Possession and selection of prepositions

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1. Prepositions

1.1. In the framework of Cognitive Grammar every morpheme is considered to be associated with meaning. Consider the following citation:

(1) 'The semantic contribution of a grammatical morpheme like *to* therefore cannot be ignored, even if it represents a figurative extension of the spatial *to* into more abstract domains.' (Langacker (1987:40))

It seems that the claim above reveals a contradiction which is inherent to the basic premise of Cognitive Grammar. I have argued that prepositions, whose members have generally been lumped together as forming a homogeneous, *i.e.*, locational, category, should be divided into two classes: Lexical or Locational prepositions and Relational Prepositions: the former includes *by, at, on,* and *in,* and Relational counterparts are *for, with, from, to* and *of*. It is only the former prepositions that are associated with a locational meaning or semantic entity. The relational ones, on the contrary, are completely devoid of lexical meaning in the usual sense of the term. So it is rather inconceivable that an element that is semantically empty contributes to the semantics of a sentence. The evidence for this is plentiful, but let me take *to* and *of* as illustrations of their lack of semantic entity.

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1.2. First of all, "directionality" is often spoken of as a 'meaning' of *to*. Following this traditional premise, let us suppose that most uses, if not all, are motivated by a metaphorical extension of the spatial *to* into more abstract domains. However, only a few simple but typical examples below would suffice to refute the assumption:

(2) a. the key *to* the door, the lid *to* the bottle, the secretary *to* the president, *etc.*

b. There is not much substance *to* his claim.

Apparently, it seems to be reasonable to assume that the uses of *to* in (2a) can be explained in terms of a metaphorical extension of direction. However, it seems more apt to say that these uses should be related to the notion of possession, rather than directionality. This point is illustrated by the example (2b). It is generally assumed that the location of a thing expressed by an existential sentence is of a temporal nature. Therefore, the following sentence (2'a) is acceptable while its counterpart (2'b) is not:

(2') a. There is a flaw in the diamond.

b. *There is a flaw to the diamond.

This leads us to another corollary. Given the fact that an existential sentence, in which such locational prepositions as *at, in, on,* etc. are typical candidates, designates a temporary location of a thing, the sentence (2b), in which the non-locational preposition *to* is employed, would express an atemporal or permanent location of an attribute which should be associated with the NP following *to*. The concept of directionality is incompatible with the concept of location.

Secondly, it is true that some lexical prepositions are employed because of the locational meaning. For example, whenever the notion of the surface of something is evoked, *on* will be employed, and whenever the notion of 'inside' something is to be lexicalised, English has no other linguistic means than using the preposition *in*.[1] With

1 We are dealing only with monosyllabic prepositions. This is because (i) monosyllabic prepositions are primary, (ii) polysyllabic ones such as *over, beyond, behind, etc.* seem to be only associated with locational meanings or their metaphorical extensions.

these locational prepositions, interestingly, the reverse is also true; the use of *in*, for example, invariably implies 'inside' something or something in a bounded enclosure. Therefore, it is quite reasonable, and also plausible, to draw the conclusion that all the uses of the locational prepositions can be reduced to their 'core' meanings and that metaphorical extensions of them are made possible.

However, this is not the case with *to*. English accommodates various expressions that are associated with directionality.

(3) a. He left Kobe *for* Edinburgh.
b. They arrived *in* Glasgow.
c. We arrived *at* the hotel.
d. The branches were reaching out *toward* the sun.
e. Her letter reached me.

This clearly implies that we cannot assume that there is a straightforward correspondence holding between the meaning of 'directionality' and the preposition *to*. The notion of directionality does not always have to be lexicalised by *to*. With the prepositions *on* and *in*, on the other hand, we can expect a strict one-to-one relationship between a linguistic sign and its semantic entity, since their meanings can be reduced to a certain, possibly, abstract locational core one, and this is not the case with *to*.

1.3. Thus, what we have observed leads us to the assumption that *to* is devoid of a semantic entity whatsoever. Then the question arises: What motivates the use of *to*? Where does the semantic difference between the following sentences come from?

(4) a. He sent a letter to Susan.
b. He sent Susan a letter. —Langacker (1987:39)

However, before addressing this problem, I have to dwell on another preposition *of*, since *to* and *of* seem to share some properties with each other. It is well known that, in the theoretical literature, *of* has been regarded as a meaningless morpheme which is syntactically inserted between the structure NP-NP, for example. This mechanical

view, however, captures only the half of the truth, because (i) not all the NP-NP constructions tolerate *of*-insertion (cf. 5a), and (ii) there are some cases where *to* is an alternative to *of* (cf. 5b).

