

Narrative pattern: a construction-based approach to frame semantics

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Abstract. The article elaborates on the idea that it is possible to arrive at schematic representations of conventionalized discourse units, which arise through use and due to certain genre expectations. Such identifiable recurring patterns are posited to be real construction-like entities, predicated conceptually upon the existence of image schemata and coding basic event patterns, which are subsequently inherited by frames. The article tests and expounds this idea on the example of two early 19th century Gothic stories, which leads to the identification of a discrete narrative schema, based on the use of spatial language.

Keywords: *construction grammar, frame semantics, discourse analysis, image schemata, spatial language.*

Recent decades have witnessed an influx of new linguistic research and ideas ranging from fresh outlooks upon the already well-established generative method to a further development of the cognitive perspective. Far from being the least important among the great abundance of topics chosen for research, the way we construe and embody in language the real and fictive situations that demand coping with the spatial structure of a certain scene and establishing the interrelation of objects, has been given much attention. Major contributions pertaining to this field of research include among them the analysis of spatial semantics and the underlying reference systems (J. Zlatev, S. Levinson, V. Evans, L. Talmy etc), the analysis of spatial discourse and live communication when giving directions (T. Tenbrink, J. A. Bateman, D. R. Montello and A. Klippel). Another promising line of research lies with the diverse constructionist frameworks (A. E. Goldberg, P. Kay etc), whose purpose is to describe language phenomena in terms of form-meaning pairings (constructions) of different levels of complexity. Those approaches allow for a flexible formalizations of language data, thus enabling intricate enquiries into the interplay of the pragmatic factors and constructional meaning as well as the role of contextual information in reorganizing specific form-meaning associations (M. Fried).

Despite the vast scope of the accomplished research much still remains to be looked into, one example being the way that discourse factors influence the spatial organization (or setting) of a given narrative, which for this very reason has been chosen as the **topic** of this article. Although due to the considerations of space and efficacy, we apply a narrower perspective and confine ourselves to the Gothic genre. Certain theoretical preliminaries are to be covered before proceeding any further, namely, the peculiarities of the Gothic literature, which is our material, and the main assumptions of Construction grammar as well as some basic notions of how space is construed in language.

First of all, the term *Gothic*, as applied to literature, refers to a certain kind of atmosphere or aesthetics [12, p. 16], often characterized by a plot of mystery and suspense and the mystique of the macabre and the horrible. Setting, in which much of the spatial information is stored, is one of the key elements to understanding the 'Gothic' in the Gothic fiction. Without a doubt, there might exist almost any arbitrary configuration of the spatial plane, but the structure of the represented world determines which arrangements of objects and features make sense [14 p. 201]. The reader, in their turn, has certain expecta-

tions about the story, which are derived from the set of schematic representations of the genre's typical structural properties and content [13 p. 159-160]. Thus, an array of common themes or motifs can be singled out as important for establishing the conventions of the Gothic genre. Those are, e.g., gloomy, decaying settings (haunted houses, castles with secret passages, hidden rooms), ascent (up a high staircase), descent (into undergrounds chambers), falling off the precipice [3, p. 29-30, 44, 71].

Next, we have to introduce the notion of construction, one of the main units of our analysis. As defined by A. Goldberg, one of the founders of the Construction grammar, who remains one of the leading scholars in the field to the present day, any language entity is a construction if a certain aspect of its form or function does not follow from the meaning of its constituents or other existing constructions [8]. All constructions within language constitute a semantic hierarchical network, sometimes called the constructicon. The Construction grammar approach is predicated upon the assumptions [8; 2, p. 203] that constructions as pairings of form and meaning (or for that matter, discourse function) are the basic units of linguistic description, though they differ in their level of abstraction (from morphemes and words to idioms and phrasal patterns), are the basic syntactic units which define grammatical categories in language, the only relations being the part-whole relations between constructions [11]; all the generalizations over languages are explicable from cognitive operations and constraints, there being no covert syntactic constructs and levels with phonetically void elements.

There have been singled out two basic subsets of spatial relations: stasis and kinesis [9, p. 5]. The static relations are further subdivided into the angular and non-angular (topological) categories, the former applying a certain axial system (the intrinsic, relative and absolute frames of reference) and the latter merely concerned with the coincidence of the Figure and the Ground. As far as motion is concerned [9, p. 15], which the focus of the current article, the frames of reference are not necessarily explicit; motion is often described in terms of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL [4] image schema, though not all of the three components have to be present. The verb semantics often offers major hints towards deriving the exact understanding of the (in our case, spatial) scene. E.g., the use of deictic verbs (come/go) relies on the construal of a particular spatial (and temporal) location of the described situation and its participants; other verbs may contain the notion of arrival or reaching the goal in their

semantics, which, correspondingly, influences their likelihood and applicability for use in certain constructions (e.g., ‘arrive’ as likely in a Resultative construction (of motion)).

