THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEXICAL SEMANTICS AND SYNTACTIC REPRESENTATION: THE VIEW FROM MANNER OF SPEAKING VERBS

IRINA STOICA
University of Bucharest

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyze the relationship between lexical semantics and syntactic representation, focusing on data coming from Manner of Speaking verbs (henceforth MoS).

In the literature, the lexicon-syntax interface has been analyzed from several points of view. According to one approach, it is the semantics of the lexical predicate which determines argument realization, i.e. structural meaning derives from lexical semantic structure. One example of how the lexical approach can be implemented is the one in Levin (2005), which emphasizes the importance of the so-called "components of meaning", stating that these are central to predicting the syntactic behaviour of certain verbs. Levin (2005) proposes that it is precisely these elements of meaning which characterize verbs, rather than verb classes which, in the author's view, are said to be epiphenomenal. However, what might be problematic is finding those specific elements of meaning which are relevant to argument realization. Looking at MoS verbs, Levin (1993) follows Mufwene (1978, in Levin 1993) in stating that what distinguishes them from other verbs, for example verbs of content of speaking, are elements of meaning which do not characterize exclusively these two classes of verbs, but are rather shared with other categories. This could potentially account for the fact that MoS verbs and communication verbs share some semantic and syntactic properties, but are also distinguished by others.

If the behavior of MoS verbs could indeed be accounted for in terms of the lexical semantics of the V and general mapping principles (Snyder 1992), MoS verbs should behave similarly across languages. However, this assumption seems to be contradicted by the data coming from English and Romanian MoS verbs. My proposal is that MoS verbs in the two languages have a different lexical representation: while in the former the structure of the verb includes a nominal component, this is not the case for the Romanian structure.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a general outline of MoS verbs in both English and Romanian, focusing on the semantic and syntactic properties of these verbs. Section 3 presents one specific syntactic property, namely the availability of extraction from the postverbal CP of a MoS verb, with a focus on the parametric variation it evinces. A brief section 4 summarizes the main findings and draws the conclusion.

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

2. Manner of Speaking verbs in a nutshell

MoS verbs were first analyzed as a distinct verbal category by Zwicky (1971), who defines them as "verbs referring to intended acts of communication by speech and describing physical characteristics of the speech act". The class of MoS verbs includes verbs such as *shout/urla, whisper/șopti, yell/țipa, babble/bolborosi, mutter/bombăni, groan/se văita, howl/urla, bark/lătra, chirp/ciripi*, etc.

In his analysis of MoS verbs, Zwicky (1971) states that their syntactic properties are "systematically associated with the semantic representation of manner of speaking verbs. The question is: How?". If this "systematic association" were valid, we would expect not only a unitary explanation for all the identified properties of MoS verbs, but also similar behaviour cross-linguistically. As will be seen in the following section, at least this latter assumption seems to be challenged by data from English and Romanian.

2.1. *The semantic properties of MoS verbs*

Zwicky (1971) identifies several semantic properties of English MoS verbs. As can be seen in the examples below, their Romanian counterparts evince similar characteristics. For example, in both languages the subject referent and the *to*-object referent are [+animate]:

(1) a. **My chair whined about the exam.*
b. **Scaunul meu s- a smiorcăit de examen.*
chair.the my REFL aux wined of exam
'My chair whined about the exam.'

(2) a. **She was yelling "Long live the Queen" to a bench.*
b. *Țipa "Trăiască regina!" la o bancă.*
shouted live queen-the at a bench
'He was shouting "Long live the Queen" to a bench.'

Zwicky (1971) also notices that English MoS verbs can be used bare, followed by a direct quoation or they can take a DP or a CP as their complement. While in the first two cases what is emphasized is the properties of the emitted sound, rather than the message, in the latter two either the message or the physical properties of the sound can be emphasized:

(3) a. *She was screaming from the top of her lungs.*
b. *Țipa cât putea de tare.*
yelled how could of loud
'She was yelling as loud as she could.'

(4) a. *The captain howled "Retreat!".*
b. *Căpitanul a răcnit "Retragerea!".*
captain-the aux howled retreat
'The captain howled "Retreat!".'

Such semantic properties can also influence the syntactic behaviour of MoS verbs. For example, only when the properties of the emitted sound are emphasized, not the communication intent, can the structure be passivized, as can be seen in (5). In Romanian as well passivization is (marginally) allowed when the verb is not used communicatively and the

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

focus is on the physical properties of the emitted sound, but it is degraded when the verb is used communicatively:

(5) a. *"Glop" was screamed at them by the dean.*
b. * *"Glop" was shouted to them by the dean.*
(examples taken from Zwicky 1971)

(6) a. *?"Sunt nevinovat" a fost strigat către mulțime de către acuzat.*
am not.guilty aux been shouted at crowd by accused
'"I am not guilty" was shouted at the crowd by the accused.'
b. **"Sunt nevinovat" a fost strigat mulțimii de către acuzat.*
am not.guilty aux been shouted crowd by accused
'"I am not guilty" was shouted to the crowd by the accused.'

