

SOME PROBLEMS OF INALIENABLE POSSESSION AND CONTACT VERBS

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In "The Case for Case" (Fillmore, 1968a:67-74), Fillmore deals very ingeniously with the problem of verbs of contact and specifically with the problem of contact with a body part.

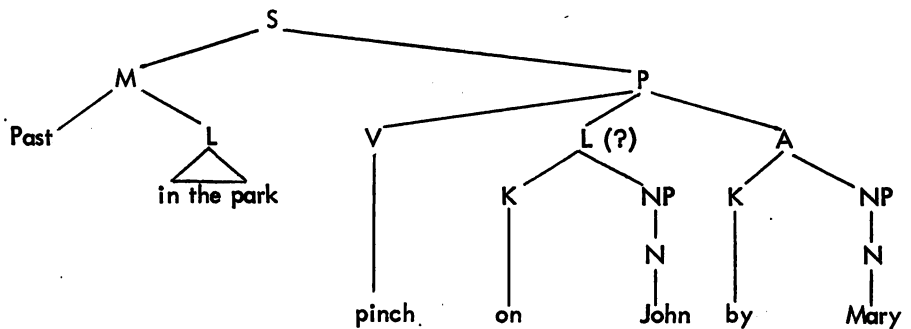
Obviously in a case grammar one wants to show the difference between sentences like:-

- (1) MARY PINCHED JOHN ON THE NOSE
- (2) MARY PINCHED JOHN IN THE PARK

In the same article, Fillmore has suggested (Fillmore, 1968:26) a difference between a Locative as a constituent of P (proposition) and a Locative as a constituent of M (modality). We may recall that Fillmore's suggested first rule (Fillmore, 1968a:24) was:

$S \rightarrow \text{Modality} + \text{Proposition}$

and that the Proposition (P) constituent is 'expanded' as a verb and one or more case categories while M is shown in various examples of trees as dominating Past. It would seem that for (2) we would have a tree something like:



The question mark against L is meant to imply some doubt not only as to whether Locative is the appropriate case but whether what I have shown as dominated by L is appropriate. We shall return to the problem later.

As mentioned before, we want to show the difference between sentences like (1) and (2) but we also want to show the relationship between sentences like (1) and (3):

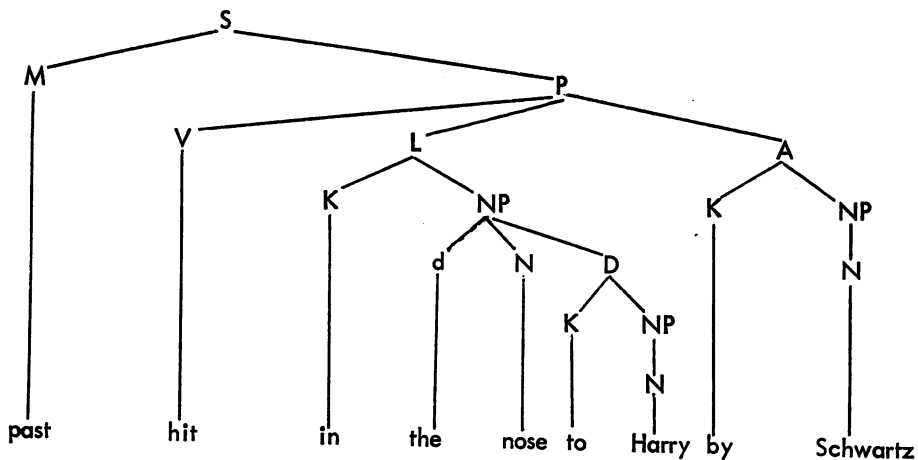
(3) MARY PINCHED JOHN'S NOSE

or between a similar pair (Fillmore, 1968b: 387):

(4) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY'S NOSE

(5) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY IN THE NOSE

Our first problem, however, is this. If Schwartz hit Harry's nose, did he hit him IN the nose or ON the nose? In other words, should we have a base representation showing:-



and another where ON is substituted for IN, both of which could come out on the surface as (4)? Another way of stating this is: does (4) give the same information as either of the sentences with surface prepositional phrases? I might add that to me the sentences with prepositional phrases would seem more common and more natural. I would choose one of them if I were describing a fight between the two unless, perhaps, I specifically wanted to contrast the point of contact as in:

(6) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY'S NOSE, NOT HIS JAW

and even then a sentence with two prepositional phrases would be quite appropriate. As for

the choice between IN and ON, this would seem to depend on the body part and the force of the blow.

