

# Semantic Extension and Patterns of Polysemization: From a Viewpoint of Lexical Network Theory

Tomoko Sugiyama

## 1 . Introduction

This paper considers, following Brugman and Lakoff (1988), the semantics of the English preposition *from* in the framework of the lexical network theory. Our claim is that different meanings assigned to this preposition are, in fact, systematically connected with each other through either specification, metonymization, or metaphORIZATION, forming a motivated semantic network. Here we will adopt a combination of images as is employed in Deane (1993) to schematically represent the various meanings the preposition *from* presents. In 3. we will deal with semantic extension through specification, and in 4. we will look at metonymization through which some static meanings are derived. In 5. some cases are mentioned in which schemas are mapped onto abstract domains. But before going on to the analysis of the semantics of *from*, we need to touch on some preliminary issues on this preposition.

## 1 . Some Preliminary Issues on the Preposition *From*

Since the preposition *from* basically evokes an image of something moving away from a point of origin or an image of a starting point, it is generally considered to be in many ways the counterpart of *to*, just as *up* is

of *down*. This is partially true. In the spatial sense of each preposition, while *to* denotes an end-point toward which a TR moves as in (1a), *from* denotes a starting point from which a TR moves away, and quite often it is used in pairs with *to* as in (1b):

- (1) a. They finally got *to* Paris.  
b. Bees are flying *from* flower *to* flower.

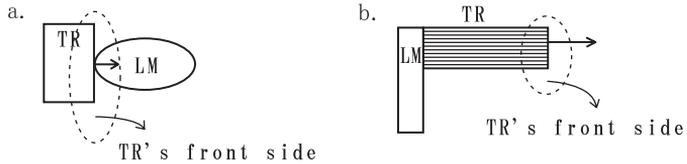
In their figurative senses, both *to* and *from* can be used to describe a passage of time as in (2) or a change of state as in (3), and while *to* denotes an end-point on a time axis or a state resulting from the changing of state, *from* denotes a starting point on a time axis or a state before undergoing a certain change:

- (2) We have classes *from* Monday *to* Saturday at school.  
(3) The leaves changed *from* green *to* brown.

Also, these prepositions are used to establish a causal relation between a TR and an LM as is clear from examples in (4), and while *to* describes a resulting event (that the speaker was surprised), *from* describes a causing event (in that fear made them scream). Moreover, both prepositions can be used to mean that a TR is in contact with an LM, but while *to* indicates that a TR's front side<sup>1</sup> is facing to its LM as in (5a), which is schematically represented in (6a), the use of *from* in (5b), whose schematic representation is given in (6b), evokes an image of a TR's (a flying flag) front side facing away from its LM (the mast); that is, the flying flag, which is actually

attached to the mast, is construed as something trying to move away from it:

- (4) a. To my surprise, the Hansin Tigers won the Japan Series this year.  
 b. They screamed *from* fear.
- (5) a. The lady pressed her hands *to* her eyes.  
 b. A flag was flying *from* the mast.
- (6)



Considering what we have just seen in (1)-(5), one may feel like regarding the preposition *from*, as Radden (1989) considers it to be, as a perfect counterpart of the preposition *to*. However, *from* does not always contrast with *to*, and there exists a kind of semantic asymmetry between these two prepositions. There are three issues that we would like to take up here.

The first and most important issue is associated with the frequency of use of each preposition. In our present research, the writer counted all the instances of *from* and *to* that appear in the 339-page novel, *Moonlight Becomes You* (hereafter, *MBY*). The resulting frequency of use for *from* and *to* are 0.565 and 2.608 instances per page respectively. This means that, at least in the novel we are dealing with, *to* is used about five times as frequently as *from*. Considering this asymmetry in the frequency of use,

*from* cannot be considered by any means the counterpart of *to* in this regard.

What we need to note here is that the degree of polysemization in each preposition seems to have something to do with these figures. In other words, a higher degree of frequency of a preposition seems to be an indication that the preposition is highly polysemized. In fact, *Shogakukan Progressive English-Japanese Dictionary* lists ten usages for the preposition *from*, while for *to* it lists twenty-two different usages. As for *Taishukan's Genius English-Japanese Dictionary*, nine usages are given for *from*, and eighteen for the preposition *to*. And as we will see, the semantics of *from* is not so differentiated compared to that of *to*<sup>2</sup>.

