Synonymy and Antonymy among the Four Basic Verbs *take, get, bring and give* in the SVO/SVVOO Constructions*

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to show the sense networks of each of the polysemous verbs *take*, *get*, *bring* and *give*, and to reveal the nature of synonymy and antonymy among the four verbs. These four verbs are basic verbs that junior high school students learn. However, vocabulary teaching does not reflect the studies in linguistics. In textbooks, the word that has some senses or usage is listed in a context again and again. The learners often have to learn it in the other context.

In cognitive linguistics, many studies have argued that the senses of a lexical item are related to one another, not separately or independently (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Brugman 1981; Fillmore 1982; Lakoff 1987; Norvig and Lakoff 1987; Taylor 1995). In the studies, Norvig and Lakoff (1987) analyzed seven senses of the polysemous verb *take* and argued that all meanings of a polysemous word have a central sense and several related senses that are minimally different from the central sense. They

* I am grateful to Daniela Caluianu and Mark Holst for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper. This paper is a revised and summarized version of my master thesis. I also would like to thank Katsunobu Izutsu for his valuable advice and comments in my writing master thesis.
also claimed that all the senses of a polysemous word are related to one another, and they can be systematically shown as a sense network.

In the next section, based on the analyses of Norvig and Lakoff (1987), I will analyze four polysemous verbs take, get, bring and give and show each of the verb senses as a network. In the third section, I will compare the central senses of the four verbs, and discuss the synonymy and antonymy among the four verbs.

2. The analysis of take, get, bring and give

I collected about one hundred sentences a verb in the transitive and ditransitive constructions from the same materials. I analyzed the four verbs, focusing on the semantic roles; agent, patient, recipient, source, and instrument are the participant roles, while origin and destination are the settings. The definitions of these roles are the same as those of Norvig and Lakoff (1987: 198).

2.1 take

Analysis of the data indicates that take has one central sense and five senses related to one another. The most typical sense of take is “Agent causes Recipient to receive Patient,” in which the agent also plays the role of the recipient. The following types of sentences form sense network:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{take-I} & \quad (a) \quad \text{He took the glass from the shelf.} \\
& \quad A=R \quad P \quad O \\
\text{take-II} & \quad (b) \quad \text{The book takes its title from Dante.} \\
& \quad A=R \quad P \quad O
\end{align*}
\]
take-III (c) She took her son in her arms.
A=R P

take-III (d) She took a bath.
A=R P

take-IV (e) I took him a book.
A R P

take-V (f) Take the car to garage to be repaired.
P D (A: You)

take-V (g) We take the kids to school in the car.
A P D

In the sentences (and elsewhere in this paper), the letters A, R, P, O and D indicate the agent, the recipient, the patient, the origin and the destination. “A=R” indicates that the agent is identical with the recipient.

Here take-I is the central sense of take. In sentence (a), He (agent) moves the glass (patient) from shelf (origin) to He (recipient). He reaches his hand out for and grabs the glass. Thus, the agent and recipient are the same person, and the patient is a physical object. This take-I is an instantiation of the shared conception, which can be diagramed as below:\footnote{Similar diagrams will be used in the case of get, bring and give as well. In the diagrams, heavy lines will be used to identify the profile. According to Langacker (1987), the profile is the entity designated by a semantic structure, and the entity functions as the focal point within the objective scene, and achieves a special degree of prominence (1987: 491). The profile “stands out in bas-relief” against the base (1987: 183).}
This figure represents the agent moving and receiving the patient. The letter $t$ represents the time. The arrow starting from the agent in the leftmost substructure indicates the exertion of force, and the double-lined arrow from the agent in the central substructure indicates the action of receiving. The solid-lined rectangles are the dominion\(^2\) of the agent, while the broken-lined rectangles are the location where the patient starts out. The substructure represented in dotted lines is not profiled in the sense of take-I.

The senses of take-II and take-III are minimal variants of take-I. Take-II exemplified sentence (b) differs from take-I in that the agent is not a human being. The book (agent) moves the title (patient) from Dante's works into its dominion. Sentence (b) denotes a relationship between the book and its title.

Take-III differs from take-I in that the patient is not a physical object, but a human being and an activity. However, the agent, as in take-I and take-II, is identical with the recipient, which receives the patient in the sentence (c). In sentence (c), She (agent) moves her son (patient) to She (recipient); therefore, she holds her son. In sentence (d),

\(^2\) "Dominion" is an area where the agent or the recipient can own and control the patient.
she (agent) moves the activity of taking a bath (patient) to receive and conduct it. The agent referent in take-II and the patient referent in take-III are a metaphorical extension from the default condition of the semantic roles, respectively. Each conception can be represented in the following figures. In the figures, the letter ME indicates a metaphorical extension from the default condition of the semantic roles.

