

Grammar and Meaning

A Semantic Approach to English
Grammar

Howard Jackson

Learning about Language



Grammar and Meaning

Learning About Language

General Editors: Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, Lancaster
University

Already published:

Analysing Sentences

Noel Burton-Roberts

Patterns of Spoken English

Gerald Knowles

Words and Their Meaning

Howard Jackson

An Introduction to Phonology

Francis Katamba

Grammar and Meaning

Howard Jackson

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

Janet Holmes

Realms of Meaning

An Introduction to Semantics

Th. R. Hofmann

An Introduction to Semantics

Danny D. Steinberg

An Introduction to Spoken Interaction

Anna-Brita Stenström

Grammar and Meaning

A Semantic Approach to
English Grammar

Howard Jackson

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1990 by Addison Wesley Longman Limited
Seventh impression 1997

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 1990, Taylor & Francis.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notices

Knowledge and best practice in this field are constantly changing. As new research and experience broaden our understanding, changes in research methods, professional practices, or medical treatment may become necessary.

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

To the fullest extent of the law, neither the Publisher nor the authors, contributors, or editors, assume any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions, or ideas contained in the material herein.

ISBN 13: 978-0-582-02875-3 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Jackson, Howard, 1945–

Grammar and meaning : a semantic approach to English grammar. – (Learning about language).

1. English language. Semantics

I. Title II. Series

422

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Jackson, Howard, 1945–

Grammar and meaning : a semantic approach to English grammar / Howard Jackson.

p. cm. — (Learning about language)

Includes bibliographical references (p.

ISBN 0–582–02875–2 (pbk.)

1. English language—Grammar—1950– 2. English language—Semantics. I. Title. II. Series.

PE1106.J29 1991

425—dc20

90–6016
CIP

Set in Linotron 202 11/12pt Bembo

Contents

List of Key Diagrams and Tables xi

Acknowledgements xiii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 States, Events, Actions: Verbs 8

What do we talk about? 8

Situation types 8

States 9

Events 12

Actions 13

Semantic classes of verb 15

Verbs 16

Finite verb forms 16

Non-finite verb forms 19

Exercises 21

Chapter 2 Participants: Nouns 23

What's in a situation? 23

Semantic roles 24

Participant roles in states and events 24

Participant roles in ACTIONS 28

Other participant roles 32

Nouns 34

Semantic subclasses 35

Number 36

Case 39

Pronouns 40

Exercises 43

Chapter 3 Circumstances: Adverbs and prepositions 46

- How necessary are circumstances? 46
- What types of circumstance? 49
 - Locative 49
 - Temporal 51
 - Process 54
 - Respect 56
 - Contingency 56
 - Degree 59
- Adverbs 60
 - ly-adverbs 61
 - Simple adverbs 62
 - Adverb particles 63
- Prepositions 64
 - Locative prepositions 65
 - Temporal prepositions 66
 - Process and Respect prepositions 67
 - Contingency prepositions 68
- Noun phrases 68
- Clauses 70
- Exercises 71

Chapter 4 Specifying States, Events and Actions: Tense, aspect and modality 76

- Time 76
 - Present 77
 - Past and future 78
 - Point and period 80
 - Definite and indefinite 81
 - Orientation 82
- Tense and Aspect 85
 - Verb forms 85
 - Meanings and forms 87
 - Present 87
 - Past 88
 - Future 90
 - Past in past 92
 - Past and future 93
 - Form and meaning 94
 - Relations with TEMPORAL circumstances 94
 - Relations with situation types 96
- Possibility and necessity 98

Speaker's assessment	99
Possibility/necessity relating to the situation	101
Modality	103
Forms and meanings	104
Exercises	105

Chapter 5 Specifying Participants: Determinatives and modifiers 108

Identification	108
Definite and indefinite	109
Possession	111
Quantity	112
Determinatives	113
Articles	114
Demonstratives	115
Possessives	116
Quantifiers	118
Classification and description	121
Classification	122
Description	124
Modifiers	125
Adjectives	125
Participles	128
Noun modifiers	129
Other modifiers	130
Noun phrase	132
Exercises	133