2.1. ***The syntactic properties of MoS verbs***

While semantically they behave similarly, MoS verbs in English and Romanian differ from the point of view of their syntactic properties. For example, MoS verbs can appear in double object constructions in Romanian but not in English, as can be seen in (7):

(7) a. **She whispered Mary the secret.*
b. *I- a șoptit Mariei secretul.*
CL_{DAT} aux whispered $Maria_{DAT}$ secret-the
'She whispered Maria the secret.'

Another property which distinguishes English MoS verbs from their Romanian counterparts is the availability of subject extraction from the postverbal clause of a MoS verb. While in English extraction is generally said to be banned, at least when the verb is used non-communicatively (Erteshick-Shir 1973; Stowell 1981; Snyder 1992; Stoica 2016), extraction is freely allowed in Romanian:

(8) a. **Who did she whisper that left the party?*
b. **How did she whisper that she solved the problem?*
c. **Towards which gate did he shout that they should run?*
d. *??? What did he mutter that he read?*

(9) a. *Cine ai şoptit că __ a plecat de la petrecere?*
who aux whispered that __ aux left of at party
'Who did you whisper that left the party?'
b. *Pe cine ai ţipat că a lovit Ion __?*
on who aux yelled that aux hit Ion
'Who did you yell that John hit?'
c. *În ce fel ai murmurat că ai scăpat din accident __?*
in what way aux murmured that aux got out of accident __
'How did you babble that you got out of the accident?'
d. *În ce sertar a mormăit că a ascuns banii ___?*
in what drawer aux moaned that aux hid money-the
'In what drawer did he moan that he hid the money?'

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

3. Extraction from the postverbal clause of MoS verbs

The data above clearly shows that there is a parametric variation with respect to the acceptability of extraction from the postverbal clause in the case of English and Romanian MoS verbs. While in English they seem to induce strong island effects, this is not the case for Romanian MoS verb.

3.1. *English MoS verbs as strong island inducers*

The unavailability of extraction from the postverbal clause of a MoS verb has been noticed in the literature.

Erteshick-Shir (1973) accounts for this phenomenon by analyzing the semantic complexity of the verb. She argues that, in general, extraction is possible only from a semantically dominant clause. Looking at MoS verbs, the author notices that, compared to communication verbs, they are more complex, as the physical properties of the emitted sound are emphasized. If the verb is more complex, the matrix clause will be seen as semantically dominant, and the CP, viewed in these cases as semantically subordinate, will function as an island for extraction.

Another study which analyses extraction is the one put forth by Stowell (1981). In the line of Erteschik-Shir (1973) Stowell notices that an important distinction between MoS verbs and communication verbs is the fact that in the case of the former the physical properties of the emitted sound are emphasized, not the speech act itself. He proposes that an example such as the one in (10a) should, in fact, be interpreted as in (10b):

(10) a. *John shouted to leave.*
b. *John uttered a shout, conveying the message to leave.*

In such an analysis, the CP will not be the argument of the verb, but an adjunct.

Another study which postulates that the CP is not an argument of a MoS verb, but, in fact, an appositive, is the one put forth by Snyder (1992). The author argues that extraction is only possible when the CP is an argument of the verb. Taking into account the fact that the postverbal CP of MoS verbs does not meet the condition needed in order for a CP to be analyzed in argument position, namely to denote the propositional attitude that the speaker or the subject has with respect to the content of the CP, Snyder (1992) states that the relation between the verb and the CP is an appositive one, the structure of MoS verbs including a light verb and a noun, as in (11) below:

(11) [v (make))][$_{NP}$ (a) [$_{NP}$ grunt]]

If the structure of MoS verbs includes a noun, then the CP will be a modifier of a complex NP and, according to the Complex NP Constraint (Ross 1967), extraction will be disallowed.

However, such an analysis seems to be contradicted by the CNPC itself, given that Ross (1967) proposes that the v+N structure should, in fact, be treated on a par with simple verbs, escaping the CNPC. Ross (1967) argues that a structure with a simple verb followed by a nominal imposes more severe restrictions on extraction than the one involving a light verb and a nominal. For example, deletion of the complement is allowed in structures involving a light v, but not in those with a simple verb followed by a nominal:

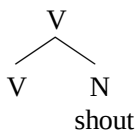
BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

(12) a. *I am making the claim? (that) the company squandered the money.*
b. *I am discussing the claim *(that) the company will squander the money.*
(examples taken from Ross 1967)

Despite the counterarguments to Snyder's account, there are several other studies in the literature which postulate the existence of a nominal component in the structure of English MoS verbs. One such study is the one put forth by Hale and Keyser (2002).

