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## On Cognitive Modes of Transitivity in English

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In two previous papers, Yamazaki (1993) and (1994), the mode by which speakers of English conduct the cognitive expression was discussed. The former paper dealt with the fact that such cognitive verbs as *feel*, *hear*, *know*, *learn*, *read*, *say*, *speak*, *talk*, *tell*, *think* and *write* express different implications when they stand before *of* or *about*. The semantic differences shown by the two prepositions arise from which aspect of the information the speaker regards as more important. I proposed, therefore, the fundamental concepts to explain the differences 'wholeness' and 'totality'. 'Wholeness' is defined as the quality of being complete or a single unit and not broken or divided into parts, and therefore *of* is used when the speaker is interested in the principal but qualitatively limited feature of the information. On the other hand, 'totality' is defined as the quality of being added together or counted to the sum, and thus *about* is used when the speaker is concerned with more detailed and comprehensive information. In short, the 'wholeness' is thought to be a unit, while the 'totality' is thought to be a sum; the choice of preposition depends on whether the speaker recognises the information constitution to be a unit or to be the summation of parts.

In the latter paper, I applied the distinction between the two concepts to that of the generic usage of the English article. I assumed that the generic indefinite article works to generalise through an inductive method. Totality, i.e. the total view through generalisation, is thought to come from the total investigation of each element within a set in an inductive process, and at the same time suggesting the existence of plural entities. I believe that it is possible to say that the essential function of the generic indefinite article is based on total cognition of the information constitution. Contrasting with this, I assumed that the generic definite article works to generalise through a deductive method. Wholeness, i.e. the whole view through generalisation, is thought to derive from the whole investigation of a set in a deductive process; it does not suggest the existence of plural en-

tities, unlike the *a (n)*-form. I believe that it is possible to say that the essential function of the generic definite article is based on whole cognition of the information constitution.

In this paper, I shall consider the two contrasting modes of cognition in syntactic phenomenon.

The following two sentences have different implications.

The hunter shot the elephant. / The hunter shot at the elephant.

The syntactic difference is obvious; the former contains a transitive verb, while the latter includes an intransitive verb. The semantic distinction is that the former sentence means the action planned had been achieved, whereas the latter expresses the action intended has been started, but it does not refer to the result. It is, therefore, possible to add a phrase expressing failure of the attempt after the second sentence, 'but missed it', for example. As Quirk et al. (1985:697) explains, there are such similar verbs as *kick, charge, bite, catch, chew* and *aim*. These verbs carry the meaning that some movement caused by the speaker will exert a physical influence on the object.<sup>1)</sup>

The semantic differences are thought to correspond to the distinction between 'wholeness' and 'totality'. In the transitive sentence, the verb requires the object and these concepts are more closely related. On the other hand, in the intransitive sentence, the object is not necessary and the semantic object, that is 'the elephant' is the head of the prepositional phrase, and therefore its relation to the verb is indirect. Because of this, both sentences imply a common action but the implication about accomplishment is not the same. The verbal phrase, 'shot the elephant', is not only syntactically but semantically one unit; implicit in the action is the result or at least, the result intended by the agent. To use the gun necessarily means to kill the object, 'the elephant'. The verb + the prepositional phrase, 'shot at the elephant', serves to convey two messages; first, the hunter used the gun, and secondly it was used in the direction of the elephant. See Nakau (1994:329). The speaker is not conscious of the result. It is obvious that the former shares the quality of 'wholeness' and the latter shares that of 'totality'.

'Wholeness' in a transitive usage implies the presupposition that the action in-

tended by the agent is linked with the effect on the object, that is, the unity of the cause and the effect. As mentioned in the previous paper, it is known that the use of the generic definite article includes the speaker's presupposition that the hearer shares some preliminary information or knowledge in order to understand an attribute of the object, and therefore, it is suitable in scientific or philosophical statements. If the hearer is a person who does not have enough information or knowledge to identify the object, such as an infant, the *a(n)*-form is more preferred than the *the*-form.<sup>2)</sup> In contrast, 'totality' in an intransitive usage is neutral about the result; the effect on the object is not necessarily known. It is the context, usually given in the information that follows, that tells the reader about the result. There are more than two possible outcomes: in other words, an intransitive verb suggests potential plurality. A representative usage of *a(n)* also implies the existence of other members that are in a paradigmatic relationship. There is the phenomenon that the indefinite article is needed when the unique existence, e.g. *the moon*, *the sky*, means one particular mode: *a new moon*, *a blue sky*. The speaker refers to a single particular mode from the potentially plural number of modes of the unique existence.

