Asymmetry in English multi-verb sequences

A corpus-based approach

John Newman and Sally Rice
University of Alberta

1.   Introduction

One way of approaching the study of asymmetrical events is through an examination of multi-verb sequences. In this paper, we focus on a certain type of multi-verb sequence in English – what we will refer to throughout as a '*V and V* construction', consisting of two verbs linked with *and*, without further intervening material. This seems a natural way to delimit the scope of asymmetry such that the concept can still be profitably investigated, albeit in a relatively restricted manner. We will explore asymmetry as it manifests itself in the properties of the verbs occupying the first and second positions of the *V and V* construction (designated as V1 and V2 respectively), as well as whether the two events are interpreted as unfolding simultaneously or sequentially. An advantage of focusing on such a narrowly defined construction type, consisting of no more than two coordinated verbs, is that it establishes a uniquely clear and simple basis for a study of asymmetry. Furthermore, delimiting the object of study to the *V and V* construction allows us to readily exploit a corpus-based approach to the collection of the data.

The sequence *V and V*, as an object of study in its own right, attracts little attention in most syntactic approaches to English grammar (though see the discussion of this construction in Francis, Hunston, and Manning 1996: 122–124, as well as the corpus-based studies of the specific *go and V* construction in Stefanowitsch 2000 and Wulff 2006). Such approaches are, for the most part, concerned with principles which apply as widely as possible rather than with narrowly defined phenomena as an individual construction. Typical of such approaches is Van Valin and LaPolla (1997: 520–523) where *V and V* is not identified or discussed as such in their treatment of syntactic structures, but as a special case of "Conjunction Reduction", which applies to many kinds of conjoined clauses and continues a long history within contemporary linguistics of dealing with conjoined structures. The authors illustrate Conjunction Reduction with the example repeated below as (1).

(1)   *Robin drove out of Phoenix this morning and* pro *will arrive in Atlanta tomorrow.*

Here, Conjunction Reduction applies to the sequence of conjoined clauses and results in a *pro* element – which is not realized overtly – as the subject of the second clause, to be understood as referring to and coindexed with the subject of the first clause, *Robin*. While this is a perfectly reasonable way of analyzing (1), it does not accord any special significance to the *V and V* construction. However, English *V and V* sequences are more constrained in terms of their morphological possibilities than the example in (1), in which the two verbs appear in a past tense and future tense, respectively, suggests. A quick search of the 10-million-word spoken subcorpus of the British National Corpus (BNC) is instructive in this respect. There are 259 instances of *and will* in this subcorpus, but in not a single case does one find a sequence of V-PAST *and will* V (like *drove and will arrive*). Instead, the BNC corpus search reveals a tighter integration of the verbs in the *V and V* sequences, compared with what the literature on conjoined clauses tells us. This proved to be the case in the corpora we used for our study, too, as described in the following section. Although the modal auxiliaries can occur in conjoined structures in our corpora, they only occur conjoined with another auxiliary (*can and can't do*, *can and will become* etc.). There were no instances of sequences of a full lexical verb conjoined with a modal (*went and might*, *came and will*, etc.). A full appreciation of this fact can only be achieved through a focus on *V and V* sequences as an object of study in their own right.

For linguists with an interest in grammaticalization, a tighter coordinated construction like English *V and V*, and its equivalent in other languages, is also of special interest since multiple verbs in close proximity are often a locus of grammaticalization cross-linguistically. For example, it is this kind of structure which figures in the grammaticalized use of the posture verb 'lie' in Manam (Austronesian), as shown in (2).

(2)   *i-pile-la-be*   *i-eno*
      3SG.REALIS-speak-LIMITER-and   3SG.REALIS-lie
      'He kept talking.'   [Manam; Lichtenberk 2002: 280]

The 'lie' verb *-eno* functions as a frequentative or continuative aspect marker, the latter of which is shown in (2), appearing in a conjoined structure with the main verb *-pile-* 'speak' and *-be* 'and'. A delimiter *-la-* is also part of this construction. Although this Manam example is not a direct equivalent of an English *V and V* construction, it is a relatively tight structure built around conjoined verbs which has given rise to the grammaticalized use of *eno*. In English, too, the *V and V* construction is a site for grammaticalization, as we shall see.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1299–1305), in their discussion of coordination, acknowledge the role that lexical items can play in determining different subcategories of coordination. Of most relevance to the present discussion is their subcategory of "Asymmetric Constructions", which is understood as the coordination of two elements

where the two halves cannot be reversed without a change of meaning, as in their example repeated here as (3).

(3)   *I fell off the ladder and broke my leg.*

Since *I broke my leg and fell off the ladder* would refer to a different situation with the events in a different relation to each other, (2) is asymmetric. While one can understand 'asymmetry' in the *V and V* construction in the temporal or logical sense used by Huddleston and Pullum, we use the term here to refer to the different lexical preferences evident in the V1 and V2 positions and a concomitant restriction on the ways in which the events coded by the *V and V* construction are interpreted. This way of approaching asymmetry is consistent with our preferred methodology of working with spoken and written corpora. Corpus techniques allow the investigation of lexical usage and pragmatic inference in this construction, though they do not by themselves yield the kinds of results about asymmetry à la Huddleston and Pullum (which, of course, require manipulation of the sentence and decontextualized acceptability judgments by speakers).

The questions we address in this study of the English *V and V* construction are: (1) What kinds of verbs occur in the V1 and V2 positions? (2) How are the two verbs in the *V and V* construction integrated semantically? (3) Are there specialized meanings which arise in the *V and V* construction, beyond what the individual meanings of the verbs might suggest? We begin, however, with a discussion of the corpus-based methodology we employ.