Chapter 6 Propositions: Sentences 136

Propositions	137
Semantic dependencies	137
Semantic compatibilities	140
Functions of propositions	144
Sentences	146
Syntactic functions	147
Subject	147
Object	148
Complement	149
Adverbial	150
Complementation	157
Obligatory and optional	160
Sentence types	162
Negation	163

viii Contents

Semantic and syntactic analysis	165
Exercises	168

Chapter 7 Propositions as Participants and Specifiers: Embedded clauses 170

Propositions in propositions	170
Direct and indirect speech	171
Other included propositions	174
Starting and stopping	174
Liking and preferring	175
Be likely, obvious	175
Consenting and refusing	176
Propositions as specifiers of participants	177
Embedded clauses	178
<i>That</i> -clause	180
<i>Wh</i> -clauses	183
Relative clauses	185
Infinitive clauses	188
Participle clauses	193
<i>-ing</i> -clauses	193
<i>-ed</i> -clauses	195
Exercises	197

Chapter 8 Propositions as Circumstances: Adverbial clauses 199

Time, place and contingency	200
Condition, concession and contrast	203
Reason, purpose and result	207
Comment and sentence relatives	210
Comparison	211
Summary	213
Adverbial clauses	213
Exercises	215

Chapter 9 Combining Propositions: Co-ordination and conjunction 218

Additive combination	219
Adversative combination	222
Temporal combination	224
Causal combination	227
Grammar of combination	230
Co-ordination	231

Conjunction 233
Exercises 235

Chapter 10 Messages: Texts 237

Variety of messages: sender's choices 237
Text structure 239
Examples 241
 'The dew-pond myth' 241
Message organisation 244
 Given and new information 245
Text grammar 247
 Elements of a text 247
 Textual adjustment of sentence order 250
 Branching 251
 Cohesion 252
 Reference 253
 Identification 253
 Ellipsis 254
 Conjunction 254
 Lexical repetition 255
 Collocation 256
Envoi 256

References 257

Key to Exercises 258

Glossary of Terms 277

Index 289

This page intentionally left blank

List of Key Diagrams and Tables

- Chapter 1 Situation types: states 11
Situation types: states, events and actions 15
Personal pronouns 17
- Chapter 2 Participant roles: states 27
Participant roles: actions 31
Personal pronouns 41
Demonstratives 43
- Chapter 3 Locative circumstances 51
Temporal circumstances 53
Process circumstances 55
Contingency circumstances 59
Degree circumstances 60
- Chapter 4 Time: past, present, future 77
Time: pre-present, post-present 79
Time: remote past 83
Time: past-in-past, future-in-past 84
Time: past-in-future 84
Tense: present/past forms 85
Aspect: progressive forms 86
Aspect: perfective forms 86
Aspect: perfective progressive forms 86
Forms of the verb phrase 86
Verb forms and meanings 94
- Chapter 5 Identification of nouns 113
Generic/specific reference 115
Possessive identifiers 116
Indefinite quantifiers 121

xii List of Key Diagrams and Tables

Chapter 6	Adverbials	157
	Basic sentence patterns	160
Chapter 7	Embedded clauses (1)	180
	Embedded clauses (2)	196
Chapter 8	Circumstances and subordinators	213
Chapter 9	Combinations and conjoiners	229

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Jürgen Esser for his helpful comments on many of the chapters, which have no doubt saved the book from more blemishes than it would otherwise have had. I would also like to thank Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, as editors of the *Learning about Language* series in which this book appears, for their suggestions for improving the text before it became public, and the publishers Longman for their encouragement and for piloting the book through to publication.

The publishers are grateful to the author, Ralph Whitlock, for permission to reproduce an extract from his article 'Dew-Pond Myth' from *The Guardian Weekly*, May 1989.