(5) a. the road *to* Rome, the sign *to* Dundee; his visit *to* Aberdeen, a new approach *to* linguistics

b. the secretary *to/of* the president, five minutes *to/of* ten

Apparently the fact that *to* is used in one construction and *of* occurs in another seems to imply that these two prepositions are associated with distinct semantic contents. However, this is not the case. If their uses were motivated by their semantic contents, (5b) would serve as a crucial counter-example; there would be no explaining why *to* and *of* alternate without causing a difference in meaning. One might, of course, argue that there are semantic differences between them, but the alleged difference is negligibly small in terms of the factual or cognitive meaning. More correctly, however, the difference, if there is any, should be regarded as of a completely different order. These examples provide us with a number of significant implications as to the relational status of *to* and *of*.

No morpheme occurs in a sentence without being charged with some sort of 'semantic' load. But is it semantic in the true sense of the term? It should be remembered here that, while the words that belong to the open category stand for the entities in the outside or mental world and the inflectional morphemes refer to 'grammatical' notions like plurality, tense, and so on, the possessive marker *'s* has no semantic entity to refer to; the function of *'s* is to dictate the structure is NP, rather than S (cf. Wada 2001). This observation also applies to the two prepositions in question. Then, what is the 'function' of these prepositions if they lack in referring function? What are they used for? At this point, it is necessary to consider Langacker's view on *of*.

Langacker claims that *of* designates "some kind of intrinsic relationship between the two participants" (Langacker 1992:487). For Langacker, this 'intrinsic relationship' makes a contrast with the

following use of *on* and *to*:

(6) a. the bottom/?label/?lid *of* the jar
b. the ?bottom/label/lid *on* the jar
c. the ??bottom/?label/lid *to* the jar

While *of* in (6a) profiles, according to him, "an inherent-and-restricted-subpart relationship" between the two entities, *on* in (6b) designates "a relationship of contact and support" and *to* in (6c) profiles "a relationship between separate (or separable) objects that belong together in an integrated assembly." Langacker is right in claiming that these prepositions (including *on*) profile a sort of relationship and that the differences in 'meaning' of the phrases above are ascribed to the differences in the relationships. However, he is wrong in arguing, over and over again, that **the relation is the meaning.** Here lies a crucial flaw to his cognitive grammar.

Relation is NOT meaning as Langacker maintains. First, relation can not be lexicalised. Secondly, let us consider his remark on (6), again. In his eagerness to argue that relation is meaning, he seems not to see the genuinely locational meaning in the preposition *on*. As far as locational prepositions are concerned, the differences of meaning should reside in the difference of locational meanings these prepositions refer to. Thus, *at, on,* and *in* are distinct from each other because they conceptualize the relevant space in different ways. *At*, for example, conceptualizes the relevant space as zero-dimensional, *on* as one- or two-dimensional, and *in* as three-dimensional (see Quirk *et al.* 1985, Wada 1996, 1998, *etc.*). The primary function of the preposition *on* consists not in such a relational nature as 'contact and support', but in conceptualizing the place in terms of spatial concepts, as opposed to *at* and *in*. The alleged relation is not its meaning *per se,* but a coincidental mode of location of the trajector with respect to its landmark.[2] Therefore, (6b) is a locational expression, while (6a)

2 Strictly speaking, however, the landmark is not the object of a preposition, as is generally supposed, but it is the preposition itself, which is inalienably related to its object.

and (6c) are not. This difference has a crucial relevance to our discussion here. While the preposition *on* is a semantic preposition, *to* and *of* are relational and, therefore, they are **RELATIONALLY** different from each other.

Langacker seems to be aware of the difference, since he suggests that *of* designates "an inherent-and-restricted-subpart relationship between the two entities" and *to* designates "a relationship between separate (or separable) objects that belong together in an integrated assembly", respectively. This assessment of his has enough observational validity to explicate the difference between the two prepositions. Again, however, this relational difference should not be identified with the semantic difference; relation and meaning belong to different levels of description from semantics. First, relation presupposes the existence of two entities to be related, while meaning does not. Second, the way to connect the two entities differs from language to language. While the distinct uses of *to* and *of* are specifically restricted to English, Japanese, for example, employs a postposition *-no* in the equivalent expressions, i.e., *bin-no soko* 'bottle-*no* bottom' and *bin-no futa* 'bottle-*no* lid'. This implies that such relational concepts as 'part-whole', 'inalienable possession', as well as Subject-of and Object-of, belong to the system of syntactic parameters. This, again, suggests that relation is syntactic.