2.   Corpus methodology

Our approach involves a combination of 'corpus-based' and 'corpus-illustrated' techniques, as distinguished by Tummers, Heylen, and Geeraerts (2005). The 'corpus-based' technique is typified by a strongly data-driven approach, relying upon quantitative analysis applied to a whole corpus; a 'corpus-illustrated' approach, on the other hand, utilizes a corpus as a source of examples to help illustrate one's position. We begin with a corpus-based approach to discovering the types and tokens of verbs appearing in the English *V and V* construction in Section 3. In Section 4 we use a corpus-illustrated approach to assist us in discussing semantic details of certain sub-types of the *V and V* construction.

Two corpora of New Zealand English were used in this study: the Wellington Written Corpus (WC) and the Wellington Spoken Corpus (WSC). The WC consists of one million words and is designed along the same lines as the Brown Corpus of written American English (1961) and the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen corpus (LOB) of written British English (1961), but covering the years 1986–1990. The WSC is also one million words and consists of spoken New Zealand English collected in the years 1988 to 1994. Although the Wellington corpora are much smaller than some corpora currently

available, such as the British National Corpus, they have the advantage of being well-balanced in terms of the representation of written and spoken forms of the language, are drawn from the same larger population group (New Zealand), and reflect roughly the same time period. They are also small enough for an analyst to undertake a comprehensive examination of all occurrences of the *V and V* construction. We identified all *and* occurrences in the two corpora and then manually identified and tagged sequences of *V and V*, such as *sing and dance*, *sang and danced*, *sung and danced*, etc.[1] We excluded the copula (as in *came and was surprised*) and auxiliaries (as in *can and will become*), but we included verb particles as part of the V category (as in *come in and wait*, *came and sat down*). Proceeding in this way, we found ourselves working with *V and V* structures in which each of the two Vs shared the same tense and aspect marking (past and past, present and present, etc.).

Table 1 summarizes the frequencies of the *V and V* construction in the two corpora, broken down by part of speech (following the CLAWS5 tagset).[2] While the overall occurrence of *V and V* is comparable between the two corpora (1375 in the WC, 1475 in the WSC), there are marked differences for certain parts of speech or inflectional categories.[3] Thus, coordinated infinitival forms (as in *to come and go*) and base forms (as in *they come and go, will come and go*) occur more than twice as frequently in the WSC compared with the WC.

Table 1. Frequency of V and V in the Wellington corpora by CLAWS5 tag. Shading indicates the greater frequency of occurrence of a tag class.

	WC	WSC
VVI (infinitive)	328	692
VVB (base)	113	208
VVZ (3Sg present)	90	64
VVD (simple past)	325	267
VVG (*-ing*)	248	147
VVN (past participle)	271	97
Total	**1375**	**1475**

---

1. The WC is tagged for part of speech but we preferred to rely on our own line-by-line inspection of *and* hits to identify flanking verbs.

2. Lancaster University's CLAWS5 tagset was chosen since it is the well-known part-of-speech coding system used for the British National Corpus.

3. While the discussion of *V and V* in Francis et al. (1996: 122-124) captures some key properties of this construction, it nevertheless fails to differentiate the inflectional classes and the relative frequencies of these classes.

Even before we consider the actual lexical forms that occur in the two V positions in the *V and V* construction, we are able to establish an interesting difference, i.e., asymmetry, in terms of the number of lemma types occurring in each position. We arrive at lemmas by generalizing across the inflectional categories, so that *come*, *comes*, *coming*, and *came*, for example, count as instances of a single COME lemma. We then count all tokens of the COME lemma as one lemma type. The more lemma types one finds in a text or wordlist, the more lexical diversity there is. Figure 1 summarizes the results from adding all of the distinct lemma types in each corpus, as well as for the combined corpora. Both overall and in the separate corpora, there are more lemma types in the V2 position than V1. Put another way, the V1 position draws its verbs from a smaller lexicon than does the V2 position. This asymmetry is reminiscent of the discrepancy one finds between the auxiliary and main verb positions in English, with far fewer auxiliary choices than main verbs.
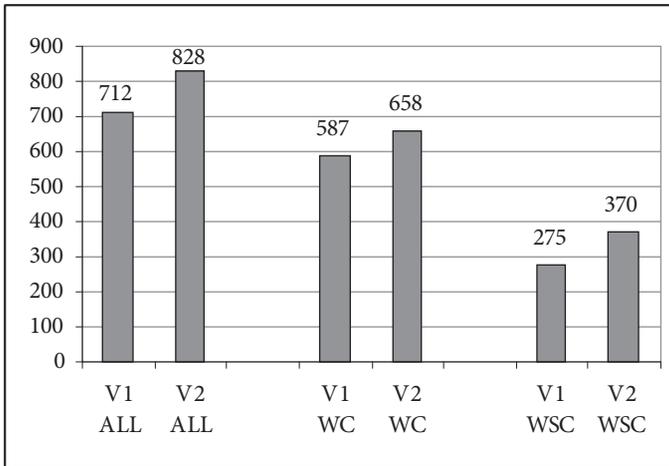

Figure 1. Frequencies of lemma types for V1 and V2 in the two Wellington corpora (WC, WSC) and their frequencies (ALL) in the combined corpus.

3.   Verbs occurring in the English *V and V* construction

We begin with a discussion of the *V1 and V2* sequences and then consider the V1 and V2 positions separately. To gain an overall appreciation of the lexical items involved, we first consider lexical items at the lemma level and postpone discussion of these items by inflectional tag until later.

3.1   V and V *sequences*

Table 2 lists the most frequent *V and V* sequences in the WC and WSC corpora. As noted above, the WSC has more tokens and fewer types of *V and V* sequences, hence the larger number of tokens per type that we see in the WSC sequences in this table.

