

TUTORIAL
8.10

Concept relations within propositions

Learners will identify the meaningful relations between semantic concepts within propositions.

Relations within Propositions¹

We have talked about semantic **things**, **events**, and **attributes**. Now we're going to talk about semantic **relations**. How are things, events, and attributes related to one another within a proposition?

We know that every proposition is made up of at least two semantic concepts. In the proposition represented in the baseball example, the event is "hit"; one of the semantic thing concepts in this proposition is "John," and the other semantic thing concept is "ball."

In every proposition there are semantically significant relations between the concepts. In **event** propositions, these relations are called **case roles**. In the baseball proposition, the case role relation between "John" and "Hit" is an **agent** Relation. John is the **agent** that actually does the action. He is the doer of the event.

Why not just say he is the "Subject"? Because the grammatical subject of a sentence is not always the semantic agent. We can't mix the grammatical and the semantic terms. Why? Because of skewing. Here's an example:

- "Jesus was baptized by John."
 - o Jesus is the grammatical subject of this sentence.
 - But he is not the semantic agent.
 - o The semantic agent is John.
 - He is the one who did the action (baptizing) even though he is not the grammatical subject of the sentence.

¹ Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning Based Translation: a guide to cross-language equivalence*, revised edition, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), pp. 219-234.

The case role relation between “ball” and “Hit” in the baseball example is an **affected** Relation. The “ball” is directly affected by the action.²

Case Roles within Event Propositions³

- The **agent** is the thing concept that does the action—the person or the object which is the doer of the event. Examples:
 - **John** ran fast.
 - **The deer** jumped over the fence.
 - **The water** flowed swiftly.

- The **affected** is the semantic thing concept that undergoes the event, or is directly affected by the event. Examples:
 - The dog ate **the meat**.
 - John hit **the ball**.

- The **goal** is the thing concept toward which an event is directed.
 - John prayed **to God**.
 - John laughed **at Peter**.
 - Peter threw the rock **at the fence post**.
 - Jesus said **to the paralytic**:

- The **beneficiary** is the thing concept that is advantaged or disadvantaged by the event. The beneficiary is not affected as directly as the affected.
 - John sold the car **for a friend**.
 - Mary bought a present **for Tom**.

- The **accompaniment** is the thing concept which participates in close association with the agent, causer, or affected in an event.
 - John went to the park **with his dog**.
 - I went out to dinner **with my family**.

- The **instrument** is the thing concept used to carry out an event.
 - Mary wrote **with a pencil**.
 - She covered the child **with a blanket**.
 - The workmen widened the road **with a bulldozer**.

- The **location** is a thing concept that identifies the spatial placement of an event

² Various authors use different labels to designate these relations. The terminology we will use in this module comes from Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning Based Translation*.

³ Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning Based Translation*, pp. 219-33.

- Jane ran away **from home**.
- John flew in **from Chicago**.
- She went **to the store**.

- The **time** identifies the temporal placement of the event.
 - John went to college **three weeks ago**.
 - Her mother stayed **for three weeks**.
 - **Soon** someone will come for us.

- The **manner** is the qualification of the event.
 - The man ran **quickly**.
 - John wrote the letter **perfectly**.
 - The plant grew **rapidly**.

- The **measure** is the quantification of the event.
 - Jane prays **frequently**.
 - They widened the road **by twenty feet**.
 - The corn had grown **three inches**.

Case Roles and Skewing

In the examples above, there is no skewing between the form and the meaning. For example, the **agent** is the subject of the sentence in “John ran fast.” And the **accompaniment** occurs as the object of the proposition “with” in the sentence, “I ate dinner with my family.”

We have learned that there is a great deal of skewing between form and meaning in every language. Translators will often find that the skewing between form and meaning in the source language is not the same as the skewing between form and meaning in the target language.

The translator must consider it from both sides:

- Analyze the original text to discover the meaning without source-language skewing.
- Re-express the meaning in the target language, using appropriate target-language skewing.

Example of Skewing in the Encoding of Case Roles in English:⁴

⁴ Ibid., pp. 245-55.

One Case Role can be encoded in several different Forms. The clauses listed in the table below all represent the same semantic proposition. The context determines the various ways the proposition is worded:

Peter ate the apple	Object	← NO Skewing
The apple was eaten by Peter	Subject	
The apple which Peter ate		← SKEWED
The eating of the apple by Peter...	Object of a proposition	
Peter's eating of the apple.		

In the sentence, "*Peter ate the apple*" there is no skewing. The semantic **agent** (Peter) is encoded as the grammatical **subject** and the semantic concept filling the role of **affected** (apple) is encoded as the grammatical **object**.

If we say, "*The apple was eaten by Peter*" or "*The apple which Peter ate...*" that represents the same semantic proposition, but there is skewing. The semantic concept in the **affected** role (apple) is now encoded as the grammatical subject. Or if we say, "*The eating of the apple by Peter...*" or "*Peter's eating of the apple...*" that is also skewed. The semantic concept filling the role of **affected** (apple) is now encoded as the object of a preposition.

Sometimes a single Form is used to encode several different Case Roles. For example:

- I ate ice cream **with my spoon**. (Instrument)
- I ate ice cream **with my pie**. (Accompaniment-Affected)
- I ate ice cream **with my wife**. (Accompaniment-Agent)

This word "with" is used to communicate three different Case Role relations. Grammatically, these three sentences are constructed the same, but semantically they are very different.

State Relations within State Propositions⁵

Every State Proposition has a **topic** and a **comment** and a **relation** between the two. Below are a few examples.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	CAR ... ownership ... ME
English	The car is mine.
	The car belongs to me.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 235-44.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	DOG ... naming ... FIDO
English	The dog's name is Fido.
	The dog is called Fido.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	CAR ... location ... GARAGE
English	The car is in the garage.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	THAT TABLE ... substance ... WOOD
English	That wooden table.
	That table is made of wood.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	BOOK ... description ... SMALL
English	The book is small.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	BAG ... containership ... RICE
English	The bag has rice in it.
	The bag contains rice.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	AIR ... ambience ... HOT
English	It is hot.

	Topic ... relation ... Comment
Proposition	TIME ... (time) ... NOON
English	It is noon.

Multiple encoding of State Propositions

A single state proposition could be encoded several different ways, depending on the context. For example, with “ownership” it could be:

- John's house...
- John has a house.
- John owns a house.
- The house John owns...

Or with “containership” it could be:

- The water jug...

- The jug of water...
- The jug has water in it.
- The jug contains water.
- The jug with water in it...
- The jug containing water...
- The jug which contains water...

These all represent the same Semantic Proposition, but it is encoded in several different ways.

Simple & Complex Concepts

An example of a simple concept would be the word “dog.” But “complex” concepts often include embedded state propositions. Here is an example:

- “*The big dog inside the wooden fence is named Fido.*”
 - o The main state proposition in this example is “*The dog is named Fido.*”
 - o But there are additional embedded state propositions:
 - The dog is big.
 - The dog is inside the fence.
 - The fence is wooden.



ACTIVITIES

Concept relations within propositions

1. Make a copy of the document that lists your rewritten propositions for Mark 2:1-12 (the assignment from Tutorial 8.9)
 - On this new copy, identify and mark the Case Roles in Event Propositions
 - Identify and mark the State Relations in State Propositions
 - Follow the pattern below. The first two lines are **event propositions** and the third line is a **state proposition**

Agent	Event	Location	Time
Jesus	came back to Capernaum		several days afterward

Agent Event

People heard

Topic Location

Jesus was at home