It is not to be overlooked, when analyzing discourse with prominent spatial properties, that much spatial information (namely, the PATH) is expressed by means of particles, which relate to a certain (usually motion) verb. This is seen as a distinctive feature of satellite-framed languages like English, as proposed by L. Talmy [16], in contrast to verb-framed languages like French, which do not conflate manner and predication, but instead do so with predication and path. The former pattern is the most typical of English (e.g., *go into [Ground]*) with the exclusion of some French loans (e.g., *to enter [Ground]*).

As far as the way-finding tasks are concerned, it is essential in this kind of undertaking that the route be segmented into smaller units, e.g., paths between decision points, the start and end point could be inferred or explicitly stated and certain prominent landmarks mentioned [17]. Often the applied linguistic description corresponds to the order that the entities along the route are going to be encountered, one way to describe the spatial surroundings being the conceptualization of a ‘generic wanderer’, an entity accomplishing an imaginary tour [10, p. 114].

As previously noted, constructions can include in their semantics certain pragmatic and discourse information, and they are not overtly limited in their level of abstraction so that even large entities can be described as constructions if they possess the necessary properties. Such efforts have been made, e.g., an attempt to give a constructionist formalization to a common dialogue pattern [1].

Thinking along the same lines, it should be possible for a recurring narrative pattern to be abstracted in a construction-like schema if it incorporates certain explicable semantic elements and regular correspondences on the syntactic level. The identification thereof constitutes the aim of this article. The proposed, though not definitive, formalization is laid out in Table 1 below. The schema is for the most part self-explanatory, but a brief overview is, nonetheless, expedient to make. Firstly, the type entry is purely subject to whatever nomenclature is deemed appropriate (and we shall subsequently reason for our choice of a name). Secondly, the underlying pattern rubric covers whatever generalized conceptual features are likely to reflect on the organization of the constituent frames. Accordingly, the frame elements (FE) stand for those entities or properties “which may or must be present in any instance of a given frame” [5, p. 324-25]. To exemplify this, as we are dealing with the first-person narratives (or at least, partially so), the narrating protagonist of the story is rightfully expected to correspond to a certain FE with its associated role, as yet again is discussed in the analytical part of the article. One preliminary point to be made is that being the focalizer of the story and, thus, very likely a vantage point defining the viewing arrangement of the scene, ought to be sufficient to raise an entity to a level of prominence correspondent to that of a FE. Lastly, the real use of constructions in a given stretch of discourse is subsumed under the constructs heading.

Table 1. The narrative schema

Narrative schema: [TYPE]	
Underlying pattern: [...]	
Constituent frames:	
F _n	
SEM	SYN
FE [role]	FE [lex_entry]
Constructs	Constructs
[synt_slots]	[lex_entries]

Two specimens of the genre were singled out as the material of our analysis: *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) by Mary Shelly and *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian: A Romance* (1811) by Persy Bysshe Shelly – both good examples of the early 19th century British Gothic prose. As the aim is to arrive at a “higher-level” construction, we necessarily had to consistently divide the texts into separate, though open-ended, discourse chunks. The criteria underlying said division were the shared topic and lexical cohesion. Van Dijk in one of his articles [18, p. 60] provides a workable definition of a discourse topic as an entity that globally organizes the information of a passage while sentence topics linearly link pieces of information; a discourse topic can be viewed as a macroproposition, i.e., a condensed summary-like representation of a larger coherent sequence of propositions. An additional constraint was dictated by our immediate interests, that is, only the scenes featuring (trans)location were selected, amounting in total to 21 fragments, ranging from a few utterances to substantial pieces stretching beyond the chapter boundary. Examples in the subsequent discussion all come from one of the extensive fragments (*Frankenstein*, chapters 9-10).

In course of the analysis we have been able to observe a recurring pattern, that of a *journey*, whose language actualization on the level of constructions, as shown further, can mostly be abstracted to the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema or, to be more specific, a series of intermediary and incomplete (in regards to the full schema) translocations and stops extending from a certain Source to a certain Goal, which are not necessarily always explicit. Thus, it can be said that the conceptual feature of the journey narrative schema is its extended Path. The name for this schema has not been chosen at random, but owing to the considerations of discourse topic (that is, [X’s] journey or [X’s] stretch of journey [from Y to Z] and not a lone-standing construction elaborating on some non-motion event) and consistency with some previous research (see below).

