CHECKLIST FOR VERBS OF SPEAKING*

ADRIENNE LEHRER

Preliminaries remarks

My long-term goal is to compare lexical systems in natural languages, basing my hypotheses on many long-held assumptions, as well as a few recent ones: (1) Languages have equivalent expressive powers, but (2) they may lexicalize concepts somewhat differently. A single word in one language may be expressible as a phrase in another. (3) However, there are universal patterns of lexicalization across languages—the kinds of parameters and semantic notions that get lexicalized do not vary wildly across languages. On the last point, the works of Berlin and Kay on basic terms, Rosch on prototypes, and others following them have been influential. Earlier work that I did on cooking terminology applied these assumptions to a relatively small and manageable domain, and this paper applies these notions to a much larger and more complex semantic domain. Verbs of speaking constitute an interesting set, because the number of lexemes varies so enormously across languages. Whereas English and other Indo-European languages have hundreds of verbs, other languages, such as Navajo and O’odham, are reported to have only a few. However, the languages are probably comparable in expressive power, since the information which is incorporated into English lexemes can be stated syntagmatically in these languages. For example, the Navajo word for whisper can be translated as

(1)  *Bijeeyi’ji’ dah dínísh’ ántii’ “.....” bidííniid*
    *his-ears-into I-put-my-head I-told-him*
    *t’aa hazhó’ógo*
    *very softly*
    *‘Putting my head to his ear I told him very softly “...”’*

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*Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest*
My study is also influenced by Talmy's work on verbs of motion (1985), in which he compares different languages with respect to the patterns of information that get incorporated into lexical items. For example, English frequently incorporates manner of motion, Spanish typically incorporates paths, and Atsugewi, an Amerindian language, incorporates themes. Talmy stresses the fact that it is necessary to examine characteristic patterns of lexemes to arrive at a satisfactory typology; therefore, one must examine a large number of items, not just a few, in order to find the significant generalizations.

The beginning of my study is for English verbs, although the current work can be looked at more as a wishlist of things to investigate; hence, the results below are very preliminary. In recent years many significant studies have appeared, and I have drawn freely from these. Different investigators have been interested in different aspects of such verbs, and one of my goals is to try to pull together various threads of this research. Some of the studies have been concerned mainly with syntax, and not necessarily the syntax of *verba dicendi* (hereafter, VD). What I have wanted to do is collect data on various syntactic and semantic properties of VD and see which properties correlate with and predict other properties.

One reason for looking carefully at the syntax, even though my ultimate goal is lexical meaning, is that it is a good working hypothesis to suppose that syntax and semantics are correlated and that syntactic frames provide clues to lexical meaning. (See Wierzbicka 1988; Pinker 1989). Of course, one must be careful to avoid circularity—of arguing that the semantics must be such and such since the distribution is as it is. In other words, there must be some independent semantic evidence in addition to syntactic evidence. Even if syntactic and semantic correlations can be found, the direction of influence is open to theoretical decision. Does syntax determine semantics? Does semantic determine syntax? Are they mutually influential? Are both reflections of something else? Do different verbs and/or classes of verbs require different explanations?

Another reason for looking carefully at the syntax and semantics involves learnability considerations. Each verb involves many semantic and syntactic facts. For the language learner to acquire all these facts for several hundred verbs is a formidable task. If verbs fall into classes that share clusters of semantic and syntactic properties, then knowing a few things about a verb will enable the learner to predict the rest. Moreover, it begins to explain how and why speakers have judgments about novel uses. (See Pinker 1989, for an extensive discussion on this point.)

My database is around 400 VD in English, and it includes related items, such as verbs of thinking, verbs that are primarily derived from other semantic
domains but which are metaphorically used as VD, and a few verbs which are not really VD at all but which are used in direct speech, such as *blush*, in "*Please don't*", *she blushed*.