This page intentionally left blank

For HILARY and LYDIA

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

Human beings communicate messages to each other in a variety of ways. In our culture it is customary to shake hands with a person whom you meet for the first time. If you refuse to do so it would convey the message that you did not accept, or that you were holding something against, the other person. Similarly, in an appropriate context, a nod or a wink, the wrinkling of the brows or the raising of a finger may serve as a means of communicating some message or other. Such means of communication may, for example, serve to indicate bids at an auction.

When we communicate messages by using gesture or other forms of bodily movement, we call it 'non-verbal' communication; that is, communication without words. The implication of that term is that we regard 'verbal communication', i.e. communication using words (or language), as somehow primary or more usual. And this is indeed the case. Non-verbal communication is extremely limited in the range of messages it can convey, and it often serves to reinforce rather than replace verbal communication. Language, on the other hand, is an explicit, versatile and extendable means of communicating messages, from the simple 'I'm fed up' to the most complex theory of nuclear physics or the most profound philosophical reasoning.

Meaning

Messages are meaningful. It may be argued that rituals like the ‘How do you do?’ of a polite introduction are meaningless because they are predictable and are not chosen from among a set of alternative messages. But even in such contexts, a message of polite greeting is communicated, however conventionalised the language may be, and such greetings have an important social function in enabling human beings to interact. What is clear is that messages do not all have the same kind of meaning or function; nor does a particular message have only one function. We probably think that the primary function of language is to convey propositional or representational meaning, e.g. making a statement about some event: ‘The telephone’s ringing.’ But the utterance, ‘The telephone’s ringing’, in its most likely context of use, is less a statement of fact than a hint or instruction to someone to go and answer it. In other words, this utterance has simultaneously a propositional meaning (‘something is happening’) and an interactional meaning (‘you do something’).

Language messages have diverse functions; they are also stylistically diverse, and there may often be a relationship between the function of a message and its style. We can make an initial stylistic distinction between spoken language and written language, but within both these styles there are many varieties, from playground rhymes and advertising jingles to sermons and formal speeches in the spoken style, and from jottings or personal letters to legal documents or scientific reports in the written style. Not every individual uses a language in all its functions, and no language user has occasion to exploit all the diverse styles. But all language users can construct messages with a variety of functions and in a variety of styles.

Structure

An important word here is 'construct'; because for communication to be successful, messages need to be structured according to the conventions of the language being used. Messages, then, have organisation and structure; and so does language. We refer to the structural or organising principles of language as **grammar**. Consider the following message:

The telephone's ringing. Stay where you are. I'll answer it.
Are you expecting a call from someone today?

This 'message' is constructed from a number of 'propositions' (e.g. 'The telephone's ringing'). The propositions in turn are constructed from: an event (or action or state), e.g. 'ring'; the participants involved in the event, e.g. 'the telephone', 'you', 'a call'; and the circumstances connected with the event, e.g. 'today'. The labels 'message', 'proposition', 'participant', etc. describe the construction of this act of verbal communication in generalised semantic terms. If we wish to describe its construction in grammatical terms, we shall use labels like 'text', 'sentence' and 'word'.

Verbal communication (language) may therefore be analysed and described in at least two ways: from the perspective of its meaning and the meaning of its constituent parts, and from the perspective of its grammatical structure and the grammar of its constituent parts. In this book we shall combine the two perspectives by beginning with meaning and then proceeding to grammatical description. We shall begin with questions such as 'What kinds of things do we talk about?', and then go on to examine how these meanings are organised grammatically.

Why both semantic and grammatical analysis?

There are two main reasons which justify this dual analysis and description. The first one is the simple observation that there are linguistically interesting things to say about meaning and grammar separately, and about the ways in which they interrelate, which justify assuming two levels of organisation in the construction of language. The second reason has to do with the observation that meaning and grammar are not in a one-to-one relationship in linguistic structure. For example, the meaning of elements in related structures may remain constant while the grammar changes. Compare the following structures:

- [1] Nathan washed up the dishes
- [2] The dishes were washed up by Nathan

In both examples, *Nathan* has the semantic role of 'ACTOR' (the one doing the washing-up) and *the dishes* have the semantic role of 'AFFECTED' (the things affected by the action of washing-up). The meaning of these elements is constant while their grammatical function changes. The change in grammar can be seen merely from the order of elements: *Nathan* is first in [1] and last in [2], reversing positions with *the dishes*. Put more technically, *Nathan* has 'Subject' function in [1], whereas in [2] *the dishes* has Subject function.

