

# The Complex Interaction of Construal Operations: Multi-Verb Sequences in World Englishes

Noriko Matsumoto  
Kobe University  
noriko-mtmt@pop02.odn.ne.jp

Keywords: verb phrase, deixis, construal, corpus, world Englishes

Through exploring four types of multi-verb sequences with the deictic verb *go* as V1 in English, the *go-to-V*, the *go-and-V*, the *go-V*, and the *go-Ving* sequences, this paper supports one hypothesis: the differences in meaning that different forms exhibit include differences in construal. Based on data from *Collins Wordbanks Online*, this paper shows how the differences in construal in American English are closely related to V2 selection and genres of language use in a complicated way. This paper also examines whether the findings of American English applies to other varieties of English, relying upon *Corpus of Global Web-Based English*.

The four types of multi-verb sequences share two remarkable features. From a semantic standpoint, the meaning of the verb *go* as V1 in each individual sequence inherits the deictic motion use or the modal use of the verb *go* (see Bourdin 2003, Clark 1974, Fillmore 1971). From a syntactic standpoint, each individual sequence has a reduced structure where one multi-verb sequence does not include two verb phrases despite the existence of two verbs. This paper divides the four types of multi-verb sequences into two groups: the semi-complement group and the adjunct/oblique group.

With respect to construal, the meaning of each individual multi-verb sequence as a complex expression is the result of construal operations. This functions at two levels, the construal of the word meanings and the one of the whole expression. At the level of the word meanings, deixis plays a crucial role. The semi-complement and the adjunct/oblique groups are exemplified by the modal use and the deictic motion use of the verb *go* respectively. At the level of the whole expression, the semi-complement group has one subgroup, the modality subgroup. With the adjunct/oblique group, the *go-to-V*, the *go-V*, and the *go-and-V* sequences have only one semantic subgroup, the motion-purpose subgroup. The *go-Ving* sequence has four subgroups. Based on the number of subgroups, there is a dividing line between the *go-to-V*, the *go-V*, and the *go-and-V* sequences on the one hand and the *go-Ving* sequence on the other. The *go-and-V* and the *go-V* sequences imply actual realization of the process represented by what appears to be the V2 phrase, but the *go-to-V* sequence does not. There is also a dividing line between the *go-to-V* sequence on the one hand and the *go-V* and the *go-and-V* sequences on the other. This paper calls the *go-and-V* and the *go-V* sequences 'semantically competing sequences'.

There are four main findings from our corpus data. First, with respect to V2 selection in American English, any V2 can occur in the semi-complement group. However, in the adjunct/oblique group, some restrictions are imposed on V2 selection. With respect to the top ten V2s used most frequently, the *go-to-V*, the *go-and-V*, and the *go-V* sequences indicate the relatively similar distribution. There is so little overlap between these three sequences and the *go-Ving* sequence. Second, with respect to genres of language use in American English, the significantly different distributions between the semantically competing sequences, the *go-and-V* and the *go-V* sequences, are observed. Third, the first and the second findings are commonly observed among eleven different English-speaking countries. Fourth, with respect to frequency of use, the crucial difference between the semantically competing sequences is observed among the varieties of Englishes. By contrast, the clear difference between the *go-to-V* and the *go-Ving* sequences is not observed among the varieties of Englishes.

From these findings from the varieties of Englishes, this paper shows that the similarities between the *go-to-V* and the *go-Ving* sequences are generally observed with respect to construal operations. However, such similarities are rarely observed between semantically competing sequences, the *go-V* and the *go-and-V* sequences. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is decidedly more to differences in grammar than well-known differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. Our empirical study discussed here is to a large extent supported by using different corpora, *BNC* and *International Corpus of English*.

## References

- Bourdin, P. 2003. On two distinct uses of *go* as a conjoined marker of evaluative modality. In R. Facchinetti, M. Krug & F. Palmer, eds., *Modality in Contemporary English*, 103-128. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Clark, E.V. (1974). Normal states and evaluative viewpoints. *Language* 50 (2): 316-332.
- Fillmore, C.J. 1971. *Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.