Another point is this: How do we account for sentences like:-

- (7) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY BEHIND THE EAR
- (8) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY BETWEEN THE EYES
- (9) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY ON TOP OF THE HEAD

which are certainly not equivalent to:

- (10) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY'S EAR
- (11) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY'S EYES
- (12) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY'S HEAD

Do we have the same type of base representation suggested by Fillmore, that is, a Locative for the body part with an adnominal Dative for the possessor of the body part, but only allow transformations leading to sentences of the type:

- (13) X HIT Y'S BODY PART

when we have certain prepositions like IN, ON dominated by K but not when we have others like BEHIND, BETWEEN, ON TOP OF?

How, too, do we deal with the fact that we can have sentences like:-

- (14) THE BULLET HIT BEHIND HARRY'S EAR

which is not necessarily synonymous with:

- (15) THE BULLET HIT HARRY BEHIND THE EAR

as it may well have hit some distinct object, like the wall, behind Harry's ear?

In any case, even if we take it that hitting Harry between the eyes means hitting between Harry's eyes, we must not allow preposition deletion here, and in the case of hitting Harry on top of the head we can have either hitting on top of Harry's head or hitting the top of his head. Perhaps we could say that these are not "typical" prepositions and that these are matters of "Adnominal Locatives" (Fillmore, 1968, 81).

In "The Grammar of Hitting and Breaking" (Fillmore, 1970), Fillmore uses the term PLACE instead of LOCATIVE, but in "Types of Lexical Information" (Fillmore, 1969: 119), we find that for the sentences:

- (16) THE ARROW HIT
- (17) THE ARROW HIT IT

we are told that in (16), the paraphrase of (17), "the speaker expects the identity of the 'target' (Goal) to be already known by the addressee." It may be mentioned in passing that the speaker may well not expect the identity of the 'target' (Goal) to be already known by the addressee as may be seen in (18):

(18) THE ARROW HIT, BUT INSTEAD OF HITTING THE KING IT HIT HIS SON

All we really know from (16) is that it hit something or someone. Certainly what is hit is not necessarily the Goal, in the ordinary sense of that word but I am not quibbling at the use of the term GOAL as a Deep Structure Case or Role.

In the list of 'case notions' on p.116 of the same article, there is no PLACE or LOCATIVE but GOAL (G) 'the place to which something is directed'. In passing, we may wonder whether "is directed" means "directed by the Agent (or Instrument)" or "in which direction it goes." The latter but not the former would be appropriate for (18). Unfortunately, there is no further discussion of contact verbs like HIT in this article and so it is impossible to know how Fillmore would, at that time, have dealt with Schwartz hitting Harry's nose or Mary pinching John's. Did Fillmore still retain LOCATIVE or PLACE as the case or role for HOT as in:

(19) THE STUDIO IS HOT

(20) IT IS HOT IN THE STUDIO

as discussed in "The Case for Case"? It would hardly seem appropriate to consider HOT as implying GOAL.

In "The Case for Case", Fillmore suggests (p.80): "There are, too, many relational nouns which do not have a specifically personal reference. We might wish to say that certain 'locational' nouns take an adnominal L." These nouns sometimes name parts of the associated objects (examples 21) and they sometimes identify a location or direction stated with reference to the associated object but not considered as a part of it (examples 22). 'Nouns' of the second type appear superficially as prepositions in English.

(21) CORNER OF THE TABLE, EDGE OF THE CLIFF, TOP OF THE BOX.

(22) BEHIND THE HOUSE, AHEAD OF THE CAR, NEXT TO THE TOWER.

Parenthetically (again), one might ask in what way these nouns, at least those in (21) are 'locational'. Certainly, we could consider a corner as a location in relation to a table and so on but they are not locational in relation to the Predicate in such examples as:

(23) PERCY INSPECTED THE CORNER OF THE TABLE

(24) THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF BROKE AWAY

(25) CLAUDE ADMIRERD THE TOP OF THE BOX

In other words, I agree that the box could be considered an adnominal L in relation to the top but do not see that the top should necessarily be considered as Locational. These observations are based on the understanding that 'these nouns' refers back to 'certain 'locational' nouns' and not to 'an adnominal L'.