One of the methodological problems is that the judgments of acceptability are very subtle, and intuitions are not to be trusted. Since each word has multiple senses, a different sense may be involved in each person's judgment or in one's judgment at different times. In some cases it may be possible to use large corpora to supplement intuitions, a task that future work will address.

**The checklist**

The checklist consists of semantic and syntactic properties of verbs of speaking, and the goal is to look for those properties which are correlated with each other—to see which properties are predictors of other properties, and to see what the clusters of properties might be. What are the semantic properties that predict syntactic properties (or vice versa)? Included in the checklist are the following: Does the verb introduce direct or indirect discourse? Is the verb intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive? What kinds of prepositional complements and adjuncts occur? What kinds of clausal complements are possible? Are there any differences if the matrix clause is negative? What illocutionary speech act does the verb express? Are there asymmetries in the verbal paradigm? Is the verb factive? Is it performatives? In addition, a few other syntactic properties have been examined that are not confined to VD, such as extraction from subject position. However, these verbs provide a corpus for testing various hypotheses that syntactic theories have made. Given the large number of possibilities, correlations were sought only where there was some reason to suspect a connection. In some cases, a correlation was hypothesized but not found, and these will not be discussed.

**English verbs of speaking**

**Verbs that introduce direct speech**

One of the intriguing puzzles is what semantic factors might determine whether a verb can take a direct speech complement. Since most verbs allow direct

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1 As recently as Aronoff (1985, 50) wrote, "one construction . . . which has received little attention from modern syntax is direct discourse. I do not know why so little attention has been paid to this construction, since it is so common . . .". Banfield (1973) is mentioned as an exception. This situation has changed radically, as can be seen from the references.

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speech complements, it may be more profitable to look at those verbs that do not appear in direct speech. Some verbs, e.g., deny and dissuade, incorporate a negative element which means ‘say not’, and there is therefore a semantic clash. For example, consider (2):

(2) *“I am not a crook,” denied Nixon.

Deny reverses the polarity of the proposition, not the utterance expressing it. Notice that (2) does not improve if the not is omitted, since then the sentence violates the requirement that a direct quote reflect what was (or could have been) said.

In general, verbs that incorporate a negative resist direct speech complements (cancel, veto, acquit, renounce, forbid, decline, reject), but syntax may play a role (see below).

Verbs that name conventional (in the sense of Bach–Harnish 1979) or institutional illocutionary acts do not fit well into direct speech pattern:

(3) *“You are Mary Louise,” baptized (christened) the minister.
(4) *“The defendant is innocent,” acquitted the jury.
(5) *“The meeting is over,” adjourned the chairman.

For these performatives, one can appeal to the argument structure of the verbs by saying they do not permit clausal direct objects, but that only pushes the question back further. A speculation here is that words spoken are formulaic or routine and therefore there is no need to present them in direct speech. This is even clearer in cases where the verb simply repeats the formula, resulting in redundancy.

(6) *“Congratulations,” she congratulated (him).
(7) *“I forgive you,” he forgave (her).

Another class of verbs that resist being used to introduce direct speech are those that refer to interactional speech activities, e.g., debate, consult, chat, conspire, discuss, contract, negotiate, gossip, converse. These focus on participation in an activity rather than on content. For these verbs, argument structure provides a more plausible explanation, since many of them are intransitive, and it is reasonable to treat the theme (the quotation) as the direct object.² If the verb is transitive but the theme is not the direct object, direct speech is awkward at best.

² Though this view is plausible, it is not uncontroversial. See Monroe (1982).

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(8) ??“Ladies and Gentlemen,” he addressed the audience.
(9) ??“You’re so beautiful,” he flattered (her).

One interesting problem has to do with the verbs that are not VD at all but which are used, at least in literature, to mark direct speech, such as blush, laugh, pout, as illustrated in (10) and (11):

(10) “You’re too kind,” she blushed.
(11) “I hate you,” he pouted.