1.4. There is another piece of evidence that makes us doubt whether *to* and *of* carry a semantic entity: the selection restriction that prepositions impose. It is generally accepted that a verb assigns a particular selection restriction onto the object. Prepositions also do assign a selection restriction onto the following object. For example, *at* will require as its object a noun that has no spatial dimension: *at ten, at the address, etc. On* will precede such nouns as *floor, line, wall, etc.* And *in* is followed by nouns that are associated with a shape: *in the house, in a queue, etc.* I am assuming that these uses of the locational prepositions are typical or prototypical. There are more

familiar uses, of course, such as *at table, on Monday* and *in October,* etc., with the prepositions in question preceding non-prototypical nouns. It is at this point that the notion of metaphorical use or extension is relevant. This problem, however, is beyond the scope of the present paper. See, also, Wierzwicka (1988, 1993) in this connection.

However, as to such relational prepositions as *to, of, with, from,* and *for,* it is unlikely that they assign any semantic restrictions onto their objects. What is the reason for this? The answer, again, is that locational prepositions have semantic entities which relational prepositions lack. This is quite reasonable because selection restrictions are semantic; only a word that bears a semantic content can assign a selection restriction onto its object. But it is interesting to note that selection restrictions seem to be holding between the two nouns connected by *of* and *to*; the two nouns are semantically and inherently related with each other, as Langacker maintains. Thus, the relational prepositions are charged not with semantic contents but with syntactic or relational roles.

Thus far, we have argued that, while an entity or meaning can always be lexicalised as far as it is referential, relational notions resist lexicalization by means of words (content words in particular). It is rather unfortunate that in the linguistic tradition the term 'relation(ship)' has been used without any clear definition. In my series of papers, I have suggested that the notion of relationship includes at least three types: Grammatical Relation, Locational Relation, and Possessive Relation. It is of crucial importance to note that, in English, these three relational categories are all realised by non-lexical means: Grammatical Relation and Locational Relation are expressed by word order, as in *John loves Mary* and *the book on the table,* respectively. Note, here, that in the case of *the book on the table,* the locational relation is holding between the two entities, *the book* and the preposition *on,* rather than *the book* and *the table,* as is generally supposed, since *on* as a locative preposition has a semantic

entity to refer to, and that *on* and *the table* are connected by Possessive Relation.

In the next section, it will be shown that the notion Possession plays an important role in the structuring of a sentence, and selection of prepositions as well, and that the relational concepts including Grammatical Relations can best be explained in terms of Case Relations.

2. Possession and syntactic selection of prepositions

2.1. As we observed above, the notion of Possession is expressed by lexically empty morphemes. This is without reason because Possession, which presupposes two entities, *i.e.,* possessor and possessee, is relational. In this section, I would like to show that the notion of Possession can be conveyed by means of the structural ordering of words and that the structural information motivates the selection of prepositions.

English seems to have some structures which are employed specifically for the purpose of Possession. Consider the sentences (4), repeated as (7):

(7) a. He sent a letter to Susan.
b. He sent Susan a letter. —Langacker (1987:39)

As early as 1974, Green argued that (a) is not synonymous to (b). Thus, in (7a), *Susan* is a simple Goal of *a letter,* but (7b) implies that Susan received *a letter.* This type of alternation or Dative Shift seems to be characteristic of the class of verbs called 'three-place-predicates', but it is not. A number of 'two-place-predicates' exhibit similar alternation:

(8) a. Tom built a cradle for Betty.
b. Tom built Betty a cradle.
c. Max got a ticket for Alice.
d. Max got Alice a ticket.

The verbs *build* and *get* are not classified as three-place-predicate verbs, but allow similar syntactic characteristics as in (7).

2.2. Now, there seem to be some peculiarities involved in these constructions. First of all, the verbs that occur in these constructions seem to be characteristic of those of Anglo-Saxon origin (cf. Green 1974:79, Gropen, *et al.* 1989, Levin 1993:48).

(9)<giving>: John gave/*donated/*contributed him some money
<communication>: She told/*explained/*announced him the news
<sending>: She sent/*transported him the goods
<creation>: He built/*created/*designed him a toy.
<obtaining>: She bought/*purchased/*collected him some food.
—*Based on* Gropen, *et al.* (1989)

There may be some exceptions to this generalisation, but, as we will see below, English seems to show this tendency, for which no satisfactory explanation has ever been given.

2.3. Secondly, the noun immediately following the verb in the sentence which undergoes the Dative Shift is restricted to human beings or animate nouns. Thus, the next (10b) is unacceptable:

(10) a. John sent the news to London.
b. *John sent London the news.

Curme says the following concerning the Dative case:

(11) The single dative in Old English represents a person as involved or concerned in an activity directed toward him and intended to affect him either in a mere material way or more commonly in an inner sense. —Curme (1931:104)

We can assume, therefore, that Dative is the case for which only a human being is eligible, which is also called 'animacy restriction' (cf. Levin 1993:48). And this is unsurprising given the fact that Dative has been regarded as a case of possession and only a human being can possess something; the human being is the recipient of something, or *vice versa*. Therefore, (10b) is ungrammatical because *London* cannot possess the news.