Table 2. Most frequent lemmatized *V and V* sequences in the Wellington corpora (WC and WSC)

V *and* V in WC > 2 tokens		V *and* V in WSC > 6 tokens	
COME AND GO	17	GO AND SEE	59
READ AND WRITE	9	GO AND GET	51
COME AND HAVE	7	GO AND HAVE	43
COME AND SEE	6	GO AND DO	36
LOOK AND SEE	6	TRY AND GET	30
CRY AND CRY	5	COME AND SAY	27
RISE AND FALL	5	COME AND SEE	18
GO AND HAVE	4	COME AND HAVE	17
GO AND PLAY	4	GO AND SIT	15
SCREAM AND SCREAM	4	COME AND GO	13
ARREST AND CHARGE	3	GO AND LOOK	12
COME AND ASK	3	WAIT AND SEE	12
COME AND GET	3	GO AND VISIT	11
COME AND GIVE	3	GO AND BUY	10
COME AND LOOK	3	COME AND DO	9
COME AND PLAY	3	COME AND GET	9
COME AND SIT	3	RING AND SAY	9
CONSTRUCT AND TEST	3	TRY AND DO	9
GO AND GET	3	GO AND LIVE	8
GO AND TELL	3	TURN AND SAY	8
KNOW AND UNDERSTAND	3	COME AND SIT	7
LIVE AND DIE	3	COME AND STAY	7
LOAD AND UNLOAD	3	GO AND FIND	7
SAY AND DO	3	GO AND PUT	7
SMILE AND NOD	3	GO AND WORK	7
WALK AND WALK	3	TRY AND FIND	7

Properties of each verb position will be discussed in following sections, but there are already interesting observations to be made about the sequences presented in Table 2. For a start, we see repetitions in a number of cases (CRY AND CRY, SCREAM AND SCREAM,

WALK AND WALK) in the WC, but not in the WSC. In general, more verb types are repeated in spoken language, so it is of some interest that this particular kind of repetition occurs more often in the written register, at least amongst the most frequently occurring *V and V* types. Presumably, modifying devices like *really, a lot,* and *all the time* are preferred as ways of conveying greater degrees, or longer duration, of events in the spoken language. Some other lexical bundles in the WC are typical of a more learned or formal style (ARREST AND CHARGE, CONSTRUCT AND TEST, KNOW AND UNDERSTAND). Of interest in a discussion of asymmetry are the pairings of different kinds of antonyms. Clearly, there is the deictic antonymy of COME AND GO evident in both the WC and the WSC – its inverse, GO AND COME, is conspicuously absent. However, there is a variety of other antonym types in the WC, absent in the WSC list in Table 2: RISE AND FALL, LIVE AND DIE, LOAD AND UNLOAD. The conjunction of such antonyms using *and* in English would appear, then, to be a feature more associated with written usage rather than spoken language. Our observations here are, of course, based on the most frequently occurring *V and V* types as listed in Table 2 and one would need to investigate all these types, including the uniquely occurring pairs, to fully research this idea. Antonymous *V and V* expressions do occur in the WSC (e.g., OPENING AND CLOSING), but not with a token frequency which makes them evident in Table 2.

3.2   The verbs in position V1

Table 3 lists the most frequent lemmas in the V1 position in both corpora, minus any verb particle (e.g., the UP of GET UP).[4] We show the top 10 or so lemmas in each corpus, ensuring that all the lemmas with equal frequency of occurrence (e.g., READ, SAY, and SMILE in the WC; STOP and WALK in the WSC) are included. The first and most striking fact in Table 3 is the dominance of the two verbs COME and GO in both corpora. We have not attempted to differentiate sub-senses of these two verbs in the corpora, but we do recognize that there can be differences in the way these they are interpreted, as discussed in Section 4. Even so, there is invariably some degree of physical motion associated with the use of COME and GO, as used in the V1 position (as opposed to the copula use in *go crazy* or the fictive motion sense as in *the road goes to the mountains*).[5] We see, then, that the notion of physical motion plays a significant role as the V1 of the

---

4.   Our interest in this paper lies primarily in the asymmetry in the V1 and V2 positions of *V and V* sequences. Consequently, we are not concerned here with whether or not the verbs in this construction occur more, or less, frequently than one would expect, given their frequencies outside of this construction. Wulff (2006: 110-115) discusses the *go and V* construction in the BNC using the collostructional technique advocated by Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003) which does take into account overall frequencies of the verbs and the construction type in a corpus.

5.   This claim needs to be qualified in light of the interpretation of some GO *and V* combinations discussed in Section 4.3, such as *go and prove me wrong*. Still, the overwhelming majority of instances of GO as V1 imply some kind of motion to a new location.

V and V construction. Between them, the two lemmas account for 691/1475 (= 46.8%) of all instances of the construction in the WSC, demonstrating a rather special role for these two verbs as the V1 in spoken usage. As we discuss in Section 4, there are some colloquial features which attach to GO as V1, in addition to indicating physical motion, and it is these additional properties in the colloquial style that help to explain the preponderance of GO in the WSC.

