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The verb *take* is an intriguing example of apparent multiple meaning, ranging from empty abstraction in *take a nap/a bath/a walk/place/root/rise/shape/hold* to specific concrete meanings ‘grasp/grab/catch/remove/steal/win/choose/assume/require’ and others. I present here part of an ongoing comprehensive study (on all uses of *take* in 10,000+ data) exploring the hypothesis that the diverse senses are the specifics of a single abstract meaning: *take* as general monoseme. I take as inspiration an article on *take* by Norvig and Lakoff (1987) [hereafter: NL]. Though my research was underway when I first read NL, it took immediate command of my procedures, serving as both guide and agonist.

Against dictionary hyponymy, NL argues for a polysemic *take* in a cognitive network (part of general knowledge), in which new senses develop as minimal changes in the form of concrete, figurative ‘image-schemas’ (NL:195). But order is partial: NL rejects monosemy (calling it an Abstractionist view) because generalizations (implied regularities) do not hold; *take a look/whiff* and *take a picture ‘photograph’ are good but not *take a stare/smell* and *take a painting ‘to paint’.*

NL includes insights that correctly fault views of meaning exclusively formal. While my approach too is formal/abstract, NL’s functional/concrete views are crucial to my claims (though the combination may seem confusing at first). To locate myself, I assume a network like NL’s. I agree that there are prototypes and image schemas. But I disagree with the claim that prototypes are basic meanings; if we make them such, we get theory-created irregularity.

My main difficulty with both formal and functional views is that too much meaning is attributed to words. I take the basic functional question to be: What do the contexts of human experience, and our knowledge of such, do that language (lexical meaning) consequently need not do? I want to make it plausible that *take’s* many meanings are due to its contexts (which vary), not the verb (which does not).

NL begins its proposal with the prototype (1), *take* meaning ‘grab’,

‘from which the other senses of take can be represented most economically in terms of minimal variation links... Moreover, speakers intuitively judge this sense to be the most basic, and dictionaries reflect this judgment’ (NL:198)
The baby took the toy from its mother.
The messenger took the book to Mary.
John took the book to Chicago.
I took a punch at him.
I took a punch from him.
Sam took Sadie to the movies.
I took a glance at John.

**NL provides the following specifications:**

(1) Subject *baby* is also agent and recipient; subject receives patient *toy* (default: small physical object) from source-person *mother*. Patient moves, controlled by agent, from origin to destination.

(2) From (1): direction is reversed; agent-subject is not recipient. Agent must move with patient.

(3) From (2): destination-place instead of recipient-person.

(4) From (2): patient-object becomes patient-action. *At* instead of *to* implies Destination not reached.

(5) From (4): direction is reversed, subject now nonagent recipient.

(6) From (3): patient is a person, destination an activity; agent-subject goes with patient, may take part in the activity.

(7) From (1): the small patient is instead a brief action: *take a glance*, but *take a stare*.

I accept several of NL’s claims: speakers think first of ‘grab’; dictionaries list this sense as basic; and children learn it early. As I find too, speakers who are asked what *take* means ‘in isolation’ (‘by itself’) are likeliest to assume the context specified in (1)’. I can also accept as operations of thought the particular schemes used to describe the changes.

Among my concerns, the one with the greatest ramifications is that NL’s variations are not really minimal. Calling them minimal establishes a divided polysemic space by fiat; we are able to see only narrow hallways and cubicles. A more minimal test asks if ‘grab’ is the only meaning that *take* evokes in (1). For some babies, ages and interests, ‘grab’ is too forceful, maybe even too fast. By using modifiers to get hyponymic variants for (1), we find a wider range:

(8) The baby didn’t really want the toy, but eventually took it from its mother.
(9) The baby reluctantly took the toy from its mother.
(10) The apprehensive baby took the toy from its insistent mother.
(11) The baby slowly took the toy from its mother.
(12) The baby finally took the toy from its mother.
These imply to me ‘passively accept’, outside the range of grab. ‘Grab’ also suggests ‘in the hand’ (13), which does not fit head/wrist/nose in (14). The meaning of take must cover (15) too. Ludicrous, unlikely or hard to imagine descriptions can be linguistically meaningful.