This schematic narrative pattern (albeit not viewed as such) has not exactly been left outside of the long-enduring interests of scholars – to name a few examples, we can liken it to Slobin’s journey (a series of linked paths or a path with waystations [15, p. 202]) or the above-mentioned research on the ways that the route strategy is manifested, nonetheless, what we aim to do is to argue for a specific discernible conventionalized structure on the discourse level. It makes even more sense to expect something of that sort if we consider that satellite-framed languages like English seem to focus more on motion events than static setting descriptions per se. Mo-

tion plays undeniably a big role in our everyday interactions with the world, thus the Motion frame (as specified under the FrameNet project [6]) can be characterized in terms of possessing an entity (Theme), which starts in one place (Source) and ends up in yet another place (Goal), having traversed some space between them (Path), moreover, mentions of the Area or Direction in which the Theme moves as well as the Distance of the said movement are possible.

A major peculiarity of the journey narrative schema lies in the overall structure of presentation, which is generally concordant on an abstract level with the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema, although, as it (the journey schema) mostly specifies a larger discourse chunk, certain peculiarities come into play due to the considerations of connectedness and logical structuring of a narrative. First of all, general SOURCE-GOAL information can be given at the onset of the journey, especially, the Goal or an intermediary stop. Consider the following example, in which the ensuing stretch of the journey is outlined in a canonical sequential fashion: *It was during an access of this kind that I suddenly left my home [SOURCE], and bending my steps towards the near Alpine valleys [PATH]... My wandering were directed towards the valley of Chamounix [GOAL]...* Namely, the Source is encapsulated within the Resultative construction (*[I suddenly left] home*), the Path is a part of the directional expression (*[towards] the near Alpine valleys*), which, in turn, constitutes a part of the idiomatic construction *bend X's steps [way...] PP OBL*, and the Goal is contained within the next directional (*[towards] the valley of Chamounix*).

Secondly, certain features or outlines of the Path may also be mentioned at the beginning, but it is a major feature of the said schema that a comparatively extensive and detailed segmented Path is being presented. The stretches or segments of the Path may be separated either by commentary, mostly unrelated to the actual motion (e.g., weather, recollections), or by actual stops along the Path, with the perspective often reestablished by means of a posture verb (such as *stand*) and some spatial information relating and relative to the surroundings of the now stationary Vantage being provided. Although the predominance of the route strategy in presenting spatial information is to be expected, certain instances of the survey are not precluded, in specific, in describing the environs, which is often executed in a most generalized way without overtly establishing any kind of well-defined frame of reference.

Thirdly, while the movement is prominent, the narrative perspective favours for the most part the protagonist, who is a focalizer (thus, fills the frame element slot Vantage), which influences the spatial description. Lastly, when the Theme's progression along the path comes to a halt, a broader perspective may be applied, often, based on the concrete geometry of the location, a survey overview (pretty much similar to the most objective 'god perspective' viewpoint in R. E. MacLaurie's classification, in which the position of the conceptualizer is irrelevant [7]) of the road ahead from a higher vantage point.

Returning to the fragment in question, both the motion and spatial descriptions in the fragment proceed as expected: the journey is presented in stretches, interspersed with mostly topological descriptions (with no clear frame

of reference). The amount of stretches within each instance of the journey schema is unlikely to be subject to any limitations. This can be likened to the FrameNet's Motion scenario frame, which, as the definition goes, binds together the various parts of movement, from setting out, to travelling and arriving; its core elements, apart from the usual members of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, are the Theme (the moving entity), the Duration, the Distance, the Area (the setting in which the Theme's movement takes place) and the Cotheme (i.e., the second moving object, expressed as a direct object or an oblique) [6]. The fragments used in this article for the sake of exemplification can be viewed as an almost unbroken continuity of motion scenarios, all but one sharing the common Theme, and the last expanding it to include an additional entity. Yet again, using the terminology of the FrameNet project, we might call them subframes.

The first part of the journey is comprised of two stretches, one starting with the above example (establishing the Source, Goal, and vaguely, the Path) and concluded with reaching the said Goal (*I entered the valley of Chamounix*), the second relates the translocation towards the final station (*I arrived at the village of Chamounix*), which is contained within the inner region of the previously established Goal. The wanderings in the valley itself are less explicitly journey-like and constitute an actual stop on the journey, almost immediately thereafter to recommence. Most of the unfolding spatial information is presented as derived from the sensory perceptions alone, independent of the movement, and a posture verb is used (*I stood beside the sources of the Arveiron...*), thus the description can be viewed as static. Yet again there is little specificity in the description: the spatial configuration of the surroundings is mostly expressed in very generalized detail, with the information beyond that immediately accessible via the frontal axis less specific and thus not employing any frame of reference, a lot of the features being simply enumerated.

