

LING554 Seminar in Semantics: Advanced Lexical Semantics

Assignment 1

Naonori Nagaya

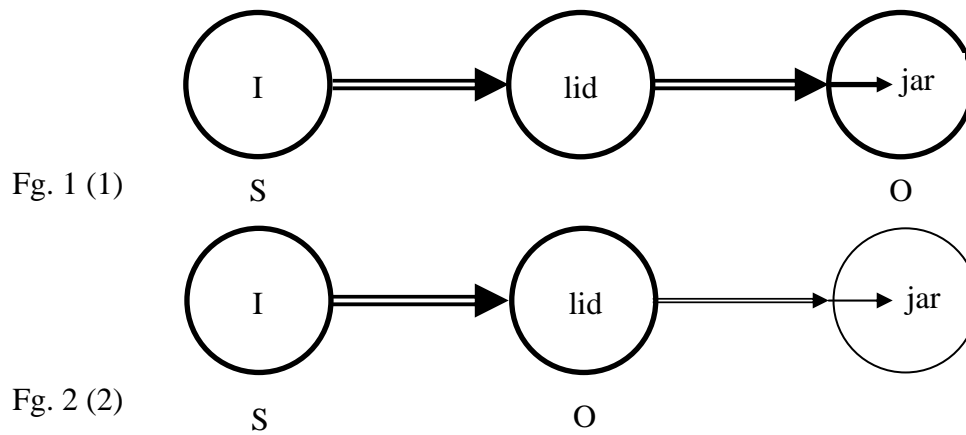
When it is used in the transitive construction, the verb *open* has two distinct albeit closely related senses, as exemplified in (1) and (2), respectively.

(1) I opened the jar.

(2) I opened the lid of the jar.

There is no doubt that (1) and (2) have the same conceptual content: both mean that the speaker manipulated a specific part of the jar, i.e., the lid, which counts as a covering of the container, and as a result he or she created a space in the jar, through which he or she can take something in and out. There is an important discrepancy between them, however. While (1) designates the entire process of opening the jar, (2) concentrates more on the maneuvering of the lid than it does on the change of the state that happened to the jar.

To put it differently, the meaning of *open* in (1) and that in (2) share the base but have different profiles. The base for this expression is composed of two components: the maneuvering of the lid and the change of the state of the jar. On the one hand, the verb *open* in (1) profiles both components of the base. The verb takes *the jar* as its direct object; it profiles the process that happened to the jar as a whole. On the other hand, *open* in (2) profiles only part of the base, the maneuvering of the lid. Since it is concerned only with the lid rather than with the entire jar, *open* in this sense takes *the lid* as its direct object. The lid is more salient and involved in the profiled process than the entire jar. These similarities and differences of the two senses are sketched in Figures 1 and 2, where each circle indicates a participant of the event, arrows express the interaction between them, and heavy lines indicate profiling.



Thus, the two senses of the verb reflect the different construals of the identical conceptual content, to be more precise, the two distinct profiles with respect to the same base. In this connection, it is of great significance that the two components of the base are related with each other and form the OPEN frame. In the case of (1), *open* evokes the entire OPEN frame. In contrast, *open* in (2) activates only part of the entire frame. This implies that the relationship of the two senses examined is metonymic extension; the one sense of the verb is contiguous to the other in the single shared domain.