

Irina Stoica, *The Syntax and the Semantics of Manner of Speaking Verbs*, Editura Universității din București, 2021, 217 p.

Irina Stoica's book starts off at a very intriguing, but nonetheless very interesting place, namely the rather marginal (or 'exceptional') status of the class of manner or speaking (MosS) verbs (*mumble, mutter, grumble, bark, stutter, stammer, whisper, holler, etc.*) and their apparent inconsistent syntactic behaviour. First discussed as a distinct class by Zwicky (1971), who defines them as a special case of verbs of communication (those that, next to the communication act *per se*, also exhibit a description of the "physical characteristics" of the act of saying), MoS verbs have not sparked much interest for a long while since. This lack of attention is probably due to their aforementioned exceptional behaviour, and the fact that their syntactic behaviour hinders them from being neatly classified into one of the already well-established verb classes.

The book gives a very clear account of these irregularities, focusing on three main important phenomena which constitute the bulk of the analysis and which are eventually tied together, with a view to treating MoS as a class in its own right, drawing on their double nature as both manner of speech verbs proper, as well as 'predicates of (implicit) creation', i.e., verbs which refer to the noise being issued or 'created'. The three phenomena which are discussed at the core of the dissertation (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) are a) extraction phenomena or islandhood, b) complementizer omission and c) the ability of MoS to appear in Double Object Constructions in English. This gives the dissertation a very clear, neat, and easy-to-follow structure, with the three middle chapters embedded into an introductory one (Chapter 1), which sets out the problem, and a final one (Chapter 5), which brings all these phenomena together, reconsidering the issues and proposing the new line of analysis.

With respect to extraction possibilities, detailed in the second chapter of the book, MoS have been shown to behave rather 'erratically'. Thus, while they are (a special category of) verbs of communication, they do not pattern with *verba dicendi* proper when it comes to allowing the extraction from the complement clause. Verbs of communication allow it unproblematically, whereas MoS disallow it (they behave like non-bridge predicates), or only marginally allow it (under certain conditions). By the same token, in spite of the fact that MoS verbs are non-factive (they do not presuppose the truth of the embedded proposition), they share with typical (epistemic) factives the fact that their complements are islands to extraction. Puzzling enough, it seems

therefore that from the point of view of islandhood, MoS verbs – which are non-factive verbs of (acts of) communication – behave differently from verbs of communication and similar to factive predicates.

As far as complementizer omission is concerned, discussed at length in Chapter 3, the picture is quite similar. Namely, MoS verbs are argued (Doherty, 2000) not to allow the deletion of the complementizer (i.e., to favour that-retention), unlike verbs of communication, which very frequently allow it, patterning thus the behaviour of factive predicates (which also disallow complementizer deletion).

Thirdly, regarding the impossibility of DOCs with MoS verbs, detailed in Chapter 4, the picture is equally puzzling. Semantically, MoS verbs are three-argument non-Latinate predicates, just like their *verba dicendi* counterparts, so they should allow the Dative alternation. However, again, unlike their ‘sisters’, they feature in most studies as a verbal class that only allows POC, not DOC.

Against this rather daunting background, and drawing on some claims in the literature that the behaviour of MoS verbs is not *that* exceptional, under specific conditions (i.e., they do allow (some instances of) extraction (Stowell, 1981a), allow complementizer deletion (Dor, 2005) and may feature in DOC (Bresnan and Nikitina, 2003)), the author defines her aim, namely to investigate these verbs more thoroughly, with a view to treating them as a distinct class, with its own semantic and syntactic particularities. This is nothing short of ambitious, given the apparent whimsical behaviour of these verbs. Such an undertaking forces the author to look for a plausible explanation for the documented irregularities, with a focus on the three aforementioned syntactic phenomena. This is further motivated by the fact that these issues do not seem to be independent of each other, but have been correlated in previous literature (see, for example, the link between the island-like status of the complement and complementizer omission (Snyder, 1992, a.o.), on the one hand, or that between the possibility of DOC and complementizer deletion (Pesetsky 1995), on the other). It is, however, the merit of Irina Stoica’s dissertation to connect not just two, but all three of the discussed phenomena. Moreover, these phenomena enrich Zwicky’s (1971) initial list of properties of the MoS class.

