

إمكانية تغير التراكيب النحوية، فإن العلاقات الدلالية الأساسية بين الأفعال وفاعليها تظل ثابتة. تؤكد الدراسة أيضًا على القيمة التربوية لتحليل الأدوار الدلالية، لا سيما لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، إذ يساعد هذا التحليل على توضيح العلاقات بين المتحدثين ويقلل من سوء فهم تراكيب الجمل المعقدة. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الأدوار الدلالية تُشكل أداة تحليلية أساسية لفهم معنى الجملة، ولها آثار مهمة على النظرية اللغوية، وتعليم اللغات، ودراسات الترجمة.

Abstract

Understanding how meaning is structured within sentences is a central concern in linguistic research. One of the most influential approaches to explaining sentence meaning is the theory of semantic roles, which describes the relationships between predicates and their participants. This study investigates the role of semantic roles in clarifying sentence meaning and examines how identifying these roles contributes to deeper linguistic interpretation.

The research adopts a descriptive analytical approach based on the theoretical frameworks proposed by Fillmore (1968), Jackendoff (1990), and Dowty (1991). A set of English sentences

Investigating Semantic Roles as a Powerful Tool for Understanding the Meaning of Sentences

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دراسة الأدوار الدلالية باعتبارها أداة قوية لفهم معنى الجمل

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المخلص:

يُعد فهم كيفية بناء المعنى داخل الجمل محورًا أساسيًا في البحث اللغوي. ومن أبرز المناهج المؤثرة في تفسير معنى الجملة نظرية الأدوار الدلالية، التي تصف العلاقات بين المسندات وفاعليها. تبحث هذه الدراسة دور الأدوار الدلالية في توضيح معنى الجملة، وتدرس كيف يُسهم تحديد هذه الأدوار في فهم أعمق للتفسير اللغوي.

يتبنى البحث منهجًا تحليليًا وصفيًا قائمًا على الأطر النظرية التي اقترحها كلٌّ من فيلمور (1968)، وجاكندوف (1990)، ودوتي (1991). وقد تم اختيار مجموعة من الجمل الإنجليزية التي تمثل تراكيب نحوية مختلفة - بما في ذلك التراكيب المبنية للمعلوم والمبنية للمجهول والنفسية والتحويلية - لتحليلها. وتم فحص كل جملة لتحديد عناصرها الدلالية، مثل (Agent , Experiencer , Instrument, Patient , Them Beneficiary,) تُظهر النتائج أن الأدوار الدلالية تُوفر إطارًا متسقًا لتفسير معنى الجملة بغض النظر عن التباين النحوي. ويُبين التحليل أنه على الرغم من

have important implications for linguistic theory, language teaching, and translation studies.

Keywords: semantic roles, thematic roles, linguistic analysis, argument structure.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. The Problem

Understanding how language conveys meaning is one of the oldest and most essential concerns in linguistics. Scholars from traditional grammar to modern cognitive linguistics have attempted to explain how sentences express who does what to whom, when, where, and how. The concept of semantic roles—also called thematic roles, theta roles, or participant roles—emerged as a powerful framework for explaining the underlying structure of meaning within sentences.

Semantic roles describe the functional relationships between verbs (or predicates) and their participants (Fillmore, 1968; Jackendoff, 1990).

Rather than focusing solely on syntactic

representing different syntactic structures—including active, passive, psychological, and transfer constructions—was selected for analysis. Each sentence was examined to identify such as Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Instrument, and Beneficiary. The findings demonstrate that semantic roles provide a consistent framework for interpreting sentence meaning regardless of syntactic variation. The analysis shows that although grammatical structures may change, the underlying semantic relationships between verbs and their participants remain stable. The study also emphasizes the pedagogical value of semantic-role analysis, particularly for learners of English as a foreign language, as it helps clarify participant relationships and reduces misinterpretation of complex sentence structures. Overall, the research concludes that semantic roles constitute an essential analytical tool for understanding sentence meaning and

relationships between predicates and their participants.

2. To examine how semantic-role analysis contributes to understanding the meaning of sentences, especially in contexts where syntactic cues alone are insufficient.
3. To explore the pedagogical potential of semantic roles as an analytical tool for learners of English as a foreign language.
4. To identify common areas where learners misinterpret sentence meaning due to a lack of awareness of semantic-role distinctions.