The start of the new stretch of the journey is indicated by identifying the new Goal: *I resolved to ascend to the summit of Montanvert*. Characteristic of the scene in question is a peculiar mix of presentation strategies, namely, the route strategy, as expressed with the generalizing second person pronoun *you* (enable **you** to **surmount...**The path, as **you ascend** higher...), a kind of a 'generic wanderer', and the elements of the panoramic (survey) view as many scenic details are presented rather impersonally. Next, as the protagonist reaches an intermediary Goal (*I arrived at the top of the ascent*), as expressed by the Resultative construction, a view of the new stretch is given from a conventional position atop an eminence overlooking a lower plane (*I sat upon the rock that overlooks the sea of ice*). Now, after some additional landscape features, in the usual topological and vertical fashion, are presented, and a short soliloquy is given, a new active Frame element comes into play (*As I said this, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed*). His position is established vis-à-vis that of the focalizer and the direction of his motion (for that matter, deictic) is stated. A short description of his motion Path and mode is present. An additional reason to posit a transition of scene (subframe) is grounded in the change of narration in the

extract as mostly not the Path, the direction of motion within which has been reversed, is for the time being in focus, but rather the motion towards the deictic centre (the protagonist, now bereft of his Theme status) and the emotional state of the focalizer, almost bereft of his agency. Now, yet again, as the two exchange a few phrases, a new subframe (or, perhaps, a continuation of the one interrupted by the monster's approach if the second one be seen as embedded within the first) is opened. The motion along the extension of the previously established Path recommences, and the Theme is changed (with both elements serving that function, as their respective Paths now converge) until at last the final Goal is reached (*we entered the hut*). The six frames, which this instance of the journey schema is comprised of, can be loosely presented as realizing certain abstracted and conventionalized event types, pertinent to the underlying pattern (see Table 2 below). Notably, the second Source element is left implicit, while it basically corresponds to the first Goal.

To conclude, the journey narrative schema is vividly represented in our material. For the most part, it can be viewed as an elaboration on the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema, although it is not confined to those three roles and they are far from equal as far as the language representation goes. Firstly, the main peculiarity of the said schema is the presence of an extended detailed Path, which can be subdivided into an indefinite number of stretches, interspersed with stops, which are often accompanied by readjustments of the vantage point (often with a posture verb and an ensuing description of the surroundings); the Source is often left implicit and the Goal also need not be specified, but is often mentioned at the onset of the journey. Secondly, it was possible to identify the following functional components of the schema: *Establish Source, Establish Path, Establish Goal, Motion along*

Path (which usually is a mixture of *Motion* and *Establish viewed area*), *Reach a Stop* (often actualized as *(re)Establish Vantage* and *Establish viewed area*) and *Reach Goal*. Those properties are inherited by frames, in which the schema is manifested, and, in turn, represented as a series of constructions. Next, it was shown that, although the frames within the current instance of the schema may change due to the change in the Theme (the moving entity) frame element, the Vantage seems to endure. Lastly, the schema itself, its underlying conceptual structure and the elements, which characterize it, have considerable bearing on the choice of constructions and the way they are used in actual discourse, such as, e.g., verbs or prepositions with certain semantics and, in case of the latter, consequences in regards to the frames of reference if any, are more likely to be employed.

Table 2. Narrative schema and its underlying pattern as manifested in frames

Narrative schema: journey		
FE Theme	FE Source	FE Goal
FE Vantage	FE Path	
F1 [Establish Source ₁ , Establish Path ₁ , Establish Goal ₁ – Motion along Path ₁ [Motion – Establish viewed area] – Reach Goal ₁]		
F2 [Establish viewed area _{container} {Goal ₁ } – Reach a Stop[(re)Establish viewed area _{container} {Goal ₁ }]]		
F3 [Establish viewed area _{container} {Goal ₁ } – Motion]		
F4[Establish Goal ₂ – Motion along Path ₂ [Motion – Establish viewed area] – Reach a Stop [Establish Vantage – (re)Establish viewed area] – Motion along Path ₂ [Motion – Establish viewed area]]		
Change of FE (Theme)		
F5[Motion along Path ₂ [Reverse direction(ality)]]		
Change of FE (Theme)		
F6[Motion along Path ₂ – Reach Goal ₂]		

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Наративная схема: конструкционный подход к фреймовой семантике

А. Ю. Рощупкин

Аннотация. В статье раскрывается идея возможности описать устоявшиеся дискурсивные структуры, возникающие вследствие повторяемости использования и в ответ на жанровые ожидания, на схематическом уровне. Подобные схематические структуры представлены как реальные сущности по образцу конструкций, концептуально зависимых от существующих образных схем и отображающих базовые событийные типы, наследуемых соответствующими фреймами. В статье эта идея находит развитие на примере двух готических историй начала 19-го века, в результате анализа которых на основе особенностей пространственных выражений выделена конкретная наративная схема.

Ключевые слова: конструкционная грамматика, фреймовая семантика, дискурсивный анализ, образные схемы, пространственные выражения.