2.4. Thirdly, it seems that Possession is signalled by certain types of

structures: typically (i) V+NP_1+NP_2 and, less typically, (ii) V+NP_2 +to+NP_1 (hereafter NP_1 is [+HUMAN]). I assume that the structure (ii), which is generally regarded as a simple Goal sentence, is closely related to Possessive constructions as far as NP_1 is [+HUMAN] since only human or animate nouns can be in the possession of something rather than a Goal. The structural nature of possession is most manifest in the next sentences.

(12) a. We won the trophy from them.
b. *We won them the trophy.

(13) a. She lost a single set to her opponent
b. The incident lost him the seat.

Let us consider the pair in (12), first. Winning means that victory comes into the subject's possession from the opponent's, so (12b) is ungrammatical. On the contrary, losing means it goes into the possession of the opponent, so (13a), which is a familiar *give*-type construction, is grammatical. The same inference is applicable to (13b). However, (13b) will need some explanations, since our suggestion should lead to the supposition that *him* and *the seat* ought to be in a possessive relation, which they clearly are not; the sentence means that the dative noun is not in the possession of *the seat*.

However, I should say that (13b) is a possessive construction. Let us consider the verb *deny* here. A dictionary gives the following explanation with an example sentence:

(14) If you **deny** someone something that they need or want, you prevent them from having it. EG *The government exploited their labour while denying them social equality.* —*Cobuild*

From a semantic point of view, the verb *deny* ought to precede a propositional complement, typically a *that*-clause, or a noun closely related to propositional content, since we can deny a proposition but not a simple NP such as *tree, man, etc.* Then, where does this 'prevent from having' meaning come from? One of the possible answers is that the double object construction constitutes a proposition. In fact, Possession makes a proposition in that two semantic entities are

involved in the structure. Moreover, in general, it seems that in the structure V+NP+XP, NP+XP constitutes a proposition: 'Small clause', 'Resultative construction', *etc.* So we can assume that this 'meaning' is motivated by the structural alignment of either (V)+NP_1+NP_2 or (V)+NP_2+to+NP_1 and what is denied is the RELATION of possession that holds between the two NPs. So, what the sentence (13b) means is that the possessive relation is denied by losing (the election) because of the incident. Interestingly, unlike (12b), the verb *win* can also be used in the same construction as (13b).

(15) The book won him fame.

It is clear that the sentence in (15) is equivalent to (12b); it means that he acquired fame because of the book. We can call *deny*-type possession NEGATIVE POSSESSION and the usual *give*-type possession POSITIVE POSSESSION. Whether Possession is negative or positive, then, depends on the lexical meaning of the verb involved.

If the difference between Negative Possession and Positive Possession is due to the lexical meaning of the verb, it is conceivable that there are some cases where the meaning is neutralised as to possession or non-possession. Consider the next sentences.

(16) a. I will save you a little popcorn.
b. You could save yourself a lot of work if you used a computer.

(17) a. Can you spare me a few minutes?
b. Spare him (from) trouble.

The verbs used in (16) and (17), *save* and *spare*, respectively, are good illustrations of this. In (16), where both sentences assume the same structure, V+NP_1+NP_2, (a) implies that the dative noun receives *a little popcorn,* whereas (b) does not provide such a reading; it means deprivation. The same applies to sentences in (17). The reason for this indeterminacy is not clear yet, but some issues connected with our general or pragmatic knowledge of the words seem to be involved.

Here, let me cite a pair of 'winning' and 'losing' expressions in

Japanese:

(18) a. watashi-ha sono shiai-**ni** katta.
'I-Top the match-Loc won'

b. watashi-ha sono shiai-**ni** maketa.
'I-Top the match-Loc lost'

Notice here that the same locative marker *-ni* is used, while English employs different prepositions; *from* is used in Winning and *to*, in Losing. This fact strongly indicates that Possession is a language-specific, structure-dependent notion.

The final observation to be made is that the structure of V+ NP_1+NP_2 is so strongly associated with Possession that it sometimes assigns a possessive marker onto the second noun. This is the case with *envy*.

(19) I envy you your success.

In (19), *your* is preferred because the structure signals the Possessive relation holding between the two nouns although the verb *envy* has no association of 'giving' or 'depriving'.

The sentence should be contrasted with the so-called 'Body-Part Possessor Ascension Alternation' (Levin 1993:71) construction like (20).