(13) The baby took the toy in its hand from its mother.
(14) The baby took the helmet/watch/eyeglasses on its head/wrist/nose from its mother.
(15) The baby took the toy refrigerator/vacuum cleaner /minibar in its teeth/ear/arms from its mother.

The hyponym test I adopted assumes that all combinations of (16) are hyponyms of take:

(16) [Take + Modifier].

However, while correct, this test cannot make complete systematicity the only consideration. Take-type modifiers qualify it in some way. Applied as a totalizing requirement, (16) can preclude the special properties of prototypes and figurativity. The formal system does not account for everything; it cannot define the body part limit to heart in take it to heart. It also treats (17) as just another sentence:

(17) The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Conversely, special status does not negate systematic place; (17) is a system sentence too. Prototype (1) is still a superordinate to the modified sentences. The take monoseme is modulated by context in many ways and for many purposes, with variant degrees of salience, frequency and usefulness. A monoseme is realized, not replaced, by variation; it defines the general space for more specific senses.

The cognitive enterprise of which Lakoff is a major participant has corrected claims of completeness by theories that preclude prototypes like (1). But that enterprise in turn can preclude with the same reductive consequences. NL idealizes in a manner it rejects in formal theorists, considering [v np pp] without related [v np pp pp]. The general-specific relation of the former ((1), (3), (6)) to the latter ((18)–(20)) is precluded.

(18) The baby took the toy from the mother to the father.
(19) John took the book from Norfolk to Chicago.
(20) Sam took Sadie from the library to the movies.

Explicit with-pp parallels implicit motion in (2)–(3) and (6). ‘Motion’ is thus external to take.
The messenger took the book (with him) to Mary.
John took the book (with him) to Chicago.
Sam took Sadie (with him) to the movies.

Generally, information provided by a PP can be implicit; thus NL must explore how its \([v \, NP \, PP]\) relates to \([v \, NP]\). Dictionaries would gloss \textit{take} in (24)–(26) as ‘seize’, ‘choose’ and ‘steal’, but the implicit material supplies much of the meaning:

(24) Josh took my bike (from me).
(25) The teacher took my poem (from all submitted).
(26) The thief took the jewels.

The implicit (elliptical, deleted) meaning comes from contextual contingencies. Autonomous syntax can allow ‘recovery’ of vague and redundant information because context can then be treated as inoperative; but all recoveries should be considered extralinguistic, recognizing that all implicit meaning can be provided by situation.

There is another range of precluded evidence that must be mentioned. As a prototype, (1) describes a situation we (think we) know well. Interpretation is effortless; meanings are salient, familiar, concrete; referents, roles and action are transparently clear. We know enough about what happens, even why or how; (1) is a comfortable sentence, high on any measure of ‘ease of uptake’. These attributes serve to make it a prototype.

In contrast, (27)–(29) are less resolved, more puzzling. We don’t know enough about what happens and so can’t determine what the verb means. We cannot guess intelligently about the roles of undertaker, maid, dancer, photographer, dancer, and manager in these situations.

(27) The undertaker took the toy from the maid.
(28) The soldier took the toy from the photographer.
(29) The slim dancer took the toy from the manager.

With regard to ease of uptake, (1)–(7) communicate instantly, unconsciously; the language is transparent. (8)–(12) are less easy; interpretation involves more conscious effort and computation, though not as much as the complex sentences or Latinate expressions such as \textit{superannuated canine}. The language used is more opaque. Examples (27)–(29) are even more difficult, but here language is not the problem. Computation cannot help; (27)–(29) need more information from human experience.

A fully adequate linguistic theory must explain these degrees of difficulty; the explanation must be both formal and functional. The needed insight comes succinctly and elegantly from Lakoff (1977:239).
A. The meanings of the parts constrain, but do not provide, the interpretation of the whole. The whole makes sense only because some aspect of the reader’s experience has been evoked by the meanings of the parts.

The key notions are ‘constraint’ and ‘evoke’. The formal system provides the first, the functional situation the second. This distinction is also that of semantic and pragmatic; of explicit and implicit; meaning of a word and of its contexts; meaning from language and from interlocutors-in-situation.