One first and essential step in the author’s declared endeavor is to take some distance from studies which focus exclusively on the exceptional behaviour of MoS verbs, and consider not just alternative analyses which argue for a more ‘nuanced’ view, emphasizing the ‘variable behaviour’ of MoS verbs, but also an in-depth analysis of empirical data. Another worthy perspective is the comparative view. Starting from Zwicky’s (1971) claim that the syntactic behaviour of these verbs is correlated to their semantics, which means that they should exhibit similar properties cross-linguistically, the author tests

this possibility by analyzing MoS verbs in several other (unrelated) languages like Romanian, Italian, German (alongside Spanish, Hungarian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Estonian). This allows her to convincingly conclude that while MoS verbs in various languages share a set of core traits, English MoS predicates are special in that they exhibit other 'extra' properties, which motivates their treatment as a separate class whose members exhibit double behaviour as either verbs of communication (when the focus is on the speech act itself) or as (non-communicative) verbs of creation (when the focus is on the noise emitted by the entity in Subject position). It is the great merit of the dissertation to show that there is a very clear-cut correlation between their variable syntactic behaviour and their dual semantics, i.e., they may allow or disallow specific phenomena according to the communicative/non-communicative dichotomy.

In Chapter 1 ("*Manner of speaking verbs: The issue*", pp.1-27), the author gives an overview of the MoS class, both in English, as well as in languages like Romanian, Italian, and German, focusing on their semantic and syntactic characteristics (cf. Zwicky, 1971). Against this cross-linguistic background, MoS verbs in English are shown to exhibit a series of properties that motivate both their status as a class in itself, on the one hand, and as a language-specific class, on the other. Namely, while MoS verbs behave similarly in a wide range of languages (they denote atelic durative eventualities, they do not presuppose the truth of the embedded proposition, and can alternate transitive with intransitive uses), English MoS verbs seem to be special with respect to other types of phenomena as well, not manifest in other languages. As already mentioned, the author focuses on three such instances: islandhood, complementizer deletion and double object constructions, adding these to Zwicky's initial list. By looking at empirical data, MoS verbs are shown to evince a series of both transparent and opaque properties. That is, while they generally disallow extraction, complementizer omission and the dative alternation, unlike verbs of communication but like factive (non-bridge) verbs (opaque), they have been shown to allow these in specific circumstances (i.e., to be transparent to such phenomena). This rather disconcerting evidence finds a very elegant solution in the claim advanced by the author, namely that this alternation in syntactic behaviour goes hand in hand with a change in their interpretation: they are transparent (on a par with *verba dicendi* proper) when they are used communicatively (i.e., when the focus lies on the actual act of communication) and, conversely, they are opaque (on a par with epistemic non-factives) when what is at stake is not the communicative act, but the creation of a certain noise. As is thoroughly documented and discussed in Chapter 5, which ties the threads together, this is reflected in the exact syntactic configuration associated with the two uses, i.e., whether the root

merges directly with the verb (the communicative/transparent use) or whether it first merges with a nominalizer (the non-communicative/opaque use). Chapter 1 also contains a preliminary corpus of MoS verbs.

Having laid out the issue and the particularities of MoS verbs with respect to these three main phenomena, the book goes on to discuss each of them in detail in the next three chapters.

Chapter 2 (*“Manner of speaking verbs and the phenomenon of extraction”*, pp.29-82) discusses the behaviour of MoS with respect to island-inducing effects on their CP-complements. More precisely, it looks at the possibility of extracting either arguments or adjuncts from the complement clauses of these verbs, both in English and Romanian. After an introductory part which explains syntactic islandhood and types of islands (weak *vs* strong), the chapter goes on to analyze the English data from this perspective (sections 2.1 to 2.4), both theoretically and empirically, and then continues with a generous sub-section (2.6) on Romanian, detailing on an experimental study and discussing degrees of acceptability.

