

Two modes of argument selection in nominals

Verbs are a prototypical argument-taking category. They need to select proper arguments because the event denoted by a verb is represented in terms of semantic or thematic roles that the arguments of the verb bear in relation with each other. Thus, the argument selection of verbs is in a substantial sense a linguistic manifestation of eventiveness. Is this the case in other argument-taking categories? Obviously nouns are an argument-taking category, but the expression of eventiveness is not so much self-evident as that of verbs because they denote individuals as well as events. Then, do they select arguments in a manner substantially different from verbs? If so, how is the eventiveness concerned with the syntactic or lexical realization of semantic relations associated with arguments of nouns?

In this paper I argue that there are two distinct modes of argument selection in nominals depending on how the denotation of the head noun is determined with reference to ontological relations encoded in lexical structure. Along with the basic idea of Pustejovsky (1995) that the distinction between individual-level predicates (e.g. *Firemen are intelligent.*) and stage-level predicates (e.g. *Firemen are available.*) can be extended to the distinction in nominals, I assume that nominals generally fall into two semantic categories in terms of eventiveness: individual-level and stage-level nominals. For example, *violinist* and *pedestrian* are different in this respect. The former may refer to a person who is not engaged in the activity of playing the violin at the time of reference. The noun is thus an individual-level (non-eventive) noun because we need not assume a particular situation that helps fix the proper denotation of the noun. In contrast, the noun *pedestrian* is eventive, i.e. a stage-level nominal, because it properly denotes an entity only if the entity is identified as being involved in the walking event.

Japanese has a wide variety of noun-forming affixes that refer to this distinction (Kageyama 1999). For instance, agent nominals derived with the affixes *-shu* (-手) and *-sha* (-者) are individual-level and stage-level nominals respectively. *Unten-shu* (DRIVE-shu) ‘driver’, an individual-level noun, normally denotes a professional driver, while *unten-sha* (DRIVE-sha) ‘driver’, a stage-level noun, simply means a person who drives a car. From this perspective, I will present an analysis of noun-forming affixes in Japanese such as *-sha*, *-mono* (-者); i.e. *hokoosha* (WALK-sha) ‘pedestrian’, *riyoosha* (USE-sha) ‘user’, *gijutusha* (ENGINEERING-sha) ‘engineer’: *-shu*, *-te* (-手); i.e. *odorite* (DANCE-te) ‘dancer’, *hanasite* (SPEAK-te) ‘speaker’, *untenshu* (DRIVE-shu) ‘driver’: *-mono*, *-butu* (-物); i.e. *kowaremono* (BREAK-mono) ‘fragile thing’, *nisemono* (FAKE-mono) ‘fake (thing)’, *haikibutu* (WASTE-butu) ‘wastes’, *kanenbutu* (INFLAME-butu) ‘inflammables’: *-hin* (-品); i.e. *mozoohin* (COUNTERFEIT-hin) ‘counterfeits’: *-sha* (-車); i.e. *jikosha* (CRASH-sha) ‘crashed car’, *kaizoosha* (CONVERT-sha) ‘stock car’, *kyuukyuuusha* (EMERGENCY-sha) ‘ambulance’: *-sen* (-船); i.e. *tinbotusen* (SINK-sen) ‘sunken ship’, *kamotusen* (CARGO-sen) ‘cargo boat’. With an extensive survey of noun-forming affixes in Japanese, I will show that Japanese has a set of noun-forming affixes that make a individual/stage-level distinction (i.e. *-sha* (-者) vs. *-shu* (-手) and *-ka* (-家)) but morphological markers do not always implement a clear distinction. For example, *-sha* (-車) forms both types of nouns: *jikosha* ‘crashed car’ is a stage-level nominal; *kyuukyuuusha* ‘ambulance’, an individual level nominal.

With the results of the survey above, I turn next to the discussion of how the semantic distinction in question is implemented in argument selection of nominals. Specifically I propose that there are two

different modes of argument selection in nominals, which I will call the relational mode and the eventive mode. The selection of arguments by an individual-level nominal is conducted in the relational mode while the selection of arguments by a stage-level nominal is done in the eventive mode. To see the difference in argument selection in the two types of nominals, take a look at the contrast below.

- (1) a. *the novelist of this best-seller (Individual-level noun)
 b. the writer of children's books (Stage-level noun)

Stage-level nominals such as *writer* in (1b) select arguments which are associated with the argument structure of the base verb. I will call this mode of argument selection an eventive mode because the denotation of the head noun is determined in association with one of the participants in the event which is denoted by the base verb. Individual-level nominals are not eventive by definition. Thus, they do not select arguments which are associated with event participants.

Individual-level nominals (i.e. *novelist* in (1a)) select arguments in a different manner. They select arguments that denote individuals which are in particular ontological relations with the denotation of the head noun. So-called relational nouns such as *wife*, *friend*, *top*, *hand* are individual-level nouns and their argument selection is based on such ontological relations as the *wife-of* (x, y) relation for *wife* or the *part-of* (x, y) relation for *hand*. In the same vein, the head noun *untenshu* 'driver' in (2a) selects its argument in terms of the *part-of* relation. This is a relational mode of argument selection, which differs from the eventive mode of argument selection for the stage-level noun *untensha* 'driver' in (2b).

- (2) a. torakku-no untenshu 'the driver of a truck' (Individual-level noun)
 truck-GEN driver
 b. jikosha-no untensha 'the driver of the crashed car' (Stage-level noun)
 crashed-car-GEN driver

In the rest of the paper, I will present extensive lexical-semantic evidence in support of our claim that examples such as in (2) systematically differ in the selection of arguments.

This paper has some important theoretical implications for the argument structure of nominals. Our analysis develops Rapaport Hovav and Levin's (1992) idea of argument selection and event vs. non-event interpretation of nominals and Barker and Dowty's (1993) idea that nominal proto-roles govern the argument selection of nominals into an integrated theory of argument selection in nominals. Also, it raises a question concerning a recent proposal by Baker and Vinokurova (2009) that maintains a simple dichotomy of agent-denoting nominals and event-denoting nominals.

References

- Baker, Mark C. and Nadya Vinokurova (2009) On agent nominalizations and why they are not like event nominalizations. *Language* 85; 3, pp. 517-556.
- Barker, Chris and David Dowty (1993) Non-verbal thematic proto-roles. *Northeastern Linguistic Society* 23; 1, pp. 49-62.
- Kageyama, Taro (1999) *Keitairon to Imi*. [Morphology and Meaning], Kurosio publishers, Tokyo.
- Pustejovsky, James. (1995) *Generative Lexicon*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Rappaport Hovav, Malka and Beth Levin. (1992) -ER nominals: implications for the theory of argument structure. T. Stowell and E. Wehrli (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics* 24, *Syntax and the lexicon*, pp.127-53, Academic Press, New York.