While initially denominal verbs, including MoS verbs, were said to be formed via incorporation and later conflation (1993, 2002), a verb like *shout* having the structure in (13) below, the authors re-evaluate their proposal and, based on examples such as the ones in (14), argue that Vocabulary Insertion is available in the cases of such verbs as well:

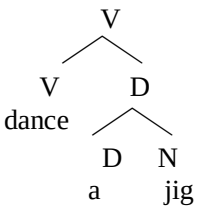
(13)



(14) a. *They are dancing a Sligo jig.*
b. *They are playing a jig.* (examples taken from Hale and Keyser 2002)

While (14a) had been treated as an instance of conflation, the verb in (14b) was said to be formed via Merge and Vocabulary Insertion. By analogy with (14b), Hale and Keyser propose that the hyponymous object structure should be treated as an instance of Merge and Vocabulary Insertion as well, as in (15) below:

(15)



The process of conflation becomes unnecessary, since the verb *dance* is available for insertion directly from the Lexicon, already having a phonological matrix.

While the authors maintain the [V, N] structure for verbs such as *laugh*, *dance* and even MoS verbs such as *shout, yell*, it is now the N that is considered an empty category which needs to be licensed. Comparing the structures in (16a) and (16b) below, Hale and Keyser argue that what licenses a null N is in fact the "nominal component of these verbs":

(16) a. **He made.*
b. *She whispered.*

Taking into account the fact that these verbs and their corresponding nouns are extremely similar to the corresponding nominals (*shout, whisper, mumble*), Hale and Keyser (2002) suggest that such structures should actually be analyzed in terms of an indeterminate root which, depending on the context, will be introduced from the Lexicon either in the position of the V, or in that of an N.

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

However, while such an account could explain several syntactic phenomena, including the unavailability of extraction, it relies heavily on "context dependency" a line of reasoning which is not necessarily desirable. What should be noticed though is the fact that, in their analysis as well, the authors identify two components of MoS verbs, as did several other previous studies: it seems to be the case that the structure of such a verb consists of a verbal component, the process, and a so-called "nominal" one, which emphasizes manner.

3.2. *Romanian MoS verbs and the availability of extraction*

As was seen in (9) above, extraction from the postverbal clause of Romanian MoS verbs is freely allowed. While in English MoS verbs are generally said to be strong island inducers, this is not the case for their Romanian counterparts. However, given that, in general, Romanian exhibits strong island effects, it is not implausible to assume that this parametric variation stems from a difference in the lexical representation of MoS verbs in the two languages.

The fact there are crosslinguistic differences with respect to syntactic islandhood was noticed by Rizzi (1982), who argues that the Subjacency Condition is subject to parametric variation: while the bounding nodes which block movement in English are NP and IP, in Italian, where for example there are no *wh*-islands, the bounding nodes are NP and CP.

Dobrovie-Sorin (1993) notices that Romanian behaves on a par with Italian and opposite to English: complex NPs, sentential subjects and adjuncts induce island effects, whereas *wh*-constructions do not:

(17) a. *A făcut afirmaţia că Mihai a uitat dicţionarul.*
aux made claim-the that Mihai aux forgot dictionary-the
'He made the claim that Mihai forgot the dictionary.'

b. **Ce a făcut afirmaţia că a uitat Mihai __?*
what aux made claim-the that aux forgot Mihai
'What did he make the claim that Mihai forgot?'

(18) a. *Că Mihai a scris ştirea l- a supărat pe editor.*
that Mihai aux wrote news-the CL_{ACC} aux upset on editor
'That Mihai wrote the news upset the editor.'

b. **Ce că a scris __ Mihai l- a supărat pe editor?*
what that aux written Mihai CL_{ACC} aux upset on editor
'What that Mihai wrote __ upset the editor?'

(19) a. *A plecat mai devreme pentru că trebuia*
aux left more early for that had
să cumpere un cadou.
SUBJ buy a present
'He left earlier because he had to buy a present.'

b. **Ce a plecat mai devreme pentru că trebuia să cumpere _?*
what aux left more early for that had SUBJ buy
'What did he leave earlier because he had to buy __?'

(20) a. *Profesorul se întreabă când a citit Ion cartea.*
professor-the refl wonders when aux read Ion book-the
'The professor wonders when Ion read the book.'

b. *Ce se întreabă profesorul când a citit Ion __?*
what refl wonders professor-the when aux read Ion
'What does the professor wonder when Ion read?'