(20) a. He tapped me on the shoulder

b. *He tapped me on my shoulder

In this sentence, it is evident that *me* and *the shoulder* are in the relation of inalienable possession, so there is no reason for the determiner *the* to be replaced by the possessive form *my*, which is only marginally possible. This is because *me* and *the shoulder* are not in the possessive construction, since a locational preposition *on* intervenes between them. So, the possessive pronoun *your* serves as a structural indicator of Possession in (19).

2.5. We have so far argued that Possession is a relational notion, so it is most unsusceptible to lexicalisation. The question immediately arises: if Possession is structurally signalled, what is the function of

the prepositions involved in the constructions and what makes it possible for different prepositions to be used in different constructions? Apparently the structures that are responsible for possessive meaning are varied. However, due to the fact that prepositions belong to the Closed Class and that such prepositions as *by, at, on,* and *in* can be excluded since they have a semantic entity to refer to, the prepositions which are relevant to our discussion are *to, of, with, for* and *from.* Another factor we have to take into account is the 'Animacy' constraint on the NP that immediately follows the verb. This is reasonable since the Dative noun is restricted to [+HUMAN] nouns and its order of occurrence with respect to another noun plays an important role in the structure. Thus, the possessive structures we are going to deal with can be summarized in the following eight patterns:

(21) Possessive Structures (1)

a. $NP+V+NP_{1\,[+HUMAN]}+WITH+NP_{2\,[+THING]}$ *provide*

b. $NP+V+NP_{1\,[+HUMAN]}+NP_{2\,[+THING]}$ (Positive Possession)

c. $NP+V+NP_{1\,[+HUMAN]}+NP_{2\,[+THING]}$ (Negative Possession)

d. $NP+V+NP_{1\,[+HUMAN]}+OF+NP_{2\,[+THING]}$ *deprive*

(22) Possessive Structures (2)

a. $NP+V+NP_{2\,[+THING]}+FOR+NP_{1\,[-HUMAN]}$ *buy, provide*

b. $NP+V+NP_{2\,[+THING]}+TO+NP_{1\,[-HUMAN]}$ (Positive Possession)

c. $NP+V+NP_{2\,[+THING]}+TO+NP_{1\,[-HUMAN]}$ (Negative Possession)

d. $NP+V+NP_{2\,[+THING]}+FROM+NP_{1\,[+HUMAN]}$ *steal*

d'. $NP+V+NP_{2\,[+THING]}+OF+NP_{1\,[-HUMAN]}$ *ask*

Based on Levin's classification, here is the representative list of verbs which are used in (21):[3]

(23) a. credit, entrust, furnish, issue, leave, present, provide, serve,

3 Note, here, that (23) does not mean that the verbs listed can occur in the 'alternated' structures (22). For example, while many of the verbs listed in (23b) can be used in the structure (22b), those listed in 23c are not free to occur in the structure (22c). Whether or not the verbs undergo Dative Shift or 'alternation' is not our direct concern here.

supply, trust; arm, burden, charge, compensate, equip, invest, ply, regale, reward, saddle, *etc.*

b. feed, give, lease, lend, loan, pass, pay, peddle, refund, render, rent, repay, sell serve, trade; advance, allocate, allot, assign, award, bequeath, cede, concede, extend, grant, guarantee, issue, leave, offer, owe, promise, vote, will yield; book, buy, call, cash, catch, charter, earn, fetch, find, gain, gather, get, hire, keep, lease, leave, order, reach, rent, reserve, save, secure, steal, vote, win, *etc.*

c. cost, deny, forbid, refuse, save, spare, take, *etc.*

d. absolve, acquit, burgle, cheat, cleanse, con, cure, defraud, denude, deprive, disabuse, disarm, dispossess, divest, drain, ease, exonerate, fleece, free, milk, pardon, plunder, purge, relieve, rid, rob, strip, swindle, unburden, wean, *etc.*

What is most remarkable about the list above is that an overwhelming number of non-native verbs are included in both (23a) and (23d), *i.e.*, *with*-constructions and *of*-constructions, respectively; we find no native verb in (23a) and only a small number of native verbs in (23d). This seems to suggest that for these two constructions to be viable as possessive structures, they have to be structurally marked by means of the prepositions *with* on one hand, and *of* on the other, since the verbs involved are not native ones. The use of *with* here is motivated by another possessive construction such as *the man with a beard,* etc. As for the semantics and function of this preposition, there still remain some mysteries to be solved, but it will be clear that the preposition *with* is associated with a possessive notion. The same applies to (21d), *i.e.*, *of*-constructions, in which *of* is another possessive marker.