1.3. Hypotheses of the Study

Based on existing literature and observed learner challenges, this study assumes that students who lack knowledge of semantic roles are more likely to misinterpret sentence meaning, particularly in complex or ambiguous structures. It is further hypothesized that semantic-role analysis offers a clearer and

form, semantic roles aim to explain deeper conceptual relationships such as *Agent*, *Patient*, *Experiencer*, *Theme*, *Instrument*, and *Beneficiary*.

This study is to answer the following questions :

- 1.What are semantic roles, and how are they defined within major theoretical frameworks?
- 2.How do semantic roles contribute to understanding the meaning of sentences?
- 3.In what ways do semantic roles clarify the relationships between verbs and participants?
- 4.What difficulties do learners face when interpreting sentences without semantic-role awareness?

1.2. Aims of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following :

1. To investigate the nature and function of semantic roles in linguistic theory, with particular attention to how roles clarify

Semantic Roles and Sentence

Meaning

2.1 Concept of Semantic Roles

Semantic roles, or thematic relations, thematic roles, participant roles, or deep cases, are a basic concept in the study of linguistics which attempts to describe the relation which arguments bear to predicates that govern them, or to the intuitive meaning of who did what to whom, with whom or for whom. Intellectual antecedents to this notion can be found in the independent work of Jeffrey Gruber and Charles Fillmore in the mid-1960s on thematic relations as part of a larger theoretical turn, no longer syntactocentric met, to a paradigm that focused on the systematic interrelation of meaning and grammatical structure. Particularly, Case Grammar by Fillmore, had posited that all underlying syntactic structure could be explained by a universal system of semantically defined categories of cases that occur in a variety of morphological and syntactic

more reliable framework for understanding relationships among sentence elements beyond surface syntax. Accordingly, teaching semantic roles is expected to enhance learners' comprehension, enabling more accurate interpretation across diverse sentence types.

1.4. The Value

This study is significant because it strengthens theoretical understanding of semantic roles as fundamental elements of sentence meaning, while also offering practical value for teaching and curriculum design in EFL contexts. It demonstrates how semantic-role analysis can enhance interpretation in fields such as translation, discourse analysis, and computational linguistics, and provides learners—especially those in linguistics and English departments—with effective tools for improving comprehension, critical reading, and analytical skills.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

farmer kills the duckling and The duckling is killed by the farmer the farmer continuously holds the semantic role of Agent even though they are placed in subject position in the first sentence and oblique by-phrase position in the latter. On the contrary, different semantic roles can be performed by the same grammatical one, e.g., subject: Agent (John opened the door), Experiencer (John heard the noise), Patient (John was injured) and Instrument (The key opened the door) (Shopen, 2007).

The theoretical usefulness of semantic roles is that they are able to represent systematic similarities between different predicates and constructions that would otherwise be obscure. Semantic roles present a means of expressing similarities within the various applications of the same predicate or less similar but semantically related predicates that would otherwise be hidden by arguments with such semantic roles being syntactically instantiated in a number of

manifestations across languages (Kim and Michaelis, 2020) .

A basic analytic difference in the description of linguistics is the difference between semantic roles and grammatical roles. Surface-structure functions that are identified by the syntactic position, case marking as well as agreement patterns in particular languages are known as grammatical roles, namely subject, direct object, indirect object, and oblique. Conceptual participation of an entity in an event or a state In comparison, semantic roles represent the conceptual constant involvement of an entity in a state or event regardless of the specific syntactic encoding. It has been stated by (Shopen , 2007): semantic functions are the aspects of such relation between sentences and the situations they represent, and grammatical functions are the aspects of their structure. One semantic role can be realized in a variety of grammatical constructions in paraphrastic constructions. In such sentences as The

The list of the semantic roles suggested in the linguistic literature differs widely between schools of thought, with small, highly generalized lists to large-scale taxonomies of participant differences. However, there is a fundamental set of roles which is repeated over and over again in both descriptive and pedagogical treatments, each of which is defined by the particular featural features and ideal exemplars (Core, 2018).

The agent refers to the party that intentionally does something and has volition and causal responsibility in the act. Agents are paradigmatically animate and cause consciously the event referred to by the verb. In Susan ate an apple, the Agent is Susan, the one who ate the apple (Wikipedia, 2007). Agents have close associations with subject position in active transitive clauses cross-linguistically, although such a mapping is not always true (Muse, 2021).

The entity upon which an action is performed and upon which a change of

distinct ways. The abstraction allows linguists to make generalizations about argument realizations, alternations and linking regularities which do not demark individual lexical items. Nonetheless, the same abstraction has given rise to a defining controversy of theories. Critics observe that it has been difficult to have a limited set of inventory of semantic roles that can be universally and broadly applicable, fine-grained semantic differences have spread over verbs and languages, and the diagnostics of role assignment is still disputable. Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties, semantic roles have found descriptive and analytical application in various subfields, such as language acquisition, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and computational natural language processing, in which they still serve as a source of theoretical interest as well as practical use (Lowell, 2018).

