PROFILING PROPERTIES OF THE VERBS *BRING, MAIL, SEND, ROB* AND *STEAL* IN THE NEWS OF WASHINGTON POST AND PITTSBURG-GAZETTE

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ABSTRACT

This research is entitled Profiling Properties of the Verbs *Bring, Mail, Rob and Steal* in the News of Washington Post and Pittsburg-Gazette. The purpose of this research is to discuss the profiling properties of these verbs in the sentence-level construction which enables the writer to find out what kind of participant roles that are obligatorily profiled and not in that construction. The research is done by collecting some data containing ditransitive verbs in the news of Washington Post and Pittsburg-Gazette and even a single transitive verb in Pittsburg- Gazette, posted by the Corpus of Contemporary American English in 2006, 2014 and 2015. The result that can be taken from this research shows that (1) the direct object sometimes cannot be represented by *inanimate* in particular construction, (2) the direct object cannot be represented by any pronouns, except in the prepositional construction, and (3) the prepositional phrases, in some cases, are optionally profiled. Finally, profiling and not profiling participant roles may have something to do with what we called semantic restriction.

INTRODUCTION

Evan and Green, in 2006, introduced their book entitled *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* containing a Goldberg's theory which concerns with a constructional

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approach to grammar. The main focus of her theory refers to the **verb argument construction**. She examined ordinary sentences, like **transitives** and **ditransitives**, and built construction grammar on the patterns she found there. She emphasized that sentence-level constructions themselves carry meaning, independently of the words in the sentence (Goldberg 1995: 1).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Goldberg revealed when a given verb may occur in the construction. When verbs are associated with **participant roles**, constructions have **argument roles**. In other words, the frame semantics of a given verb means that it is associated with frame-specific participants. For example the verb *buy* might be associated with or might profile the participant roles BUYER, SELLER and GOODS, while the verb *sing* might profile the participant roles SINGER and SONG.

Goldberg posits two principles that govern the association of a verb's participant roles with a construction's argument roles: (1) the *Semantic Coherence Principle*; and (2) the *Correspondence Principle*. **The Semantic Coherence Principle works by matching a participant role with an argument role and seeing if the two overlap sufficiently for one to be construed as an instance of the other**. For example, general categorization principles enable us to determine that the THIEF participant role of the verb *steal* overlaps sufficiently with the argument role AGENT, because both share semantic properties such as ***animacy, intention, causation*** and so on. **The Correspondence Principle states that profiled argument roles are obligatorily matched with profiled participant roles**, but builds some flexibility into the system by allowing that one of the participant roles may or may not be constructionally profiled in the case of a verb with three participant roles. Equally, a ditransitive construction can contribute a third role to a two-participant verb (Evan & Green. 2006: 677).

In accordance with an interesting theory that Goldberg developed, the writer enthusiastically makes an attempt to apply her theory which may construe the kind of participant roles that will be obligatorily profiled or not in a ditransitive construction,

even in a transitive construction. To support this research, the writer collects the data from the news of Washington Post and Pittsburg-Gazette posted by the Corpus of Contemporary American English in 2006, 2014 and 2015.

METHODS

The method applied in this research is qualitative. The writer analyzes the profiling properties of the verbs *Bring, Mail, Send, Rob and Steal* in the News of Washington Post and Pittsburg-Gazette posted by the Corpus of Contemporary American English in 2006, 2014 and 2015. There are two stages in data collecting. First, the writer searched into both ditransitive and transitive verbs involving the verbs *Bring, Mail, Send, Rob and Steal* in the News of Washington Post and Pittsburg-Gazette that enable the writer to find how the participant and argument roles fused in each construction. Finally, the writer illustrates and discusses which participant roles may be either lexically profiled or not, based on Goldberg's theory, while considering the semantic roles and semantic restriction as well.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Constructional profiling

While each verb determines which of its participant roles is lexically profiled or conceptually highlighted, sentence-level constructions also profile their argument roles. However, the constructional profiling of argument roles is more flexible. Goldberg suggests that only the argument roles that are linked to a grammatical function (subject, direct object or indirect object) are constructionally profiled (Goldberg 1995: 48). Other argument roles may optionally be present in the sentence but represented as **prepositional phrase**, sometimes called **oblique objects.**

Argument roles

The argument roles which are associated with sentence-level construction are familiar from a range of approaches to sentence structure that assumes **semantic roles.** This type of approach rests upon the semantic partition of the clause into **predicate** and **arguments**. In semantic roles predicate is usually a word-level unit that can be thought

of as **semantic 'head' of a sentence**. This expresses the action, event, property or relation that the clause describes. Prototypically, the predicate of a clause is the lexical which explains the central status of the verb in many approaches to explaining the relationship between grammar and meaning (Evans & Green, 2006: 675).

