

Argument Structure of *Slide* Verb in English

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Abstract— Various languages in the world have their own systems, especially in terms of verb classification. It can determine argument in the structure. This paper is intended to analyze the interaction between syntax and semantics in terms of the argument structure of the *slide* verb in English. The main theory used in this study was the theory of argument structure proposed by Kim & Sells (2008). The result of analysis showed that two kinds of *slide* verb: *bounce* and *slide* are intransitive and transitive verbs. The specifier (SPR) of the sentence structure functions as the agent; the Complement (COMPS) of the verb *bounce* serves as the patient and the COMPS of the verb *slide* functions as the theme.

Keywords: *Slide Verb, Argument Structure, English*

1. Introduction

Language is a system of communication in speech and writing used by people of a particular country or area (Hornby, 2010:834). According to Crystal (2003:1) English is the global language, meaning that most people use English as their language. The English signs and advertisements in a hotel or restaurant in a foreign city, for example, will be understood by people.

From the linguistic point of view, English can be analyzed in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This paper focuses on syntax and semantics. Syntax is the study of sentence structure (Varga, 2010:56). A sentence consists of words from different word classes such as noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. Verb is one of the most important elements in a sentence, especially in English. According to Richards *et al* (1985:305), verb refers to an action or state. Generally, verb can be divided into two types; they are intransitive and transitive verbs (Dixon, 2010). A transitive verb is a verb which occurs in a transitive clause. Intransitive verb is a verb which occurs in an intransitive clause (Utami *et al.* 2018). The sentence with an

intransitive verb only has one argument. Meanwhile, the sentence with a transitive verb has two or more arguments. Syntactically, a sentence structure has its core and noncore arguments (Masreng *et al.* 2019).

Semantic roles are the ways of classifying the arguments of predicators (Kim and Sells, 2008:43). They are agent, patient, experience, theme, benefactive, source, goal, location, and instrument. These roles are used to capture the relationship between two related sentences, for example:

1a. The cat chased the mouse

The cat	chased	the mouse
agent		patient

1b. The mouse was chased by the cat

The mouse	was chased by	the cat
patient		agent

(Kim and Sells, 2008:45)

The structure of sentence (1a) is different from that of sentence (1b). Sentence (1a) is an active sentence and sentence (1b) is a passive sentence proved by the preposition *by*. Those sentences have the same semantic roles assigned to the Noun Phrase (NP). It can be seen that the NP *the cat* is the agent and *the mouse* is the patient. Agent is a participant that performs something. Meanwhile, patient is a participant that is being affected by what happens to it (Kim and Sells, 2008: 44). The slide verb was chosen in this study because it belongs to intransitive and transitive verbs. It consists of the verbs *bounce*, *float*, *roll*, and *slide* (Levin, 1955:133)

Based on the explanation above, this study is attempted to examine the argument structure of the slide verb in English. The data in this study were taken from a British Corpus, that is, the British National Corpus (BNC), which can be accessed from <https://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>. BNC consists of a 100 million word collection of written and spoken British language.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Argument Structure is used in this study. The theory is proposed by Kim and Sells (2008). Argument Structure (ARG-ST) has the elements realized by Specifier (SPR) and Complements (COMPS). Complement is a phrasal element in which a head must combine with or a head includes direct object, indirect object, predicative complement, and oblique complement (Kim and Sells, 2008:51). SPR is the first element which is realized by a subject and the rest are realized by COMPS.

According to Kim and Sells (2008:67), the argument structure of a sentence can differ based on the verb types, as illustrated by the following examples:

a. Intransitive verb

This verb does not have any COMPS as in the example *John sneezed*.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \text{sneeze} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \quad \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle \quad \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

It can be seen from structure (a) that there is no COMPS element and that there is only one argument realized by the subject *John*.

b. Linking Verb

The linking verbs such as *look*, *seem*, *remain*, and *feel* require different complements like the category Adjective Phrase (AP) or Noun Phrase (NP) as the predicative complement. There are two arguments in this kind of verb: one is an NP as the subject and the other is any phrase (XP) functioning as the predicate (PRD +) as in the example *John remained a student*.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{remain} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \quad \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle [2] \text{ NP}[\text{PRD}+] \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1], [2] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

c. Transitive Verb

This kind of verb requires non-predicative as the complement functioning as the direct object as illustrated in the sentence *John saw Fred*.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{see} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \quad \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle [2] \text{ NP} \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1], [2] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

d. Ditransitive Verb

This kind of verb requires Indirect Object (IO) and Direct Object (DO), as illustrated in the sentence *John taught new students English Syntax*.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{teach} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \quad \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle [2] \text{ NP}, [3] \text{ NP} \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1], [2] [\textit{goal}], [3] [\textit{theme}] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

e. Complex Transitive Verb

A complex transitive verb is another type of transitive verb which has two complements, one functions as the direct object and the other as the predicative phrase (NP, AP, or VP), describing the object, as exemplified in the sentence *Ad agencies call young people Generation X-ers*. The NP *Generation X-ers* is as the predicative phrase. This verb is like linking verb that requires a predicative ([PRD +]) XP as the complement.