2.2 Types of Semantic Roles

Experiencers are conscious creatures that know, feel or perceive. Experiencers in the song Susan heard the song Susan is Experiencer; in the song Joan likes pizza Joan experiences psychological affect. Experiencers often occur as the subject of psych-verbs but also sometimes occur in object position, as in the song The music pleases Susan. Instrument identifies whatever is employed by an Agent to do an action. Instruments are usually nonliving things that are used to bring about an occurrence. In Jamie cut the ribbon with a pair of scissors, the scissors are the Instrument (Wikipedia, 2007). Subject position of instruments in some types of constructions is allowed, especially when Agents are unspecified, as in The key opens the door (Muse, 2021).

Beneficiary (or Benefactive) refers to the one whose benefit it is done. The benefits can be coded as objects in both types of doubles object construction,--I baked Reggie a cake--and they can be coded as

state follows are identified by the patient. The falling rocks crushed the car In the case of The falling rocks crushed the car, the car is the Patient, which is altered to the damaged state. The Patient position corresponds to the direct object position in active transitive sentences. Theme is conceptually close to Patient but tends to be differentiated by the lack of needed change of state. Theme describes the object movements, places, or semantically acted on without transformation. I put the book on the table, Theme: the book is moved but not in essence. In like manner, in stative sentences like I have two children, the Theme is the object whose being or possession is stated. Other theoretical treatments use the terms Theme and Patient interchangeably, whereas some accounts retain the latter term because it is affected (Lowell, 2018).

Experiencer refers to the object which is subject to sensory, emotional or cognitive input which is not initiated volitarily.

of transfer and change of possession (Kim and Michaelis, 2020).

Other roles found in the literature are Stimulus (the thing that triggers an experience state), Force or Natural Cause (agents of causation that are mindless), Time (the time of occurrence of an event), Manner (how an action is carried out), Purpose (what an action is supposed to accomplish), and Cause (the thing that causes an action to occur). This explosion of the number of types of role has inspired later attempts to reduce roles into simpler systems, most famously the macrorole theory of Role and Reference Grammar and the proto-role theory of Dowty which treats Agent and Patient not as discrete categories but as clusters of entailments prototype-based (Core, 2018).

2.3 Semantic Roles and Sentence Structure

The connection between semantic roles and sentence structures is the heart of the syntax-semantics interface and concerns

oblique prepositional phrases, --He built a car for me. The Beneficiary is a role of advantage or service to a benefit recipient who is most usually an animate being. Location defines the place of action or possession of a state. Location is the park in Johnny and Linda played in the park. Locative roles can be coded in prepositional phrases, locative case marking or, in some languages, by verbal affixation.

Source refers to the place or point of origin of movement or transfer. The rocket was launched from Central Command, the Source in this case is Central Command, in Bill borrowed a book from Sarah the Source is Sarah, and the book is transferred. Goal (or Direction in specialist terms) determines the object or destination of motion or transfer. School is Goal, her is Goal/Recipient, a representation of the intended destination of transfer. Recipient in He walked to school is often viewed as a subtype of Goal that is directly linked with the verbs

is overt or inferable noun phrase (Kim and Michaelis, 2020).

Perhaps the most vivid examples of how semantic role structure affects syntactic structure include argument structure alternations, in which a syntactic frame involving the same verb has different syntactic units although central meaning elements remain the same. The locative alternation demonstrates that alternative placements of semantic roles on grammatical posts form sound paraphrases with a manifestation of slight distinctions in meanings. Take the example of He loaded hay on the truck and He loaded the truck with hay. In the initial construction, the direct object position is held by the hay, which is Theme in the process of movement, and the truck can be seen as the Location/Goal, and one of the prepositions. In the second, the truck is in direct object position, and it is allowed to have Patient-like properties of holistic affectedness and hay surfaces as oblique

the way the information about the participants of the event is systematically codified in the grammatical structures. At the heart of this relationship is the verb which plays the role of the structural and semantic nucleus of the clause. Verbs do not merely refer to events, states, or processes, but also mark the number and kind of semantic positions that they must take on syntactic position- a property also known as valency or argument structure. According to Kim and Michaelis (2020), it is impossible to, say, have an event of transfer without a donor, gift, and recipient. It is the relational structure of verbal concepts, which implies particular arrays of semantic roles: transfer verbs (give, send, lend) need Agent, Theme, Goal/Recipient, change-of-state verbs (break, open, melt) need Agent, Patient, perception verbs (see, hear, feel) need Experiencer, Stimulus. This verb therefore constructs a semantic template that need not be met by an argument that

which semantic role. In configurationally languages such as English, the syntactic position of noun phrases is the most important cue to such identification but morphological case systems in other languages such as Finnish, Hungarian, and Turkey have other encoding mechanisms (Muse, 2021).

