Joanna Podhorodecka

Pedagogical University, Kraków

Evaluative Metaphor and the Passive Construction

The phenomenon of metaphor is closely connected with evaluation, which results from the fact that the process of metaphorization to a great extent relies on image schemas, which are axiologically charged (Krzeszowski 1997). The schema of motion, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, is particularly productive in conveying evaluation. Consequently, verbs of motion offer a wide range of means for expressing evaluative meanings. I would like to focus on the verb *arrive at* and a certain characteristic feature of the verb revealed by a corpus study. Namely, the verb allows the passive construction only in its metaphorically extended senses; the passive of the verb in its basic physical sense turned out to be unattested. The problem I would like to address is how exactly metaphorization influences the transitivity of the verb.

As a verb of motion, *arrive at* realizes the termination schema, proposed by Radden (1993: 16) to describe moving objects which slow down and finally come to a halt. In its metaphorical uses, the schema describes gradual, pre-dictable changes, events "taking a regular course which gradually leads to an almost predictable outcome" (Radden 1993: 22). So, the verb profiles both the GOAL and the PATH elements of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema: what is important is not only the trajector coming in contact with the goal, but also its slow, gradual movement towards it:

(1.1) The temptation is to jump to <u>conclusions</u> without **arriving at** them.[1]

In (1.1) above, the positive evaluation is attached not only to the goal, but to the gradual, effortful process of moving towards it, which adds to its validity.

The force underlying motion is construed as the internal force of the tra-jector. The verb profiles the exertion of effort by the trajector and as such it is force-dynamically charged. This results in the verb's tendency to combine with human trajectors.

The verb *arrive at* consistently conveys positive evaluations. This can be explained by the fact that it profiles GOAL – the positively charged element of

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all examples from *The British National Corpus*, emphasis added.

the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema – and that it inherits the positive axiology of human trajector and internal force. Thus, in its metaphorical uses, the verb describes an intentional activity of the human trajector finally achieving the desired purpose. Human actions described by *arrive at* are gradual, intentional and ultimately successful.

The evaluation connected with the verb *arrive at* in its extended senses is consistently positive (only 3.9% of the metaphorical uses have been classified as negative or doubtful). This is achieved by the combination of the verb with a positive landmark, usually profiling the successful completion of human mental activity: the most popular combinations include *conclusion* (9.5% of the metaphorical uses), *decision* (8.3%), *solution* (3.2%) and *agreement* (2.8%).

The corpus reveals that the verb *arrive at* allows the passive construction only in its metaphorically extended senses. Clearly it is the process of metaphorization that influences the meaning of the verb in a way that makes passivization possible. How exactly does that happen? I would like to argue that the characteristics of the above mentioned positively valued landmarks vitally contribute to the transitivity of the verb.

Within Cognitive Grammar transitivity is a feature of construal, and as such it cannot be accounted for by the verb alone, but it depends on various aspects of the whole clause. Metaphorization and the positive axiological charge of the landmark seem to play an important role, since they affect the relationship between the agent and the patient.

The model that Langacker uses to describe clause structure is called **the canonical event model** (Figure 1). It represents "the normal observation of a prototypical action" (1991: 286). The central element of this model is the transfer of energy between the agent and the patient: the agent is the source of energy, while the patient receives it, and as a result undergoes a change of state. The interaction between these two clausal participants takes place within a setting and is observed from an external vantage point.

Situations which are typical examples of such energy transfer are normally expressed by a finite transitive clause, in which the agent occupies the position of the subject, the patient the position of the object, and the elements of the setting – the position of adverbials (Langacker 1991: 298). Such a sentence is an example of **unmarked coding**: a prototypical way of describing a prototypical situation. The term **marked coding** refers to various linguistic structures which differ from that prototype, e.g. the passive construction, in which there is an alternative hierarchy of salience between the clausal participants: the patient is accorded the more prominent position of the clausal subject.
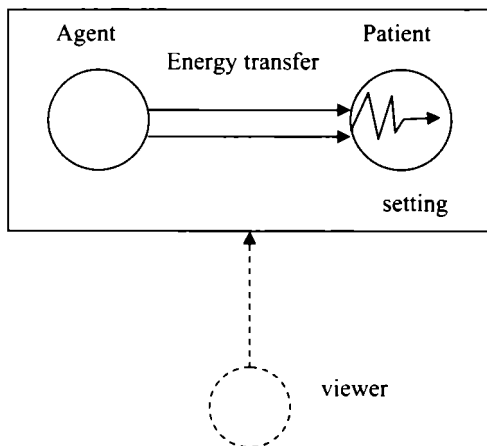
Figure 1. The canonical event model (Langacker 1991: 285).