The second point is that LMs in the schematization for the semantics of *from* are sometimes conceptualized as a kind of container from which TRs come out. This is not the case with *to*, and when the goal toward which something moves is conceptualized as a container, this is indicated by the preposition *into*. Consider the examples in (7):

- (7) a. to take sth. *from* his pocket  
b. ? to put sth. *to* his pocket (in the same sense with (6c))  
c. to put sth. *into* his pocket

Finally, since, in the basic schematization of the semantic structure for *from*, a TR is at first at the place occupied by its LM from which it starts toward an unknown goal, TRs in the schematization of *from* are likely to be regarded as originally part of their LMs, namely, as part of entities, physical or figurative, that constitute the whole LMs, which is not the case with

the preposition *to*. Consider examples in (8) below:

- (8) a. lettuce fresh *from* the garden  
b. to choose a tie *from* among these  
c. light *from* the sun  
d. to act a scene *from* Hamlet

These examples, too, suggest that there is a semantic asymmetricality between the preposition *from* and its assumed counterpart *to*.

## 2 . The Central Meaning of *From*: The Basic Image-Schema

The basic image-schema for *from* consists of three sub-schemas: one representing a TR facing away from its LM and is about to move away from the LM, one representing a TR moving along a path from its LM toward an unknown goal, and one describing a situation in which a TR has reached a certain goal, which is at some distance from the LM. The basic semantic schematization for *from* is given in (9) below with the examples that can illustrate this use:

- (9) USE 1

TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = PLACE AS AN  
ENTITY ORIGIN





d. EXAMPLES:

travel *from* Paris to London / bees going *from* flower to flower / leap *from* sth. to sth.

Liam pulled a chair *from* a nearby table and sat down.

(from *MBY*, p. 13)

Before coming down *from* Providence, he had finished grading the papers turned in by his Anthropology 101 class ...

(from *MBY*, p. 22)

The simple act brought back another memory, that of her father's annoyed voice: "Nuala, why is it so impossible to transfer dishes directly *from* the table to the dishwasher without first piling them in the sink?" (from *MBY*, p. 77)

It looked as though a rock or something might have been removed from there. Whoever had taken it had not bothered to smooth over the earth. (from *MBY*, p. 137)

This section has looked at the basic schema for the central meaning of the preposition *from*. In the next section, we will look at three other versions specified in regard to the orientation of a TR's movement, an LM's animacy, and LM's region,<sup>3</sup> on the basic semantic structure.



d. EXAMPLES:

rise *from* a chair / *from* head to foot / get down *from* a platform / pick a spoon up *from* a floor / Apples fell *from* the tree.

She knew immediately what she had to do, and the full realization came with such force that she almost stood up *from* the table with a shock of it. (from *MBY*, p. 212)

Perhaps some may find this kind of semantic change minor or even insignificant. However, this use is an important one in the semantic network of *from* in that it plausibly and economically relates the central meaning of from to another use which denotes a lower limit of something as in “We have good Italian wine from £1.50 a bottle, at this price and at higher prices.” Without the image-schema in (10a)-(10c), it will be hard to explain why and how the basic meaning, which evokes an image of a TR moving away from its LM, semantically extends to mean a TR’s “lower limit.” Thus, we stick to this use in our study of *from* here.

### 3 . 2 . Specification in Terms of Animacy

The preposition from can denote “transfer of possessions.” In this case, an LM can be conceptualized not as a two dimensional place as in (9) but as a person as an origin from whom something moves to somewhere to become someone else’s (since there is no overall rearrangement of a TR, an LM, and the path the TR traces but only a change of a property in the LM, we will leave out the schematic representation for USE 3 here.)

- (11) USE 3: SPECIFICATION      USE 1 → USE 3  
TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = ANIMATE  
ENTITY

EXAMPLES:

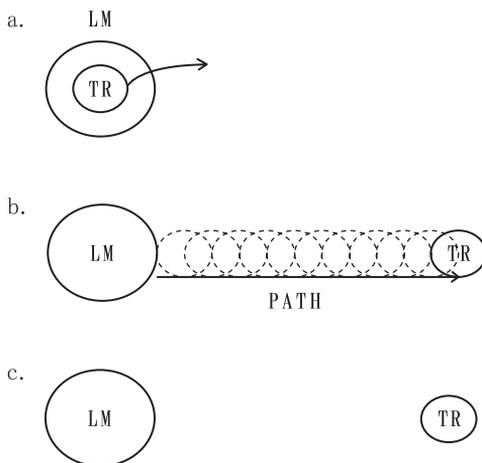
A present from my cousin / Take the knife (away) from the boy.  
She is not used to the residence yet, and she resents the fact  
that her son sold her house out from under her.