2.6. Now, let us consider (21b) and (21c). The former is Positive Possession and the latter is Negative (or Deprivative) Possession. The two structures, which can, in fact, be conflated into one, are the most typical possessive structures in English. However, it should be noted

that they are rather exceptional in terms of the (surface) syntactic structures of English. As Emonds suggested as early as 1970, English strictly observes Structure-Preserving Constraints. This is a purely structural principle. Thus, according to this constraint, a preposition has to intervene between the two object NPs in (21b,c), which is exemplified in other structures in (21) and (22). Moreover, the alignment of NP+NP itself should be strictly excluded in the grammar of English. Given these facts, we could conclude that the structure is tolerated simply because it is a possessive structure in which the first noun is in the Dative, *i.e.*, [+HUMAN]. In other words, Possession is grammaticalized to such an extent that it overrules the most fundamental syntactic principles of English. This is why the degree of anglicisation of verbs seems to affect the grammaticality of the structure. Since the Dative case is exclusively a structural notion, it is compatible, in principle, only with the verbs of English origin; the more anglicised the verb is, the more comfortable the structure is as the one for possession.

However, it is not the case that only the 'anglicised' verbs are eligible for the structure. The list of verbs in (23b) shows that quite a number of 'foreign' verbs can be used in this construction. This, it seems to me, is another side of grammaticalization of Possession. The structure of NP+NP is tolerated only when it means Possession. So, as far as the meaning of the verb, or, therefore, the result of the event expressed by the verb, entails the subsequent Possession, the structure is available for it, which explains why '*Build* Verbs' and 'Verbs of Preparing' are likely to be used in this construction: *build, carve, bake, boil, cook,* and so on (see Levin 1993:174).[4]

Another point to note is the fact that not a few verbs of French origin are used in Negative Possession constructions: *cost, deny, fine, refuse, save,* etc. (cf. Levin 1993:47). The verb *deny,* as we suggested above, requires a propositonal complement to follow, so it is entitled

4 According to Levin (1993:176), '*Create* Verbs', which forms another category, are not felicitous for this construction because of the Latinate restriction.

to the construction. The rests (*cost, fine, refuse, save*) are very close to *take* in meaning, which is exemplified in a sentence like *It took me three days*. All these verbs have deprivative meaning, which presupposes that the two nouns are in a possessive relation.

Finally, some remarks on the constructions in (22) will be in order here. The structures provided are distinct from those in (21) in some respects. First, since they are in the form of NP+V+NP+PP, they conform to the general structure-preserving patterns. Second, the direct object is not restricted to animate nouns. Therefore, with the structures in (22b) and (22c), the possessive meaning is not so highlighted as in (30). Rather they are relegated into one of the ordinary Goal type structures. Particularly, if the NP_1 is [-HUMAN], the structure is a simple Goal sentence.

Note that, unlike *with* in (21a) and *of* in (21d), the *for*-phrases and *from* (*of*)-phrases are optional in (22a) and (22d); they do not constitute a core argument structure with respect to the verbs. For example, when the verb *provide* precedes the two NPs of which the first one is [+HUMAN] (*i.e.*, (21a)), it requires the second *with*-phrase as its obligatory argument. However, when the verb occurs in the structure NP+for+NP [+HUMAN] (*i.e.*, (22a)), the second NP [+HUMAN], which, in fact, is not necessarily restricted to [+HUMAN] now, is optional.

(24) a. The garden provides us *(with vegetables)
b. The garden provides vegetables (for us).

Similarly, the verbs *steal* and *ask* take the *from*-phrase and *of*-phrase, respectively, optionally.

(25) a. He stole the car (from her house).
b. They asked a lot of favour (of him).

2.7. So far, we have argued that possession plays a crucial role in the structuring of English sentences. When two entities are adjacent to each other, there must be some basic relations governing to keep them where they are. Possession may well be regarded as one of the

candidates. In sum, Possession can be accommodated by the following seven structures:

(26) (i) V+NP [+HUMAN]+NP *give/deny*
(ii) V+NP [+HUMAN]+*with*+NP *provide*
(iii) V+NP [+HUMAN]+*of*+NP *deprive*
(iv) V+NP+*to*+NP [+HUMAN] *give/deny*
(v) V+NP+*for*+NP [+HUMAN] *buy*
(vi) V+NP+*from*+NP [+HUMAN] *steal*
(vii) V+NP+*of*+NP [+HUMAN] *ask*

In the structure (i) a human noun immediately follows the verb and it precedes another noun phrase. As we mentioned above, this structure is rather exceptional. But the exception is tolerated because the possessive relation is holding between the two adjacent noun phrases. On the other hand, in (ii) and (iii), it seems that the relevant two NPs are not adjacent since a preposition *with* or *of* intervenes. However, I suggest that they are SEMANTICALLY adjacent. The preposition *with* or *of* is required because the verb is not anglicised enough, so that some support from a preposition is needed to reinforce the possessive relation. *With* and *of* are most suitable in this respect, for they are often used in possessive contexts.