We may now investigate these suggestions as they relate to (7) and to:

(26) SCHWARTZ HIT BEHIND HARRY'S EAR

If we take it that what is HIT is L or G (Goal), then this would be BEHIND and this would take an adnominal locative THE EAR which, in turn would have an adnominal Dative (D) or Experiencer (E), namely HARRY. Does the first of these Ls, namely BEHIND, take a preposition dominated by K in the underlying structure or, as it is itself a preposition, does this automatically make the preposition \emptyset ? But the main problem is how we indicate the two different underlying structures for these two sentences which, as mentioned earlier, are not, or at least are not necessarily, synonymous. It may be that for the second sentence that as HARRY hit SOMETHING behind Harry's ear we could have this as the L which is HIT and consider behind Harry's ear as a reduction of a relative clause. Of course, there is the added complication that he could have hit behind Harry's ear without his fist landing anywhere. I am inclined to feel that at least a partial solution to these problems is possible through suggestions which will appear later in this article.

Unfortunately, Fillmore has not, in any of the articles mentioned, dealt with the matter of sentences like:

(27) SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY

(28) MARY PINCHED JOHN

where no particular body part is mentioned. Are we to consider that underlying these are structures of the type

(29) PAST HIT ON L (unspecified) TO HARRY BY SCHWARTZ

PAST PINCH ON L (unspecified) TO JOHN BY MARY

so that when the body part is unspecified we must have a surface structure like the two

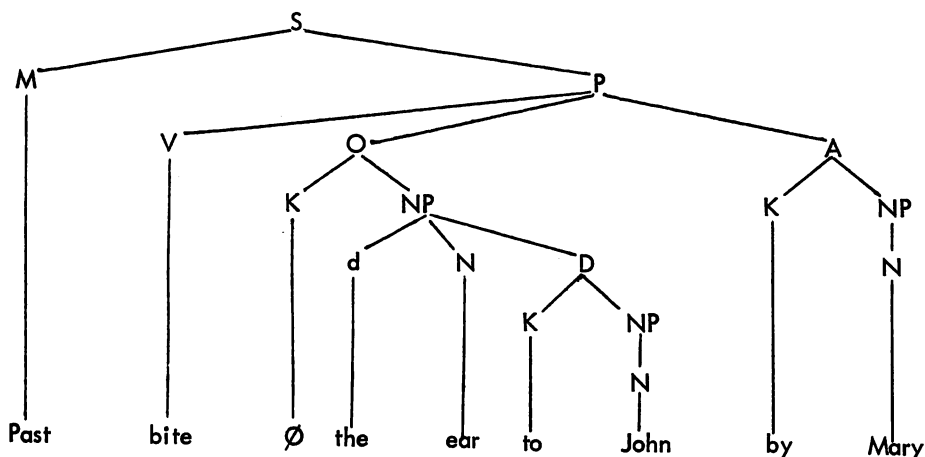
previous sentences or their Passive counterparts?

In "The Grammar of Hitting and Breaking", Fillmore suggests (p.130) that "some change-of-state verbs (he has previously referred to BREAK as a change-of-state verb) are understood as affecting a place on an object rather than the object as a whole. CUT and BITE, for example, are of this type." He goes on to mention that they show paraphrase relations of the type previously exemplified by HIT. Thus one can have:

(30) MARY BIT JOHN ON THE EAR

(31) MARY BIT JOHN'S EAR

However, for BREAK, and presumably BITE, Fillmore suggests the Objective Case (O) for what suffers the action. Thus, I assume that these sentences would have the underlying structure:

