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Directional phrases in SA constructions

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4 Directional Phrases in SA Constructions

The claim concerning the obligatory presence of directional phrases in what are termed here as SA constructions also figures in Levin and Rappaport Hovav's account (as well as in the account of some other researchers, cf. Chapter 3). To repeat: since only unaccusatives can causativize, directional phrases must be present because they effect the shift of a verb from the class of unergatives to the class of unaccusatives. This chapter will offer arguments against the obligatory presence of directional phrases in SA constructions (transitive causative constructions with agentive manner of motion verbs) with regard to the so-called unaccusative status of the verbs that appear in them and also with regard to some other considerations.

(I) It is well known that path verbs, which do not encode information about the manner of the motion and present the motion as a mere change of location (e.g., *come*, *go* or *arrive*), do not causativize in spite of the fact that they belong to the unaccusative class and hence should allow causativization (cf. also Pinker 1989: 42–43 and 131):

- (4.1) *John came (*/went*) Harry to the station.
 (4.2) *John was come (*/was gone*) to the station.

Although it is known that a single verb may display both unaccusative and unergative features and that not all unaccusatives can undergo causativization, it still remains a significant fact that manner of motion verbs (*walk*, *run*, *dance*, *swim*, etc.) can appear in transitive causative structures whereas path verbs cannot, in spite of the fact that both the verbal types (a) encode the mover's locomotion and (b) their event structure consists of a single event with one participant (because no external causing event is involved).

Nevertheless, it should be admitted that the addition of a path argument (*John walked* – *John walked to the store*) does not represent a simple extension of the verbal meaning but its alteration. That is, the augmentation of the argument structure of unergatives does have an impact on the verb's meaning. As argued for by Kudrnáčová (2008: 18–26), non-directed motion and directed motion represent conceptually different phenomena. Constructions with directional phrases render motion primarily as a change of location (i.e. as a predominantly kinetic phe-

nomenon) whereas constructions without directional phrases render motion as a type of activity (motion in this sense can be put on a par with other types of activities, such as *work* or *smoke*).¹¹

(II) It is often claimed that one of the signals of the verb's unaccusative status is the verb's possibility of entering into the locative inversion construction:

- (4.3) Into the room came an old woman.
 (4.4) Out of the wigwam crawled the boy who'd shot the arrow.
 (BNC)

However, self-agentive manner of motion verbs complemented by directional phrases do not, in spite of their purported unaccusative status, behave uniformly as regards their applicability in the locative inversion construction. This construction does not readily admit verbs complemented by *to*-directional phrases, cf.:

- (4.5) Into the room walked a tall, pale skinned woman.
 (4.6) *To the room walked a tall, pale skinned woman.

The locative inversion construction as one of the diagnostics of the unaccusativity of self-agentive verbs of motion is not a reliable criterion since what also comes into play is the semantics of the path phrase.¹²

(III) As observed by Ritter and Rosen (1998), the subject in sentences like *John walked to the store* is the agent, which qualifies this participant as the external argument of the verb. In other words, the verb retains its unergativity even in the presence of a directional phrase.

(IV) The agentive status of the mover in constructions with manner of motion verbs manifests itself at a syntactic level, namely, in the possibility of forming reflexive constructions such as those in (4.7) below. They explicitly render the mover as a wilful, conscious executor of the motion, in full control of the movement. Admittedly, such constructions are very

11 The upshot is that in directed motion progression along a physical path cannot be conceptualized as progression along a path that marks the mover's change of state, whereas non-directed motion does allow such a conceptualization (Kudrnáčová 2008).

12 For reasons why this construction is barred for *to*-phrases and open for *into*-path phrases see Kudrnáčová (2006).

infrequent and, in addition, they are open for a very limited set of verbs (a more detailed analysis of these constructions is offered in Chapter 13):

- (4.7) a. He marched (/walked) himself to the store.
 b. He marched (/walked) himself towards the store.
 c. He marched (/walked) himself into the store.

(V) In some caused motion situations directional phrases are not obligatory (cf. Filipović 2007 or Randall 2010). Levin and Rappaport Hovav themselves (1995: 295) admit that in some circumstances directionals need not be expressed (but must always be understood).

Certainly, it cannot be denied that the absence of directionals renders the sentences in (4.8b), (4.9b), (4.10b) and (4.11b) implausible:

- (4.8) a) John walked Mary to the station.
 b) *John walked Mary.
 (4.9) a) The trainer ran the trainees around the field.
 b) *The trainer ran the trainees.
 (4.10) a) John danced Mary to the other end of the ball-room.
 b) *John danced Mary.
 (4.11) a) John swam the boy to the shore.
 b) *John swam the boy.