Table 3. Most frequent V1 lemmas in the Wellington corpora (WC and WSC)

V1 in the WC (>14 tokens)		V1 in the WSC (> 12 tokens)	
COME	80	GO	462
GO	54	COME	229
GET	26	TRY	168
TURN	24	GET	36
STOP	20	SIT	28
STAND	18	TURN	26
TRY	18	RING	21
SIT	16	WAIT	17
READ	15	STAND	15
SAY	15	LOOK	14
SMILE	15	STOP	13
others	1074	WALK	13
		others	433
Total	**1375**	**Total**	**1475**

Apart from COME, GO, and WALK, there are other verbs that are associated with a change in physical position or state, depending upon the particle that might appear with them: GET (UP, DOWN), TURN (ROUND), STOP, SIT (DOWN), STAND (UP). Although we do not report separate results for the particular verb plus verb-particle combinations in these cases, these verbs are predominantly used to indicate a change in position or state, rather than to describe an existing or continuing position or state. As such, they constitute a second, significant class of verb types in the V1 position. Another semantic class that can be established consists of the verbs referring to an activity requiring minimal motion and no change in location: SMILE, SAY, READ, SIT, STAND, LOOK, WAIT. None of these verbs occurs amongst the top three in either corpus, but they are a recognizable subclass within the table. TRY also occupies a special place in this construction and we return to this verb in Section 4.

  Figure 2 presents a finer-grained breakdown of the frequencies of COME and GO by the most common inflectional tags (base, infinitive, and past tense forms) in the V1

position. The pie-charts clearly show the consistent predominance of COME and GO in the WSC, compared with the WC in these categories. For these parts of speech, COME and GO together account for more than half of the tokens in the V1 in the WSC, with GO making up the larger percentage of occurrences in each case. This distribution shows that the class of motion verbs, consisting of COME, GO, and any other motion verbs which happen to occur in the V1 position but are not listed in Table 2, accounts for the majority of verbs in the V1 position for these most frequent inflectional categories.
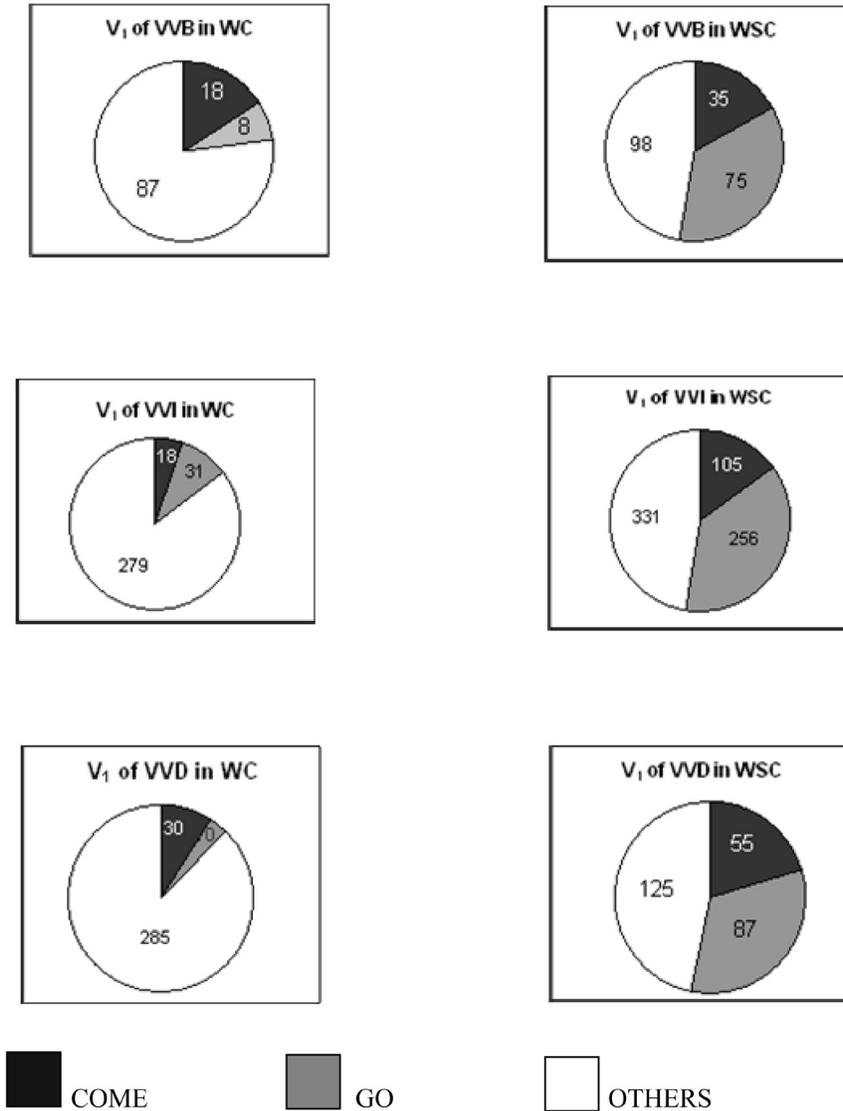

Figure 2. Distribution of COME, GO and other verbs as V1 in selected parts of speech

What we find in English parallels tendencies observed about 'come' and 'go' verbs in other languages. Pawley and Lane (1998), for example, report that these two verbs are the most common lexical items in serial verb constructions in Kalam (Papuan), reflecting exactly the same preference as found for English, even if the Kalam facts are not reported in the same quantified way in which we report the English results. The availability of large-scale corpora for major languages, like English, and their relative unavailability for lesser known languages means that it is less likely that observed tendencies will be supported with quantified results. In other languages, 'come' and 'go' have an even more privileged role to play in serial verb constructions. In Kaititj (Arandic, Australia), these two verbs are the only ones which enter into a serial verb construction (Foley and Olson 1985). We may see here how the *probabilistic* behaviour of 'come' and 'go' verbs in English (as supported by our corpus linguistic study) and Kalam corresponds to the *categorical* behaviour of these same verbs in Kaititj.[6]

3.3   The verbs in position V2

Table 4 lists the most frequent lexical items in the V2 position. Consistent with the general observations made in Section 2 about lemma types in the two corpora, we see in Table 4 fewer tokens per type in the spoken register. In addition, one can see a greater lexical diversity of V2 types compared with V1 types, again as alluded to in Section 2. The number of tokens in the "others" category, covering all the less frequently occurring V2 types, is also indicative of this greater diversity. The discrepancy in lexical diversity is particularly evident in the spoken register: 837 V2 tokens in the "others" category (Table 4), compared with 433 V1 tokens in this category (Table 3). V2 tokens are spread across a far greater number of lexical items than the V1 tokens are.