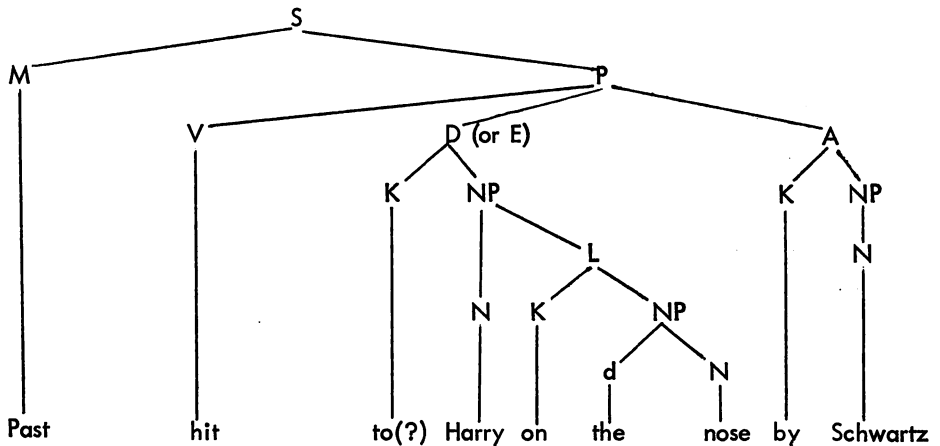


The problem here is, though, that we do not have a preposition dominated by K under O as in the Objective case. K typically dominates \emptyset . Thus, it would seem that although we could obtain the surface sentence (31), we could not obtain (30) as the preposition is not in the underlying structure. One way out of this problem would be to consider that BITE is an example of one of the "specific verbs (that) are exceptions to the above generalizations" (Fillmore, 1968a:32) where the "above generalizations" had included that statement that "the O and F prepositions are typically zero." This does not seem to be a very satisfactory way out.

A possible solution to these problems is to consider that the person (or other animate being) who is BITTEN, HIT, CUT, etc. should be in what Fillmore called the Dative Case

(D) "the case of the animate being affected by the state or action identified by the verb (Fillmore, 1968a:24) or what he later called Experiencer (E) (Fillmore, 1969:116) "the entity which receives or undergoes the effect of an action." These definitions seem appropriate for the sufferer of BITE, HIT, CUT.

We could then consider that a Dative (or Experiencer) could sometimes take an adnominal Locative so that the underlying structure for (5) would be:



Whether a D (or E) could take an adnominal Locative would need to be shown in the lexical entry for the particular verb. Thus, if D (or E) is appropriate for KILL and DIE, an adnominal Locative could not perhaps occur.

If we have Goal, Source and Locative cases, then what is HIT could be considered as Goal, as in:

(32) MARY HIT THE TABLE

I cannot find an example of anything being bitten unless it is an animate being or part of one; BITTEN AT and BITTEN INTO but not simply BITTEN - except, of course, in the expression "to bite the dust." This somewhat reinforces my view that a D (or E) must be implied by BITE!

Fillmore mentions in "The Grammar of Hitting and Breaking" (p.132, footnote 10) that "the surface contact verbs can also be said to identify a "change of state" of some kind. In a purely abstract sense, a cheek which has once been slapped is different from the same cheek before the slapping event took place. The semantic structures of some words recognize properties of objects discoverable not in the objects themselves but in their

"histories" (words like bastard or widow), but such matters have no relevance to the distinction between the two kinds of verbs we are discussing here." The two kinds of verbs are those exemplified by HIT and BREAK.

One wonders in this regard why Fillmore considered the Objective case as appropriate for what is BROKEN as well as for what is SEEN or LOOKED AT (Fillmore, 1968a: 31). There is certainly no difference in an object for its being SEEN or LOOKED AT. It might therefore be better to divide the Objective case into two, namely Neutral and Affective as exemplified in the objects in the following sentences:

(33) CLAUDE SAW THE VASE

(34) CLAUDE BROKE THE VASE

We may note, too, that while we may talk about a BROKEN vase we do not talk about a SEEN vase. This leads to the fact that we do not usually speak of a HIT vase although I would more accept a HIT woman as in:

(35) THE HIT WOMAN WAS SCREAMING BLUE MURDER

Of course, verbs like SEE and HIT may occur in past participial form when modified as in:

(36) A RECENTLY SEEN FILM

(37) A BRUTALLY HIT DOG

but a difference is that in the former the adverb must refer to the one who sees whereas with HIT it does not necessarily refer to the hitter. Certainly, in (37) it was the hitter of the dog who was being brutal but we may also have:

(38) A FREQUENTLY HIT DOG

where the frequency need not refer to one hitter and where we cannot consider a group of people as hitting it frequently but where the dog frequently receives hits. Again:

(39) A BADLY HIT DOG

is not one where the hitter(s) did the hitting badly but where the dog received a bad hit or bad hits.

It is noticeable, too, that most contact verbs may be paraphrased by constructions of the:

GIVE A _____ TO X or GIVE X A _____

type when the recipient of the action is animate. This applies to HIT, PINCH, KISS, TOUCH, SLAP, BUMP (Fillmore, 1968b: 387). The other two verbs in Fillmore's list there present some difficulty in this respect. To me, SMITE is archaic and with STRIKE, although we can have:

(40) HE GAVE HIS SON A STROKE OVER THE BACKSIDE

for example, this is not quite the same as:

(41) HE STRUCK HIS SON OVER THE BACKSIDE

However, the relationship works with other verbs like: CLOUT, BASH, SOCK, THUMP, COSH.