Moreover, the selection of *with* and *of* is in sharp contrast with selection of ordinary locational prepositions. Consider the next sentence:

(27) He put the book *on/in/by/behind, etc.* the box.

In a locational sentence, the verb subcategorises the locative phrase as one of its obligatory arguments. However, I assume that the subcategorisation should be sensitive with respect to the locative prepositions, rather than the noun; in other words, the verb selects the preposition. This is reasonable in view of the fact that the prepositions involved in locational sentences are varied and, seemingly, open-ended as in (27). This is a semantic selection of prepositions.[5]

But, the prepositions *with* and *of*, on one hand, and *for* and *to*,

5 It is interesting to note that there holds a possessive or, more correctly, inalienable possessive relation between the locative preposition and its object noun.

on the other, are syntactically inserted in an appropriate structure to reinforce the possessive meaning, since they are relational prepositions.

The structural nature of these prepositions is particularly noticeable with the prepositions *with* and *of* in (26ii) and (26iii), since their phrases are hardly omissible. On the other hand, the phrases involving *to, from, for,* and *of* in the structures (26iv-vii) seem to be more susceptible to deletion than those involving *with* and *of*. However, according to Quirk *et al.* (1972:322) a *to*-phrase expresses 'actual recipient', while the meaning of *for*-phrase is 'intended recipient'. This could mean that the *to*-phrase is more closely involved in the possessive meaning than the *for*-counterpart. Moreover, it is generally accepted that *to* is a marker of Dative and *for* of Benefactive, and that Dative nouns can occupy either the subject, direct object or indirect object position in a simple sentence, which Benefactive nouns cannot do (see Givón 1993:93, for example). So, from a semantic point of view, we can assume that *to* is distinct from *for* in the degree of optionality. So, the preposition *for* is rather peripheral to the argument structure of the predicate verb.[6]

Although it is evident that *from*-phrases are the most peripheral to the predicate verb, the final comment on *of* in (35vii) will have to be made. It is interesting to note, here, that this preposition can often be ambivalent, sometimes meaning 'from' and sometimes 'off'. It is in the former sense that the preposition *of* is used in the sentence like *I'd like ask a favour of you.*

On the other hand, the *of* used in the structure (35iii) seems to be close to *off* in meaning. Consider the next sentences:

(28) a. Straight after your last cigarette your body will begin to cleanse itself *of* tobacco toxin. —*COBUILD2*

b. The illness depletes the body *of* vitamins. —*CIDE*

c. He made a fortune swindling old ladies *out of* their life savings. —*LDCE3*

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6 From a syntactic point of view, *for*-phrases are regarded as behaving more adjunct like than *to*-phrases. See Green (1974:70ff.), for example.

d. I'm still trying to wean my daughter *off sugary snacks.* —*LDCE3*

According to Levin (1993:129), a few 'Verbs of Possessional Deprivation' (i.e., those listed in (32d)) allow *of* to alternate with *out of,* like (28c). And some of them are predominantly used with *off,* like (28d). Now, it seems natural that these sentences remind us of the following familiar sentences:

(29) a. Keep children off the premises.
b. Keep the dog out of our garden.

Thus, (29) indicates that the NP and the prepositional phrase constitute a propositional sentence or a small clause. Therefore, it will not be unreasonable to assume that the structure (26iii) makes an interface between a Possessive structure and a small clause. Consider the next sentences:

(30) a. Mrs Clegg was severely beaten and *robbed of* all her possessions. —*LDCE3*
b. The illness *depletes* the body *of* vitamins. —*CIDE*
c. Jessie could *relieve* you *of* some of the chores. —*LDCE3*
d. Even whisky could not *cure* him *of* his anxieties. -*LDCE3*
e. Walking helped to *ease* him *of* his pain. —*OALD5*
f. He made a fortune *swindling* old ladies *out of* their life savings. —*LDCE3*
g. He *conned* me *out of* £5! —*LDCE3*
h. A lot of these children have been *deprived of* a normal home life. —*LDCE3*
i. I'm still trying to *wean* my daughter *off* sugary snacks. —*LDCE3*

(30) is intended to show a tentative gradience from Possession to small clause.