Turning to the specific details of the V2 position, one immediately notices the absence of COME altogether in this table. GO does occur, but far less frequently than it does in the V1 position. In the case of its frequency in the WSC, GO occurs just 48 times compared with 462 times as V1. Nor do we find other verbs of motion, like WALK, in this table. Clearly, change of physical location is not a dominant semantic property of the verbs in the V2 position as it is in the V1 position. On the other hand, the semantic class of verbs referring to activities involving stationary position rather than a change of place is significant: SEE, LOOK, SAY, TALK, WRITE. The prevalence of SEE and GET in WSC is noteworthy, representing the two largest V2 types, each consisting of roughly the same number of tokens. They reflect quite natural experiential realities relating to the kinds of activities or purposes associated with motion to a location.

---

6.   Manning (2003: 316) refers to the categorical versus probabilistic facts in terms of *hard* and *soft* constraints: "The same categorical phenomena that are attributed to hard grammatical constraints in some languages continue to show up as soft constraints in other languages." We make the same point for English SIT, STAND, and LIE in Newman and Rice (2004).

Combining the major results obtained from examining the verbs which occupy positions V1 and V2, we are able to establish the major semantic schema associated with the English *V and V* construction. As we have already observed, human motion from one location to another is the dominant semantic category associated with V1 in the three most commonly occurring inflected categories, i.e., base, infinitival, and past tense forms. And it is human activity at a single location which is the dominant semantic category associated with the V2 position. The sequence of human motion from one location to another followed by an activity at the destination must be considered therefore as the single most frequent conceptual complex encoded by the *V and V* construction. Semantically, then, English *V and V* is most strongly associated with the frame 'movement to a location plus subsequent activity' or, expressed more schematically, MOVE (IN ORDER) TO DO.

Table 4. Most frequent V2 lemmas in the Wellington corpora (WC and WSC)

V2 in the WC (>9 tokens)		V2 in the WSC (> 16 tokens)	
GO	30	SEE	107
SEE	19	GET	104
TAKE	18	SAY	86
LOOK	17	HAVE	85
SAY	17	DO	73
TALK	16	GO	48
HAVE	15	LOOK	25
PLAY	15	TALK	25
GET	14	SIT	24
WRITE	12	MADE	23
CHANGE	10	TELL	21
GIVE	10	WORK	17
others	1182	others	837
Total	**1375**	**Total**	**1475**

4. Integrating V1 and V2

We illustrate some of the range of semantic types represented by the *V and V* construction using four specific sub-types. Distinguishing between the sequential versus simultaneous types of concatenation in the *V and V* construction is a familiar tactic in semantic analyses of the construction (see, for example, the discussion in Francis, Hunston, and Manning 1996: 122–124) and we give some attention to this in what

follows. As we shall see, however, categorizing *V and V* merely as signaling a 'sequential' or 'simultaneous' type of integration captures relatively little about the semantic nature of their integration. We particularly focus on GO *and V* because GO is the most common verb in the V1 position in the spoken corpus – where one might expect a more complete range of uses compared with the written corpus. We discuss three sub-types of the GO *and V* construction which serve to illustrate the variation and complexity in terms of how the two predicates in this construction are semantically integrated. The three sequences are: GO *and* TELL, GO *and* VISIT, and GO *and* PROVE ME WRONG. We also discuss the TRY *and* FIND sequence. Clearly, there are other kinds of semantic relationships which can hold between the two predicates of the *V and V* construction. While the four sub-constructions we focus on do not, by any means, exhaust all the semantic possibilities, they are nevertheless instructive.

4.1   GO and TELL

Examples of GO *and* TELL, and other combinations of the same semantic type, are given in (4).

(4)   a.   *and so I should just go and tell them you know* [WSC]
      b.   *if Debbie was going to go and tell them to stop* it [WSC]
      c.   *it'd never occur to him to go and buy it* [WC]
      d.   *Let's go and look at the damage* [WC]
      e.   *Then I went and stood behind the next tree* [WC]

The integration of V1 and V2 in (4) seems relatively straightforward: two events occur in chronological sequence, with the same subject referent for both cases, as is the case with all three GO *and V* types that we are considering. We draw attention, however, to another critical component, a component in fact of all three GO *and V* sub-types: the GO event is a purposeful event, carried out with the intention of performing the event referred to by V2.[7]

The term "complex matrix", as described by Langacker (1991: 4–5), is useful in this context. The term refers to the collection of relevant information about a morpheme drawn from different domains. So, for example, the complex matrix for the noun *knife* includes references to the typical shape of a *knife*, a "cutlery frame" consisting of a certain typical arrangement of a knife, a fork, and spoon, and a "cutting" frame conveying the notion of the typical action associated with *knife* when used as an instrument. Just as there is a complex matrix associated with *knife*, comprised of information from these various domains, so we may also recognize a complex matrix associated with GO. Specifically, the GO complex matrix will make reference to both spatio-temporal and mental domains. The former locates the movement of an entity through

---

space and time and, in the case of GO, will refer to the movement of an entity away from a deictic centre. This spatio-temporal perspective of GO is familiar from discussions in the literature – see, for example, the diagram of GO in Langacker (1991: 6). However, another domain in addition to this spatio-temporal domain needs to be recognized: an "intentional" domain representing the realities of human sentience and volition. In this domain, persons may have, and typically will have, intentions to carry out future acts. The complex matrix of GO consists, therefore, of the integration of information from both of these domains, the spatio-temporal and the intentional. The end result is not just the uniting of, but indeed the blending of notions of physical motion and psychological purpose inside the *V and V* construction in English.