Theoretical studies of syntax-semantics interface have suggested several linking rules or mapping principles according to which regular correspondences between semantic role hierarchies and grammatical functions assignment are carried out. The most common generalization, usually known as the Agent-First or Subject-Selection Principle, is that in all languages, Agents are usually mapped to subject position, and Patients or Themes are usually mapped to direct object. Such default pattern can be rewritten by voice constructions, e.g. passive, which reduce Agents to oblique and elevate Patients to subject, or applicative constructions,

with-with phrase. The semantic difference of whether the place or the moved object is construed to be the most affected is in direct relation to syntactic prominence. Equally, dative alternation allows alternative realization of Recipient either as indirect object (He gave her the book) or prepositional object (He gave the book to her) with discourse status and construal attendant differences (Shopen, 2007).

Importantly, systematically changing the distribution of the semantic roles to the grammatical positions changes sentence meaning despite the same lexical content being the same. The minimal pair cat chase dog vs. dog chase cat shows that the reversal of the Agent and Patient roles in the same lexical items is not just a stylistic difference, but it is also a difference in the truth-value. The point observed here shows that the meaning of sentences cannot be broken down into lexical concatenation; instead, what is required is an accurate determination of who plays

In the absence of semantic role assignment, a sequence of lexical items is simply a collection of concepts without relationships; it is role assignment that enables the listener to re-construct the event configuration of which the speaker is about. This process of interpretation is very quick and automatic in understanding the language of the native language as it utilizes numerous sources of information such as verb specific knowledge, syntactic parsing, animacy heuristics and real-world plausibility (Valin, 2006).

The semantic role criticality of a proper interpretation is especially clear in constructions that have a broken canonical form-function correlation. Passive constructions, object-experiencer psych-verbs, and topicalization constructions all de-couple the natural association of the Agent with the subject and the Patient with the object but competent comprehenders can reliably restore correct role occupations. In A

which raise obliques to object. The theory of semantic macroroles offered by Van Valin (2006), Actor and Undergoer, is one such complex attempt to make generalizations at an intermediate level of abstraction in between particular thematic relations and grammatical functions, where it is assumed that all languages are unmarked active clauses which Actor and Undergoer match (Valin, 2006).

2.4 The Role of Semantic Roles in Meaning Interpretation

Semantic roles are an essential part of sentence interpretation as they can be described as the conceptual mediator between the syntactic forms of the surface and the mental images of the situation that language provokes. The main interpretative role of verbs with meanings is to determine the state of participation of any entity in the event or state represented by a verb to answer the basic question of who did what to whom that constitutes the basis of propositional knowledge (MUSE, 2021).

The followings are illustrations of different role configurations and the implications on their interpretation:

Example 1: "She would tickle him with a feather. In this instance, Agent (volitional initiator) is She, Patient (becomes the target of tickling) is him, and the Instrument (tool used) is a feather. The sentence talks of an intentional physical contact that is mediated by an implement.

Example 2: "The mountain was floating down the rock. The rock has Theme role- it moves in a Path but does not intentionally instigate it and is not subjected to any change of state which is necessary. The mountain is Source (point of origin of movement description). The building is a profile of non-volitional, self-propelled motion.

Example 3: Bill borrowed a book to Sarah, and he gave it back to her immediately. This is a complicated sentence that presents several role-bearing objects on two occasions. In the

cache of weapons was seized by the FBI on Thursday, the hearer has to be aware that the FBI is the bearer of Agent role yet it holds oblique position and the cache of weapons is the bearer of Patient role yet it holds subject position. Such an interpretive performance demands the syntactic information (auxiliary, morphology of a participle, a by-phrase), semantic information (weapons can not be taken; police forces do), and pragmatic reasoning in a fraction of a second. According to Kamal, Jew, Al-Rikabi, and Mohammed (2025) , semantic role assignment is diagnostic as evidenced by systematic analysis of English sentences , deducing word meaning from morphological structure in order to achieve word comprehension is a reasonable and effective learning strategy, as determining word meaning from context or dictionary definitions can often lead to confusion.