(from *MBY*, p. 25)

### 3 . 3 . Specification in Terms of an LM's Region

Svorou (1994) argues that a notion of an LM's region is important in characterizing a TR's location with respect to its LM. Her point is that in establishing a spatial relation between a TR and an LM, a TR is not located with respect to an LM itself, but with respect to an LM's region.<sup>4</sup> Thus, according to Svorou, in "a bicycle in front of a house," a bicycle is not located with respect to a house, but it is located relative to an LM's (the house's) front region. To borrow this notion, *from* in (8) locates a TR in terms of its LM's surface(-region). And from this basic meaning derives another sense which is specified in terms of an LM's region. Consider examples in (12) below:

- (12) USE 4: SPECIFICATION      USE 1 → USE 4  
TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = PLACE AS A THREE-  
DIMENSIONAL CON-  
TAINER



d. EXAMPLES:

*from* within / take sth. *from* one's pocket / draw water *from* a well

The windows facing the street were open, and she thought she detected a harsh, burning smell coming *from* inside.

(from *MBY*, p. 34)

It's much too high risk, but I'd venture to say that there is more oil dripping *from* the car in your garage than you'll ever see spurting *from* one of those so-called gushers.

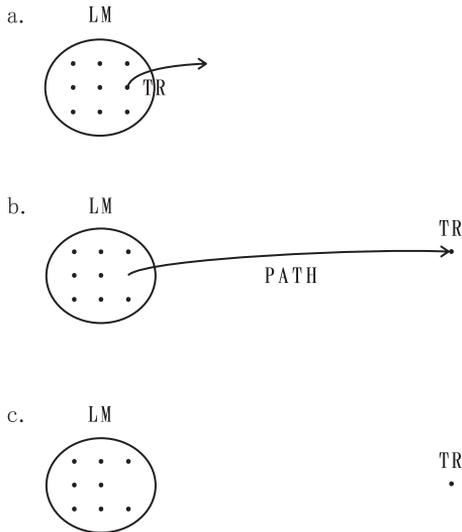
(from *MBY*, p. 87)

As is clear from examples in (12), LMs are conceptualized as a three-dimensional container in USE 4, and moving TRs are characterized with respect to the interior-region of those LMs.

Use 4 can be further specified as seen in examples in (13). As we have mentioned earlier, since, in the schematization of the semantic structure for *from* as in (9)-(12), a TR is at first at the place occupied by its LM, from which it starts toward an unknown goal, TRs in the schematization of *from* are likely to be regarded as originally part of their LMs. Thus, in USE 5 below, LMs are interpreted as a kind of container consisting of a set of persons or things, and TRs are understood as originally a member (or, sometimes, members) or an example (or examples) in those LMs.

(13) USE 5: SPECIFICATION      USE 4 → USE 5

TR = A MEMBER IN AN LM / LM = A SET OF PERSONS or THINGS



d. EXAMPLES:

choose a tie *from* (among) these / lettuce fresh *from* the garden / He was selected *from* among a great many candidates. / act a scene *from* Hamlet / light *from* the sun

She would make an excellent addition to the residence and very possibly attract future guests *from* among her friends.

(from *MBY*, p. 93)

Neil eyed his shot and selected a club *from* the bag the cad-die was holding.

(from *MBY*, p. 128)

Again, we emphasize that these types of conceptualization seen in USE 4 and USE 5 are not observable in the semantic network of the preposition *to*. This is not surprising, given that the basic semantic schematizations for each of those two prepositions are different.

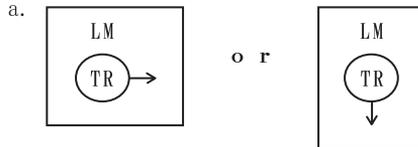
#### 4 . Semantic Extension through Metonymization

Each of the sub-schemas making up the whole image-schema for the basic meaning of the preposition *from* can be highlighted to yield three different static senses from what is basically a dynamic preposition. In this section we will look at these three different static meanings in turn.

When the sub-schema in (9a) (or in the case of the second example, (10a)) is given a focus, it is used to describe a situation in which a TR and an LM are in contact, but the TR is facing away from its LM, that is, the TR is construed as if it were trying to move away from its LM.

(14) USE 6: METONYMIZATION      USE 1 (or USE 2) → USE 6

TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = PLACE which a TR  
is in contact with



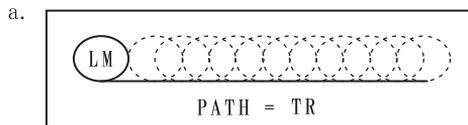
b. EXAMPLES:

A flag was flying *from* the mast. / A lamp was hanging *from* the ceiling.