We offer a very schematic representation of the GO *and* TELL construction in Figure 2, adapting some of the notation employed by Langacker (1987, 1991). The oval shapes represent the two predicates of the construction, abstracting away from the detailed relationships which hold within each predicate (e.g., movement of an entity away from a deictic centre in the case of GO, the verbal interaction between two entities in the case of TELL). TELL is placed after GO in this diagram reflecting the temporal sequence of the two events. Each predicate contains a subject argument, indicated by the small empty circles. The identity of the subject referents of the two predicates is expressed by the dotted line joining the two circles. The arrow leading from the subject of GO to the subject of TELL is used to express the fact that the subject referent of GO has the intention of engaging in the second event, involving telling something to someone. Although it is possible to explicate the semantic relationships between the two predicates in the *V and V* construction without recourse to any graphic representation, we find it helpful to refer to such graphic representations in order to highlight the key semantic properties of the construction with different lexical choices for the verbs. The representations in Figure 3 and the Figures associated with the discussions in the following sections communicate in a relatively direct way various semantic properties of interest in this construction, e.g., the distinctness or simultaneity of events, the intentionality of the subject referent, and the semantic contribution made by each predicate.
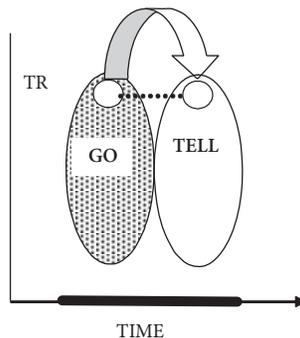

Figure 3. Representation of GO *and* TELL integrating spatio-temporal and intentional domains

4.2   GO and VISIT

In (5), we see examples of the *go and visit* construction.

(5)   a.   *I'm going to contact her arrange to go and visit her and so on* [WSC]
     b.   *well if I get a ticket to um just go and visit some of my cousins* [WSC]
     c.   *and then the next day go up and visit the other two* [WSC]
     d.   *I went out and visit the guy I used to work for* [WSC]
     e.   *Sharon went and visited the flat* [WSC]

The examples in (5) may appear, at first glance, to involve the same kind of integration of predicates as we saw for *go and* TELL, i.e., sequentiality together with intentionality. The combination illustrated in (5), however, presents a different kind of semantics. For a start, consider typical definitions of the verb VISIT, as shown in (6).

(6)   a.   **visit**. *v.t.* to go to see (a person, place, etc.) in the way of friendship, cere-mony, duty, business, curiosity or the like. [The Macquarie Dictionary]
     b.   **visit**. *v.t.* go or come to see (person, place, etc. or abs.) as act of friendship or ceremony, on business or for a purpose. [Concise Oxford Dictionary]

Note how in these definitions a verb of motion, GO or COME, is deployed as part of the definition of VISIT. This seems entirely natural and correct. This is quite different from TELL, where the idea of movement to another location is not at all an inherent part of its meaning. Using Langacker's (1987 :183–189) terms, we could say that the *base* of the predicate VISIT includes movement to a location as well as the planned encounter with someone at that location, while the *profile* focuses just on the encounter. Thus, VISIT already subsumes semantically the GO predicate in *go and visit* and needs to be represented accordingly, as in Figure 4. In this figure, the circular shape representing VISIT includes within it the representation of GO.
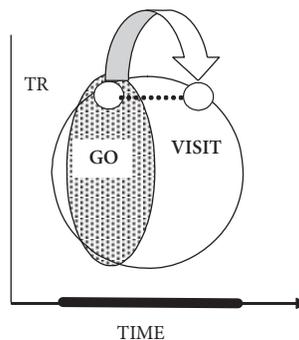

Figure 4. Representation of *go and visit* integrating spatio-temporal and intentional domains

Additional examples which, arguably, are similar to the *go and visit* type of integration are given in (7).

> (7) a. *are you gonna go and pick Raewyn and Benny up* [WSC]
>   b. *they go and see a solicitor* [WSC]
>   c. *and went off and disappeared* [WSC]
>   d. *I'll have to go and fetch him, Rosey* [WC]
>   e. *The team prays for two hours before they go and return later to pray again.* [WC]

In (7a), the idea of picking someone up (as used here) implies a familiar scenario of driving to a location where someone is waiting for that driver and the driver then bringing the person somewhere else in the car. As with visit, pick up makes reference to a larger scenario in which the actual encounter with another person is the focus. In (7b), see is used in a particular way, comparable to visit in that it refers to a larger scenario of making an appointment, traveling to an office, and meeting with a solicitor. In (7c), the act of disappearing already subsumes the motion of the go predicate. In (7d), fetch implies a motion to some place. In (7e), the return predicate already subsumes motion to the location from which one moves back to the original location.

4.3   GO and PROVE ME WRONG

We now turn to examples of the kind illustrated in (8) which we will refer to as the *go and prove me wrong* type. This subtype of *go and V* is remarkable because the sense of precipitating motion suggested by V1 can be heavily attenuated if not effectively non-existent.