The departure point in this chapter is the initial consensus in the literature that MoS verbs are island-inducers (Erteschik-Shir, 1973, Stowell 1981a, Snyder 1992) and the subsequent debate on the possibility of object extraction (deemed marginal by some or fully grammatical by others (e.g., Erteschik-Shir 2005) under specific pragmatic conditions). The author also discusses the main directions of analysis proposed in the literature, by far not unitary. While some (syntactic) accounts explain the island-like behaviour of the complement by drawing on its likeness to a nominal (the CP as NP analysis) – which thus gives the complement the status of an adjunct, others focus on the semantic weight of the selecting verb (the manner component), which arguably accounts for islandhood without giving up on the argument status of the complement. Yet other studies, though less prolific, take MoS verbs to be part of light verb constructions, with the CP functioning as an appositive. However, neither of these directions can fully account for the data. Hence the author’s claim that MoS verbs display a dual nature, functioning as either communicative or non-communicative predicates.

The three experimental studies discussed in this chapter (one for English and two for Romanian) test and confirm this hypothesis and prompt the conclusion that transparency to extraction correlates with communicative uses. The test for English, conducted on 30 native speakers, has revealed that while acceptability of extraction is rather low, there are statistically significant differences between acceptability of extraction in communicative contexts (higher), as opposed to non-communicative uses (lower) – with both embedded arguments and adjuncts. Romanian (30 participants tested) seems

to allow extraction with MoS verbs more freely than English (69% in Romanian *vs* 37% in English). Also, another unexpected result was that there was increased acceptability when the MoS verbs favoured a non-communicative interpretation (also, higher rates with adjuncts than with complements). This seems *prima facie* to contradict the claim put forth by the author, but it is only an apparent stumbling block. Actually, a plausible explanation is found once we look at the make-up of the structures tested: the ones favouring a more communicative reading featured a Dative clitic on the MoS verb, which arguably constituted a computational load, thus rendering it impossible to clearly conclude on the correlation between communicative/non-communicative uses and acceptability of extraction. What the data does show is that extraction is affected by computational load.

Chapter 3 ("*Manner of speaking verbs and complementizer omission*", pp. 85-111) goes on to analyze the behaviour of MoS verbs with respect to the (im)possibility of complementizer deletion. Since this is an option available for English, but not for Romanian, the chapter focuses exclusively on the English data, tackling the phenomenon from a three-fold perspective: syntactic accounts (section 3.3), semantic accounts (section 3.4) and pragmatic accounts (section 3.5). The purpose of this chapter is not only to zero in on factors which require the retention of the complementizer, but also on those which allow its deletion. Notice that the distinction is not a trivial one: on the one hand, there are constraints that *force the presence* of an overt complementizer (or *ban its deletion*), and, on the other, there are factors which *favour or allow its deletion* (i.e., deletion does not seem to be forced, unlike retention). While most studies in the literature have focused on the former and mostly from a syntactic point of view (Pesetsky and Torrego, 2004, 2006; a.o.), there are also (fewer) studies which discuss (optional) cases of complementizer deletion. The author is bold enough to take the extra step and try to find a plausible explanation which could cover both.

Within section 3.4, which deals with lexical/semantic accounts of complementizer deletion, the author delves into a detailed analysis of (the semantics of) factive verbs (cf Kastner 2015, Ormazabal 1995), with which MoS verbs have often been shown to pattern. Thus, drawing on the differences between factives and non-factives regarding the presuppositionality of their respective complements and the related constraints that derive from this, Irina Stoica proposes a similar dichotomy at work within the MoS class. Namely, the semantics of these predicates is divided between either signalling an actual process of communication or referring to the production of a particular noise.

