



snippets

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4.

Nancy Hedberg and Richard C. DeArmond – *Simon Fraser University* *On complements and adjuncts*

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The distinction between complements and adjuncts has long been recognized in generative grammar, and given a structural explanation. Thus, the '*do-so* test' is widely taken to distinguish complements from adjuncts in English (e.g., Lakoff and Ross 1966, Baker 1978, Radford 1988).

- (1) Mary studies in the evening and John does so in the morning.
- (2) Sue worked in a quick manner and Pete did so in a slow manner.
- (3) ?Fred laughed at the giraffe, and John did so at the clown.
- (4) *Kim went to the library, and Mary did so to the store.

Do so is considered to be a pro-form standing in for a complete VP, so this behavior is explained by postulating that adjuncts are adjoined to VP while complements are sisters to the verb.

We have found in teaching undergraduate syntax that intuitions are not clear in (3), for example. We propose that another test employing *do* leads to sharper intuitions. We term this the '*pseudocleft test*'. Even our beginning students agree that (7) is ungrammatical or anomalous.

- (5) What John does in the morning is study.
- (6) What Pete did in a slow manner was work.
- (7) *What John did at the clown was laugh.
- (8) *What Mary did to the store was go.

A third test for distinguishing complements from adjuncts we call the '*preposition stranding test*'. Huang (1982) proposes the '*Condition on Extraction Domains*', which states that constituents can be extracted from complements but not from adjuncts because in the latter the trace would not be properly governed. This test confirms the classification in (1)-(8).

- (9) *It is the morning that John studies in.
- (10) *It was a slow manner that Pete worked in.
- (11) It was the store that Mary went to.
- (12) It was the clown that Sue laughed at.

What has not been noted before is that the two types of test do not always pattern opposite to each other. Thus, instrumental and benefactive phrases test out as adjuncts according to the pseudocleft test, but as complements according to the preposition-stranding test.

- (13)a. What Bill did with a key was open the door.
b. It was a key that Bill opened the door with.
- (14)a. What Mary did for John was write a book.
b. It was John that Mary wrote a book for.

We propose that three types of verb dependents must be distinguished: primary complements, secondary complements, and adjuncts. We suggest that this three-way distinction is semantically based. When a complement of either type is merged, an argument is added to the event structure: valency is thus increased. A complete event is denoted when all primary complements have been added. *Do* in the *do so* and pseudocleft construction must denote a complete event. Secondary complements increase valency but are not required for a complete event to be denoted. Adjuncts apply to complete events and modify them rather than expanding valency. We conclude that any theory of syntax needs to accommodate these three different dependent types.

References

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