This discussion illustrates the point that there are two systems of construction operating in language: a semantic system, concerned with the meaning relations between elements of constructions, and a grammatical system, concerned with the grammatical relations between elements of a construction. We are therefore justified in analysing and describing linguistic constructions from both a semantic and a grammatical perspective and in seeking to relate the two analyses.

Structure of this book

Each chapter begins with a discussion of the aspects of meaning relevant to the topic of the chapter. Then the discussion moves on to relate the meanings to the grammatical aspects of the topic and to describe the relevant grammatical systems and structures.

The first three chapters treat the essential elements of propositions or sentences: in Chapter 1, the central element, which refers to the states, events and actions that we want to talk about and which is represented grammatically by verbs; in Chapter 2, the participants in these states, events and actions, which are represented grammatically by nouns; and in Chapter 3, the circumstances (e.g. of place or time) attendant on the state, event or action and which are represented grammatically by adverbs and prepositions.

The next two chapters consider the ways in which semantic and grammatical elaboration or 'specification' occurs: of states, events and actions (i.e. verbs) in Chapter 4 by notions such as 'time' and its corresponding grammatical category 'tense'; and of participants (i.e. nouns) in Chapter 5 by means of items which identify, classify and describe them.

Chapter 6 brings together the topics of the preceding chapters and examines how these elements combine together to form semantic constructions (propositions) and grammatical constructions (sentences).

The next two chapters continue the discussion of propositions (sentences), but show how one proposition may 'embed' in and be a constituent of another proposition, either as a participant or specifier (Chapter 7) or as a circumstance (Chapter 8).

The final two chapters take the discussion beyond the construction of propositions to the ways in which propositions combine. Chapter 9 looks at the means of co-ordination and conjunction which combine propositions. The last chapter considers the structure of messages (or texts), which are propositions in combination for the purpose of meaningful human communication.

A glossary of key terms used in the discussion is provided at the end of the book.

Examples

We shall illustrate the points being made with copious examples from naturally occurring language. Most of the examples are taken from the *Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus of British English, for use with digital computers* (S. Johansson, G. N. Leech & H. Goodluck 1978). The *LOB Corpus* is a computer corpus of printed British English published in the year 1961. It contains extracts from a wide variety of types of text, organised under fifteen categories, as follows:

- A Press: reportage
- B Press: editorial
- C Press: reviews
- D Religion
- E Skills, trades and hobbies
- F Popular lore
- G Belles lettres, biography, essays
- H Miscellaneous (government documents, foundation reports, industry reports, college catalogue, industry house organ)
- J Learned and scientific writings
- K General fiction
- L Mystery and detective fiction
- M Science fiction
- N Adventure and western fiction
- P Romance and love story
- R Humour

The categories have different numbers of texts in each, but there are 500 text extracts in all, of approximately 2000 words each, amounting to a corpus of over one million words. When sentences from the *LOB Corpus* are used as examples in this book, they are given a reference which corresponds with the category, extract number and line number in the corpus: for example, 'K06: 145' means 'line number 145 from text extract 6 in category K'.

The examples were obtained from the *LOB Corpus* using the *Oxford Concordance Program* (S. Hockey & I. Marriott, Oxford University Computing Service 1980).

In the final chapter, though, a complete text is used to illustrate the discussion of messages and texts. It is an article

taken from *The Guardian Weekly* newspaper, written by one of the newspaper's regular columnists, Ralph Whitlock.