In the first guise, just as other *verba dicendi*, they behave like non-factive verbs which take a (non-presuppositional) CP complement whose proposition denotes the content of the saying event, and thus

functions as a newly-introduced element in the common ground. As such, complementizer deletion is allowed (though not enforced). Conversely, in the latter stance, i.e., as creation-of-a-noise type of verbs, they can take both clausal and nominal complements (the nominal variant is impossible in the communicative use) and refer to discourse-old elements (already part of the conversational background). Importantly, in this use the CP does not behave like a regular (i.e., selected) CP argument, but is embedded within the definite DP which designates the noise. As such, MoS verbs in this particular guise function like presuppositional verbs which exhibit (simultaneously) both the introduction of a discourse-new entity (i.e., the noise being produced), as well as context update by ‘calling up’ the embedded proposition from the common ground (to explicitate the content of the noise). The (existential) presupposition here targets primarily the existence of the noise, while that of the CP is secondary and derives from the former. Ultimately, whether the CP is presupposed on not may also depend on the specific semantics of the noun that the complements modify. With factive verbs proper, which denote *facts*, the factive semantic follows. With MoS, however, the semantics of whisper or shout or mutter does not have such entailments. On a semantic level, therefore, factivity does not seem to play a crucial role. Syntactically, however, the existence of the nominal is of utmost importance, since it accounts for the opaque behaviour of ‘creation’ MoS verbs when it comes to complementizer deletion – more precisely, it can explain why they disallow it.

In Chapter 4 (“*Manner of speaking verbs in double object constructions*”, pp. 113-152), the focus is on (in)compatibility of MoS verbs with double object constructions. The first five sub-sections of this chapter (4.1-4.5) are more general in nature, discussing DOC in English from both a syntactic and a semantic perspective. As far as the syntactic view goes, both the derivational and the non-derivational accounts are presented, as extensively discussed in the literature. The semantic approach looks at the typical classes of verbs that allow the dative alternation, discussing the Latinate-constraint, the Animacy constraint, etc. Finally, it is acknowledged that the data is quite varied and controversial and that the acceptability of the dative alternation cannot be reduced to either or only syntactic or semantic factors, being influenced by a combination of any or all of factors such as syntax, semantics, discourse prominence or definiteness (of the Theme or Goal participants), word length (i.e., the principle of End-Weight).

Section 4.6 sets out to look more carefully at the behaviour of MoS in DOCs, drawing on the above conclusions regarding the general constraints on the dative alternation, as well as previous claims in the literature (Bresnan & Nikitina 2003) about the acceptability of MoS verbs in DOCs with pronominal Goals. It discusses the design

and results of an experimental study whose aim is to verify the exact acceptability of MoS in Double Object Constructions, taking into account their double nature as verbs of communication proper of verbs of sound creation. While the results show that English native speakers overall reject DOCs with MoS verbs (probably due to their semantic inability to yield change of possession interpretations), they also reveal improved acceptability in cases when the Goal is pronominal, as argued in the literature. Thus, the results confirm previous claims, but also very interestingly show that this increased acceptability ties in with communicative uses, i.e., those where the focus is on the speech act itself rather than the produced noise.

The chapter closes with a cross-linguistic view (section 4.7) – with a focus on Romanian (4.7.2), which, unlike English, allows MoS in the Romanian equivalent of DOCs (i.e., with a Goal argument adjacent to the verb). Nevertheless, the experimental study conducted by the author shows that even when MoS verbs freely allow the dative alternation, there is a gradient of acceptability which again ties in with the (non-) communicative semantics of these predicates: the more communicative they are in their interpretation (i.e., *a șopti* ‘whisper’, *a murmura* ‘murmur’), the higher the acceptability rate (and vice-versa, with *a țipa* ‘yell’, *a striga* ‘shout’ – which primarily emphasise the noise).

The irrefutable merit of these empirical studies is that they manage to account for the (variable) behaviour of MoS verbs by combining syntactic and semantic accounts, rather than discussing them separately. Namely, it is the very dual semantics of these verbs that determines a different syntax, which in turn nicely explains their opaque vs transparent behaviour with respect to DOCs.