It is noticeable that the recipient of these actions can get or receive a HIT, PINCH, KISS, SLAP and so on.

As a conclusion to this argument, I would propose therefore that we modify certain of Fillmore's case categories to include:

Neutral: for what is SEEN, SMELT, NOTICED and so on where nothing happens to what is SEEN, SMELT, NOTICED

Affective: for what is BROKEN, SMASHED, DAMAGED and so on where there is a change of state in what is BROKEN, SMASHED, DAMAGED.

For verbs like HIT we could say:

what is hit is Goal:

the animate being hit is Experiencer (this seems particularly apt here as against the term Dative) and may take an adnominal Locative. Therefore, a verb like HIT could be shown in the lexicon as follows:

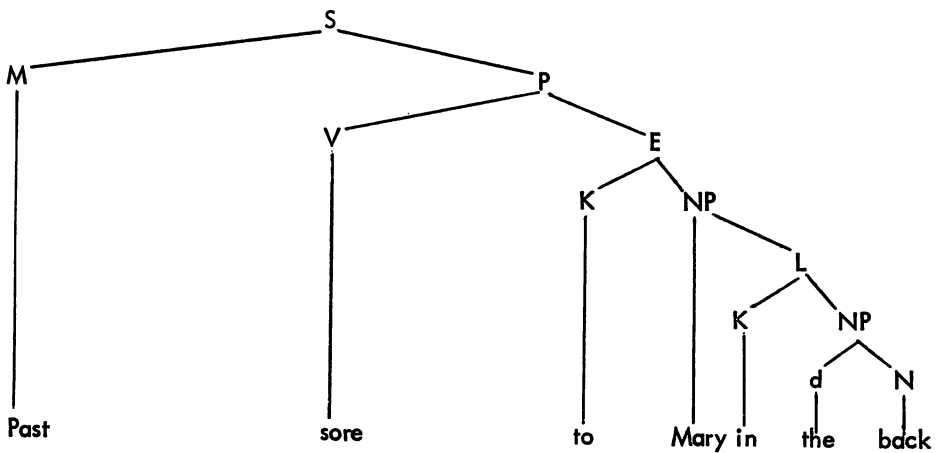
(Agent) (Instrument) Goal/Experiencer ⁺ ₋ Locative

which would mean that this verb occurs in the case frame: Agent or Instrumental or both (following Fillmore in the Grammar of Hitting and Breaking) and Goal or Experiencer with the option of Locative if Experiencer is chosen.

Adnominal Locative to the Experiencer case would be appropriate, too, for 'verbs'

like SORE as in:

(42) MARY WAS SORE IN THE BACK



which is a rather different matter from:

(43) THE GIRL'S EYES ARE BEAUTIFUL

(44) THE GIRL HAS BEAUTIFUL EYES

discussed by Fillmore in "The Case for Case" (p.74-80) where the girl does not experience the beauty of her eyes whereas she does experience the soreness in her back. It would seem to me that E rather than L is the appropriate 'case' for SORE so that adnominal L to E is more suitable than adnominal E to L.

Adnominal L to E may also be appropriate for such sentences as:

(45) FRED IS SAD AT HEART

(46) FRED SEES IT IN HIS MIND

These suggestions may seem to spoil the attractive proposal of one underlying structure for sentence pairs of the type exemplified by (4) and (5). We would now have:

Adnominal E to G for the former

Adnominal L to E for the latter

G for: SCHWARTZ HIT THE TABLE

E for: SCHWARTZ HIT HARRY

but I feel that these differences are appropriate. In fact, if we substitute L for G (I have

used G to bring it into line with what seemed to be Fillmore's intention in "Types of Lexical Information") we find an even closer relationship, simply a reversal of what is adnominal to what.

Furthermore, if we feel that there should be only one underlying structure for (4) and (5), then adnominal L to E would still seem the more appropriate. After all, if Harry's nose is hit, so is Harry. On the other hand, with a verb like BREAK it would seem more appropriate to have an Adnominal E to the case of what is broken. After all, if:

(47) SCHWARTZ BROKE HARRY'S NOSE

he did not break Harry.

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