Langacker numbers nine aspects in which a typical transitive clause reflects the canonical event model:

1) It has two participants expressed by overt nominals that function as subject and object.
2) It describes an event, as opposed to a static situation.
3) The event is energetic, relatively brief, and has a well defined endpoint.
4) The subject and the object represent discrete, highly individuated physical entities.
5) These entities already exist when the event occurs.
6) The subject and the object are fully distinct and participate in a strongly asymmetrical relationship.
7) The subject's participation is volitional, while that of the object is non-volitional.
8) The subject is the source of the energy, and the object is its target.
9) The object is totally affected by the action.   (Langacker 1991: 302)

The features that are particularly relevant here are no. 3 (a well defined endpoint), no. 5 (pre-existence of the clausal participants) and no. 8 (the energy transfer). A prototypical transitive clause shares all those features, while situations which differ from the prototype do not and they yield themselves to a number of alternative constructions:

(2.1) McMurtry **climbed** up the mountain in seven hours.

(2.2) McMurtry **climbed** the mountain in seven hours.   (Langacker 1991: 303)

The landmark of both construals – *the mountain* – is coded as a location in (2.1), while in (2.2) it is accorded a more prominent position of a clausal participant, i.e. direct object. The basic difference between those two alternative construals is the energy transfer between the clausal participants: the agent directs its energy at the patient, whereas the setting is merely occupied. The presence of the energy transfer makes the landmark prominent enough to allow it to be coded as the subject in the passive (*The mountain was climbed in seven hours*), which is not possible for 2.1. (****Up the mountain was climbed in seven hours*). The fact that the trajector's energy is directed at the landmark makes the landmark prominent enough to become a clausal participant, and consequently enhances the transitivity of the clause.

The main difference between literal and metaphorical senses of the verb *arrive at* is connected with the presence or absence of the energy transfer, which gives rise to alternative construals of the landmark as either a location or a clausal participant. Compare:

(3.1) When we **arrived** at the station an enormous suitcase was taken out of the car.

(3.2) American and Soviet leaders could **arrive at** a compromise over the composition of the future Afghan regime.

In (3.1) the verb is used in its literal meaning, and the landmark is construed as a location. The literal uses of the verb *arrive at* share many important features of a prototypical transitive clause: they describe a dynamic event with a well defined endpoint, in which two distinct, pre-existing entities are involved. There is, however, no energy transfer between them and the landmark remains unaffected by the action. This seems to be the main reason for construing it as a location.

By contrast, in metaphorical senses of *arrive at*, the landmark is construed as a clausal participant, which makes it possible to code it as the subject in the passive, as exemplified by (4.1) and (4.2) below:

(4.1) In this way, the concept 'red' **is arrived at** through observation.

(4.2) (. . .) a peaceful settlement **was** only **arrived at** by the intervention of the schoolmasters from both villages.

What is interesting is that, as opposed to the literal senses of the verb, the construals above do not share feature 5 of a typical transitive clause – the pre-existence of the participants. The landmark does not exist independently of the trajector, but appears as a result of the trajector's activity. Theoretically, the fact that the trajector and the landmark are not entirely distinct should have a negative influence on the transitivity of the clause. In practice, this aspect of the metaphorical meaning of the verb actually contributes to the possibility of passivization. The fact that the landmark results from the trajector's exertion of effort introduces the concept of energy transfer. As a result, the landmark gains the status of a clausal participant. The transfer of energy between the clausal participants seems to be more essential for transitivity than the two participants being fully distinct.

According to characteristics no. 3, a typical transitive clause has a well defined endpoint. Corpus evidence seems to support this: the passive of the verb *arrive at*, which profiles the GOAL (19.5% of the metaphorical uses) clearly prevails over the passive of *depart from*, profiling the SOURCE element of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema (only 3.7% of metaphorical uses). A clausal participant that profiles the GOAL is more likely to become the subject in the passive. This may be connected with the positive axiological charge centered around the GOAL.

Positive evaluation also seems to enhance the salience of the landmark, and consequently the transitivity of motion verbs. Positive landmarks coded as clausal subjects visibly prevail over negative ones. For the verb *arrive at* negative construals in the passive constitute only 1.03% as opposed to 3.9% of negative construals in all metaphorical uses of the verb. For the verb *reach*, the corresponding percentage is 2.88% to 9.5%.

One of the characteristics of metaphorical mappings is that they are partial: they downplay certain features of both the source and the target domains, while highlighting others. The features highlighted in the metaphorization of the verb *arrive at* are those that contribute to the transitivity of the clause: the energy transfer between the participants, the importance of the GOAL element of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema and its positive evaluation.

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