In the final chapter of the book, Chapter 5 (“*Drawing the threads together: towards an analysis of MoS verbs*”, pp. 153-200), everything comes neatly together, in the sense that the author puts forth and details an analysis under which the three phenomena discussed in the previous chapters find a natural and plausible explanation. The key point that feeds the entire argument is the dual nature of MoS verbs, which are not only verbs of communication (in a specific manner) – as previously analyzed in the literature – but also verbs of (implicit) creation, building on previous accounts of ‘verbs of creation’ (Jezek 2010, 2014) or verbs of derived creation (Levinson 2007). Here the author draws on Zwicky’s (1971) own definition, which says, on the one hand, that MoS verbs “denote intended acts of communication by speech”, thereby denoting that some communicative act has taken place in a certain manner (i.e., *whisper X = say X in a whispering manner*), but also, on the other hand, that they “describe the physical characteristics of the emitted sound”, thereby emphasizing the creation of a specific sound (whose properties are further spelled out by the verb) (i.e., *shout/mutter X (the answer / that...) = produce*

a shout/a mutter which counts as the answer/ which says that...). The incontestable merit of this proposal is that it brings under the same 'roof' the manner and result readings of MoS verbs, unifying two hitherto divergent lines of analysis, one emphasizing the manner component in order to account for these verbs' semantic entailments, the other postulating a nominal component in order to account for their syntactic properties.

The semantics of MoS verbs goes hand in hand with their proposed syntax. Drawing on the homophonous nature of many words in English (a poor morphological language), which can be either verbal or nominal in nature, the author suggests that this is exactly what determines the oscillating behaviour of MoS verbs with respect to islandhood, complementizer omission and DOCs. More specifically, words like *mutter*, *mumble*, *shout*, etc. do not exhibit any morphological clues as to the lexical category they belong to (zero derivation). Neither is stress a reliable test, much like in the case of words like *love*, *hate* (and unlike, say, words like *object*, *subject*, *desert*, *defect*, *reject*, etc. – whose nominal or verbal properties are distinguished in terms of stress patterns). As such, MoS words in English enter the derivation in zero-related pairs and it is ultimately the role of syntax (i.e., their *Merge* position) to determine their category membership. In this respect, English is different from other languages (viz., Romanian, German, Italian), where verbs and nouns (including those designating emission of noises or manner of speech) are distinguished morphologically. This cross-linguistic morphological distinction is exactly what accounts for the different behaviour of MoS in English versus other languages – with respect to the three analyzed syntactic phenomena.

Coming back to MoS verbs in English, their hybrid status is accounted for by the different merge position of the root (given zero-derivation). Thus, when the root merges directly with the verb, it acquires verbal properties and takes a DP or CP internal argument (in complement position). This yields the communicative use, under which the verb is 'transparent', in the sense that, given the syntactic configuration, nothing prevents extraction from the CP argument, complementizer omission is unproblematic and DOCs are allowed – because in this configuration the semantics is one of change of possession (i.e., transfer of some information, much like in the case of *tell*). Alternatively, the root can combine with a nominalizer, itself the head of a small clause whose Specifier position is occupied by a DP or CP. This captures the 'creation of noise' semantics, where the focus is not on the act of communication, but rather on the noise produced. Syntactically, this time, none of the three phenomena is allowed anymore. Extraction is impossible due to the fact that this would occur out of an argument in subject position, but it is a well-established fact that subjects are islands to extraction. A similar line of argumentation

works for complementizer deletion, too: while it is possible to delete a complementizer from a CP in post-verbal position (under certain conditions), this is not permitted with complement clauses in pre-verbal position (viz., subject). As for DOCs, the structural position of the root in this configuration prevents the change of possession interpretation (the focus is on the creation of the noise, not the saying event), thereby yielding the dative alternation impossible.

When all the threads have been tied, the picture that emerges is very clear, convincing, exciting and overreaching. The author builds her argumentation stepwise: she starts from a problem (the apparent erratic behaviour of MoS verbs) and then she slowly but surely dismantles it (building not only on claims in previous studies, but also on empirical data and experimental evidence), working towards an elegant solution whose merit is not only to unify semantic and syntactic accounts, but also to offer significant clues with respect to linguistic variation.

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