One might suppose that such verbs can be used for actions or responses that can accompany speaking, but surely this is not correct. One can speak while eating, reading, watching, etc., but such verbs cannot mark direct speech:

(12) ??“Look at that bird!” she watched.
(13) ??“I like this bread,” he ate.

Some of the allowable verbs can be treated as manner of speaking verbs, such as laugh and giggle; others, meaning ‘speak while blushing’ or ‘speak while pouting’ suggest that the response itself is communicative (although not necessarily intentionally so).

Moreover, the possibility of non-VD being pushed into the category of VD is open and depends on finding a plausible context. Consider the following dialogue between a husband and wife over breakfast.

(14) “Good morning,” she says happily.
He grunts, picks up the newspaper, and takes a bite from his toast.
“Did you sleep well?” she asks cheerfully.
He continues chewing on his toast.
“What’s the matter? Are you angry with me?” she queries.
He remains silent and continues chewing on his toast.
“Please say something!” she pleads.
“Shut up!” he chews.

In this example, chew can be viewed as a communicative act. Although some may find it marginal, it is possible in a literary text, since such texts frequently use innovative expressions.

Bare fact correlations: 1) Manner of speaking verbs (whisper, shout, lisp) all permit direct speech complements. 2) In general, verbs that permit exclamatory complements are found with direct speech.

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(15) (a) He stressed what a fool John is.
(b) "What a fool John is," he stressed.

There are differences between sentences in which the VD precede the quotation and those in which it follows. This remains to be investigated. (See Reinhart 1975.)

Verbs that introduce indirect speech

Turning now to indirect speech, the first problem is to specify what to include (and exclude). The traditional narrow definition is that indirect speech in English is introduced by the complementizer that (which can sometimes be omitted), and furthermore, in indirect speech there are deictic shifts of person, tense, and time and place adverbials. Since indirect speech has been narrowly defined as requiring a possible that complementizer, any verb that does not fit into the frame is necessarily out, for example directives, which tend to require different kinds of complement constructions. Traditionally, indirect speech is thought of as a fairly mechanical transformation (this term is not intended technically), where (16) might be reported by (17):

(16) Bill says to Mary: "I like reading novels."
(17) Mary reports to someone else: "Bill says that he likes reading novels."

However, reported speech can also consist of a paraphrase, with the reporter’s views added as well, and if we broaden our conception of indirect speech to include sentences that take complementizers other than that, a much wider range of possibilities exists, as shown in (18) and (19):

(18) (a) Bill says to Mary: "Bring me my slippers."
(b) Mary reports to someone else: "Bill told me to bring him his slippers."
(19) (a) A to B: "What are you going to do?"
(b) B reports: "A asked me what I was going to do."

A criterion which permits any kind of paraphrase is probably too broad, since it allows (21) to count as an indirect speech report of (20).

(20) Priest: "I baptize you Mary Louise."
(21) The priest baptized the baby.
Sentence (20) could be ruled out as a base for indirect speech on other grounds, however. Indirect speech verbs require, as Banfield (1973) pointed out in her seminal article, that the message be a proposition, so that (22) would be ungrammatical:

(22) *He said that ugh!

Therefore, the criterion for indirect speech should be expanded to include at least clauses introduced by whether and probably clauses introduced by for-to and to as well. This characterization permits (18b) to be included. The syntax and semantics of indirect discourse awaits further study. However, some trends concerning the correlation of complementizer types and illocutionary acts and the interaction of complementizers and negation are discussed below.

**Complementizers, illocutionary acts, and negation**

There is a rough correlation between the complement construction of the embedded clause and the kind of illocutionary act denoted by the VD (Searle 1976; Kiparsky–Kiparsky 1970; Wierzbicka 1988; and others.)

In general, that clauses are associated with knowledge and assertions, to correlates with directives, and for-to constructions are found with “weak directives”, like plead. Finally, some verbs, for example, those denoting manner of speaking, means of communicating, and a few others, embed several or all complement types.