These examples indicate that semantic role analysis sheds light on minor differences that cannot be detected through gross description of syntax only. Sentences can be of the same grammar but with different role structures and with the corresponding variations in the truth conditions and entailment structure. Besides, the role analysis shows systematic polysemy: the verbs which are found in more than one construction type have corresponding changes in role arrays, e.g., load in the locative alternation described above (Indiana University, n.d., p. 3).

Semantic role interpretation is not only limited to the understanding of single sentences, but also to discourse processing levels. Clause boundary role maintenance and tracking helps the reader and the audience to create coherent mental images of a larger story, determining which participant is acting on which throughout a series of events. NLP Computational methods have

borrowing act, Bill is Agent/Recipient (volitional acquirer), a book is Theme (transferred entity), Sarah is Source (origin of transfer). The role array accurately defines the direction of reversal of transfer: Agent/Source (volitional transferor) in the returning event, it (book) in the Theme and her (Sarah) in the Goal/Recipient.

Example 4: "She nailed the picture on the wall to him. She is Agent, the painting is Theme (entity moved and located), the wall is Location (spatial endpoint) and he is Beneficiary (recipient of service) . The structure captures the spatial disposition and interpersonal gain.

Example 5: "That cheese stinks." The role of the single argument cheese is that of Stimulus role; the object that evokes an olfactory feeling in an implied Experiencer (Indiana University, n.d., p. 2). The stative predicate describes an innate attribute and not a phenomenon.

Each of the sentences is chosen to demonstrate certain patterns of role assigning, the possibilities of alternation or interpretative ambiguities which occur in this situation of pedagogy of L2 in universities. The corpus also has sentences with non-canonical mappings between semantic and grammatical roles passives, object-experiencer psych-verbs and locative alternations, thus allowing systematic exploration of how L2 learners negotiate complex syntax-semantics interface effects. All the sentences are de-institutionalized and are discussed solely in their structural and semantic terms.

3.2 Methodology

In this paper, the analytical methodology to be used is descriptive in nature, a qualitative research methodology that is suitable to a fine-grained study of linguistic structures and their interpretive implications. The descriptive part of the paper entails the systematic identification and categorization of semantic roles in every sentence of the corpus using the

therefore put significant effort into semantic role labeling the process of automatically recognizing and classifying role-bearing arguments in text, and has found uses in information extraction and machine translation to name a few.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Data Description

The data that will be involved in the analysis of this study is in the form of a purposely sampled corpus of 10 English sentences based on the real-life second language teaching tools, such as textbook and classroom interaction transcripts, and language assessment tools. This variation guarantees that essential coverage has been made on the major semantic role categories identified in the theoretical framework which are Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Instrument, Beneficiary, Location, Source and Goal.

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The profes sor	Agent	Volitional initiator of communicative act; answers "What did the professor do?"
the theory	Theme	Entity transferred/displ aced; undergoes no physical change but is "moved" from unknown to known status
the studen ts	Goal/Recip ient	Endpoint of transfer; answers "To whom was the explanation directed?"
the lecture	Location (Temporal)	Temporal setting of event; answers "When did the explaining occur?"

This sentence instantiates a transfer-of-information frame, semantically parallel to material transfer verbs like give or send. The Agent (professor) volitionally causes Theme (theory) to move along a communicative path to Goal (students). The temporal Location provides event

diagnostic criteria and the role definitions in Chapter Two. Every noun phrase argument is attributed a semantic role according to the relationship they bear to the governing predicate in both intrinsic verb semantics and constructional context. The analytical part goes further to investigate patterns, regularities, and variation in the role assignment throughout the corpus, especially the correlation between semantic role set ups and sentence meaning.

3.3 Semantic Roles Analysis of Sentences.

The corpus analysis has shown regularities in the distribution and grammatical encoding of semantic roles in English sentence types. The examples below, which are the results of the analysis of the semantic roles, are based on the corpus, and they prove the role of the meaning.

Sentence 1: "The professor explained the theory to the students during the lecture."