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

In consequence, it is not the case that the differences between English and Romanian with respect to the availability of extraction from the postverbal clause of MoS verbs stem from a parametric variation regarding syntactic islandhood in general. Instead, this contrast could be accounted for in terms of the lexical representation of the structure of MoS verbs in the two languages. While in English MoS verbs have a nominal component which blocks extraction from the postverbal clause (Stowell 1981; Snyder 1992; Hale and Keyser 2002; Avram 2012), in Romanian the lexical representation of these verbs does not include a noun.

4. Concluding remarks

In the above sections we have seen that the properties of MoS verbs have been argued to be "systematically associated with their semantic structure" (Zwicky 1981). If such a relation between lexical representation and syntactic behaviour were indeed valid, we would expect that MoS verbs should behave similarly crosslinguistically. We tested this prediction by looking at the data coming from English and Romanian.

First of all, we saw that, although semantically these verbs evince similar properties in the two languages, they differ from the point of view of their syntactic behaviour. One such property is the availability of extraction from the postverbal clause of a MoS verb: while extraction is freely allowed with MoS verbs in Romanian, this is not the case for the English MoS verbs.

Analyzing the English data, several studies in the literature (Stowell 1981; Snyder 1992; Hale and Keyser 2002; Avram 2012) have argued that the structure of MoS verbs includes a nominal component which seems to block extraction, at least when the verb is used non-communicatively (Stoica 2016). Given that this is not the case for Romanian MoS verbs, I argued that the lexical representation of these verbs is subject to parametric variation and that the structure of Romanian MoS verbs does not include a nominal component.

REFERENCES

Avram, Larisa, 2012, "Manner of Speaking across Constructions", paper presented at the 9th Conference on British and American Studies, *Transilvania* University of Braşov, May.

Dobrovie-Sorin, Carmen, 1993, *The Syntax of Romanian: Comparative Studies in Romance*, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter.

Dor, Daniel. 2005, "Toward a Semantic Account of *That*-deletion in English", *Linguistics*, 43, 2, p. 345–382.

Erteschik-Shir, Nomi, 1973, *On the Nature of Island Constraints*, PhD Dissertation, MIT.

Hale, Ken, Samuel Jay Keyser, 1993, "On Argument Structure and the Lexical Expression of Syntactic Relations", in Ken Hale, Samuel Jay Keyser (eds.), *The View from Building 20: Essays in Honor of Sylvain Bromberger*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.

Hale, Ken, Samuel Jay Keyser, 2002, *Prolegomenon to a Theory of Argument Structure*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.

Levin, Beth, 1993, *English Verb Classes and Alternations*, Chicago/London, The University of Chicago Press.

Mufwene, Salikoko, 1978, "English Manner of Speaking Verbs Revisited", *Papers from the Parasession on the Lexicon*, Chicago Linguistic Society, p. 278-289.

Rizzi, Luigi, 1982, "Violations of the Wh-island Constraint and the Subjacency Condition", in Luigi Rizzi (ed.), *Issues in Italian Syntax*, Dordrecht, Foris, p. 49–76.

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)

Ross, J. R., *Constraints on variables in syntax*, Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts, Institute of Technology.
Snyder, William, 1992, "Wh-extraction and the Lexical Representation of Verbs", Ms MIT, 6 May.
Stoica, Irina, 2016, "Communicative Use Effects on Syntactic Islandhood: the View from Manner of Speaking Verbs", paper presented at the 14th Conference on British and American Studies, *Transilvania* University of Braşov, 13 May.
Stowell, Tim, 1981, "Complementizers and the Empty Category Principle", in: Victoria A. Burke, James Pustejovsky (eds.) *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the North Eastern Linguistic Society*, Amherst, Mass., GLSA, p. 345–363.
Zwicky, Arnold M., 1971. "In a Manner of speaking", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 2, 2, p. 223–232.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEXICAL SEMANTICS AND SYNTACTIC REPRESENTATION: THE VIEW FROM MANNER OF SPEAKING VERBS

(*Abstract*)

The syntactic properties of manner of speaking verbs are argued to be "systematically associated with their lexical representation" (Zwicky, 1971). The aim of this paper is to investigate the properties of manner of speaking verbs from a comparative perspective with a view to identifying to what extent similar semantic representation maps onto similar syntactic behaviour. My proposal is that the syntactic differences between manner of speaking verbs in Romanian and English could potentially be reduced to the bridge/non-bridge distinction in conjunction with more general properties of the syntactic systems of the two languages.

BDD-V2320 © 2016 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:56:13 UTC)