*That* clauses are indeed highly correlated with assertions, and conversely, most verbs of assertion allow *that* complements. A small class of assertives that disallow *that* complements are judgmental verbs, such as denounce, acclaim, admonish, and credit, which presuppose a fact or event and assert a judgment.

Another syntactic property to look at involves the distribution of complementizers in the sentences with and without negative main verbs. Traditional accounts of verb complements and complementizers assume that there should be no difference. In the case of verbs taking *that*, *to*, and *for-to*, such is the case. Any verb that permits *that* in main clauses without a negative, also permits *that* when negated:

(23) (a) I told him that I was happy.
    (b) I didn’t tell him that I was happy.

Similar pairs of sentences can be constructed for *to* and *for-to* complements.

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3 Gerundive complements will be discussed in future work.

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Such is not the case with \textit{whether}. Radford (1988) noticed that some verbs allow \textit{whether} to appear when the main clause verb is negated, but not otherwise, as in

\begin{enumerate}[(24)]
\item[(a)] He didn’t assert whether he would leave.
\item[(b)] *He asserted whether he would leave.
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}[(25)][(a)]
\item She did not admit whether she stole the money.
\item *She admitted whether she stole the money.
\end{enumerate}

To better understand what is going on, we must look at the meaning of \textit{whether}. Since \textit{whether} introduces alternatives, the meaning of the matrix verb should involve some sort of choice. This explains the use of \textit{whether} in embedded \textit{yes-no} questions, as in (26):

\begin{enumerate}[(26)]
\item He asked whether it would snow.
\end{enumerate}

This observation also explains the selection of \textit{whether} complements with interactional verbs like \textit{debate} and \textit{discuss}:

\begin{enumerate}[(27)]
\item We debated whether we should buy a new car.
\item We disputed (about) whether we should go.
\end{enumerate}

The semantics here is fairly clear, in that alternatives are being considered.

In (27) and (28), one can intuitively see how the negative sentences provide alternatives. (25a) can be paraphrased as ‘either she stole the money or she did not, but she did not say which of these alternatives is true.’ In (25b), however, only one proposition is being entertained—‘that she stole the money’. It seems that the primary verbs that behave this way are assertives; however, not all assertives allow \textit{whether} when the VD are negatives, as in (29):

\begin{enumerate}[(29)][(a)]
\item *He didn’t concede whether he lost the race.
\item *She didn’t claim whether the argument was convincing.
\end{enumerate}

This topic clearly needs more work along the lines of a finely-grained semantic analysis.

The syntax of to and for-to constructions interacts with control. In to constructions, (which are not to be interpreted as ‘in order to’, the implicit subject (PRO in GB) is coreferential with the object of the matrix verb if there is one, with a few marked exceptions, like \textit{promise}. In (30), it is \textit{Sally} which is the understood subject of \textit{move}.

\begin{enumerate}[(30)]
\item Bill ordered Sally to move over.
\end{enumerate}
If there is no direct object, the understood subject is generally coreferential with the matrix subject, as in (31) although cases of “arbitrary” control can be found, as in (32).

(31) Norman begged to leave.  (Norman is the leaver.)
(32) Norman said to leave.  (Leaver(s) unspecified.)

In the case of for-to constructions the subject of the embedded clause is specified and is usually different from either the subject or object\(^4\) in the matrix clauses, possibly for pragmatic reasons.

(33) (a) ?I nagged John for John to go.
        (b) ?I nagged (John) for me/myself to go.

As for the correlation of illocutionary act and complement type, to correlates highly with directives. This is to be expected, as Wierzbicka’s analysis of to would predict, since to is associated with wanting—and a directive is an expression in which the speaker wants the addressee to do something. A small class of directives that disallow to incorporate a negative: forbid, prohibit, dissuade, and, cancel.

For-to constructions among the VD are rather limited, and they cluster around 1) requests—directives in which the speaker is in a weak position, and 2) business deals. Examples are beg, nag, plead, intercede, appeal, apply, bid, negotiate, contract, and advertise.