There are, however, situations in which the caused movements are not directed towards attaining a spatial goal or are not spatially oriented at all, cf.:

- (4.12) A woman needed hospital treatment after being attacked by a parrot as she walked her dog at Ashleworth, near Gloucester. (BNC)
 (4.13) The surgeon who removed the gallbladder was adamant that his patients be up and walking in the hall the day after surgery, to help prevent blood clots forming in the leg veins. The nurses walked the patient in the hall as ordered, and after the third day /.../. The surgeon told them to keep walking him. (<http://witandwisdom.org/archive/20020923.htm>)
 (4.14) If it is windy Tracey will not risk taking him on the roads, and instead exercises him in the school, but she never jumps him. Her objective is to keep him fit between shows /.../. (BNC)
 (4.15) I'll canter him [=the pony] for a bit, then wait till you come up for your turn. (BNC)

As is evident, caused movements in SA constructions can imply the causee's traversal of a path even if directional phrases are missing. The reason is twofold.

First, as pointed out by Slobin (2004), manner of motion verbs involve a path in their lexico-semantic structure (the path is an implicit argument, cf. Jackendoff 1990). For example, "walking a dog" (*John walks his dog every day*) involves the traversal of a path and so does "walking the patient" or "jumping a horse." Van Valin (2006: 268) thus adduces causative counterparts not only of active accomplishments, but also of activities (*in the field* in the example in (d) is not a directional phrase but merely specifies a location in which the movement takes place).¹³

- (a) active accomplishment: *The soldiers marched to the field*
- (b) causative active accomplishment: *The sergeant marched the soldiers to the field.*
- (c) activity: *The soldiers marched in the field.*
- (d) causative activity: *The sergeant marched the soldiers in the field.*

Second, directional phrases can be omitted in situations in which the purpose of the movement intended by the causer goes beyond the movement itself. By this it is meant that the aim that is to be achieved is not to primarily effect a change of the mover's location but to effect a change which is not conceptually involved in the movement *per se* (which transcends the movement, so to say). In other words, the movement has an instrumental position because it serves as a means to an end. Dogs may be walked and horses may be swum to keep them fit, patients may be walked as part of their rehabilitation, horses may be jumped or cantered as part of their exercise, etc. Thus the question *Have you walked the dog?* lacks a directional phrase because the speaker does not enquire about attaining a spatial goal but about attaining a goal that transcends the kinetic event itself. It cannot be overlooked that such caused movements form part of more or less well-established, conventionalized scenarios. This pragmatic knowledge enables us to decode the position of the movement in a broader causal chain. As the analysis of SA constructions presented later in the book will demonstrate, their meaning is largely dependent on a wider verbal, situational and pragmatic context.

13 Activities (*walk, run*) do not proceed towards a terminus whereas this is the case with accomplishments (*walk to the store, run to the store*), cf. Vendler's (1967) classification of verbs.

This is not to say, however, that if a certain caused movement forms part of a well-established scenario, a directional phrase is not needed. For example, it follows from the very nature of ‘accompaniment’ that a directional phrase must be present. Therefore *John walked Mary to the station (to the door)* does not make sense in a reduced form, without a directional: **John walked Mary (*John has already walked Mary)*.

(VI) The claim concerning the obligatory presence of a directional phrase in SA constructions also follows from the fact that directional phrases are often interpreted as resultative phrases (see, e.g. Rappaport Hovav 2001, Wechsler 1997), owing to the causal link between the movement and the resultant position of the mover (in *John walked to the store* the resultant position is “being at the store”).¹⁴ The problem, however, is that the requirement for the obligatory presence of directional phrases rests on the implicit assumption that the result in a caused motion situation can only be represented by attaining a spatial goal. That is, directional phrases are considered obligatory because they encode the causee’s resulting change of location. We may thus say that a caused movement in SA constructions is, using Chafe’s terminology, implicitly taken as a ‘process’, i.e. as an event that necessarily involves the participant’s change of condition (a change of location, in our case). In Chafe’s (1970) classification of non-states into ‘actions’, ‘processes’ and ‘action-processes’, actions are described as lexicalizing the action of an agent (*Harriet sang*), processes as expressing a change of condition in the patient (*The elephant died*) and action-processes as a combination of the two (*The tiger killed the elephant*). In this taxonomy, SA constructions would certainly belong to the ‘action-process’ type: the causing event represents an action that is responsible for bringing about a process (the caused movement). Since a process is defined as involving a change in the patient’s condition, the path phrase is taken as a sentence constituent that expresses this change and that, therefore, must be present.

(VII) Reaching a spatial goal (or moving towards it) represents the most immediate and the most natural reason why a movement is carried out since such a goal conceptually follows from the very nature of the movement. Caused movements thus do not lend themselves readily to the

14 They are classified as subject oriented resultatives because they do not meet the Direct Object Restriction, i.e. they do not meet the requirement that resultative phrases can only be predicated of direct objects (Simpson 1993). The resultative analysis of directionals has been convincingly argued against by Rothstein (2004: 84–88). In her view, directionals are internal path arguments of the verbs.

interpretation in terms of “caused for their own sake”. In other words, movements change into actions if they are carried out to achieve a goal (i.e. if they have a purpose).¹⁵

¹⁵ As Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 217) observe, there is a regular correlation “between (1) actions taken on the basis of reason to achieve a purpose and (2) the causal relation between the actions taken and their result”.