In the take-IV, sentence (e), the agent is not identical with the recipient, and the patient goes to either the recipient or destination. The sentence means that I (agent) moves a book (patient) to him (recipient). The condition of $A \neq R$ holds in the ditransitive construction. The sense of take in this sentence can be diagramed as in Figure 2.4:
In take-V, sentences (f) and (g), the agent moves the patient to the place called Destination, not a human recipient. The sentence (f) is an imperative. If the implied subject is assumed to be you, this sentence will mean that you (agent) moves the car (patient) to garage (destination). In sentence (g), we (agent) moves the kids (patient) to school (destination). These two sentences mean that the agent moves the patient to the destination, not to the recipient. The recipient is not profiled in these sentences. This is a difference from take-IV. It is not clear whether "going-to-D" schema is in the sentence or not. This conception can be represented below. The agent moves the patient to the destination. The agent does not play the role of recipient. This sense is similar to the sense of take-IV in this respect. The only difference between take-IV and take-V is where the agent moves the patient to.

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8 Norvig and Lakoff (1987) argues that the sense of take in the sentences like take-V (f)-(g) (A take P to D) is related to the sense of "going-to-D." "Going-to-D" means not only moving to a place but also doing something there. However, this meaning is restricted within the case that the destination is a public establishment and a conventional activity with a conventional purpose. Note that the sense of "the agent takes the patient to the destination" is not necessarily related to the sense of "going-to-D."
As we have observed so far, *take* has one central sense and five senses related to one another. The relationship among these four senses can be represented as a network with the following link-types:

**take-I**
- A: human
- P: object
- R: human
- A\rightarrow R

**take-II**
- A: entity
- P: object
- R: entity
- A\rightarrow R

**take-III**
- A: human
- P: human, activity
- R: human
- A\rightarrow R

**take-IV**
- A: human
- P: object
- R: human
- A\rightarrow R

**take-V**
- A: human
- P: human
- R: D

**Figure 2.5** The conception of take-V

**Figure 2.6** The sense network of take

- **take-I—take-II**: change of the agent/recipient referent by metaphorical extension
- **take-I—take-III**: change of the patient referent by metaphorical extension
take-I—take-IV: the agent does not play the role of the recipient (in ditransitive construction)
take-IV—take-V: profile shift (R→D)

2.2 get

The verb get in transitive and ditransitive constructions has four senses related to one another.4

get-I  (a) Sharon always seems to get loads of mail.
     R                                      P

get-II  (b) Good luck with the diving — and mind the sharks don’t get you!
     R                                      P

get-III (c) He’ll get a real shock when he sees the bill.
     R                                      P

get-IV  (d) I get you a ticket.
     A                                      R                                      P

The typical sense of get is “P comes into R’s dominion,” which is seen in the sentence (a) in get-I. The patient is a physical object, and the recipient is a human being. Here the agent, who intentionally causes the recipient to receive the patient, is not profiled. In sentence (a), loads of mail (patient) comes into Sharon (recipient)’s dominion and she receives them. Sharon is the recipient and the mails is the patient. It is not clear

4 In this analysis, in order to compare with the other verb senses, I collected and analyzed the sentences of the verb get in which are not associated with prepositional phrases.
who send the mails to Sharon. This sense of get can be diagramed as follows:

![Diagram of the shared conception of get (get-I)](image)

**Figure 2.7** The shared conception of get (get-I)

In get-II (b), the recipient is not a human being but an animal. As get-I, the sentence get-II (b) means that the patient comes into the recipients' dominion and the recipients receive the patient. In sentence (b), *the sharks* (recipient) tries to receive *you* (patient). This sense of get can be represented as in Figure 2.8. Here the circle labeled ME is a metaphorical extension of the recipient. This is the only difference from get-I:

![Diagram of the conception of get-II](image)

**Figure 2.8** The conception of get-II

In the sentences get-III, the patient is not a physical object. The patient is an emotion in sentence (c). The senses of get-III are similar to that of get-I. Get-III is a metaphorical extension of the patient, which is different from get-I. Sentence (c) implies that the recipient receives the
patient by accident or unwillingly. Some sentences of *get* have as the patient the feeling which the recipient does not want or need, for example, anger, sadness, shock. In this case, the patient of *get* seems to come into the recipient's dominion without the recipient's intention. The sense of get-III can be represented as follows:

![Diagram of get-III](image)

**Figure 2.9** The conception of get-III

The sentence get-IV (d) is the ditransitive construction. In the ditransitive constructions, as Goldberg (1995) argues, the constructions themselves have a sense "X causes Y to receive Z." The argument roles of the ditransitive construction are agent, patient, and recipient, and the ditransitive construction contributes the participant roles not associated with the roles of a verb. Thus, in sentence (d), the construction contributes the agentivity. *I* (agent) fetches *a ticket* (patient) and tries to cause *you* (recipient) to receive it. The sense of get-IV can be represented as follows. Get-IV is different from get-I in profiling the agent. In get-IV, the agent causes the recipient to receive the patient.

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* Further studies of construction Grammar, see also Fillmore (1988), Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988), Kay (1990), and Lambrecht (1990), et al.
Figure 2.10 The conception of get-IV

These four senses can be represented as a network with the following link types:

Figure 2.11 The sense network of get

- get-I—get-II: metaphorical extension of the agent
- get-I—get-III: metaphorical extension of the patient
- get-I—get-IV: A \neq R (in the ditransitive construction)

2.3 bring

The verb *bring* means that the agent moves with the patient to the
destination or to the recipient. It is not clear where the patient comes from or where the patient goes to. The verb *bring* has one central sense and four senses related to one another.

### bring-I
(a) I have brought the book you wanted.

```
A                   P
```

### bring-II
(b) Can you bring the children to our party?

```
A                   P                   D
```

### bring-III
(c) The screams brought the police to the scene of the crime.

```
A                   P                   D (R)
```

(d) The bad weather brought famine.

```
A                   P
```

### bring-IV
(e) She couldn’t bring herself to touch it.

```
A                   P
```

### bring-V
(f) Liz brought her a glass of water.

```
A                   R                   P
```

Bring-I is the most typical expression of *bring*. The agent is a human being and the patient is a physical object. The agent moves with the patient. The agent functions as a “mover.”

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*Figure 2.12* The shared conception of *bring* (bring-I)

In bring-II, the patient is not a physical object but a human being.
The sense of the agent moving the patient is similar to that of bring-I. This sentence is a metaphorical extension of bring-I.

Bring-III is that both the agent and patient are metaphorical extensions of the default conditions. In sentence (c), the agent is sound (someone's voice) and the patient is a human being. In general, the agent role is assigned to the causer or the initiator of the event. In sentence (c), someone's scream moves the police officers to the crime scene. The scream is the agent and the police are the patient. In sentence (d), the agent is not a physical object. Owing to the bad weather, people living in the area became famished. The sentence means that the bad weather (agent) moves famine (patient) to the people living in the area. This sense can be represented as follows:
In bring-IV, the sentence (e) is a negative sentence, which means that she (agent) influences and tries to move herself (patient), though she could not. In this sentence, the agent is identical with the patient. This is a metaphorical extension of bring-III. Bring-IV is different from bring-II in the agent being identical with the patient.

![Diagram of bring-IV](image1)

**Figure 2.15 The conception of bring-IV**

Bring-V is ditransitive construction of *bring*. Sentence (f) means that Liz (agent) moves a glass of water (patient) to her (recipient). This sense of *bring* is related to the sense of the ditransitive construction. The sense of bring-V can be represented as follows:

![Diagram of bring-V](image2)

**Figure 2.16 The conception of bring-V**

The verb *bring* has one central sense and four senses related to one another. These five senses can be represented as a following network with the link-types:
Figure 2.17 The sense network of bring

**Figure 2.17 The sense network of bring**

- **bring-I**
  - A: human
  - P: object

- **bring-II**
  - A: human
  - P: object

- **bring-III**
  - A: object, situation
  - P: human, situation

- **bring-IV**
  - A: human
  - P: human

- **bring-V**
  - A: human
  - P: human

**Figure 2.17 The sense network of bring**

- **bring-I**—**bring-II**: metaphorical extension of the patient
- **bring-II**—**bring-III**: metaphorical extension of the agent and patient
- **bring-II**—**bring-IV**: the agent is the same person as the patient
- **bring-I**—**bring-V**: the recipient is profiled (the ditransitive construction)

### 2.4. give

The verb *give* means that the agent moves the patient to the recipient's dominion, and then the recipient receives it. The agent is not identical with the recipient. *Give* is often associated with ditransitive construction. The verb *give* has one central sense and two related senses.

