Fictive Motion

- A common assumption
  As a device for reporting on the nature of the world around us, language is used primarily for the direct description of events and situations. The principal nominal and relation elements of a clause refer specifically to actual individuals and an actual relationship in which they participate. (from Langacker, 1997)

- One of many exceptions: Fictive or Virtual Motion

- The virtual motion is used to “build up” the conception of a stable situation (Langacker 1997)
Fictive Motion

Talmy, 1996

• Oriented Paths

(1) The snake is lying away from the light.

• Pattern Paths

(2) As I painted, (a line of) paint spots
    slowly progressed across the floor.
    (vs. ants slowly progressed...)

• Frame-Relative Motion

(3) I sat in the car and watched the scenery
    rush past me. (vs. ... in the movie-set
    car)
Fictive Motion

• Advent Paths

(4) The palm trees clustered together around the oasis. (vs. children clustered...)

• Access Paths

(5) The vacuum cleaner is down the hall, around the corner, behind the clotheshamper.

• Coextension Paths

(6) The fence zigzags from the plateau to the valley. (vs. I zigzagged...)
Virtual Change

- Virtual motion is just a special case of the broader phenomenon of *virtual change* (Langacker, 1997)

- Role vs. value

  (7) a. His newspaper column grew longer every week.

  b. The trees got shorter at higher altitudes.

  c. The water got deeper as he swam away from the shore.
Virtual Change

- Such expressions always presuppose a “viewer” (conceptualizer) and a “viewing arrangement” (vantage point, domain, ...)

(8) The telephone poles are rushing by at 80 miles per hour.

(9) a. There was a house every now and then through the valley.

       b. There is a house every now and then through the valley.
Qualia Structure

- We have seen that verbs and constructions can affect how the entities over which they predicate are interpreted.

- But there is also evidence that salient information associated with noun meanings can affect how the verb is interpreted.
• Recall that adjectives are not always *intersective*
  
  – the female suspect
  – the alleged suspect

• Evaluative adjectives
  
  – a fast typist: one who types quickly
  – a fast car: one which can move quickly
  – a fast waltz: one with a fast tempo
  – a fast highway: one on which one can drive quickly
The Structure of Qualia (Pustejovsky, 1991)

- Constitutive Role: the relation between an object and its constituents, or proper parts
  - Material, weight, etc.

- Formal Role: that which distinguishes the object within a larger domain
  - Orientation, magnitude, shape, color, etc.
Qualia Structure

The Structure of Qualia (Pustejovsky, 1991)

- Telic Role: purpose and function of an object
  - Purpose that an agent has in performing an act
  - Built-in function or aim that specifies certain activities

- Agentive Role: factors involved in the origin or “bringing about” of an object
  - Creator, natural kind vs. artifact, etc.
Qualia Structure

- Evaluative adjectives again
  - a fast typist: one who types quickly
  - a fast car: one which can move quickly
  - a fast waltz: one with a fast tempo
  - a fast highway: one on which one can drive quickly

- Information about the noun – what it’s used for, what scales it lies on, etc. – determines the manner in which we interpret and adjective like ‘fast’ (or ‘good’, etc.)

- Salience of this type of information determines the manner in which such phrases are interpreted
Qualia Structure

• So-called “light verbs”

(10) a. John began the novel.
    b. Susan had a cup of coffee.
    c. Sue enjoyed the song.

• Compare with:

(11) a. ?? John finished the rock.
    b. ?? Mary enjoyed the dirt.
Qualia Structure

• An (oversimplistic) qualia for ‘novel’:

\[ \text{novel}(x) \]

Constitutive: \( \text{narrative}(x) \)

Form: \( \text{book}(x) \)

Telic: \( \text{read}(x) \)

Agentive: \( \text{write}(x) \)

• Telic and agent components can result in ambiguities

(12) a. John began the novel.

b. John began reading the novel.

c. John began writing the novel.
**Qualia Structure**

- An (oversimplistic) qualia for ‘door’:

  \[ \text{door}(x,y) \]
  
  Constitutive: \( \text{aperture}(y) \)
  
  Form: \( \text{phys-obj}(x) \)
  
  Telic: \( \text{pass-through}(y) \)
  
  Agentive: \( \text{artifact}(x) \)

- Two senses are inherently relational; the qualia captures this polysemy

(13) a. Mary painted the door.
    
    b. Mary walked through the door.
**Qualia Structure**

- How many meanings for ‘bake’?

(14) a. John baked the potato.
   (change of state)
   b. John baked the cake. (creation)

- This difference can be generated by the qualia for ‘potato’ and ‘cake’
  - potatoes are natural kinds, created by growing
  - cakes are artifacts, *created by baking*

- From the *cospecification* of information between verb and noun, one need not posit two distinct meanings of *bake*
Another problem for compositionality: Adjectives that appear to predicate adverbially over an entire proposition

(15) a. An occasional sailor walks by on the weekend.
    b. Caution: may contain an occasional pit (notice on a box of prunes)

But consider:

(16) a. John had his usual cigarette this morning.
    b. John missed his usual cigarette this morning.