The vase bears Patient role in the main clause, encoding its affectedness, while simultaneously bearing Theme role in the subordinate clause, encoding its translational motion. The absence of an Agent reflects a deliberate construal of the event as spontaneous or with unspecified cause. This pattern presents well-documented challenges for L2 learners whose first languages require explicit Agent expression in all transitive contexts

Sentence 3: "The audience enjoyed the performance immensely."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The audience	Experiencer	Sentient entity undergoing psychological/emotional state; answers "Who experienced the enjoyment?"
the performance	Stimulus	Entity triggering psychological state; answers "What was enjoyed?"
immensely	Manner	Adjunct specifying degree/intensity; not an argument

This sentence exemplifies the Experiencer-Stimulus configuration characteristic of psych-verbs. Notably, English permits alternation between this frame and the alternative Stimulus-Experiencer frame ("The performance

grounding. Grammatically, Agent maps to subject, Theme to direct object, Goal to indirect object (prepositional phrase), and Location to temporal adjunct. This canonical mapping facilitates immediate interpretive access for both native speakers and L2 learners .

Sentence 2: "The vase broke when it fell from the shelf."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The vase	Patient	Undergoes change of state (from intact to broken); answers "What happened to the vase?"
the shelf	Source	Origin point of motion; answers "From where did it fall?"

This sentence illustrates the anticausative construction, wherein a change-of-state verb appears without an expressed Agent.

prepositional dative ("handed the key to the new student"). The semantic role configuration remains identical across alternants; what shifts is the discourse prominence accorded to Recipient versus Theme. The double-object construction, by according object status to Recipient, profiles the affectedness or benefit accruing to the recipient entity (Indiana University, n.d., para. 3). L2 learners must acquire not only the possibility of both constructions but also their subtle pragmatic differentiation.

Sentence 5: "The storm destroyed several buildings along the coastline."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The storm	Force/Natural Cause	Non-volitional causal entity; mindless initiator of event
several buildings	Patient	Entities undergoing destruction; changed from

pleased the audience immensely"), with attendant changes in grammatical role assignment but preservation of core semantic roles (Wikipedia, 2007, para. 6). The alternation demonstrates that semantic role constancy across syntactic paraphrases provides robust evidence for role autonomy from grammatical functions.

Sentence 4: "The librarian handed the new student the key to the archives."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The librarian	Agent	Volitional initiator of transfer event
the new student	Goal/Recipient	Animate endpoint of transfer; receives entity
the key	Theme	Entity transferred; changes possession

This double-object dative construction encodes the Recipient as indirect object without preposition, contrasting with the

The patient	Goal/Recipient	Undergoes transfer; receives entity
a new medication	Theme	Entity transferred
the specialist	Agent	Volitional initiator (demoted to oblique)

This passive ditransitive construction illustrates the decoupling of semantic roles from canonical grammatical alignments. The Recipient occupies subject position despite bearing Goal role; the Agent occupies oblique by-phrase position despite being the volitional initiator. Yet interpretation remains unambiguous because morphological (be+past participle, by) and positional cues signal the voice construction, prompting the comprehender to remap grammatical functions to semantic roles appropriately. For L2 learners, passive constructions represent a classic learnability problem precisely because they disrupt the

		standing to ruined state
the coastline	Location	Spatial setting; answers "Where were the buildings located?"

The storm bears Force rather than Agent due to absence of volition and intentionality, yet it occupies subject position—a position prototypically associated with Agent. This demonstrates that subjecthood correlates more strongly with causal responsibility than with animacy or volition per se. The analysis reveals that causal hierarchies interact with grammatical mapping principles: entities highest in causal prominence, whether animate Agents or inanimate Forces, preferentially realize as subjects.

Sentence 6: "The patient was given a new medication by the specialist."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
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Languages differ in the extent to which they permit non-Agent subjects; English is relatively permissive, whereas many languages strictly prohibit Instrument, Location, or Patient subjects without passive morphology. This cross-linguistic variation constitutes a potential source of L1 transfer effects in university L2 populations.

Sentence 8: "We baked him a cake for his birthday."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
We	Agent	Volitional performers of baking action
him	Beneficiary	Entity benefiting from action; answers "For whom was the cake baked?"
a cake	Theme	Entity created; resultant object of action
his birthday	Purpose	Intended occasion; adjunct role

transparent role-form mappings characteristic of active transitive.

Sentence 7: "The key opened the door effortlessly."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The key	Instrument	Entity used to perform action; answers "What was used to open the door?"
the door	Patient	Entity undergoing change of state (closed → open)
effortlessly	Manner	Adjunct specifying action quality

This instrumental subject construction suppresses the Agent, profiling instead the implement enabling the event. The Instrument occupies subject position—a slot normally reserved for Agent or Force—demonstrating that semantic role promiscuity of grammatical subjects is systematic rather than arbitrary.

the playground	Goal	Endpoint/destination of motion
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This sentence illustrates the conflation of Agent and Theme in a single argument—a phenomenon characteristic of motion verbs in which the moving entity is both the volitional initiator and the entity undergoing translational displacement. Such role conflation poses no interpretive difficulty for native speakers but illuminates why some verbs permit middle constructions ("The door opens easily") while others resist them ("*The playground runs easily"). The distributional restrictions follow from role configurations: verbs whose subject bears only Agent resist middle formation; verbs whose subject bears Patient or Theme properties permit it.