Terminology

The linguistic terminology I have used in this book derives in large part from the most up-to-date descriptive grammar of English: *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik (Longman 1985). This grammar is frequently referred to by the acronym of its title, *CGEL*, and that is how we will refer to it when we need to. You will find that a small number of terms are used which do not derive from *CGEL*, mostly relating to semantic description. The difference between *CGEL* and this book is that *CGEL* is a reference grammar that aims to be 'comprehensive' (or as comprehensive as one can be in the present state of linguistic knowledge), while this book is a textbook or coursebook which aims to present and expound a scheme of description of contemporary English, building up the description gradually through the book. It cannot therefore expect to be as comprehensive as the 1779-page *CGEL*. You will not find every aspect of English grammar dealt with here, but you will be given a sufficient grounding to enable you to look up a point of grammar in *CGEL* and understand what it says with relative ease.

Exercises

Each chapter, apart from the final one, contains a small number of exercises at the end, and a note within the chapter indicates the appropriate point at which to attempt the exercise. The aim of the exercises is to provide further illustration of the scheme of description being expounded in the book, and to encourage you – the reader – to develop your analytical skills on language data. A key to the exercises is given at the end of the book.

CHAPTER 1

States, Events, Actions: Verbs

What do we talk about?

Imagine a typical conversation that you might have with a member of your family or a friend, or think of the reconstructions of conversations in the dialogue of novels or plays, such as the following (from: Angus Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, p. 52). What do we talk about?

[1] ‘Mrs Salad sent you her love,’ said Gerald to his son.

‘How the wicked prosper!’ said John. ‘You ought to meet her, Elvira; she’s the living example of that Marxist myth, the lumpen proletariat.’

‘She sent you a message,’ said Gerald.

We talk about things that happen: ‘the wicked prosper’. We talk about what people do: ‘She sent you a message.’ We talk about the way people or things are: ‘She’s the living example of that Marxist myth. . .’ We will label these meanings: **event** (*prosper*), **action** (*send*) and **state** (*be* – the ‘s in *she’s* is a contraction of *is*, which is a form of *be*). And we will also refer to events, actions and states by the general term **situation types**.

Situation types

We have identified three situation types, which represent the general content of the messages that we communicate by means of language: STATES, EVENTS and ACTIONS (we will use capitals for semantic labels). Although the whole utterance (e.g. ‘She sent you a message’) may be

regarded as reporting a situation, we have identified one item (*send*) in particular as representative of the situation (in this case an action). This item, together with the others that we identified (*prosper*, *be*), belong to a class of words called **verbs**.

Words in a language are grouped into a number of word classes (about eight in English) and subclasses, to enable us to make grammatical descriptions. Where grammar is concerned with words, it is in terms of classes and subclasses of word that the description is made, not in terms of individual words. The word-class to which a word belongs is shown traditionally in dictionaries: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, pronoun, etc. We will discuss all of them in the course of our investigation of English grammar. In this chapter, though, we are concerned only with verbs, as the class of words whose meanings refer to situation types.

[Exercise 1]

States

We start our detailed examination of situation types by considering states. States refer to the way people or things are, what they are like, the condition they are in, where they are, the position they have taken up, and the like. Look at the examples in [2] to [8] below, which illustrate states. Do the verbs in these sentences all have the same kind of meaning?

- | | |
|---|------------|
| [2] It <i>was</i> a quiet place | [L07: 29] |
| [3] She <i>was</i> silent again | [L06: 90] |
| [4] He <i>had</i> security, comfort, for a little at least | [L06: 182] |
| [5] Andrea <i>knew</i> that it was purposeless to stay | [L08: 21] |
| [6] I don't <i>like</i> the risk | [L16: 122] |
| [7] She could <i>hear</i> faint voices the other side | [L06: 10] |
| [8] It <i>hurt</i> most when she tried to twist the foot outwards | [F31: 25] |

Clearly, a rather wide range of meaning is expressed by the verbs in [2] to [8], though they may all be classed as

10 States, Events, Actions: Verbs

state verbs. Let us now distinguish the types of state to which these verbs refer. The verb *be* occurs in both [2] and [3]: in [2] *be* predicates a **quality**, whereas in [3] *be* predicates a (temporary) **state**. A ‘quality’ is a more-or-less permanent characteristic of someone or something, while a ‘state’ is a less permanent type of situation. The use of *have* in [4], with its meaning of ‘possess’, refers, like *be* in [3], to a temporary state. *Have* may also be used to refer to a quality, e.g.