It is interesting that *from*, which primarily denotes “detachment” from the point of origin, also describes a situation in which a TR and its LM are in contact. However, this type of use is, as we can see in (14b), is extremely lean in frequency and in number.

When the sub-schema (9b) goes under metonymization, it yields a schematic representation as is shown in (15a), which explains the second type of a static use of *from* given in (15b), in which a TR as a path holds a spatial relation with its LM:

(15) USE 7: METONYMIZATION      USE 1 → USE 7  
TR = PATH / LM = PLACE



b. EXAMPLES:

ten miles *from* the coast / The situation is a long way *from* here.

“Maggie, come visit me, please. It’s only a three-hour drive *from* New York.” (from *MBY*, p. 13)

“I want you to lean back and close your eyes. I’m going to call Dr.Lane.” Nurse Markey’s face was barely inches *from* hers now.” (from *MBY*, p. 49)

“Beautiful, peaceful,” he said, shaking his head. “Hard to believe that six miles *from* here, a woman was murdered in her own home.” (from *MBY*, p. 57)

A moving TR tends to be reinterpreted as an extended TR, as Taylor (1993) proposes in the form of an extension rule given in (16):

(16) Place of Tr  $\Leftrightarrow$  Path of Tr

Finally, schema (9c) can be highlighted to refer to a static relation where a TR has been detached, or is at a certain distance from an LM. Consider the schema in (17a) and the corresponding examples in (17b):

(17) USE 8: METONYMIZATION      USE 1  $\rightarrow$  USE 8

a.



b. EXAMPLES

stay away from work / be away from home / The houses are set back from the road.

Liam, an occasional but normally thoughtful date when he was in town from Boston, was tonight displaying a boundless faith in her ability to fend for herself. (from *MBY*, p. 5)  
Nualla lived just off the fabled Ocean Drive, on Garrison Avenue. "I even have a view of the ocean from the third floor," she had explained. (from *MBY*, p. 33)

The home of his great-great-grandfather, the narrow Victorian house and the acre it stood on had been separated from the main house and property ten years earlier.

(from *MBY*, p. 82)

In all the examples given above, the focus is on the end-point of a path, hence Taylor's (1993) generalization in (18) below applies.

(18) Path  $\Leftrightarrow$  Place construed as end-point of path

Unlike the use of the preposition *to* as in "He was sitting with his feet *to* the fire," which describes a situation in which a TR and its LM are facing to each other, a TR is not construed as facing to its LM in the case of Use 8 in (17) above. This implicational difference follows from the difference in overall arrangement of the basic image-schemas that these two prepositions evoke.

## 5 . Mapping to the Abstract Domains: Metaphorization

In this section, five metaphorized versions derived from the spatial senses of *from* will be briefly taken up. As has been repeatedly mentioned in many studies on cognitive linguistics, abstract uses are considered to be derivations from spatial uses, which are cognitively prior to those abstract uses. First, we will look at two variations mapped to the abstract domains of “change of state” and “time” respectively on the basis of the schematic representation for USE 1.

- (19) USE 9: METAPHORIZATION      USE 1 → USE 9  
TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = ANY STATE

### EXAMPLES:

change *from* green to brown / Bread is made *from* wheat. /

The weather was going *from* bad to worse.

... he started quoting something about sorrow like joy leaping  
*from* mind to mind. It was weird.                      (from *MBY*, p. 72)

- (20) USE 10: METAPHORIZATION      USE 1 → USE 10  
TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = TIME

### EXAMPLES:

*from* morning till night / from June through September / *from*

now on / The shop will be open *from* 9 o'clock.

It had been so long ago, yet she sounded just like the woman  
who once had been her stepmother *from* the time she was five

until she was ten. (from *MBY*, p. 8)

The house's magnificent first floor included the grand salon and marble and crystal dining room, where the enormous banquet table she remembered from youth had been replaced by smaller tables. (from *MBY*, p. 46)

As is clear from the examples above, USE 9 refers to a state before its TR undergoes any kind of change while USE 10 denotes a starting point on a time axis.

USE 2 of the preposition *from* can be metaphorized as can be seen in examples in (21) below. This use denotes a lower limit of something or a lower status.

- (21) USE 11: METAPHORIZATION      USE 2 → USE 11  
TR = ANIMATE or INANIMATE / LM = LOWER LIMIT or  
LOWER STATUS

EXAMPLES:

We have good Italian wine *from* £ 1.50 a bottle, at this price and at higher prices. / There were *from* ten to fifteen boys absent. / He rose *from* office boy to manager of the company.