This benefactive construction encodes the Beneficiary as indirect object in a double-object frame, paralleling the dative alternation. Semantically, him is not a Recipient (no transfer of possession occurs until the cake is presented, an event not asserted here) but rather Beneficiary—the intended recipient of benefit. This distinction, often conflated in pedagogical grammars, is semantically significant: Beneficiary relates to intended advantage, Recipient to actual transfer. Role analysis thus exposes granular semantic distinctions with implications for accurate sentence interpretation and production.

Sentence 9: "The children ran to the playground."

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The children	Agent	Volitional initiators of motion; intentional movement

Sentence 10: "The idea fascinated the students."

animacy (experiencers are animate), subjecthood, and agentivity .

3.4 Discussion of Results

The review provides a number of results that directly relate to the theoretical model developed in Chapter Two and have implications in second language instruction. To begin with, the corpus data strongly demonstrate the analysis strength of semantic roles as descriptive categories. In the ten sentences, the methodical use of diagnostic tests provided a uniform, intersubjectively verifiable, role allocation, which proves that semantic roles, despite continuing theoretical controversies concerning their exact inventory and ontological position, have a real descriptive competency in natural language data. The analysis also confirms the difference between semantic and grammatical roles which is the same arrangement of semantic roles are manifested in divergent grammatical structure (active/passive, dative alternants, locative alternants), and the

Noun Phrase	Semantic Role	Diagnostic Evidence
The idea	Stimulus	Entity triggering psychological state
the students	Experiencer	Sentient entity experiencing fascination

This object-experiencer psych-verb construction inverts the canonical mapping of Experiencer to subject and Stimulus to object. The stimulus appears in subject position; the experiencer appears in object position. Yet the semantic role configuration is identical to that of subject-experiencer verbs like enjoy—the only difference lies in their grammatical realization. This decoupling of semantic and grammatical prominence in object-experiencer verbs is cross-linguistically unstable; languages frequently diachronically regularize such verbs toward the canonical Experiencer-subject template. L2 learners show protracted difficulty with these constructions precisely because they violate the expected alignment of

mappings, which is authorized by certain morphological or constructional indicators. Such combination of default principles with exceptional constructions defines the syntax-semantics interface of the languages and forms the major learning issue of university L2 students.

The analysis shows that truth-conditional and entailment properties of sentences depend on semantic role configurations directly. The comparison of Sentences 1 and 6, 3 and 10, and the locative alternants of Chapter Two clearly show that role assignments, not the lexical content or gross syntactic structure determine propositional meaning. Two sentences can contain the same lexical items, same grammatical role assignments but with different semantic role assignments when their semantic role assignments are different, as is the case with canonical cat/dog chase example. On the other hand, sentences with divergent surface structure and the same role assignments (active/ passive pairs)

same grammatical positions are occupied by various semantic roles in various sentences. The dissociation is not an artificial abstraction but a real and concrete phenomenon of the English structure of clauses that have practical implications on understanding.

The analysis supports the hierarchical structure of the semantic roles in grammatical mapping. Systematically Agents have accessibility to subject position ranking higher than other positions in the corpus, then Forces, Instruments, Experiencers, and Locations/Patients depending on certain constructional conditions. This hierarchy, which can be expressed in many different ways as Thematic Hierarchy, Agent-First Principle, or Actor-Undergoer continuum, is strongly empirically supported by the patterns of distributions. Interestingly, the hierarchy is not final: passive, object-experiencer, and instrumental subject constructions are all systematic superimposition of default

are involved in multiple argument structure frames with corresponding meaning shifts

Relating these results to the general theoretical framework of the innovative teaching methodological framework developed in Chapter One, the discussion allows considering that explicit training on semantic roles and argument structure alternations can become a successful pedagogical intervention. The new pedagogical practices in SLA should be based on new innovative methods of teaching that are geared towards more than just a superficial vocabulary and grammar, but also towards the more fundamental conceptual frameworks that structure linguistic knowledge . Such deep conceptual structures, a level of representation that mediates between conceptualization and syntactic encoding of events, are exactly semantic roles. The current discussion suggests that semantic role teaching might be one of such cognitive strategies that allow L2 learners

have the same core propositional content in spite of information structure differences. These observations confirm the theoretical statement that semantic roles are a stage of conceptual representation that cannot be reduced to either semantics or syntax.