> (8) a. *go on go and prove me wrong now* [WSC]
>   b. *the silly council went and sprayed the side of the banks* [WSC]
>   c. *so she went and moved us up to new Plymouth* [WSC]
>   d. *and then a day later he went and wrote this poem* [WSC]
>   e. *now different people have gone and sold their houses* [WSC]
>   f. *the punters they went and paid forty odd dollars* [WSC]

The examples in (8) illustrate a usage found mainly in a colloquial, conversational style, as suggested by some of the rhetorical devices which appear in these examples: *Go on…!, the silly council, so she…*etc. These devices point to a common, breezy narrative style common in conversation. In all of these cases, some kind of movement to a different location may be involved, though more prominent is the intent to carry out the activity predicated by V2. Thus, the sense of motion directed away from a deictic centre seems far less salient than the idea that some kind of non-specified activity is undertaken, sometimes with a hint of determinedness on the part of the subject referent, leading to the subsequent event. Figure 5 represents this aspect of the *go and prove me wrong* subtype by showing the first predicate as act (non-specific). The

intentionality underlying the action of V2 is present, but the idea of physical motion leading to that action is very weak indeed.
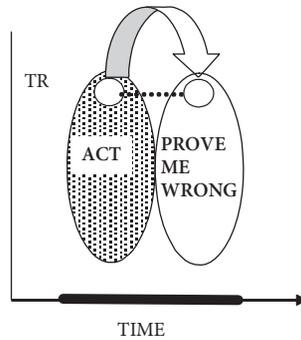

Figure 5. Representation of GO *and* PROVE ME WRONG integrating spatio-temporal and intentional domains

The semantics associated with this type of GO *and* V construction are such that the contribution of GO in the V1 position amounts to little more than indicating that an intention or determinedness to proceed with V2 exists, as in *She went and moved us up to New Plymouth*. As such, the GO *and* V construction in these cases could be seen as a particular kind of purposive construction, suggesting characteristics ranging from intentionality and purposefulness to determinedness and resoluteness on the part of the person undertaking the activity of V2. The evolution of 'go' morphemes to purposive markers is well known, as documented in part by Heine and Kuteva (2002: 163–165), who provide a number of examples from different language families of a change of a lexical verb 'go' to a functional gram marking 'purpose'. Their 'purpose' label covers a variety of senses and morpheme types relating to a purpose, e.g., a 'purpose clause marker' in Tepo (Niger-Congo), a 'subordinating conjunction of goal, purpose, etc.' in Rama (Amerind), etc. They also report a sense of 'speaker determination' as part of the extension of 'go' predicates to purposive markers in some creole languages.

4.4   TRY and V

Table 5 summarizes the most frequent types of TRY *and* V in the corpora, with the construction occurring far more frequently in the spoken register than the written (see Table 1). One can see in Table 5, even in the absence of the larger context, that the construction often occurs with V2 verb types involving activities associated with effort: ANALYSE, ASSIST, CONJURE, IMPROVE, RECTIFY, LEARN. In many cases, of course, it is difficult to fully appreciate the nature of V2 without the larger context (as in the case

of TRY AND GET, TRY AND DO, TRY AND MAKE) and a closer examination of the context is needed in these cases.

Table 5. Most frequent lemmatized TRY *and* V sequences in both corpora (WC and WSC)

TRY *and* V in WC (all tokens)		TRY *and* V in WSC (tokens > 2)	
TRY AND TELL	1	TRY AND GET	30
TRY AND ADOPT	1	TRY AND DO	9
TRY AND ANALYSE	1	TRY AND FIND	7
TRY AND ASSIST	1	TRY AND MAKE	6
TRY AND BLAME	1	TRY AND GO	4
TRY AND CONJURE	1	TRY AND PUT	4
TRY AND FIND	1	TRY AND SEE	4
TRY AND GET	1	TRY AND LEARN	3
TRY AND IMPROVE	1	TRY AND PLAY	3
TRY AND KEEP	1	TRY AND SAY	3
TRY AND MAKE	1	TRY AND TAKE	3
TRY AND PEEK	1		
TRY AND RECTIFY	1		
TRY AND SEE	1		
TRY AND SHOW	1		
TRY AND TALK	1		
TRY AND WRITE	1		

The examples in (9) illustrate the TRY *and* V construction in both the spoken and written corpora, with additional context.

(9)   a.   *they try and intimidate you they try and see where they can get with you* [WSC]
　　　b.   *sort of chap is that they always try and clinch their argument by saying* [WSC]
　　　c.   *best to avoid that weekend and try and go for the May date* [WSC]
　　　d.   *somehow we have got to try and keep control of our members* [WC]
　　　e.   *in two minds about whether or not to try and adopt a son* [WC]

In the TRY AND V construction, there is a tight semantic integration of the two verbs, similar to WANT TO V. The act of trying, like the state of wanting, is always directed towards some other activity or thing (or possibly thing in the case of wanting). It is possible to construct a kind of sequential combination of repeated trying, followed by execution of the activity aimed for, e.g., *She tried very hard, but in the end she was*

unable to complete the marathon. But in the examples in (9) and other TRY *and V* sequences in the corpora, there is no such clear separation of the two halves, semantically. In effect, they are like the TRY *to V* construction. Sometimes, TRY *and V* seems to carry a nuance suggesting slightly more certainty or confidence about the outcome than TRY *to V*. So, for example, *We have got to try and keep control of our members* seems a little more insistent that the addressees should ensure the outcome than *We have got to try to keep control of our members*. We represent the TRY *and V* construction in Figure 6 showing the V2 predicate as contained within the semantic scope of TRY.
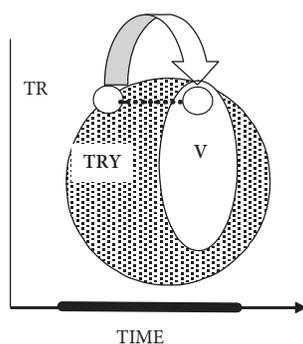

Figure 6. Representation of TRY *and* V integrating spatio-temporal and intentional domains

The distribution of TRY *and V* is heavily skewed both across corpora and across the inflectional categories, as seen in Table 6. It is far more prevalent in the spoken corpus than the written, where it would be prescriptively avoided. Note also its absence in the VVZ and VVD categories altogether. It does however appear in one instance in the VVG category. The particular semantics associated with TRY *and V* and its restriction to certain inflectional categories encourage us to think of TRY in this construction as becoming a kind of phrasal auxiliary marker indicating inception.