... they range *from* late sixties to late eighties, although Greta whispered that an attractive woman in black velvet suit ... had just turned ninety-four. (from *MBY*, p. 110)

And there was that dreadful Squire Moore. Everyone knew he came *from* nothing ... (from *MBY*, p. 114)

Obviously in USE 11, two conceptual metaphors that Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose, that is, MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN metaphor and HIGH STATUS IS UP; LOW STATUS IS DOWN metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 16) mediate this semantic extension.

Further, USE 4 semantically extends to indicate a causing state or event,<sup>5</sup> or a verification for the truth of some sort of judgment. In either case, an LM (a causing state / event or a verification) is viewed as a container from which a resulting state or event, or someone's judgment comes out. Obviously, in this use, a combination of conceptual metaphors introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) such as EVENTS ARE OBJECTS, STATES AND ACTIVITIES ARE CONTAINERS, and CAUSATION IS EMERGENCE are at work simultaneously.

- (22) USE 12: METAPHORIZATION      USE 4 → USE 12  
TR = EVENTS AS OBJECTS / LM = STATES AND ACTIVITIES AS CONTAINERS

EXAMPLES:

mortality *from* malaria / scream *from* fear / suffer *from* headache  
/ faint *from* hunger / draw conclusions *from* the evidence / help  
*from* a sense of obligation / The picture was fuzzy *from* enlargement.  
/ *From* the look of sky, it will snow tonight.

With the profit he would make *from* the sale of the property, he  
would have enough cash to settle with his wife ...

(from *MBY*, p. 28)

Also, it would seem obvious *from* the overall appearance of the



are directly or indirectly connected to the basic meaning through a limited set of motivated links, that is, specification, metonymization, and metaphorization. The originally dynamic preposition *from* yields static uses through metonymization. Finally, what must be emphasized is that though the uses of *from* symmetrically contrasts with those of *to* in many ways, there exists a semantic asymmetricality between *from* and *to*, which comes from the difference in the overall arrangement of a TR, an LM, and a path in the basic schematization for each of the prepositions.

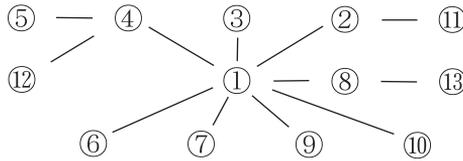


Figure 1: A semantic network for the preposition *from*

## NOTES

1. Svorou (1994) points out that there is a general tendency for a functional side of an asymmetrical object such as a piano to be regarded as its front. Thus, for example, the front side of a piano is the side we usually face to when we play the piano. As for a symmetrical object such as a ball, the side which faces to the direction in which the object moves is usually construed as its front side. In our case of *from*, the latter case applies, and this construal is considered to be preserved even in the static uses of the preposition. In our example of (5b), for

instance, though the flag flying in the wind is actually in contact with the mast, that is, (5b) depicts a static spatial relation between the flag and the mast, the flag can be construed as if it were about to move away from the mast in the wind. As the schema in (6b) shows, the flag's farthest end from the mast can be regarded as the TR's (the flag's) front side.

- 2 . See Sugiyama (1999) for detail.
- 3 . Svorou (1994) defines a "region" as the location which is contiguous to an LM or which is part of an LM. Therefore, the front region of an LM is the place which is contiguous to the front side of the LM, and the interior region of an LM refers to the inside of an LM as a container and hence, part of it.
- 4 . The same line of argument is also found in Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976). For an extensive discussion on the notion of a region, see Svorou (1994, pp. 12-31).
- 5 . There is evidence which shows that children associate cause concept with the notion of source from very early on. Examine the following examples from Clark and Carpenter (1989):
  - (i) Damon (2;6,2, recalling what he had done three months earlier when his mother had left him with his grand-mother while she fetched his father): When grn'ma'ancy was here, you go fetch Herb. [pause] Then I cried a bit from you go get him.
  - (ii) Shem (2;8,7, explaining why his fire-engine was stuck on the roof of his toy garage): That's fro – that's from I put a thing on it.

- (iii) Walt (3;3.25. explaining how to tell mean hawks from nice hawks): Maybe from they – hawks eat sea-shells. Some hawks eat sea-shells.

These unconventional uses of *from* by young children to represent cause concept suggest that the notion of cause and that of source are closely related in our cognition. This fact further suggests that the semantic extension exhibited by the preposition *from*, which indicates a causal relation between a TR and its LM, is not arbitrary, but motivated.

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