Some linguists (including Lakoff) reject the semantic-pragmatic distinction, which has been highly elusive. Yet, if we attribute all meaning to the verb, we collapse figure and ground in the figure, thus introducing another kind of precluding idealization and creating extensive polysemy. To make monosemym a plausible claim, I need to distinguish semantic and pragmatic. From (A), I have applied the following guidelines (with some redundancy):

B. Linguistic expression is both formal/semantic and functional/pragmatic.

C. A linguistic expression is composed of both semantic and pragmatic parts. How meaning is provided, part by part, is not obvious, cannot be intuited. The general range of potential specific meanings is also nonobvious and beyond intuition.

D. External effects cannot be formalized away. There is always a context. Expressions ‘in isolation’ contribute implicit salient context, all the more effective by being undetected. Uses supply context; citations and intuitions are uses.

E. The formal system cannot be functionalized away. There is always a difference between linguistic order and extralinguistic order; correlating the two, or combining them without distinction, simply minimizes the order of the formal system and biases toward functional diversity.

F. Since functional effects are in principle infinite, and most formal effects unconscious, what is formal cannot be fully intuited. No linguistic expression, however conceived, presents only the formal linguistic system. We have no direct access to the ‘solely semantic’. The linguistic system must be inferred from its modulated irregular realization in expressions.

G. Two common assumptions turn out to be wrong: that intuitions are relatively reliable, and that intuition has access to the purely formal syntax/semantics. Isolating the purely semantic involves study of many details of many data.
H. Considering our habit of reducing figure-ground to figure, we can con-
clude that language provides much less meaning than we imagine. The
semantic-pragmatic boundary eludes us because we have been looking in
the wrong place, far into pragmatics.

I. We have no theoretical insights into what can and must be redundant in
messages. What is provided semantically by other words or pragmatically
need not be duplicated in a nonvarying word.

The semantic difference of to-pp and from-pp provides variant directions,
making subject, agent and recipient sometimes identical, sometimes not. Take is
unspecified for what prepositions provide or evoke.

Grab, seize, choose and steal—the words that appear in definitions and synonym
lists for take—are its hyponyms. Take is more general: in (26), for example, the jew-
els may belong to the thief, who may not now be stealing.

Minimal variation applies not only to a sentence’s more specific meanings, but
also to its more general: superordinate, more abstract, expressions (1):

(30) The baby took the toy from her.
(31) Someone took it from her.
(32) Someone took it from someone.

Considering the details we have factored out of take, I abstract nl-patterns, from
(1)–(7) to (33)–(39).

(33) ‘grab’
(34) ‘take Patient to Recipient’
(35) ‘take Patient to Destination’
(36) ‘take Action at Patient’
(37) ‘take Action from Agent’
(38) ‘take to the movies’
(39) ‘take a glance at’

Abstracting again, we get (40)–(46) (where A = Agent, P = Patient, R = Recipient,
D = Destination, S = Source, O = Origin):

(40) ‘A/R take P from S/O’, P = small concrete object
(41) ‘A take P to R’, P = small concrete object
(42) ‘A take P to D’, P = small concrete action
(43) ‘A/R take P at R’, P = action
(44) ‘R take P from S’, P = action
(45) ‘A take P to D’, P = person, D=activity
(46) ‘A take p at d’, p = brief action

Monosemy is not achieved simply by abstracting. If the remaining specifics of (40)–(46) are necessary in stating take’s meaning, then NL’s seven examples are still polysemic. Monosemy requires all patients (p) to exemplify some generalization, even if simply ‘no limit on what can be in this position’. Since agent and recipient each both occur as subjects and not, we need not put any limit on subject position for these roles; plus-minus values exhaust all possibilities.

NL’s criticisms of monosemy invoke standards that are too restrictive. NL requires plus-minus values to be fully parallel to be generalized; prepositions are not parallel in time and space. Yet, such a standard requires some developed assessment of parallelism. Do we in fact insist on perfect parallelism in general for all linguistic research?

Irregularities may be created by cross-effects: it can be argued that the time-space difference is external; the language adapts as well as it can to two different subclasses All subsumed specifics of some generalization may be available linguistically but have no use: a take-in restaurant. ‘Motion’ in (2), (3), and (6) is required and thus irregular in the set (1)–(7), but reality makes the requirement, not semantics. Some specifics are not used by everyone (dialect-specific take and tell him, take a decision) yet nothing in the language forbids these uses.