There is a difference in meaning between the usage of transitive verbs and that of intransitive verbs. When some verbs, which can often be used as intransitives, take objectives, they mean completion in the course of action. See Nakau(1994: 338). Compare the sentences below.

The swimmer swam the Channel. / The swimmer swam in the Channel.

Quirk et al. (1985:685) gives examples of this kind: *roam (about/around)*, *ponder (on)*, *pass (by)*, *turn (round)*, *flee (from)*, *attain (to)*, *cross (over)*, *climb (up)*, *jump/leap (over)* and *pierce (through)*. Transitives share an implication of the unity between the cause and the effect, while intransitives do not. Quirk et al. (1985:685) explains, "The construction with preposition draws attention to the process, whereas the direct object construction has perfective meaning, indicating that the objective is achieved". I believe that this is more evidence that English speakers conduct cognitive expression with the two different modes: 'wholeness' and 'totality'.

Similar difference can be seen in syntax having a double object and its para-

phrase. See Nakau (1994:334).

He sent his sweetheart the package. / He sent the package to his sweetheart.

It has been explained that the former suggests the attainment of the speaker's intention, while the latter shows no implication about the effect. Syntactically both verbs are transitives, but a relationship of two objects to a verb is not the same. Again, it is possible to explain the difference through referring to the two modes. In the former, the direct object is linked to the verb with the indirect object between; in contrast, in the latter the indirect object follows the VP through a preposition. The direct object is more strongly related to the verb than the indirect object, because the former shares a primary importance in the semantic interpretation. The verbal phrase, 'sent his sweetheart the package' is a unit in which the indirect object is inserted between the verb and the direct object, and the verbal phrase as a unit carries the meaning of accomplishment. When the indirect object is put at the end of the sentence with the preposition, the verbal phrase, 'sent the package' is a unit, to which the adverbial phrase is added. This is an additional part, and does not refer to the effect. These constructions are based on the same semantic structure as we have seen in the comparison of the transitive usage and the intransitive one.

According to Wood (1970:512), the difference between *think of* and *think about* is explained through comparing the following two sentences:

He thinks too much of himself (= he has too high an opinion of himself)

He thinks too much about himself (= he worries over his health, or his aches and pains, too much).

When the speaker says 'thinks too much of himself', he is concerned with more general, to some degree abstract matters, for example, those concerning his whole personality. In contrast, when the speaker says 'thinks too much about himself', he is concerned with more concrete matters, which constitute the total image of his personality. I think that it is possible to call the former mode 'synthetic', and the latter mode 'analytic', I explained in the previous paper that these two modes are expressed as 'deductive' and 'inductive' in the generic us-

age of the articles; the former meaning unity, while the latter meaning potential plurality.

The view so far is arranged in the table below:

MODE	Feature	Transitivity	Generic Articles	Verbal Phrases
WHOLENESS	: synthetic	/ transitive	/ the definite article	/ verbs + of
TOTALITY	: analytic	/ intransitive	/ the indefinite article	/ verbs + about

In the fourth column, both VPs obviously contain intransitive verbs. This, however, does not contradict the second column because transitives and intransitives are distinct regarding transitivity, whereas *of*-phrase and *about*-phrase are discrete concerning the usage of intransitive verbs.

The origin of *of*-phrase with cognitive verbs is thought to be 'partitive genitive', which was often used with such verbs as *drink*, *eat*, *smell* and *taste*. These verbs are not concerned with cognitive activities but with activities in which sensory organs operate. It is possible to find certain common features between the activities although the latter are more physiological, rather than intellectual, than the former. I think that through a process in which the preposition is connected with cognitive verbs as well as verbs of sensory reception, there occurs a change in the speaker's point of view from a quantitative to a qualitative one. In other words, this change shares the aspect of abstraction at a higher level of human activity with the result that there occurs a cognitive implication of the *of*-phrase which is opposite to that of the *about*-phrase. On the other hand, there is a change where such verbs as *drink*, *eat*, *smell* and *taste* are generally used as transitives in the modern usage. There can be seen a tendency in which both changes are accordant with the mode of wholeness, as seen in the table.

I would like to conclude that the modes of this kind are universal to some extent, because 'synthetic' and 'analytic' are by nature opposite concepts; so it is with the two articles: definite or indefinite. This fact shows that human thought can be carried out from the two opposite viewpoints: recognition of unity and recognition of plurality. It is useful to study not only the logical scheme of cognition in English but that in other languages.

## NOTE

- 1) Nakau (1994: 327-331) explains that the syntactic distance corresponds to the semantic one.
- 2) It is said that 'An elephant is an animal' is preferred to 'The elephant is an animal' when saying to an infant. This is because the latter expression presupposes that the hearer shares a certain amount of knowledge of an elephant.

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