At least two VD classes plus assorted other individual verbs select that, and either to or for-to complements, (and sometimes both). The two classes are manner of speaking verbs (scream, shout,) and means verbs (cable, telephone). Among the others are suggest, hint, advertise, plead, argue, decide, propose, and say.

(34) (a) He screamed/telephoned that the house was on fire.
        (b) He screamed/telephoned for someone to help him.

Although one could propose double or triple lexical items, it is more efficient to establish a single verb meaning and let the syntactic construction itself supply the relevant illocutionary force. (See Wierzbicka 1988; Ruhl 1989.)

\(^4\) Very few verbs that allow or require internal dative objects are found with the for-to construction.
Truth properties and presuppositions

Two items on the checklist are truth properties and presuppositions. To test for whether the VD is one in which truth is relevant, a frame with the adverbs correctly or accurately was used. The prediction is that these adverbs should only be acceptable with assertions or with VD that can be used as statements, like broadcast. Syntactically, the VD that allow truth modifiers should also allow that complementizers, a correlation that holds up very well. However, one interesting class of exceptions emerged. Manner of speaking verbs sound rather bizarre with accurately, even when they are statements.

(35) (a) He babbled accurately that the sun is very hot.
      (b) He lisped correctly that $3 + 3 = 6$.

Apparently, the kind of information that manner of speaking verbs incorporate is somewhat incompatible with truth properties. Verbs either incorporate a manner or an illocutionary force. It is probably not the case that incorporating both constitutes a cognitive overload or that the two semantically clash. The explanation may be pragmatic—that a speaker focuses on only one of these notions. It is analogous to the fact English syntax only allows a speaker to topicalize one constituent. (See Pinker 1989, 204.)

A class of verbs, lie, fib, and their synonyms and hyponyms entail the falsity of the statements.

Some of the classic work on presupposition and factivity has predicted that VD should not pass any of the tests for factivity; or in Kartunnen’s terminology (1971), VD should be presuppositional plugs and not allow presuppositions to remain. Although most VD behave this way, a major class of exceptions are verbs of judging,(excuse, apologize, blame, forgive, criticize), which, according to Fillmore’s analysis (1971), can be decomposed into two parts: components that are asserted and components that are presupposed.

(36) I didn’t apologize to him for kicking him

presupposes that I kicked him.

A small number of other verbs also act like factives: divulge, disclose, reveal, prove, verify, and attack, plus a few marginal cases like add, acknowledge, remember, recollect, and emphasize. Divulge, disclose, and reveal involve knowledge on the speaker’s part, and like other verbs of knowledge, e.g. know,

5 Correctly can also be used with judgmental verbs, such as advise, but the meaning is that the advice is good, rather than true. With interactional verbs, like apologize, the adverbs show that the act meets expected social standards. These uses are ignored.
comprehend, and prove (which are not VD), they exhibit factive properties. For these verbs, adding accurately or correctly sounds redundant. Remember, recollect, point out, notice, observe, and possibly others are not necessarily VD, but they are commonly used in direct and free indirect speech. Attack is a verb of judging and can be handled with the other such verbs as analyzed by Fillmore (1971). Finally, refute and inform carry a strong presumption of factivity: refute strongly implies that the refuted statement is false, and inform strongly implies that the information presented is correct.

Prepositional complements and adjuncts and transitivity

Drawing the line between complements and adjuncts is harder than one might suppose, as Jackendoff (1990) points out. However, for the purposes at hand, it may not be important, since the concern is with what can or cannot co-occur with the VD. The possible complements and adjuncts are intimately tied up with issues of transitivity. The analyst, however, has the option of deciding whether transitivity is a given which can be used to explain other phenomena or whether the transitivity of a verb is itself something to be accounted for.

Among the VD are verbs that are always intransitive (consent), those that may be intransitive or transitive (lament), and those that are optionally ditransitive (tell). Among the transitive and ditransitive verbs, either the goal (the addressee) or the theme (the message) is designated as the direct object, where the other theta role is expressed as a prepositional phrase. To expresses the goal and about or of express the theme. (Dative alternations are discussed below).