NL claim that subject and object are too abstract to be semantic categories. But if subject and object are the minimal generalizations in a context, then no semantic limits are set on take on those positions. Actually, I have found that all the arguments of take are what NL would consider too abstract.

In my study of take, I have reached the following tentative conclusions. I find that take’s full range of syntax needs at least eight arguments:

J. Syntax for take:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subj</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Obj</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>With</th>
<th>As</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP_S</td>
<td>take</td>
<td>NP_o</td>
<td>PP_x</td>
<td>PP_y</td>
<td>PP_z</td>
<td>PP_t</td>
<td>PP_w</td>
<td>PP_a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject-to-As designates categories equally abstract. The last three PP categories have only one member each.

The following p-chart roughly indicates which PP can be used in which categories:

K. Prepositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Path</td>
<td>Path</td>
<td>Path</td>
<td>Path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>Locative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The major task with *take* is accounting for all the phrases that are thought to be idioms (phrasal verbs). This verb is more systematic when redundant arguments (both full and part-whole, either PP or NP-object) can allow implicit modifiers. Also, a place is (as metonym) an NP or PP that starts or ends at it.

**L. Examples of Goal = Subject**

(47) I could take his pain onto (myself).
(48) He took fresh air onto (his lungs).
(49) A trained ear takes sound patterns onto (itself).
(50) No family took guests onto (their home).
(51) The car can’t take the box onto (the rear).

**M. Examples of Source = Subject**

(52) Mary took a pen out of (her pocket).
(53) She took her bitterness out of (herself) on her husband.
(54) ‘I’ll just take a peek from (myself) at the baby’.
(55) No one took an ax from (one’s self) to the trees.
(56) She seemed to take a fancy from (herself) to Jay.

**N. Examples of Object = Subject**

(57) The airplane took (itself) off
(58) She had taken (herself) to bed to think
(59) We took (ourselves) to the road
(60) He took (himself) to crime like Caruso to opera.

**O. Examples of Goal = Object**

(61) I took the dress in (to itself).

**P. Examples of Source = Object**

(62) They took the doors off (of their hinges).
(63) She took the dress out (of itself).
(64) His voice took all my fear away (from me).

All of nl’s examples fit two of these patterns: (1) and (5) are Subject = Goal; (2)–(4) and (6)–(7) are Subject = Source.

(1)" The baby took the toy from its mother (to itself).
(5)" I took a punch from him (on my arm).

(2)" The messenger took the book (from his place) to Mary
(3)" John took the book (from his place) to Chicago.
(4)" I took a punch (from self) at him.
(6)" Sam took Sadie (from their place) to the movies.
(7)" I took a glance (from self) at John.

There is less incompatibility between nl and me than might seem apparent. As in many disagreements, the parties are in different parts of a highly complex order. I should note another seeming difference: nl emphasizes figurativity and I ignore it. But we both find shortsighted any theory that has no place for it. nl’s metaphors and metonyms are appropriate for the image schemas. We differ here only on take, which I find too abstract and general to be figurative.

Polysemy is monosemic diversified in pragmatic hyponyms on more concrete levels. nl attends to openended, ever new, concrete levels; I attend to the closed, long-established abstract levels. My part of the social division of linguistic labor is to keep the formal and functional polarities from eclipsing each other and the continuum they span. Meaning is our capacity for ordering the world; to comprehend it, we need more means and levels than we currently imagine.

What is easy and immediate for us has the extra complexity of being made such. Prototypes, I suggest, are the most complex simple meanings we know, the super-structural commonplace ‘known world’ created from language and experience. Prototypes represent consciousness: what is real to us, familiar, frequent, salient, natural, true. Prototypes can help us discover such things, but not basic order. Conscious awareness emerges from the unconscious; basic order in language is unconscious, perhaps even partly beyond knowing. By conflating prototypes and basic order, we diminish both thought and language.

I hope to have shown to some degree, using nl’s method of minimal variation, that the seven patterns are evidence not of separate meanings but contextually modulated variants of one meaning, a verb of high abstraction. A full demonstration requires more than I can presently offer; inconveniently, the more general a claim, the more details to be taken into account. Many details, surprises, revisions remain.
REFERENCES