Ditransitive verb in construction grammar

The ditransitive verb is the verb requiring two nominal objects which is called *double object construction* if it does not involve prepositional construction. When it does Goldberg preferred to use the term *oblique object* which may be optionally profiled in the construction. However, the double object construction may not be applied just the way it does. There must be lexical items to be considered since they may be **semantically restricted**. It refers to **animate** and **inanimate objects**.

(DATA 1)

- The man robbed a pastor of a cellphone when he was confronted for attempting to steal items from a kitchen at a community center. (*Washington Post,* 5 February 2015).

The man   robbed   a pastor   (of cellphone).
<**THIEF**   **TARGET**   GOODS>

The verb *robbed* in the first data obligatory profiles **THIEF** *the man* and **TARGET** *a pastor.* The verb *robbed* may optionally profile GOODS in this case a prepositional phrase *of a cellphone*. However, the sentence becomes ungrammatical if this optional participant *a cellphone* is represented as direct object as we will see in the following example:

*The man robbed a cellphone. <THIEF GOODS>

The verb profiling **THIEF** and **GOODS** must belong to the verb *steal.* Clearly, the verb *rob* focuses on the place or person from which the thing is taken while the verb *steal* focuses on the stolen thing as in *The man stole a cellphone* <**THIEF GOODS**>. This case certainly differentiates the profiling properties between *rob* and *steal*. The following data may illustrate a clear conception of the verb *steal*.

(DATA 2)

- A group of males stole a bicycle from three youths (*Washington Post*, 6 August 2015).

  A group of males   stole   a bicycle   (from three youths).
   <THIEF   GOODS   TARGET>

The verb *stole* obligatorily profiles **THIEF** *A group of males* and **GOODS** *a bicycle.* The verb *stole* optionally represents the third participant or TARGET *from three youths* as a prepositional phrase. However, the sentence becomes ungrammatical if this optional participant is represented as direct object. Consider the following sentence:

   *A group of males stole three youth. <THIEF TARGET>

The third data will illustrate the verb *steal* which appropriately profiles two participant roles.

(DATA 3)

- The 31-year-old woman was walking in the 7100 block of Bennett Street about 12:20 a.m. when the group, made up of three men and three women, stole her purse, according to Pittsburgh public safety spokeswoman Sonya Toler (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 11 June 2015).

  The group   stole   her purse.
   <THIEF   GOODS>

From the data above, the verb *stole* profiles two participant roles, in this case **THIEF** and **GOODS**, respectively since there is no prepositional phrase involved.

This case reveals the distinction between **lexical profiling** and **constructional profiling** in Goldberg's model. Lexical profiling relates to the aspect of an expression's meaning that is made explicit by some expression. In other words, in the sentence *George bought some champagne*, the expressions *George* and *some champagne* lexically profile (express in language) two participant roles relating to the semantic frame of the verb *buy* (BUYER and GOODS, respectively). Constructional profiling in Goldberg's model relates to the realization of **argument roles** in terms of core grammatical relations. This means that other arguments may be explicit (lexically profiled) yet not constructionally profiled (Evans & Green, 2006: 676).

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The lexical and constructional profiling involving participant roles and argument roles are illustrated in the fourth data as follows:

(DATA 4)

- He **mailed** it to his mother in South Dakota to type, and she **sent** copies to several college coaches and running clubs (*Washington Post*, 5 July 2015).

He	mailed	it	(to his mother).
<**MAILER**	**MAILED**	MAILEE >	
<**AGENT**	**PATIENT**	RECIPIENT>	

From the data above, the verb *mail,* as Goldberg argued, obligatorily profiles two participant roles: <**MAILER MAILED** MAILEE>. However, the third participant role *to his mother*, although it is as an oblique object, must be profiled unless the text will be unclear as in *He mailed it in South Dakota to type*, *and she sent copies to several college coaches and running clubs*. In this case, it can be concluded that the verb *mail* may involve two or three participant roles according to the text. Thus, it would be better if the verb *mail* profiles three participant roles <**MAILER MAILED MAILEE**> or in other words the verb *mail* may profile two participant roles if it does not involve the adverb of place *in South Dakota.* In addition to the profiling properties of the verb *mail*, the ungrammatical result will occur when the noun phrase *his mother* is represented as indirect object as in the following example:

    *He mailed his mother it.

This sentence is ungrammatical since the verb *mailed* profiles the third participant, in this case pronoun *it*. The third participant is obligatorily represented by **nouns** rather than **pronoun**, such as *invoice, transcript,* and etc, for instance *'He mailed his mother an invoice'.* (**Data 5**) will also illustrate the profiling properties of the verb *mail*.