About. One might expect most VD to permit about phrases, since people talk about things. However, less than half the VD take about. Among those that do are intransitives and optional transitives; some of the relevant semantic classes so far identified are manner of speaking verbs: babble about, boast about, whisper about; and group interaction verbs, such as chat about, argue about, converse about, conspire about. One observation suggesting that the semantic class may determine the syntax is that I have heard speakers use the expression “discuss about”, even though discuss is standardly transitive, but it denotes group interaction.

With. Of the many meanings of with, the one I am concerned with is that of interaction—doing something interactive with other people. This is quite a small class and includes chat, discuss, converse, argue, agree, conspire, debate,

6 The about phrase under discussion is a verb adjunct, not a post-nominal modifier. In I gave the news about John to the press, the about phrase is a nominal adjunct.

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and a few others. Other VD can be forced to accept with by imposing a group interpretation on verbs that normally denote individual actions:

(37) He complained with me to the management.

It is interesting to note that any intransitive verb that permits a with phrase also permits an about phrase (but not necessarily the converse.) Charge, threaten, and possibly intercede allow another sense of with, which may be a reflex of an earlier meaning, ‘against’:

(38) The court charged the defendant with theft.

For. The benefactive for can occur with about half of the verbs, although I find my judgments here quite unreliable. Since for phrases are adjuncts, they should appear freely wherever their meaning is compatible with that of the verbs, as in (39) and (40).

(39) I beseech you for the sake of my family not to reveal my secret.

(40) Let me explain it again for you.

Datives: internal datives, to, and alternations

Dative constructions and dative alternations have been much studied (by Green 1974; Oehrle 1975; Wierzbicka 1986; Pinker 1989; Jackendoff 1990; and many others). The problem is to try to find an explanation or a set of predictors or at least anything better than just a list that will predict the distribution. Some verbs permit only internal datives (convince, forbid, challenge), others permit only to datives (explain, assert, advertise), while other allow both constructions (tell, cable, convey). Wierzbicka (1986) claims that the syntactic distribution can be accounted for by the meanings. However, there is a problem of circularity, since it seems to be the distribution which provides the clues to the meaning.

In general, when looking at internal and external datives, it seems necessary to divide verbs into various subclasses, a practice followed by Green (1974), who argues that communication verbs exhibit great syntactic diversity, and also Wierzbicka (1985), who in fact argues for an abstract unity as well. There is psycholinguistic evidence in acquisition studies for a number of subclasses in that children apparently do not treat all verbs that take double objects as a uniform class but rather subdivide them into narrow semantic classes (Gropen et al. 1989; Pinker 1989). Pinker’s hypothesis is that
syntactic alternation patterns affect narrow classes of items. Narrow classes can be determined by phonological, morphological, or semantic criteria or by an combination of these.

Morphological constraints can be seen among the VD. In general, Latinate words with prefixes where the stress does not fall on the first syllable do not allow internal datives (Oehrle 1975; Pinker 1989).7

(41) (a) He reported/explained the facts to me.
        (b) *He reported/explained me the facts.

In the cases where the both the internal dative and the prepositional dative are permitted, the double object carries with it the connotation of success (Green 1974; Oehrle 1975; Wierzbicka 1986).

(42) (a) He cabled me the news.
        (b) He cabled the news to me.

(43) (a) He told me the story about Joe’s accident.
        (b) He told the story about Joe’s accident to me.

The (a) sentences are more likely to suggest success than the (b) sentences.

The most apparent narrow classes among the VD are the means verbs (telephone, cable, radio) which permit both syntactic forms and manner of speaker verbs which resist internal datives, with some items being worse than others.

(44) (a) He shouted/whispered/yelled the message to me.
        (b) *He shouted/whispered/yelled me the message.

