CHAPTER 4
SEMANTIC ROLES
4.1 Sentence and Proposition

- Sentence = "something that expresses a complete thought"?
- Proposition: -the semantic content/ message
  - something abstract but meaningful
Examples

a.  *Sentence Vs Proposition*

3a Richard wrote the report.
3b Richard is the one who wrote the report.
3c The report was written by Richard.
3d The report is what Richard wrote.

These are 4 different English sentences but they convey the same message – they express the same proposition.
b. Inflection +Proposition (+Focus)

We

walked
are walking
may walk
would have walked
would have walked

in the park

walk
have walked

could be walking
### c. Syntactic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Adverbial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A window</td>
<td>broke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>broke</td>
<td>a window</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our dog</td>
<td>is</td>
<td></td>
<td>under the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>put</td>
<td>marmalade</td>
<td>on her toast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert</td>
<td>sends</td>
<td>e-mail</td>
<td>to his friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>thirsty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hector</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>afraid</td>
<td>of the dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Whipple</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>a banker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
d. Semantic Analysis

- {break, a window}
- {break, Tom, a window}
- {under, our dog, the house}
- {put-on, Denise, marmalade, Denise’s toast}
- {send, Albert, e-mail, Albert’s friends}
- {thirsty, I}
- {afraid-of, Hector, the dark}
- {a banker, Mr Whipple}. 
In semantic analysis every proposition contains one predicate and a varying number of referring expressions (noun phrases) called arguments.

While the predicate may be in the form of a verb, an adjective, a preposition, or a noun phrase.
Every simple sentence – every proposition – has one predicate and a varying number of expressions, or arguments.

An account of the number of arguments that a predicate has is called the valency of that predicate.

Valency theory is a description of the semantic potential of predicates in terms of the number and types of arguments which may co-occur with them.
11 It’s raining.
12 It sleeted (yesterday).
13 It has been thundering (in the west).

English requires the presence of it with weather verbs like rain, snow, sleet, thunder, but it does not refer to anything.
4.2.2 Valency One

- Each of these arguments names an actor that carries out the action.

  16 The dog is sleeping.
  17 Larry laughed.
  18 The earth rotates (on its axis).
The predicates *die, erupt, fall* tell an event, a change in the condition of the entity named by the argument, and the entity named in the argument undergoes this change, is affected by it.

19 Grandfather died (last week).
20 A volcano erupted.
21 The cake fell.
a) theme- description (22-25)
- 22 This soup is cold.
- 23 Terry is impatient.
- 24 Henrietta was rather reckless.
- 25 The bottle is empty.

b) theme – identity (26-29)
- 26 This man is a carpenter.
- 27 Dextrose and fructose are sugars.
- 28 Eddy Eckstein is the village idiot.
- 29 Cora and Willis are the class leaders
Table of Semantic Roles

- **Actor**: performs some action without affecting any other entity. (e.g. *She* left.)
- **Affected**: undergoes a change due to some even or is affected by some other entity. (e.g. *A window* broke).
- **Affecting**: without any action, affects another entity. (e.g. *Betty* likes *opera*.)
- **Agent**: by its action affects some other entity. (e.g. *Tom* broke a window.)
- **Associate**: tells the status or identity of another argument, the theme. (e.g. *Tom is a student*.)
- Effect: comes into existence through the action of the predicate. (e.g. Lili baked a pie.)
- Place: names the location in which the action of the predicate occurs. (e.g. The fireman climbed a ladder.)
- Theme: the topic of a predicate that does not express action – a stative predicate. (e.g. Audrey is a computer expert.)

This package weighs five kilos.

Theme Link?P associate
Most verbs take a subject and an object; they are two-argument predicates. One of them is make, illustrated in sentence 9. Other examples are need and use.

9 Chris is making an omelet.

The following are examples of two argument predicates.
Argument – predicate – argument

- Agent – action – affected (31-33)
- Agent – action- effect (34-36)
- Actor – action – place (37-39)
- Affecting – affect – affected (40-42)
- Affected – affect – affecting (43-48)
- Theme-link – associate (49-52)
31 The cat killed a rat.
32 I broke the window.
33 Bert hit Harry.
34 The cat dug a hole.
35 Chris is making an omelet.
36 Picasso created a masterpiece.
37 Jennie crossed the street.
38 Fiona entered the room.
39 Simon climbed a tree.
40 The decision surprised us all.
41 You’re disturbing everybody.
42 The comedian didn’t impress the audience.
43 Oliver was envious of his brother.
44 Oliver envied his brother.
45 Angie was angry with Algernon
46 I’m afraid of that dog.
47 We were not aware of the accident.
48 Aren’t you curious about…?
49 Sheila is like her mother.
50 This present is for you.
51 Tom is with Ann.
52 The book is about fossils.