The following analysis deals with the profiling properties of the verb *send* as the second clause of the data (4):

she	sent	copies	(to several college coaches and running clubs).
<**SENDER**	**SENT**	SENDEE>	
<**AGENT**	**PATIENT**	RECIPIENT>	

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The data clearly illustrates the rule of ditransitive construction. In this case, only two participants are mapped into the argument roles, **SENDER** and **SENT**. The SENDEE role is optionally represented as a prepositional phrase *to several college coaches and running clubs,* which means that it is not constructionally profiled since it is represented as oblique object. In other words, **AGENT** and **PATIENT** are obligatorily profiled, and RECEPIENT is optional. The ungrammatical result may occur if the verb *sent* profiles two participant roles, SENDER and SENDEE. Consider the following example:

*She	sent	several college coaches and running clubs.
<SENDER		SENDEE>
<AGENT		RECIPIENT>

Clearly, the verb *sent* may represent two participant roles as long as it profiles **SENDER** and **SENT**, and they may be mapped into the argument roles as in the following example:

She	sent	copies.
<SENDER	**SENT >**	
<**AGENT**	**PATIENT >**	

(DATA 5)

- She mailed some brownies to the show (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 6 November 2014).

He	mailed	some brownies	(to the show).
<**MAILER**	**MAILED**	MAILEE>	
<**AGENT**	**PATIENT**	RECIPIENT>	

The data above obligatorily profiles only two participant roles, **MAILER** and **MAILED**. The MAILEE role is represented as oblique object *to the show,* which means that it is optionally profiled. In other words, **AGENT** and **PATIENT** are obligatorily profiled, and RECEPIENT is optional. The ungrammatical result may occur if the verb *mailed* profiles two participant roles, MAILER and MAILEE. Consider the following example:

*He	mailed	the show.
<MAILER	MAILEE>	
<AGENT	RECIPIENT>	

As mentioned previously, the verb *mailed* may represent two participant roles as long as it profiles **MAILER** and **MAILED**, and they may be mapped into the argument roles as in the following example:

He   mailed   some brownies.
<MAILER   **MAILED>**
<**AGENT**   **PATIENT>**

In addition, regarding the data (4), when the verb profiles MAILED as its third participant as in *He mailed the show some brownies* <**MAILER, MAILEE, MAILED**> the sentence will be grammatical since there is no oblique object involved. In this case, MAILER, MAILEE and MAILED are profiled respectively.

In Goldberg's model, it is emphasized that every argument role linked to a grammatical relation (SUB, OBJ or OBJ2). The next data refers to how the verb *send* profiles three participant roles respectively.

(DATA 6)

- He sent Buckham an e-mail after the trip expressing appreciation for his support and recalling Buckham's explanation that one of his roles was to stop legislation from getting on the floor of the House (*Washington Post*, 26 March 2006).

He   sent Buckham   an e-mail.
<**SENDER**   **SENDEE**   **SENT**   **>**
<**AGENT**   **RECEPIENT**   **PATIENT>**

The verb *sent* obligatorily profiles three participant roles <**SENDER SENDEE SENT**>. These argument roles linked to *double object construction* respectively. However, the SENDEE will be optionally profiled if the preposition *to* involved in the ditransitive construction as in *He sent an email to Buckham* <**SENDER SENT** SENDEE>. The prepositional phrase *to Buckham* is not obligationarily profiled since it is as oblique object.

(DATA 7)

- Eddie brought a lot of good things to Tchula (*Washington Post*, 6 August 2015).

Eddie   brought a lot of good things   (to Tchula).
<**AGENT**   **PATIENT**   RECIPIENT>

The sentence above is called **prepositional construction** since the indirect object is represented by a prepositional phrase or oblique object *to Tchula*. The prepositional

construction, in this case, allows the recipients to be **inanimate**. However, the sentence will be ungrammatical if the direct object is represented by the indirect object as follows:

   *Eddie brought Tchula a lot of good things.

The indirect object cannot be represented by **inanimate** *Tchula*. This is what Goldberg called **semantic restriction** which associates directly with the grammatical construction itself, rather than stating the information in the lexical entries of individual verbs. The ungrammatical sentence will also occur if the verb *brought* profiles two participants as follows:

   *Eddie brought Tchula. <AGENT RECIPIENT>

The result of the sentence is ungrammatical since the **AGENT** and **PATIENT** that are obligatorily profiled. The AGENT and PATIENT are respectively profiled in this following example:

   Eddie brought a lot of good things. **<AGENT PATIENT>**

Instead of **inanimate** indirect object, the **animate** indirect object also will be ungrammatical if profiled in the following example:

   *Eddie brought Catharine. <AGENT RECIPIENT>

In this case the verb *brought* must profile three participants as in *(a) Eddie brought Catharine a lot of good things and (b) Eddie brought a lot of good things to Catharine,* or with two participants as in *(c) Eddie brought a lot of good things.*

CONCLUSION

   There are several fact findings in the News of Washington Post and Pittsburg-Gazette containing some ditransitive and transitive constructions. The findings basically refer to the ditransitive verbs *steal, rob, bring,* and *send.* Those verbs are conceptually unique since some of their participants may be optionally profiled and even semantically restricted. Having knowledge of construction grammar, especially a basic knowledge of lexical and constructional profiling, will enable us to know how the profiling properties of the verbs *steal, rob, bring,* and *send* play their roles in the sentence-level construction.

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