

**English benefactive NPs**  
Ida Toivonen, Carleton University  
ida\_toivonen@carleton.ca

This paper proposes a Lexical-Functional Grammar analysis of benefactive NPs in English. These phrases have previously been discussed in other frameworks by Fillmore 1965, Oerhle 1976, Larson 1988, Jackendoff 1990, Emonds 1993, and many others. Benefactive NPs (e.g., *Mary* and *her sister* in (1a) and (2a)) alternate with PP<sub>for</sub>-benefactives:

- (1) a. Fred carved Mary a statue.  
b. Fred carved a statue for Mary. [from Wechsler 1995: 84]
- (2) a. Maya cut her sister some chicken.  
b. Maya cut some chicken for her sister.

This paper specifically concerns the argument-status of benefactive NPs.

The distinction between arguments and adjuncts is foundational at all levels of syntactic structure in LFG. Arguments, but not adjuncts, are included in lexical entries and play a role in Lexical-Mapping Theory at a(argument)-structure. Arguments and adjuncts are assigned different functions at f(functional)-structure. Universal c(constituent)-structure principles dictate that arguments and adjuncts are represented differently at c-structure. It is therefore problematic that many types of phrases are difficult to classify as clear arguments or adjuncts. A number of recent LFG papers have addressed this issue: Zaenen and Crouch (2009) argue that all semantically restricted obliques should be treated as adjuncts. Needham & Toivonen (2011) propose that ‘in-between’ cases should be treated as derived arguments. Rákosi (2006, 2012) argue that such cases are better analyzed as *thematic adjuncts*. Asudeh & Giorgolo (2012) and Giorgolo & Asudeh (2012) handle the distinctions in semantic composition.

English benefactive NPs display mixed behavior with respect to argumenthood. This paper will argue that benefactive NPs map to the OBJECT function, which is an argument function. The benefactive NP patterns with arguments in that it has rigid word order, which is typical for arguments:

- (3) a. Melissa built John a house.  
b. \*Melissa built a house John.

The benefactive NP must be an immediate sister of the verb, which is an internal argument position. However, there are also reasons not to treat benefactive NPs as arguments: the verbs *carve*, *cut* and *build* (used in examples (1–3) above) are intuitively two-place predicates, and the benefactives are always optional. In sum, benefactive NPs pattern with arguments in some ways but not others. Below I will argue that the mixed argumenthood characteristics follow from an analysis where benefactive NPs are derived arguments, in the sense of Needham & Toivonen (2011).

Bresnan (2001:315) offers the following analysis of the verb *cook* with a benefactive NP: “The ditransitive of *cook* has an added beneficiary role, which is a patientlike ‘internal argument’. It is thus assigned the  $[-r]$  feature”. She specifically discusses the example in (4), with the a-structure representation in (5):

- (4) Both parents cooked the children supper.
- (5)  $cook-for \langle \begin{array}{ccc} x & y & z \\ [-o] & [-r] & [+o] \end{array} \rangle$

Bresnan does not specify how the beneficiary argument is added, but it can be inferred that the benefactive  $[-r]$  argument is either added by a lexical rule, or else transitive *cook* simply has an alternative lexical entry which includes a benefactive  $[-r]$  argument. Bresnan’s (2001) treatment of *cook* correctly predicts that the benefactive in (4) can passivize:

- (6) The children were cooked supper by both parents.

However, not all benefactive NPs can passivize (example (7) is adapted from Wechsler 1995: 90):

- (7) a. The carpenter sanded him a board.  
b. \*He was sanded a board by the carpenter.

Wechsler (1995:90–91) handles this contrast in passivization by postulating that verbs such as *cook* and *bake* are lexicalized as three-place predicates. He assumes that the non-passivizable beneficiary NPs (as well as the benefactive *for*-PPs) are adjunct roles that are added to the lexical entry. Wechsler’s analysis is not cast in LFG.

The present analysis of English benefactive NPs draws upon the analyses by Bresnan (2001) and Wechsler (1995). We follow Wechsler and Bresnan in assuming that some transitive verbs (e.g., *cook*, *bake*) have a lexicalized ditransitive alternant. Benefactive NPs in the argument structure of such verbs can passivize. However, the majority of benefactive NPs are added by the following rule:

$$(8) \quad \emptyset$$

$$\left\langle \begin{array}{ccc} \hat{\theta} & \theta_{rec} & \theta \\ [-o] & [+o] & [+o] \end{array} \right\rangle$$

The rule in (8) can be compared to the applicative rule of Bresnan & Moshi (1990). The general mapping principles of Lexical Mapping Theory will ensure that the  $[-o]$  argument maps onto a SUBJECT, the first  $[+o]$  argument maps onto an OBJECT, and the second  $[+o]$  argument maps onto an OBJECT $_{\theta}$ . The objects are marked  $[+o]$  and are thus incompatible with the SUBJECT function, which is  $[-r - o]$ . Passivization is therefore impossible, and examples like (7b) are ruled out. Here, I follow the acceptability judgements of benefactive actives and passives typically given in the literature, but the data are complex (Shnoebelen, undated).

Benefactive NPs are only possible where the second object can be interpreted as being transferred or given to the first object (Allerton 1978, Wechsler 1995, Shibatani 1996):

- (9) a. I changed my hairstyle for Leah.  
 b. \*I changed Leah my hairstyle.

In (9), *Leah* is a benefactive but not a recipient, and (9b) is ungrammatical. In order to account for these data, we posit that the NP introduced by the rule in (8) must be a recipient-benefactive. Note, however, that the recipient NP is an OBJECT and therefore negatively specified  $[-r]$ ; i.e. semantically unrestricted. This indicates that the topic of semantic restrictedness deserves further attention in Lexical Mapping Theory.

Under the analysis adopted here, the basic lexical entry of a verb such as *sand* in (7) does not include a benefactive. However, a recipient-benefactive is optionally added to these verbs by the optional rule in (8). The intuition that the benefactive is not a core participant follows from this analysis. The optionality of the benefactive NP follows from the optionality of the rule in (8). These two characteristics are non-argumentlike. On the other hand, the benefactive NP is an OBJECT, which is an argument function. When present, the benefactive NP thus patterns with other internal arguments.

The proposed analysis for benefactive NPs is consistent with Needham & Toivonen’s general hypothesis: phrases which display characteristics of both arguments and adjuncts are derived arguments. However, even if the mixed behaviour of the benefactive NP in English can be explained by its status as a derived argument, it does not mean that other in-between cases are readily explained in the same way. It is of course possible that the passive *by*-phrase, instrument PPs and, indeed, benefactive *for*-phrases show mixed characteristics for some other reason. Perhaps those phrases are best treated as thematic adjuncts along the lines of (Rákosi 2006, 2012).

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