Another narrow class identified by Pinker is verbs in which a future commitment is made: offer, guarantee, pledge, grant, promise among the VD as well as other verbs, many of which violate the morphological rule stated above: refer, allot, assign, advance, award, grant.

In general, directives (requests, orders, advice, suggestions) allow or require an internal dative and do not permit to+NP, e.g. caution, direct, counsel, beseech, ask, etc.

(45) (a) I cautioned (directed, entreated) him to pay me.
        (b) *I cautioned (advised) (the warning) to him.

7 There are some exceptions, however, pointed out by Dick Oehrle, such as assign.
Pinker's hypothesis (1989) of narrow classes is very promising and a cursory study of the VD seems to be compatible with it. However, careful semantic sorting needs to be done independently of the syntactic distribution. Circularity is a difficult problem to avoid, and even some of very best analysts occasionally slip into it.

**Asymmetries in the person paradigm**

There are three small classes of VD in which there are subtle differences between the first person and other persons in the person paradigm. One class consists of *claim*, *allege*, and in some cases *say* (especially if stressed). Compare (46) and (47).

(46) He claims that X's theory is the best one.
(47) I claim that X's theory is the best one.

In (46) there is an implicature that the speaker is withholding approval of the proposition, which is not the case in (47). However, the asymmetry may be only apparent, and Wierzbicka's account (1987) explains why. The verb *claim* puts forth some controversial issue, something that others might be expected to challenge. In the case of first person sentences, e.g., (47), the speaker admits that the proposition is controversial; in third person sentences, the speaker is implying his or her own challenge.

A second class of asymmetries include manner of speaking verbs which denote a negatively evaluated manner: *growl, grumble, babble, chatter*, etc.\(^8\)

(48) He chattered/babbled about the war.
(49) I chattered/babbled about the war.

The explanation in these cases is strictly pragmatic. Speakers are not likely to describe their speech acts negatively. The phenomena are exactly analogous to those of *lurk*, discussed in the 1960s and 1970s transformational literature (see Harnish 1975).

The third class involves those VD that can serve a performatives, such as *bet, guess, advise, declare, recommend*, etc. as in (50):

(50) I recommend that you invest in the stock market

\(^8\) A few other *verba dicendi* that carry a negative evaluation can be included here, for example, *conspire.*
where the sentence can count as a recommendation. With a different person (or a different tense), (50) would simply be a statement.\footnote{I am grateful to Paul Meyer for this observation.} Extensive accounts of the syntax and semantics of such constructions can be found in Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Fraser (1971). A wide variety of illocutionary act types can be used as performatives, including a large number that are involved in formal procedures and institutional practices: \textit{summon, authorize, certify, adjourn, resign, sentence, baptize, nominate, second}, and many more.

\textbf{Other properties of verba dicendi}

Some of the syntactic distributions that are included in my checklist are not particular to VD, since they occur with other kinds of verbs as well. However, the VD may serve as a useful corpus for testing the predictions made. For example, Erteschik-Shir–Lappin (1979) have predicted that extraction from subject position is possible for verbs that are semantically ‘light’, or ‘non-dominant’. Therefore, (51) is grammatical but (52) and (53) are not.

\begin{enumerate}
\item (51) Who did Bill say left?
\item (52) *Who did Bill whisper left?
\item (53) *Who did Bill broadcast left?
\end{enumerate}

Stowell, however, argues that the explanation lies in case assigning properties postulated as a part of GB theory. If \textit{that} cannot be deleted, then the following subject cannot be extracted. Therefore, Stowell predicts that extraction from subject and deletion of \textit{that} should apply to exactly the same verbs. In my sample, there is some overlap in the two classes, but they are by no means co-extensive.