The analysis pinpoints certain areas of the syntax-semantics interface that systematically target the L2 learners, with regards to the previous SLA research findings. These are: (a) passive constructions, which need to restructure Agent in canonical subject position to oblique; (b) object-experiencer psych-verbs, which invert the expected animacy-subjecthood correspondence; (c) locative and dative alternations, which demand acquiring subtle semantic and pragmatic constraints on near-synonymous constructions; (d) Instrument-subject and other non-agentive subject constructions, which are permitted to more or less varying degrees by different languages; and (e) verbs that

pedagogically important aspect of sentence meaning. The systematic analysis of the corpus in terms of role analysis can show regularities in the ways in which English represents the relationships of participants and loci of difficulty that can be predicted where English mapping principles do not follow cross-linguistic defaults. These results overlap with the literature of innovative teaching approaches in causing to believe that explicit, cognitively informed teaching of semantic roles, which can possibly be advanced by technology-mediated visualization and embedded within communicative task structures, may make a significant contribution to the second language learning outcomes among university students. These findings are summarized in the following Conclusion chapter, which explains its implications on theory, pedagogy, and the future research.

Conclusion

to receive systematic and generalizable principles of sentence interpretation and production regardless of the types of verbs and the constructions they belong to.

Last but not least, the analysis highlights the necessity to incorporate semantic role training in the context of the wider communicative and task-oriented instruction. Semantic roles are not in their own right an end but a means to the final objective of correct, fluent and contextually suitable use of languages. Role-based consciousness-raising exercises, interpretation exercises involving minimal differentiation sentences and production exercises involving the need to make an appropriate alternation choice all are practical ways of operationalizing semantic role teaching in learner-focused, innovation based L2 curricula.

Overall, the results of data analysis prove that the semantic roles form a theoretically consistent and

that is typical of completely acquired linguistic systems. Unless L2 learners develop this system, they are essentially handicapped in their capacity to understand and generate sentences outside a restricted range of memorised frames, no matter the size of their lexicon or knowledge of grammatical paradigms expressly.

Second, the semantic roles offer it a single explanatory framework of various phenomena that have traditionally been regarded as entirely distinct in pedagogical grammars. Passive voice, psych-verb alternations, dative and locative alternations, middle constructions and instrumental subject constructions are usually taught as discrete topics with idiosyncratic rules that hide the underlying deep systematicity holding them together. The semantic role framework shows that all these phenomena are the manifestations of the same underlying system of the mapping between conceptual event

The intersection of theoretical and empirical results justifies some key inferences as to the significance of semantic roles in sentence meaning and how they may be used in second language pedagogy. To start with, semantic roles form an essential part of first language speaker linguistic competence and a critical learning goal in being a highly proficient L2 speaker. Effective language users do not simply have knowledge of the meaning of single words together with the grammatical principles of constructing words together, but have implicit information of the systematic relationships between event conceptualization, role assignment and syntactic encoding that result in fluent production and quick and correct interpretation of new sentences. This information cannot be reduced to the verb-specific learning; native speakers productively apply the principles of role assignment to new verbs and structures in an example of the rule-based creativity

the correction of errors made by the learner, and to autonomous exploration of authentic L2 input. Semantic role instruction is not alternative instruction to the innovative instruction, then, but a particular implementation of the instruction-cognitive grounded and learner-centered and learner-empowering instruction that enables a learner to generate systematic, transferable knowledge about the L2.

Fourth, semantic role teaching can be not only incorporated into wider curricula of communicative teaching but is pedagogically justified. There is one tenacious myth in applied linguistics which recommends that overt focus on form and systematic study of linguistic structure are the opposite of communicative language teaching.

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structure and grammatical form. Each is a systematic alternation of the overriding of the role-to-form mapping by default in order to obtain specific discourse-pragmatic effects or profile certain event participants. This acknowledgment of this underlying unity will make these subjects no longer a system of haphazard exceptions but a learning system that is governed by general principles.

Third, semantic roles and argument structure alternations can be taught explicitly and, in that way, complement, or even improve the efficiency of new teaching techniques reported in Chapter One. Visualisable interactive displays of event structure and role assignment of participants can be invested in technology-enhanced learning environments to enable learners to intuitively understand the semantic implications of alternative syntactic encodings of the same text. Semantic role analysis may be used as a metacognitive aid to both the comprehension of text and

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