Table 6. TRY *and V* across corpora and inflectional categories

	WC	WSC
try and VVI	16	130
try and VVB	2	36
trying and VVG	0	1*
tries and VVZ	0	0
tried and VVD	0	0

*Ted kept trying and scraping all this paint off the inside

5.   Conclusion

There are multiple asymmetries evident in the English *V and V* construction. There is the chronological priority of V1 over V2 in the sequential type of coordination. This is the kind of asymmetry that Huddleston and Pullum (2002) single out. But there are other asymmetries that can best be observed using corpus-based procedures. Such procedures enabled us to identify more lemma types in the V2 position than in the V1 position (in both spoken and written corpora), a result that is not intuitively obvious and cannot be fully anticipated prior to carrying out a corpus-based study. Another type of asymmetry concerns the semantic profiles of the individual verbs in each position. Even without resorting to a semantic categorization of every single verb in the *V and V* construction, we succeeded in identifying two motion verbs, COME and GO, which together account for the majority of V1 tokens in the most common inflectional categories, whereas we found no comparable presence of these verbs (or other motion verbs) in the V2 position. This led us to identify a schematic meaning of 'human motion from one location to another followed by an activity at the destination' as the dominant meaning associated with the *V and V* construction.[8] However much one might intuit that some kind of sequentiality is present in the *V and V* construction, only a corpus-based approach like the one we have followed permits any degree of confidence in formulating this schema.

It is not uncommon to encounter discussions of sequential vs. simultaneous types of coordination, as with the *V and V* construction. This is a reasonable way to proceed in a semantic analysis of the construction, but as our discussion in Section 4 shows, that taxonomy does not reveal all the intricacies in the nature of the semantic integration of the two predicates. Even with the sequential type of coordination, represented by GO *and V*, we found varying degrees of integration of the predicates, from relatively separate events to relatively unified. The peculiar distribution of the TRY *and V* construction, limited as it is to just some of the inflectional categories, suggests an auxiliary-like status for TRY in this combination, similar to the modal-like future marker that *going to* has become in English in a different construction altogether. Auxiliaries remain the category *par excellence* of asymmetrical or subordinating events in multi-verb sequences, and two of the most prevalent V1 verbs discussed here, GO and TRY, either have become or seem destined to become auxiliarized. Only a close examination of the larger context in each major sub-type of the *V and V* construction has allowed us to appreciate these finer details and empirically establish that, despite the use of the "symmetrical" conjunction *and*, very little symmetry is involved in English *V and V* sequences.

---

8.   Our result about the prevalence of the meaning 'human motion from one location to another followed by an activity at the destination' bears comparison with the result from Stefanowitsch and Rohde (2004) on the prevalence of a goal adverbial phrase with English GO.

References

Foley, W. A. and M. Olson (1985). Clausehood and verb serialization. In J. Nichols and A. C. Woodbury (eds.), *Grammar Inside and Outside the Clause*, pp. 17–60. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Francis, G., S. Hunston, and E. Manning (eds.) (1996). *Collins COBUILD Grammar Patterns 1: Verbs*. London: HarperCollins.

Heine, B. and T. Kuteva (2002). *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*

Huddleston, R. and G. K. Pullum (2002). *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Langacker, R. W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Volume I. Theoretical Prerequisites.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Langacker, R. W. (1991). *Concept, Image, and Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lichtenberk, F. (2002). Posture verbs in Oceanic. In J. Newman (ed.), *The Linguistics of Sitting, Standing, and Lying*, pp. 269–314. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Manning, C. D. (2003). Probabilistic syntax. In: R. Bod, J. Hay, and S. Jannedy (eds.) *Probabilistic Linguistic*s, pp. 289–341. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Newman, J. and J. Lin (2007). The purposefulness of going: A corpus-linguistic study. In J. Walinski, K. Kredens, and S. Gozdz-Roszkowski (eds.), *Corpora and ICT in Language Studies*, pp. 293–308. Lodz Studies in Language, Vol. 13. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Newman, J. and S. Rice (2004). Patterns of usage for English SIT, STAND, and LIE: A cognitively inspired exploration in corpus linguistics. *Cognitive Linguistics* 15: 351–396.

Pawley, A. and J. Lane (1998). From event sequence to grammar: Serial verb constructions in Kalam. In A. Siewierska and J. J. Song (eds.), *Case, Typology, and Grammar: In Honour of Barry J. Blake*, pp. 201–227. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Stefanowitsch, A. (2000). The English *GO*-(PRT)-*AND-VERB* construction. BLS 26: 259–270.

Stefanowitsch, A. and S. Th. Gries (2003). Collostructions: Investigating the interaction between words and constructions. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 8: 209–243.

Stefanowitsch, A. and A. Rohde. (2004). The goal bias in the encoding of motion events. In G. Radden and K.-U. Panther (eds.), *Studies in Linguistic Motivation,* pp. 249–267. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Tummers, J., K. Heylen, and D. Geeraerts (2005). Usage-based approaches in Cognitive Linguistics: A state of the art. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory* 1.2: 225–261.

Van Valin, R. and R. LaPolla (1997). *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wulff, S. (2006). *Go*-V vs. *go-and*-V in English: A case of constructional synonymy? In S. Th. Gries and A. Stefanowitsch (eds.), *Corpora in Cognitive Linguistics: Corpus-Based Approaches to Syntax and Lexis*, pp. 101–125. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.