$\langle call \rangle$ VAL ARG-ST	<table style="border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">SPR</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">$\langle [1] NP \rangle$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">COMPS</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">$\langle [2] NP, [3] XP \rangle$</td> </tr> </table> $\langle [1], [2], [3] [PRD+] \rangle$	SPR	$\langle [1] NP \rangle$	COMPS	$\langle [2] NP, [3] XP \rangle$
SPR	$\langle [1] NP \rangle$				
COMPS	$\langle [2] NP, [3] XP \rangle$				

3. Research Method

This study is qualitative descriptive research using syntax and semantic approach. The data were collected using observation method and obtained from one of many online corpora, the British National Corpus (BNC), which can be accessed from <https://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>. This corpus contains 100 million words especially in British English language. This corpus is free to access. This study focuses on types of *slide* verb such as *bounce*, *float*, *roll*, and *slide* (Levin, 1955). The data were classified based on the types of verb in order to know the argument structure in a sentence. The theory proposed by Kim and Sells (2008) was used to analyze the data.

4. Discussion

According to Levin (1955), slide verbs consist of *bounce*, *float*, *roll*, and *slide*.

2a. We can **bounce** the ball (BYU-BNC, A woman of style)

The verb *bounce* in sentence (a) is categorized as a transitive verb. This verb is modified by the modal verb *can*. In this sentence, there are two arguments which serve as SPR of the subject *we* and COMPS in the NP *the ball* as in (2b).

$$2b. \left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{bounce} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle [2] \text{ NP} \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1], [2] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

In sentence (2a), the SPR *we* is the agent because there is one participant that performs something. Furthermore, the COMPS *the ball* is the patient as it is affected by what happens to it (Kim and Sells, 2008:44).

3a. He will **bounce** back (BYU-BNC, Liverpool Daily Post and Echo)

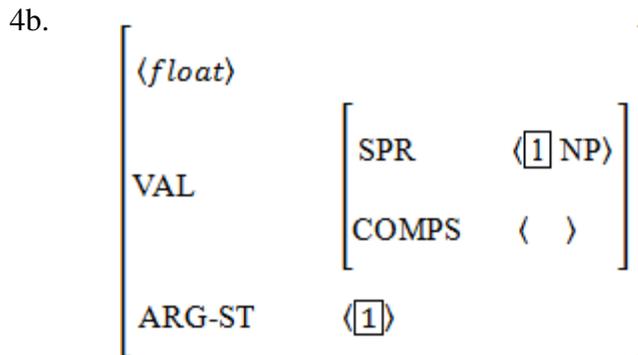
In sentence (3a) the Verb Phrase (VP) *will bounce* is followed by the adverb *back*. Unlike sentence (2a), sentence (3a) is an intransitive verb. This verb follows the NP *he* as the subject, meaning that this sentence only has one argument categorized as the agent. The argument structure of sentence (3a) can be illustrated as follows.

$$3b. \left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{bounce} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle \quad \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

4a. Miniature water lilies **float** on a tiny pond (BYU-BNC, Ideal Home)

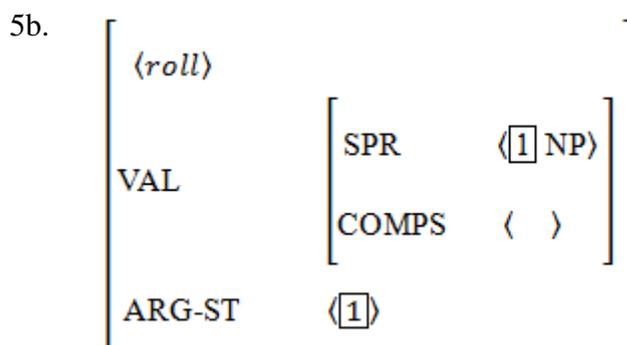
The verb *float* in sentence (4a) is an intransitive verb in which there is only one argument which serves as the agent of the argument structure. The verb is followed by the

Prepositional Phrase (PP) *on a tiny pond*. The semantic structure of the verb can be illustrated in (4b).



5a. It would **roll** around on the carpet (BYU-BNC, Catlore)

Like sentence (4a), the verb *roll* is an intransitive verb that is followed by the PP *around the carpet*. The agent *it* in sentence (5a) means that there is something that would be rolled by someone around on the carpet. The argument structure of this verb is illustrated in (5b)



6a. I **slide** a bowl of fruit onto the table (BYU-BNC, Underground)

The verb *slide* in sentence (6a) is a transitive verb. There are two arguments in the sentence; they are the subject *I* as SPR and the other is NP *a bowl of fruit* as COMPS.

From the semantic role point of view, SPR in the sentence is categorized as an agent because it is a participant that does something and COMPS is a theme because its position can be changed (Kim and Sells, 2008:44). The argument structure of the verb in sentence (6a) can be illustrated in (6b).

6b.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{slide} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle [2] \text{ NP} \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1], [2] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$

7a. We could **slide** together (BYU-BNC, Underground)

In sentence (7a), the verb *slide* is an intransitive verb. The reason is that there is only one argument, namely the agent, as shown by the argument structure (7b). This verb is followed by the adverb *together*.

7b.

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} \langle \textit{slide} \rangle \\ \text{VAL} \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{SPR} \quad \langle [1] \text{ NP} \rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \quad \langle \quad \rangle \end{array} \right] \\ \text{ARG-ST} \quad \langle [1] \rangle \end{array} \right]$$



5. Novelties

The novelties of this study are that (1) the data were obtained from the British online corpus; British National Corpus (BNC) and (2) the Argument Structure theory proposed by Kim and Sells (2008) was applied in this study.

6. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that *slide verbs* belong to intransitive and transitive verbs. The verbs *bounce* and *slide* can be used as intransitive and transitive verbs. Meanwhile, the verbs *float* and *roll* are used as intransitive verbs. Furthermore, SPR in those sentences functions as the agent. The COMPS of the verb *bounce* serve as the patient and the COMPS of the sentence structure with the verb *slide* serve as the theme.

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