Unfortunately, the judgments of acceptability are so subtle that I do not consider introspective reports to be reliable enough. Therefore, the property of \textit{that} omission must await investigation until the data can be checked with corpora.\footnote{Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English, based on a corpus of 25 million words of text, provides information on the acceptability of omitting \textit{that}.}

Erteschik-Shir–Lappin argue that the lie test also applies to ‘semantically light’ or ‘non-dominant’ verbs. Consider the following dialogues:

\begin{enumerate}
\item (54) (a) John said that Bill stole the money.
\item (b) That’s a lie!
\end{enumerate}
(55) (a) John bet that George stole the money.
   (b) That's a lie!

For (54) a possible interpretation is that Bill stole the money as well as the interpretation that John did not utter the complement. However, in (55) the only interpretation is that John did not bet that George stole the money. Thus Erteschik-Shir–Lappin predict that the same verbs should behave alike with respect to the extraction and lie tests. In my sample the number of verbs for which the lie test yields ambiguous sentences overlaps with but is not exactly coextensive with the extraction tests.

Broad semantic classes and illocutionary force

One important aspect of the study of VD, the one that relates to Talmy’s approach to lexical typology (1985), is a frequency count of the different semantic classes. Since categories overlap, more than simple counting is involved. In general, illocutionary force constitutes the most important semantic dimension, particularly for assertives (statements) and directives. Very few verbs are used to ask questions: ask, inquire, query, interrogate, question. As mentioned above, statements and directives correlate with complement selection.

A second set incorporates manner of speaking components. Syntactically, these verbs occur as intransitives, as transitives, and with almost any complement; it is the complement type which determines the illocutionary force. Example (56a) is a statement and (56b) a directive.

(56) (a) I whispered that X.
   (b) I whispered (to him) to X.

Means verbs such as telephone, cable, etc. behave the same way.

Another set of VD lexicalizes kinds of group activities: chat, dispute, talk, gossip, debate, converse. These are typically intransitive but allow further specification by means of with and about adjunct phrases. The meaning of the verb focusses on the nature of the activity—whether serious, friendly, argumentative, etc.

Another small but important class includes textual verbs, that is, verbs used most frequently as responses to the speech of another, such as add, agree, reply, contradict, decline, disagree. Some of these lexicalize the speaker’s attitudes or intentions. Although some, like reply can involve any illocutionary force, others are limited to assertions. Thus we see that the semantic classification of VD is different from taxonomies of illocutionary acts, although illocution plays a big roll in the lexical semantics.

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Summary

This paper has surveyed broadly the various syntactic and semantic aspects of *verba dicendi* in English. The syntax is varied, but Pinker’s hypothesis that narrow semantic classes of verbs will predict syntactic properties is a promising one. Semantically, illocutionary force is an important aspect of constructing semantic classes, but manner of speaking, means of communicating, conversational interactional, and textual sequencing are also important semantic notions are incorporated into verbs. I hope that this study can serve as a basis for comparing the verbs of speaking in other languages in order to compare the lexicalization of concepts from a truly universal semantic domain.

Appendix

The morphology and syntax of indirect speech

In comparing the grammatical properties of reported speech across languages, Coulmas (1985) stresses the arbitrariness and variability. Some languages, such as German, use a special mood for indirect speech, others, such as English and Italian, shift tense, others use special complementizers or adverbs or quotative particles. However, before giving up on the possibility of finding universals, it is necessary to investigate this matter more abstractly. Following the work of Victor Friedman (1980, 1981), it is necessary to look, not only at the forms used for reported speech but look also at the other meanings and uses of that form and then look at the paradigmatic contrasts in the language. For example, in looking at tense shifts from present to past, we need to see what other functions past tenses have and what they contrast with; similarly we need to see what other things the subjunctive mood signals in German and what contrasts are made with other moods. Perhaps at a more abstract level we can find greater similarities—perhaps not. But since labels like ‘subjunctive mood’ and ‘past tense’ are often applied loosely, a scholar of universals and typology must be wary in interpreting them without looking at how they are used in each language.

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Address of the author: Adrienne Lehrer University of Arizona Department of Linguistics Douglass 200 East Tucson, Arizona 85721 USA

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