Our considerations so far seem to suggest another possibility as to the paradigms of prepositions. Apart from locational prepositions, *at, on,* and *in,* I assume that each relational preposition is associated with a relational concept. Among the relational concepts will be such

case relations as ALLATIVE, ABLATIVE, and COMITATIVE (cf. Anderson 1977). Whatever linguistic framework one may adopt, no one will deny the relational nature of cases and their relevancy to linguistic analysis, at least at a certain level of description. The cases are relational, and, therefore, they can serve as mediators of two entities. In other words, when two (or more) entities form a certain construction, they are connected by case relations. Consider the sentence (27) again. The subject *he* and the verb *put* are adjacent since they are connected by the case relation ERGATIVE; the verb *put* and the object *the book* are connected by ABSOLUTIVE; the object *the book* and the prepositional phrase can be adjacent due to LOCATIVE case. It is most important to note here that all these relational categories are not always or necessarily morphologically realised. This, I assume, is parametricised depending on languages. In English, for example, ERGATIVE, ABSOLUTIVE, and LOCATIVE are expressed by word order, *i.e.*, ZERO MORPH, while ALLATIVE and ABLATIVE are realized in *to* and *of* (*from*), respectively.

Therefore, I suggest the following paradigm for prepositions as a first approximation, although much elaboration will be required.

(31)

Relation	**Marker**	
ALLATIVE	TO (Core)	FOR (Circumstantial)
ABLATIVE	OF (Core)	FROM (Circumstantial)
COMITATIVE	WITH (Core)	BY (Circumstantial)
ERGATIVE	ZERO MORPH	
ABSOLUTIVE	ZERO MORPH	
LOCATIVE	ZERO MORPH	

I assume that the relation will be, in principle, realised by a marker. In this sense there is a strict one-to-one correspondence between the denotatum and the sign (including the cases of Zero Morph). As far as the possessive structures are concerned, five prepositions have a direct relevancy: *to, of, with, for and from.*[7] Note here that the insertion of

7 The preposition *by* is excluded from the present discussion, since it is irrelevant to the possessive constructions. And the whole paradigm of (39) will remain to be justified in the future, as well as the explanation as to why English provides 'core' prepositions and 'circumstantial' ones for ALLATIVE, ABLATIVE, and COMITATIVE relations.

different markers is motivated by the different structures: *to* is inserted in such possessive structures as *give-* or *deny*-sentences (22b) and (22c), *of* will be in *deprive*-type sentences (22d) and *ask*-type sentences (22d'), *with* in *provide*-sentences (21a), *for* in *buy*-sentences (22a) and *from* in *steal*-sentences (22d). In other words, it can be assumed that these prepositions are assigned a specific structural description in the lexicon. The distinction between Core and Circumstantial should be understood to mean that the former is related to the typical possessive structures while the latter is related to structures of a more general nature, i.e., Goal type sentences. Therefore, the *for*-phrases in (22a) and *of/from*-phrases in (22d, d') are sometimes optional.

More importantly, however, there is a great possibility that Possession might be an epiphenomenon that is coincident with a particular structure, rather than a principle to connect two phrases. This is without reason. Consider the so-called 'Caused-Motion Construction' (Goldberg1995).

(32) a. Frank sneezed the tissue off the table.

b. Sam helped him into the car.

In (32a), although the verb used is regarded as an intransitive verb, it is followed by two phrases, *the tissue* and *off the table.* And the verb *help* in (32b) is also considered to be a simple two place-predicate verb, but it precedes two phrases. This means that when two phrases (or maximal projections) follow a predicate verb, they constitute a proposition of some sort, generally a subject-predicate relation. Other instances are plentiful. It is effected, mostly, by the meanings of the main verb; the event expressed by the main verb motivates another event to follow it. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that possessive sentences like *Tom built Betty a cradle* bear a close similarity to (32). Just as 'Caused-Motion Construction' or Resultative Construction is effected by the structural alignment of (V)+NP+XP (where XP is not NP), in which the subject and predicate relation is holding, the possessive meaning is created by two structural alignments

such as (i) (V)+NP[+HUMAN]+NP or (ii) (V)+NP+to/of/with+NP([+HUMAN]). Possession is a type of proposition, and therefore, the 'meaning' is anomalous and fuzzy, and productive in the sense that the relation between the subject and the predicate verb or between the predicate verb and the object is productive.

3. Conclusion

I assume that language consists of an infinite number of content (*i.e.*, Open Class) words or entity and a (universal) set of relational concepts; the former contribute to the semantics of a sentence, and the latter, the syntactic structuring of a sentence. The simple assumption that a morpheme (or word, particularly relational prepositions) contributes to a meaning does not explain the fact that it functions as a 'connector' between two words, and vice versa. Relation is a syntactic concept. In other words, relation is a set of principles that govern the adjacency of two neighbouring words. The different categories of relational concepts seem to be connected with the capacity of a language to afford different grammatical positions or statuses to different phrases. And I also assume that the ways of realising relational concepts are different from language to language. Some languages employ grammatical morphemes to express particular relational concepts, others resort to ordering of words. Some may accommodate all the relational concepts by means of morphemes, others may do only part of them. That is all tied up with the problems of parameter. And the number and kinds of relational concepts are experiential problems.

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