[9] Spiders *have* eight legs

The remaining examples, [5] to [8], contain verbs which refer to what are called **private states**. We can distinguish four types of private state: **intellectual** states, illustrated by *know* in [5]; states of **emotion** or **attitude**, illustrated by *like* in [6]; states of **perception**, illustrated by *hear* in [7], and accompanied by *can/could*; and states of **bodily sensation**, illustrated by *hurt* in [8]. These verbs refer to subjective states of mind and feeling.

Consider now the perception verb *taste* as it is used in the examples at [10] to [12] below:

- [10] This soup *tastes* of garlic
- [11] I can *taste* the garlic in the soup
- [12] Would you kindly *taste* the soup?

In [10] *taste* is used in the same way as *be* in [2], to refer to a quality. In [11] *taste* is used like *hear* in [7], to refer to a state of perception. In [12], however, *taste* refers to an action. The action of tasting – deliberately and intentionally taking something into the mouth – may lead to a report on the state of perception which ensues from the action, as in [11], or on the quality of the food or drink, as in [10]. A similar triple use of a verb to refer to a quality, a state of perception, and an action, occurs with *smell* and *feel*. With hearing and seeing, though, different verbs are used. For the quality situation type, the verbs *sound* and *look* are used, e.g.

- [13] It *sounds* a good idea [L11: 193]
- [14] They don't *look* very exciting [L05: 78]

For the state of perception situation type, the verbs *hear* and *see* are used, e.g.

- [15] She *could hear* his steps [L21: 142]
 [16] I *could see* its clean baked concrete [L09: 173]

For the action situation type, the verbs *listen to* and *look at* are used, e.g.

- [17] Tom would not even *listen to* me [L15: 102]
 [18] *Look at* the names she called your mother [L22: 208]

One further type of state remains to be identified. It is illustrated by [19] and [20] below:

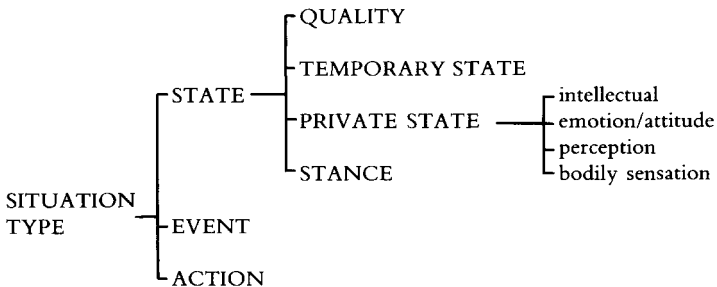
- [19] She *was standing right* in front of him [L04: 7]
 [20] The couple *were sitting* on a low couch against one wall [L11: 44]

The verbs *stand* and *sit* in these examples refer to **stance**, the position that someone or something is in. In [19] and [20] these verbs clearly refer to a state. Look at [21] and [22] below, however:

- [21] *Stand* on the sidelines and cheer on anyone. . . [L14:132]
 [22] Shall we *sit* down? [L11: 106]

In these examples, *stand* and *sit* seem to be referring to actions rather than to states. Like so many verbs (e.g. the perception verbs discussed above), they refer to different situation types according to context of use; or they may be said to belong to more than one semantic class of verbs.

Let us now summarise the distinctions we have drawn among different types of state in the following diagram:



12 States, Events, Actions: Verbs

Reading this diagram from left to right, you move from more general labels to more particular ones. An intellectual state is a (more particular) type of private state, which is a (more particular) type of state.

[Exercise 2]

Events

Events refer to things that happen. There is no stated human or other animate instigator or agent for an event: they simply occur. In essence this is the feature which distinguishes events from actions. Actions are set in train by a (usually) human agent; events occur without a human instigator being involved. Look at the examples in [23] to [26] below, which illustrate four different types of event.