**give-I (a)**  His mother gave him a cake.

```
A                     R         P
```

**give-I (b)**  They regularly give 5% of their income to charity.

```
A                     P         R
```

**give-II (c)**  This new computer program is giving us a little bit of trouble.

```
A                     R         P
```
give-II (d) The first chapter gives a broad outline of the topic.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{A} & & \text{P} \\
\end{array}
\]

give-III (e) He gave us quite a shock, appearing suddenly like that.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{A} & \text{R} & \text{P} \\
\end{array}
\]

give-III (f) The judge gave her two years.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{A} & \text{R} & \text{P} \\
\end{array}
\]

The most typical sense of give is in give-I (a). His mother (agent) moves a cake (patient) to him (recipient), and he receives it. In sentence (b), They (agent) moves 5% of their income (patient) to charity (recipient), and the charity receives it. This sense of give can be represented in figure 2.18.

![Figure 2.18](image)

Figure 2.18  The shared conception of give (give-I)

In both give-II (c) and (d), the agent is not a human being. In sentence (c), the agent is a computer program, and in sentence (d), it is the first chapter of the book. In sentence (c), computer program (agent) moves trouble (patient) to us (recipient). In sentence (d), the first chapter (agent) moves a broad outline of the topic (patient). The recipient is not in the sentence (d). Give-II is different from give-I in this respect. The sense of give-II is similar to that of give-I.

In give-III, the patient is not a physical object. In sentence (e), the
patient is emotion. *He* (agent) causes *us* (recipient) to receive a *shock* (patient). In sentence (f), the patient is time. *The judge* (agent) causes *her* (recipient) to receive the judgment of a term in prison for *two years* (patient). This is the only difference of give-I.

![Figure 2.19 The conception of give-II](image)

![Figure 2.20 The conception of give-III](image)

The verb *give* has one central sense and two related senses. They are related to one another, and they can be represented as a following network with the link types:
**Figure 2.21** The sense network of *give*

give-I—give-II: metaphorical extension of the agent
give-I—give-III: metaphorical extension of the patient

3. Discussion

Each of the four verbs *take, get, bring* and *give* has a central sense as follows:

- **take**  
  A moves P to R, R receives P (A=R)

- **get**  
  P comes into R’s dominion, R receives P

- **bring**  
  A moves with P to D

- **give**  
  A moves P to R, R receives P (A≠R)

In these central senses, the agent is a human being, the patient is a physical object, and the recipient is a human being. Each of the verbs has the sense network that the senses of a verb are related to one another. These central senses except that of *get* have the similar sense, that is, the agent moves the patient (to the recipient or the destination). They also have the different senses from one another in how the participants act or...
move. Table 3.1 summarizes the central senses of the four verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APR</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>RM</th>
<th>A=P</th>
<th>A=R</th>
<th>PatO</th>
<th>PatD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>take</td>
<td>AP(R)</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get</td>
<td>(A)PR</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>?(A)</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bring</td>
<td>AP(R)</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>±</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give</td>
<td>AP(R)</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>(−)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 3.1, the patients of the four central senses change the location. The four verbs are synonymous with one another in focusing on the patient changing the location. They are also synonymous with one another in focusing on the recipient not changing the location and on the agent not being the patient.

In the verbs take, get and give, the agent does not change the location. The verbs take, get and give are synonymous with one another in this respect. However, for the verb bring, the agent changes the location. The verbs take, get and give are antonymous with the verb bring in this respect.

The verb take has the sense of the agent being identical with the recipient. This sense is not in those of the verb get, bring and give. The verb take is antonymous with the other verbs in this respect.

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6 Each abbreviated word means the following: APR (which participant roles are profiled in the sentence): AM, PM and RM (whether the agent/patient/recipient moves or changes the agent’s/patient’s/recipient’s location during act): A=P and A=R (whether agent and patient/agent and recipient are the same person or the same thing): PatO and PatD (the place where the patient belongs to at the beginning /ending of the event.)

7 The verb get profiles the agent in the ditransitive construction.
4. Conclusion

In this paper I applied the lexical network theory to not one polysemous word but four polysemous words which are related as synonymy and antonymy. I argued that a verb take has one central sense and four minimal variants, get has three minimal variants, bring has five minimal variants, and give has two minimal variants. All minimal variants of each verb are related to the central sense. All the senses are related to one another, and they can be represented as a network with the link types. When we focus on some of the four verbs in terms of the similarity, they are related to one another as synonym. On the other hand, when we focus on some of them in terms of the difference, they are related to one another as antonym. This paper provides some clear reasons why we say “give and take” or “bring and take” as antonym.

Reference