- [23] In this modern age very few of those reminders of man's early attempts at mechanisation on a fairly large scale are still *working* [E10: 9]
- [24] The general condition and appetite *improved* [J17: 133]
- [25] The steering wheel *hit* his chest [N29: 134]
- [26] I *arrived* at the Oldham Empire with the gang [A39: 218]

The example with *work* at [23] illustrates a type of event termed **goings-on**: an event takes place involving an inanimate force or object. The event is viewed as being in progress (going on), and there is no indication of an end to the goings-on. The example at [24] with the verb *improve* illustrates a **process**: a change of state takes place or is implied. A process is also viewed as taking place over a period of time, but it issues in a conclusion, the new state. Improvement, for example, involves changing from a worse to a better state, during a span of time. The example with *hit* at [25] illustrates a **momentary event**: an event happens, but it is viewed as taking place in a moment of time. The example at [26] with the verb *arrive* illustrates a **transitional event**: again the event is viewed as taking

place in a moment of time, but the event also entails a change of state. In the case of *arrive*, the change is from not being in a place to being there.

You may have noticed from this discussion that two features in particular serve to draw distinctions among the four types of event. One is the feature ‘change of state’, which distinguishes processes and transitional events, involving a change of state, from goings-on and momentary events, which do not. The other feature is the view of the event as lasting through a period of time, contrasted with the view of it as taking place in a moment of time. This feature distinguishes goings-on and processes, lasting through time, from momentary and transitional events, which are momentary. For the first feature the terms **conclusive** (involving a change of state) and **non-conclusive** (no change of state) are used. For the second feature the terms are **durative** (lasting through time) and **punctual** (taking place in a moment of time). We may express the distinctions between the types of event in the following matrix:

	DURATIVE	PUNCTUAL
NON-CONCLUSIVE	goings-on	momentary event
CONCLUSIVE	process	transitional event

Actions

Actions do not just happen. Actions are usually performed by human, or at least animate, agents or instigators. They are normally the result of the exercise of a will or intention on the part of the agent. Actions are done by somebody. We can identify four types of action, corresponding to the four types of event which we discussed in the previous section. They are illustrated by the examples at [27] to [30] below.

- [27] She *sang* in clubs and in concerts [A39: 114]
- [28] In 1901 Landsteiner *discovered* the ABO blood group system [J13: 139]
- [29] He *kicked* the razor clear [L03: 43]
- [30] He *began* his search [L08: 153]

14 States, Events, Actions: Verbs

The example with the verb *sing* at [27] illustrates a type of action called **activity**: a person or other animate agent is involved in doing something. The action is viewed as durative (lasting over a period of time), but no result or achievement is implied (i.e. it is non-conclusive). The example at [28] with *discover* illustrates an **accomplishment**: a person undertakes an action with a result or achievement, i.e. it is conclusive. Like activities, though, accomplishments are viewed as taking place over a period: they are durative. The example with the verb *kick* at [29] illustrates a **momentary act**: an agent performs an action which is viewed as punctual (taking place in a moment of time), but the action has no end-result (i.e. it is non-conclusive). The example at [30] with *begin* illustrates a **transitional act**: again the action is viewed as punctual, but it is also conclusive. It involves a change of state, in the case of *begin* from not happening to being under way.

The same features are used to distinguish the four types of action as we used to make the distinctions among types of event: durative vs punctual, and conclusive vs non-conclusive. They distinguish types of action in the following way:

	DURATIVE	PUNCTUAL
NON-CONCLUSIVE	activity	momentary act
CONCLUSIVE	accomplishment	transitional act

There is therefore a match between types of event and types of action. The feature which distinguishes events from actions is termed **agentive**: actions are 'agentive', events are 'non-agentive'. Agentive means that a human (or other animate) decision or intention is involved, so that verbs expressing actions are usually accompanied by a word referring to a doer or agent. Non-agentive means that an event occurs without a human decision or intention being involved. Events and actions, though, as we have seen, do share common features, which mark them off from states.

We may summarise our discussion of situation types by relating the different types of situation in the following diagram: