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## *Hold* as a Monosemic Verb

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***HOLD AS A MONOSEMIC VERB***

by

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Degree of**

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**APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

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Approved by:

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**Charles Ruhl (director)**

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## ABSTRACT

### *HOLD AS A MONOSEMIC VERB*

Amy D. Camp  
Old Dominion University, 1995  
Director: Dr. Charles Ruhl

The verb *hold* is normally presumed to be highly polysemous; dictionaries ascribe to it several senses and sub-senses. This treatment is supported by the polysemous bias in current semantic research. In this thesis, I claim that *hold* is monosemic, with ascribed meanings resulting from pragmatic modulation. My treatment of *hold* is based on Charles Ruhl's work with monosemy in his book *On Monosemy: A Study in Linguistic Semantics*.

This study isolates *hold*'s constant semantic contribution throughout 250 diverse example sentences. I claim that *hold*

- (1) presupposes a sequence, and then
- (2) suspends the sequence.

After an introduction and a chapter on current treatments of *hold*, I present simple transitives (chapter 3) and then a look at objects modified by adjectives and the possibility of small clauses (chapter 4). Also covered are example sentences containing phrasal verbs (chapter 5) and idioms (chapter 6). A sampling of prepositional phrases and their impact on *hold* is presented in chapters 7 and 8.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Charles Ruhl, my thesis advisor, for being so generous with his time and knowledge. His invaluable insights, encouraging spirit, and good cheer made writing this thesis a pleasurable learning experience.

I would like to thank my parents, Lloyd and Nelda Camp, who together collected well over 1,500 example *hold* sentences. To this day, neither can read a newspaper or novel without the word *hold* catching their attention.

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## Chapter 1

## Introduction

In this thesis, I claim that the verb *hold* is monosemic; that is, it has a single meaning. This may be a surprising conclusion given that *hold* is normally presumed to be highly polysemous. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Third Edition, is unremarkable in assigning to it several senses and sub-senses:

Transitives:

- (1) 'to have and keep in one's grasp' (1a) in *held the reins tightly*
- (2) 'to aim or direct' (1b) in *held the hose on the fire*
- (3) 'to avoid letting out or expelling' (2d) in *the swimmer couldn't hold her breath any longer*
- (4) 'to maintain control over' (5b) in *the dam held the flood waters*
- (5) 'to assert or affirm, especially formally' (8b) in *the doctrine holds that people are inherently good*
- (6) 'to carry or support in a certain position' (10a) in *can the baby hold herself up yet*

Intransitives:

- (7) 'to withstand stress, pressure, or opposition' (2b) in *the defense held*
- (8) 'to continue in the same direction' (3) in *the ship held to a southwesterly course.* (861)

*The Middle English Dictionary (MED)* informs us that, in the 11-, 12-, and 1300s, one could hold (and, in many cases, be held by) almost anything on a continuum ranging from the concrete to the abstract: a hand (1a), a husband or

wife (8a), a place or position (23b), an office (9), a sorrow (1c), and a virtue (10a). In addition, a wide variety of particles, adverbs, prepositions, and prepositional phrases kept company with *hold*: *up* (3a), *on* (22a), *in* (22d), *till*, *until*, *unto* (14b(b)), *from* (23a), *down* (3e), *with* (24b), *forth* (21a), *together* (5c), *still* (24a), *hard* (15b), *instead* (23c), *in mind* (16e), *in bond* (11d), *in balance* (15e), and *under foot* (15b) (vol. G-H: 836-854).

*The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* notes that the original sense of the word in Teutonic languages was 'to keep watch over, keep charge of, keep herd, pasture (cattle)'. Although this sense of *hold* has become obsolete, the *OED* lists its subsequent senses as 'to rule, guard, defend, keep from getting away or falling, preserve, reserve, keep possession of, possess, occupy, contain, detain, entertain, retain, maintain, sustain'. (A number of the listed subsequent senses, such as *contain* and *detain*, include the French *-tain*, meaning 'hold'.) The *OED* further notes that the verb had "a wide development of senses in Old English, as far back as we can go" (7:295).

This "wide development of senses" is often at the heart of semantic inquiry. The debate turns on the location of meaning. Some linguists believe meaning resides mostly within the linguistic system itself; thus fine distinctions are attributed to the language rather than to extralinguistic influences. This results in a polysemous orientation. Lakoff (1987) registers his vote for intralinguistic distinction as he explores the words *open* and *run*:

We open doors and open presents, and though the actions described by the words are very different, we would normally have to think twice to notice the difference. Or [examine] the word *run*. It is very different for Harry to run into the woods and for the road to run into the woods. Again, there is a single verb with two senses so intimately related that we have to think twice to notice the difference. Such cases are called



instances of *polysemy*. They are cases where there is one lexical item with a family of related senses. (416)

Other linguists, while they agree that Harry and the road "run" into the woods differently, attribute this difference not to the meaning of the verb but to linguistic and extralinguistic contextual factors. The linguistic system is viewed as open to modulation. Ruhl claims that some words which have been labeled as highly polysemous are actually monosemic: they have an abstract, single meaning that is modulated by real-world knowledge. Ruhl (1989) writes:

I claim that a considerable part of alleged lexical meaning is actually supplied by other means; words are highly abstract in inherent meaning, often too much so for conscious understanding. It follows that all use of language is heavily modulated. The more diversely useful a language, the more it would have to be heavily modulated by other means to differing situations. (86)

My own research leads me to conclude that meaning is minimal, owing much to extralinguistic influences. In this thesis, I have tried to provide grounds for concluding that *hold* is monosemic. I believe it is semantically dependent upon its context, leading to heavy pragmatic modulation, and freely accepting subjects, objects, and prepositions from a wide concrete-to-abstract continuum. Implicit in these claims is Joos' (1972) semantic axiom: "The best meaning is the least meaning" (257). According to Joos, this is the guideline used by lexicographers for defining a *hapax legomenon*: make the word ". . . contribute least to the total message derivable from the passage where it is at home . . ." (257). I believe this is a good rule of thumb when assigning meaning to any word, but as the sample definitions of *hold* given at the beginning of the chapter demonstrate, dictionaries often define words based on context, thereby ensuring a polysemous bias.

Moon (1987) explores the effects of definition based on context and collocation, which results in the proliferation of senses. Moon notes that Bailey defined the verb *take* as having 18 senses in 1721. Johnson ascribed to it 134 senses in 1755, and, in 1933, Murray *et al* gave *take* 341 senses (176). Is it possible that *take* has 341 related meanings? Or is it more likely that it has at least 341 contexts that specify meaning? "Lexicographers," writes Moon, "carve up the word in order to explain it in relation to its various contexts--the larger the dictionary, the more the word is carved up--and as a result the single core meaning is dissipated" (174).

Weinreich (1963) also looks at the semantic contribution of *take* and concludes that ". . . this is a case not of abnormally overdeveloped polysemy of a word, but rather of its semantic near-emptiness" (144). Agreeing with Weinreich and also considering *take*, Ruhl (1989) writes:

One prevalent mistake is to attribute semantic status to what is habitually present in a particular context. In *The thief took the jewels*, the verb *take* can be pragmatically specialized as 'steal'; it may be almost automatic for *take* in this individual sentence. That is likely the reason dictionaries give 'steal' as one of *take*'s meanings. However, the uniformity need not have a lexical cause: the meaning comes not only from *take*, but *take-in-this-context*; it is the context that (quite heavily) suggests the specific taking that we call stealing. A word's semantics should concern what it contributes in all contexts. (87)

While researching the particulars of *hold*, I tried to isolate that which is present in all contexts, factoring out the contextually-bound assumptions and knowledge we have loaded onto the word. To restore a sense of semantic perspective for *hold* (as well as for other words), we must tease out the semantic

from the pragmatic. As Bolinger (1971) notes, that which is arrived at by inference is often mistaken for reference<sup>1</sup>:

What features of meaning are IN a linguistic form and what features are suggested to our minds ABOUT it, by the actual context, or by past association? This is the question of reference vs. inference.

Imposing an inferential for a referential meaning is a form of semantic overloading. (522, 529)

(Surely, Murray's 341 senses for *take* is semantic overloading.)

Most likely, this distinction between reference and inference or semantic and pragmatic must be established individually for each word (and, perhaps, combination of words) in the lexicon. After all, words do not exist in a vacuum; even individual words are not context-free. If I write a straightforward word such as *map* on the chalkboard, each student will supply a context for the word: Is the map a world map, a road map of Virginia, or a campus map? Is it bound in an atlas, creased and folded, or printed in a pamphlet labeled Campus Guide? Is it envisioned in a hand, lying in the sun on a car seat, tacked to a bulletin board, or floating in limbo? Does it evoke feelings of usefulness and competence or frustration and dread? It is soon apparent just how easily semantics is modulated by pragmatics, usually without our noticing.

By presenting *hold* as a highly polysemous word, lexicographers have not defined *hold* so much as they have demonstrated the influence of pragmatic modulations on the verb.<sup>2</sup> Given that we often turn to dictionaries to explore

---

<sup>1</sup> Bolinger uses *reference* to designate a word's semantics and *inference* for pragmatics. I accept the distinction, but not the terminology. I will use *reference* to designate a word's pragmatics and *sense* to refer to semantics.

<sup>2</sup> I take *pragmatic* to include real-world knowledge and "the speaker's and addressee's background attitudes and beliefs, their understanding of the context in which a sentence is uttered, and their knowledge of the way in which language is used to communicate information" (O'Grady, William, Michael Dobrovolsky, and Mark Aronoff 181).

paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships, wishing to know when and how a word is used, it is not a bad idea to highlight a word's possible contexts. After all, general usage dictionaries must strive for maximal usefulness for the broadest population. But taken to an extreme, definition based on pragmatics or context becomes a semantic nightmare. Lakoff is right: Harry's running into the woods is a very different matter from the way a road runs into the woods. Similarly, I hold a coat very differently from the way I hold a coffee cup or the slide of a zipper. But does this necessarily prove that *hold* is polysemous? And if we begin to define words based on real-world knowledge and context, can we possibly carry through on such a practice? Clearly, *hold a grudge*, *hold family dear*, and *hold traffic up* all have very distinct meanings. But are we able to demonstrate that the verb *hold* is the semantic carrier of these distinctions?

My research involved analyzing the semantic and syntactic environments of approximately 1000 sentences, all containing the verb *hold*. Two hundred and fifty example sentences were chosen as the corpus of this thesis. These sentences are cited in their original forms in Appendix A. These sentences were gathered from various sources: dictionaries, newspapers, periodicals, literature, CD-ROMs, and actual speech. By so doing, I hoped to avoid the premature conclusions that are sometimes reached when using a contrived or impoverished data base. Gleason (1972) notes the hazards of being both informant and analyst when he writes, "At worst, much evidence may never even come before us for appraisal, since our tastes and theoretical commitment may control where we look for evidence" (113). By analyzing sentences that people have written and uttered with the intent to convey meaning, I hope to have reduced the likelihood of confirming my own biases.

In chapter 2, we will examine some current treatments of *hold*. Chapter 3 deals with simple transitives. We look at adjective modification in chapter 4,

along with the possibility of small clauses. In chapter 5, we explore the merits of an intransitive preposition analysis over the traditional phrasal verb designation. The topic of chapter 6 is idioms and their bearing on *hold*'s monosemic status. In chapters 7 and 8, we look at some sample prepositional phrases and their interactions with *hold*.

## Chapter 2

Guidelines, Current Treatments, and Proposed Meaning of *Hold*

Admittedly, isolating the semantic contribution(s) of a verb thought to be so unequivocally polysemous is a tedious and difficult job. I found the following set of guidelines and procedures helpful and necessary throughout my research:

- A. Solve syntactic problems before semantic ones. I began by investigating the range of syntactic patterns that apply to *hold*.
- B. Remember that the verb phrase is the most relevant part of any sentence. During my research, I put minor isolatable phenomena (such as adverbs) aside until the end.
- C. Start with the VP-rule<sup>3</sup>: VP → V (NP) (AP) (PP). Work only with simple sentences. I treated passives as corresponding actives, questions as declaratives, negatives as affirmatives. To this end, the verb phrase is somewhat idealized.
- D. Ignore auxiliary variations: tense, modals, perfect, progressive.
- E. Treat heavy shifted sentences as unshifted. This is explained in detail in chapter 5.
- F. Consider missing prepositions or NP-objects.
- G. Delineate parts of the VP-rule:

V

V NP

V \*PP

---

<sup>3</sup> Actually, in Government Binding theory, it is the V'.

V NP PP

V AP

V NP AP

V NP AP PP

\*There may be multiple PPs.

Adverbial phrases have been left out of the VP because of guideline (B).

H. Delineate compound and complex sentences:

Compounds of NP, AP, or PP.

Complex: Modifiers of NP, AP, or PP.

Complex: Modifiers of VP.

Complex: VP as modifier (infinitive or gerund).

I. Within each set, put similars together.

J. Within each set, arrange concrete to abstract.

K. Having done all this, make what semantic conclusions seem warranted. Add all needed comments on results, indirect objects, subjects, derivatives, compounds, and anything else.

It may seem curious that these guidelines for semantic research rely heavily on syntactic analysis. This was important for a few reasons. Isolating the verb phrase and getting rid of the auxiliary variation helped to begin to reduce the semantic overloading of *hold*. It also improved the chances of discerning *hold*'s syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties from the meanings given in dictionaries. Additionally, my research is based on Ruhl's (1989) assertion that syntax, semantics, and pragmatics exist as a continuum with form (syntax) being more abstract or "remote from reality", resulting in reduced variation. Meaning (semantics), he claims, has more distinctions and is a bit more concrete or "more directly related to reality" (128). Pragmatics is the most concrete, offering infinite distinctions. He writes:

. . . syntax is abstract semantics, and semantics is concrete syntax.

Pragmatics is then even more concrete. . . .

Syntax is most constrained and least diverse, semantics is less constrained and more diverse, and pragmatics is least constrained and most diverse, this last diversity created by extralinguistic modulations.

If we consider form to be the most abstract meaning, then we have a continuum of meaning, from the most general and abstract to the most specific and concrete. (128, 129)

Based on this continuum of meaning, we will see that when *hold*'s unity of form, its abstract meaning, is pragmatically modulated, it can participate in many diverse sentences, often absorbing meaning from context.

We begin this analysis of *hold* by noting its appearance in the verb-phrase rule and then looking at the current treatments of *hold* by various linguists.

Hold can occur in all of the VP-rule patterns:

V		hold
V	NP	hold that thought
V	AP	hold dear
V	PP	hold onto the handle
V	NP AP	hold marriage sacred
V	NP PP	hold your hand onto the lever
V	NP AP PP	hold him true to his promise

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) claim that *hold* is most closely related to stance verbs; that is, it is intermediate between the stative and the dynamic. They list other sample stance verbs as *lie, live, sit, and stand* (55). Greenbaum and Quirk note the subject as "positioner" rather than "agentive." They write that in the positioner role, ". . . the participant is in control, but the situation is not resultative in that no change is indicated in the positioner during the period in



which the situation lasts" (211). Offering the following sample sentence, (9) *The hijacker was holding the revolver*, they claim that direct objects have an affected role (211). However, this assertion warrants further comment based upon Dixon's (1991) treatment of *hold*.

Dixon categorizes *hold* as a subtype of "rest" under the heading "Motion and Rest": *hold* refers to something ". . . being in a position of rest in juxtaposition with a person's body. . ." (100). My data on *hold* shows a much greater range of usage than this "juxtaposition with a person's body", but Dixon goes on to make an important point when he notes that words such as *grasp*, *grab*, *catch*, *pick up*, and the like are used to affect a relationship before *hold* steps in to signal rest. Dixon's sample sentence is (10) *John grabbed/picked up the axe (and then held it tightly)* (101). Essentially, we have a chain of action: First, John picked up the ax; his grip was tight. Second, the sequence involving his tight grip on the ax was suspended: he held it tightly. And so when Quirk and Greenbaum write that the direct object has an affected role, we see that the effect was completed earlier, and the *hold* sentence merely signals a suspension. In their sentence, (9) *The hijacker was holding the revolver*, a change of position occurred with the direct object when the hijacker initially picked up the revolver, but in the *hold* sentence this new position merely remains in effect.

My research leads me to believe that Greenbaum and Quirk's stative verb designation is indeed appropriate. The subject as positioner rather than agent is also fitting. Dixon's treatment of the stereotype of *hold* is insightful, but he ignores the magnitude of diversity of both its positioners and objects.

My treatment of *hold* includes the following monosemic definition: *Hold* is a verb that

- 1) presupposes a sequence of events, and then
- 2) suspends the sequence.

Current semantic inquiry rarely perceives such semantic unity throughout a range of data. The 250 example sentences are important because they illustrate *hold*'s unified semantic contribution, constant throughout diverse contexts. The data also demonstrate how we overload meaning by contributing extralinguistic factors to *hold*.

## Chapter 3

NP<sub>1</sub> V NP<sub>2</sub> Data<sup>4</sup>

Quirk and Greenbaum and Dixon's example sentences, (9) *The hijacker was holding the revolver* and (10) *John grabbed/picked up the axe (and then held it tightly)*, reflect the first sense ascribed to *hold* by the *AHD*: 'to have and keep in one's grasp'. Although this is very concrete, both the subjects and objects of *hold* may be concrete or abstract, animate or inanimate. I present first the stereotypical *hold*, 'grasp' (hold x in one's hand), but this chapter reveals a wide range of subjects and objects.

People hold concrete, inanimate objects (X holds Y in X's hand):

- (11) He holds a candy bar.
- (12) They hold their half-full champagne glasses.
- (13) I hold the lamp.
- (14) He holds a chunk of wood.
- (15) Jem holds my ham costume.
- (16) She holds her own reins.
- (17) Tonya Harding holds flowers and a stuffed animal.
- (18) A different member of the trio holds the stakes.

All of these objects are held in the hand, which Dixon (1991) notes as the unmarked, stereotypic locus, or "place of rest" (100). The unmarked locus is

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<sup>4</sup> At times it is necessary to give identifying information about the subjects and objects in order for the example sentence to be understood. I give this type of information between parenthesis. At other times I have added an elliptical subject or object. I use brackets in this case.

often elliptical. When the locus is a specific part of the hand or another body part, it is usually specified by a prepositional phrase, as in

(19) My mom holds it (the brooch) in her palm

or

(20) He holds the pencil between his fingers.

Dixon (1991) contributes (21) *John carried/held the banana in/with his hand/teeth* (100).

The previous examples show *hold*'s contribution: to presuppose a sequence and to suspend it. For example, in (11), the positioner, *he*, first had to pick up the candy bar, and then this sequence of events was suspended.

The stereotypical "hand" is nonessential:

(22) The Espanolos hold property.

(23) The Bosnian government holds 50 heavy weapons.

(24) The troops hold the bunker.

We understand (22), (23), and (24) to mean possession based on the fact that property, fifty heavy weapons, and a bunker cannot be held in juxtaposition with a person's body. In (24), some would claim that *hold* signals a sense of maintaining control despite a struggle; however I believe that *hold* behaves here just as it does in other contexts. It presupposes that a sequence of events brought the bunker into the possession of the troops and then suspends the sequence so that they still possess or hold the bunker. The sense of struggle for control is supplied by our knowledge that bunkers are the sites of fierce fighting. Notice that we could signal otherwise by saying:

(25) During the three-month cease-fire agreement, the troops held the bunker without incident.

*Hold*'s purported meaning of maintaining control over something is the result of pragmatic modulation.

Expanding the range of objects and means, we have:

People hold abstract objects:

- (26) Gotha and Gordo hold grudges.
- (27) Mbatl holds my gaze.
- (28) I hold my silence.
- (29) She holds her peace.
- (30) You hold the good.
- (31) He holds two conflicting beliefs.
- (32) I hold the blame.
- (33) The people of Kyoto hold the answer.
- (34) [You] hold your arguments.
- (35) The (Golden) Flashes hold the longest losing streak.
- (36) The captain holds an auction.
- (37) Democratic and Republican leaders hold periodic formal debates.
- (38) We hold a big rally and burn all Bert and Ernie dolls.
- (39) They hold the meeting.
- (40) They hold workshops on sexual harassment and abuse and women's legal rights.
- (41) Englishmen hold all they gain.
- (42) You hold the other thirty percent.
- (43) Neither side holds the moral high ground.
- (44) She holds court.
- (45) She holds a bachelor's and two master's (degrees).
- (46) He holds two concepts, which may be in conflict: one is his world view, his sense of the way the world is; the other is his sense of morality, the way the

world ought to be.

In examples (11) through (18), we have people holding concrete objects in their hands. Sentences (26) through (45) demonstrate that Dixon's theory of "rest" need not be in juxtaposition with the body: the sequence has come to a rest.

Here we see body parts holding concrete or abstract objects:

A part of the body holds concrete or abstract objects ((in itself) = X):

(47) Your bladder holds urine.

(48) Your hair holds a curl.

(49) Each cell within my body holds a heart/ And all my hearts in unison strike twelve.

(50) Johnny's swollen eyes hold a focus.

(51) Her lips hold the shapes of certain words, such as "homework," after she has said them.

A part of the human psyche holds an abstract object (X):

(52) The ego holds your allegiance.

In (53) and (54) we see an emotion hold a concrete object, a person, and an abstract object. This possible diversity of positioners and objects is not reflected in the stereotypical 'grasp with the hand'.

An emotion holds a concrete or abstract object (X):

(53) Curiosity holds Dunlap.

(54) Guilt holds no attraction.

Further data reveals that the positioner does not need to be human (nor related to the human psyche, emotions, etc.)

Nature holds concrete objects (X):

(55) The grassy hollow holds the bubbling well-spring.

(56) That river holds a lot of different kinds of fish.

Locations hold abstract objects (X):

(57) Great Britain holds the key to peace.

(58) Alaska holds such adventure.

While (58) seems to be an actual location, (57) is a metonymic substitution, Country for Government. We know this because pragmatically we understand that people, not locations, *hold the keys to peace*.

Examples (59) through (61) show more syntactic possibilities. (*Hold* and some of its attendant prepositions are considered at length in chapters four through eight.)

Concrete subjects hold concrete objects + PP:

(59) An unseen rod behind her neck holds her head for the slow exposure.

(60) We hold new mothers to pre-delivery adoption agreements.

Concrete subject holds part of subject + PP:

(61) Barbara Bush holds her tongue on the issue of abortion.

Dictionaries often list *contain* as a definition or synonym for *hold*. The *AHD*, Third Edition, lists *hold* and *contain* as synonyms. The editors write that *contain* "means to have within or as part of a constituent." *Hold*, they claim, "can be used in that sense but primarily stresses capacity for containing." They offer (62) *The pitcher holds two pints but contains only one* (406). The following data also indicate the capacity for containment:

(63) That pot holds two quarts.

(64) The boxes, handcrafted from old books that retail for \$85 to \$385, hold anything.

The following sentences suggest actual containment:

(65) The bottle holds dressing.

(66) The pouch holds three ancient Spanish gold coins.

(67) The teaspoon holds two drops of precious oil.

*Hold* is not the determiner of possible or actual containment for these sentences. The difference turns on the specificity of the object. For instance, if

(67) read *The teaspoon holds two drops of oil*, it would be more potential-general than *two drops of precious oil*. Likewise, changing (63) to

(68) That pot holds two quarts of potato salad,

increases the sense of actual containment. Further, (69) is even more actual:

(69) That pot holds two quarts of potato salad for the church picnic.

However, changing (63) to

(70) That pot holds two quarts of water

restores a sense of potential containment, probably because water is the stereotypical liquid of potential capacity, especially for pots and pans.

The actual-potential contrast is external to *hold*; *hold* merely presupposes and suspends a sequence of events. Notice, too, that it does not prohibit or constrain any further sequence of events:

(71) The pot held two quarts of potato salad for the church picnic until the hungry parishoners dug in.

Levin (1993) lists *hold* as a "Fit Verb" along with *carry, contain, fit, feed, house, seat, serve, sleep, store, take, and use*. She notes that "[t]hey are used with location subjects to describe the capacity of the location with respect to the action named by the verb" (82). She gives the sample sentence *We sleep five people in each room*. The following data allude to capacity, but without the accompanying PP that we see in Levin's example:

(72) That hotel holds 800 guests.

(73) This elevator holds ten men.

(74) More than 50 boot camps in 30 states hold 8,000 young inmates.

Number (72) in its present form is ambiguous in that we don't know if the hotel is currently holding 800 guests or if it has the capacity to hold a total of 800 guests. If the former, this sentence is closely related to the pot and potato salad examples of (68) and (69). Eight hundred people have checked in and any further



sequence related to people checking in or out is suspended until further notice. But if (72) indicates potential capacity, as it usually does, what sequence is being presupposed and suspended?

Potential containment is often stipulated. Someone decides that as many as 800 guests can stay in the hotel at one time, with the hotel optimally offering what it was designed to offer, namely a bed to sleep in. No one shall sleep on the floor, in the hallway, etc. The presupposed sequence is arriving at the decision of optimal, maximum occupancy. This sequence is suspended until someone decides differently or the hotel is expanded.

In the elevator example (73), someone stipulated ten as the maximum number of occupants that can safely be transported based on calculations involving the weight of the average man. This stipulation is suspended until someone decrees differently.

There are other examples of concrete, inanimate subjects holding concrete objects. In these sentences, however, the object is not human as it was in the previous stipulation sentences:

(75) Fruit-shaped magnets hold shopping lists and Lissa's drawings and Linda's reminders.

(76) The rocker's loose right arm holds a watery drink.

Neither of these sentences indicates containment. The difference between (72) *The hotel holds 800 guests* and (75) does not turn on the verb *hold* but rather on our understanding of hotels, people, fruit-shaped magnets and shopping lists.

A broad range of inanimate positioners and objects are possible:

Inanimate, concrete subjects hold inanimate, concrete or abstract objects:

(77) His outfit (department store) holds goods.

(78) Some of the aspen are yellow tinged with brown and some still hold green.

(79) The mirror holds her face.

- (80) Traditional wood-frame houses hold no secrets.
- (81) The tree holds their clubhouse and their secrets.
- (82) The desert's silence holds the answers to his questions.
- (83) The ceiling catches and holds my attention.
- (84) Scripture holds supreme authority.
- (85) Banks hold a percentage of deposits.

The positioner is often abstract:

Abstract subjects hold abstract objects:

- (86) Galbraith's ideology holds sway.
- (87) The love of justice holds virtue.
- (88) An unusual investment opportunity holds great promise.
- (89) The industries' efforts to keep inventories under control hold a comeback's seeds.
- (90) Next Monday's deadline for the heavy guns to be pulled back or bombed holds its threat of the start of a widened conflict.

The verb *hold* is often used in sentences noting possession of various jobs or positions. Again, here we understand possession rather than containment or stipulation because of our pragmatic knowledge of occupations:

- (91) Richard Stolz holds that job.
- (92) Chretien holds eight cabinet posts.
- (93) Kenneth Fisher holds that seat.
- (94) Minorities and immigrants hold 26 percent of all jobs.
- (95) More people of color and women hold positions.
- (96) President Clinton holds the highest office.
- (97) He holds the highest enlisted rank.
- (98) President David Daberko holds the title of CEO of the bank.

Dictionaries often define *hold* primarily as a concrete verb, 'to have and keep in one's grasp' (*AHD*), which is able to withstand figurative applications. But the previous data show that *hold* interacts with a wide range of positioners and objects, absorbing meaning from its context. *Hold* is not lexically stipulated as concrete or abstract, and it does not favor potential containment over actual.

## Chapter 4

NP<sub>1</sub> V NP<sub>2</sub> AP Data and the Complications of the Small Clause Theory

The diverse objects of *hold* that we saw in the previous chapter can be modified by an AP. Because *hold* is a verb of rest, we expect APs that indicate rest, as in the following data:

(99) He holds his index finger rigid and upright.

(100) Blossom (horse) holds his feet steady, but he starts losing ground.

(101) The more abstract underlying convictions hold [themselves] steady.

(Although we have the same adjective in (100) and (101), *hold* seems more concrete in (100) due to the positioner and object.)

(102) Fetters hold me bound.

(103) We hold [ourselves] fast.

(104) Glue holds the pin secure.

The range of APs is much broader than adjectives denoting rest or suspended states:

(105) You hold the two sticks parallel.

(106) You hold the door open long enough for her to get completely through.

(107) He holds his blue-fringed lids closed.

(108) She draws on it until the ash glows, and she holds it (smoke) deep, then lets it out slowly, in a long luxurious soft plume.

(109) The Roman world is falling, yet we hold our heads erect.

(110) She holds her shoulders straighter and begins to sway her hip.

(111) I hold the ship straight.

In (112) through (121) we see that people can hold themselves or others in a variety of states:

(112) The philosopher holds [himself] aloof.

(113) Someone holds a homeowner liable.

(114) Men hold themselves cheap and vile.

(115) I hold myself safe a moment.

(116) I hold that mortal foolish who strives against the stress of necessity.

(117) She holds them spellbound.

(118) They hold themselves very fortunate.

(119) I hold him rich, though not a shirt hath he.

(120) She holds the fertilized egg captive.

(121) She holds him ineffective.

By Heavy Shift, V AP NP:

(122) Be our joys three parts pain! [We] strive and hold cheap the strain.

Another syntactic possibility is:

AP + PP:

(123) He holds his overcoat closed at the neck.

(124) The man holds both small feet helpless in his large hand.

(125) The pilots hold the aircraft high enough off the LZ to prevent anyone from grabbing hold of the landing gear, but low enough to make the rotors whip up a compressed tornado that drives the crowds back.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of whether the adjective denotes rest or not, we get a strong sense of fixed states because *hold* has suspended the sequence that brought

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<sup>5</sup> Notice the compound AP here.

about the object-adjective relationship. If we try to reflect this in the grammar, we have the following possible syntactic analyses:

(107) *He holds his blue-fringed lids closed*

A) He [VP [holds [NP his blue-fringed lids] [AP closed]]] = V NP AP  
and

B) He [VP holds [SC his blue-fringed lids closed]] = V NP, where NP is an S (sentence).

Analysis (B) suggests a small clause (SC) in which the linking verb *be* has been omitted<sup>6</sup> between the object of the verb and the adjective (phrase). Aarts (1989) notes that although small clause analysis is controversial, it is often applied to verb-particle and verb-preposition constructions (277). *Hold* seems particularly suited to small clause analysis because it suspends a previous sequence. I present a small clause analysis here, but have concluded that such an analysis does little to expose the semantic contribution of *hold*.

If we apply this small clause analysis to other sample sentences, we have the following:

(126) *The old Persians [hold [the sea (be) holy]]*

There is a strong motivation to conclude this analysis for sentence (126) because the original sentence seems to be a reduction of *The old Persians hold that the sea is holy*.

The adverbial phrase in

(127) *The PTA holds the budget tight this year*

could be analyzed as part of the verb phrase or as independent of it:

The PTA [holds [the budget (be) tight] [this year]]

or

The PTA [holds [the budget (be) tight]] this year.

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<sup>6</sup> It may be the case that *be* is easily omitted because it is the most primary verb.

The small clause analysis seems straightforward and very plausible when *hold* is followed by an object and its adjective. However, when we look at *hold* and its various prepositions, the small clause analysis becomes more complicated. For example, the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English: Verbs with Particles and Prepositions (ODCIE)* offers the sentence (128) *The thin cordon of police could do nothing to hold the crowd back* (157). To this sentence, we might apply the small clause analysis as follows:

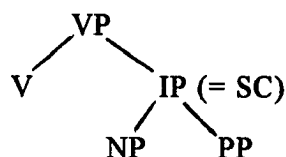
The thin cordon of police [<sub>VP</sub> holds [<sub>SC</sub> the crowd (be) back]].

Notice, though, that this analysis does not seem to work with

(129) *The thin cordon of police holds the crowd up.*

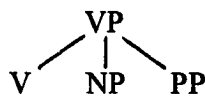
\* *The thin cordon of police [holds [the crowd (be) up]].*

Aarts (1989) attributes this fickleness of small clauses to the verb. Noting the inability of some intransitive prepositions (IP)<sup>7</sup> to appear in small clauses, Aarts distinguishes A-verbs from B-verbs (283). He offers the following analyses:  
A-verbs: [<sub>VP</sub> V [<sub>IP</sub> NP PP]]



Example Sentences: (130) *I switched the light off* (Aarts'); (128) *The thin cordon of police holds the crowd back* (mine, via the *ODCIE*)

B-verbs: [<sub>VP</sub> [V NP PP]]



Example Sentences: (131) *I looked the information up* (Aarts'); (129) *The thin cordon of police holds the crowd up* (mine)

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the *intransitive preposition* designation, see chapter 5.

While I find Aarts' distinctions illuminating, after a detailed analysis of *hold*, I am not convinced that this distinction is *verb*-specific. (Notice that I have offered a sample *hold* sentence for both the A-verb and B-verb.) It appears that this distinction is more preposition-specific, with intransitive prepositions more likely to appear in small clauses than transitives.<sup>8</sup> This is not surprising since abstract intransitive prepositions often rely on a close relationship with the predicate; "concrete" prepositions are more independent and therefore more likely to modify the entire sentence rather than the verb.<sup>9</sup> This helps to explain the relative freedom of movement of phrases containing transitive prepositions versus intransitives. For example, in the sentence

(132) They held the party for the winning team after the game,  
the sentence adjunct *after the game* can also appear before the subject, after the direct object, and, parenthetically, after the verb:

(133) After the game, they held the party for the winning team.

(134) They held the party after the game for the winning team.

(135) They held, after the game, the party for the winning team.

Because of this relative autonomy, I would not analyze the direct object and the *after*-phrase as a small clause (Aarts' A-verb). I would also hesitate to use his B-verb analysis [ $\sqrt{P}$  [V NP PP]] since the adjunct seems to be more peripheral and sentential than predicational. In order to effectively analyze the full data on *hold*, we would need to modify and add to Aarts' proposal, making a tripartite distinction:

Pattern A: [ $\sqrt{P}$  V [SC NP (be) IP] ([extra PP]]]

Example Sentence: (136) The thin cordon of police [holds [the crowd (be) back]  
([from the accident scene]]]

<sup>8</sup> Notice though, that from the two sample A-verb and B-verb *hold* sentences, (128) and (129), we know that some intransitive prepositions collaborate to make small clauses while others don't.

<sup>9</sup> See chapter 6 for a discussion on the notions of concrete and abstract prepositions.



Pattern B: [VP [V NP IP] ([extra PP])]

Example Sentence: (137) The thin cordon of police [holds the crowd up]

Pattern C: [VP [V NP]] ([extra PP])

Example Sentence: (138) They [hold the party] [after the game]

Having made these distinctions, I am aware that they may still be less representational than is desirable. At times, the distinction between patterns A and B seems to be based more on the particulars of the preposition *up* than on anything else. Notice that in (130) and (128), the fact that someone switched the lights off entails *the light is off*, and the fact that someone held the crowd back entails *the crowd is back* (pattern A). But we cannot claim that (131) *I looked the information up* (pattern B) entails *the information is up*; nor does (129) *The thin cordon of police held the crowd up* entails *the crowd is up*. And so it would seem that the resultant state small clause (as was seen in *the crowd is back*) is inappropriate, here resulting in pattern B.

When *up* is used after the copular *be*, it is most often used in its two-way directional sense: up, not down. Perhaps *up* does not retain its abstract sense following *be* because both words are so abstract as to be virtually meaningless in the absence of some modulating influence. In the original sentence (129), *up* was understood to have an abstract, completive sense. But does the fact that this sense does not come across after the copula necessarily preclude a small clause relationship? For instance, in (129), the crowd's efforts to proceed forward are obviously being held in a suspended state—the cordon of police have seen to that—just as they have made sure the crowd is back (not proceeding forward) in (128).<sup>10</sup> And so it seems that some sentences are labeled pattern B just because the small clause wording is too abstract and has therefore not gained currency.

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, this is not the case with (131) *I looked the information up* because there is no resultant state in which the information exists. This perhaps has more to do with the difference in verbs—*looked* versus *hold*—than it has to do with the abstract nature of *up*.

Pattern C sentences, [VP [V NP]] ([extra PP]), are challenging because it is often difficult to decide whether the prepositional phrase is part of the verb complement or not. In cases where it is part of the verb complement, we will need a fourth pattern:

Pattern D: [VP [V NP (PP)]] ([extra PP])

Example Sentence: (139) She [holds his hand (in her hand)] [at the airport]

However, if the prepositional phrase is part of a small clause, we need another option:

Pattern E: [VP V [SC[NP (be) (PP)]]] ([extra PP])

Example Sentence: (140) She [holds [his hand (be) (in her hand)]] [at the airport]

As I looked through the *hold* + IP or PP data, I could create small clauses at will:

(141) The administration holds his one bad attitude against everyone

The administration holds [his one bad attitude (be) against everyone]

(142) Having shipped for an officer when he was not half a seaman, he found little pity with the crew and was not man enough to hold his own among them.

He holds [his ground (be) among them]

(143) She holds her hand onto his jacket for dear life.

She holds [her hand (be) onto his jacket] for dear life

(144) Reverend Sykes shuffled some papers, chose one and held it at arm's length

Reverend Sykes holds [it (be) (in his hand)] at arm's length

I acknowledge the possibility of small clauses, but I will forego this analysis; it is so easy to create small clauses in my data that I have come to wonder about their value to offer insight or illuminate distinctions. They make

no real difference; the abstract definition of *hold* can be seen with or without them.

## Chapter 5

## Phrasal Verbs, Heavy Shift, and Prepositional Phrases

As is the case with many primary verbs, *hold* occurs with many particles and prepositions. The *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English: Verbs with Prepositions and Particles (ODCIE)* includes thirty-four entries for the verb *hold*, many of which could be termed phrasal verbs. Viewed traditionally, phrasal verbs are verb and particle combinations that function as semantic units, able to be replaced by a single word of equivalent meaning. Headphrase number one under *hold back* is a typical entry:

hold back<sup>1</sup> [B1i pass] check, restrain; prevent from advancing. S:  
dam; barrier, fence; police, troops. O: river, flood-waters; crowd, mob  
◇ Millions of tons of water are held back by a complex system of dykes.  
◇ The thin cordon of police could do nothing to hold back the crowd;  
they flooded on to the pitch. (157)

This [B1i] designation tells us that *hold back*<sup>1</sup> is a transitive pattern with a particle ([B1]) that is able to take a noun or noun phrase object on either side of the particle ([i]). The [pass] marker indicated that it can appear in passive constructions (xxxiii, xlv). Sample subjects (S:) and objects (O:) are given, along with a definition and sample sentences.

This treatment of *hold back* as a phrasal verb is typical, but some linguists have questioned the composition of phrasal verbs. Emonds (1972) quotes the work of B. Fraser (1968) whose traditional view of phrasal verbs leads to the following usages for post-verbal particles:

(1) As directional adverbs:

John carried the trunk *up*.

John carried *up* the trunk.

Mary threw a box *out*.

Mary threw *out* a box.

They should gather these books *together*.

They should gather *together* these books.

(2) In idiomatic verb-particle combinations:

John will turn that job *down*.

John will turn *down* that job.

His offer really took John *in*.

His offer really took *in* John.

He has taken the government *over*.

He has taken *over* the government.

(3) In completive verb-particle combinations (*up* only):

John fixed a drink *up*.

John fixed *up* a drink.

We painted the house *up*.

We painted *up* the house.

Cut the meat *up*.

Cut *up* the meat. (546)

Emonds, however, argues that these post-verbal particles should be analyzed as prepositions--some transitive, others intransitive (547). Drawing on Emonds' work (1972) and that of Klima (1965), who demonstrated the advantages of reclassifying certain adverbs as intransitive prepositions, Jackendoff (1973) reiterates the need for the intransitive preposition designation by following reasoning (345-348) (his examples, my numbering):

Point 1: There is an identical phonological relationship between some so-called particles, prepositions and adverbs:

- (1) He didn't play the harp {  
 after the first act  
 afterward  
 before Zeppo walked in  
 before  
 inside the hotel  
 inside

Point 2: The analysis of verbs that must have a prepositional phrase, directional adverb, or particle after the direct object (e.g. *put*) is simplified if all three are analyzed as prepositions:

- (2a) Irving put the books {  
 on the shelf  
 there  
 away
- (b) Sheila put the clothes {  
 in the closet  
 inside  
 on

Jackendoff notes that the only real difference between designated "particles" and other directional phrases is, that unlike the other directional phrases, particles can occur before the direct object:

- (3a) Irving put {  
 \*on the shelf  
 \*there  
 away } the books
- (b) Sheila put {  
 \*in the closet  
 \*inside  
 on } the clothes

Point 3: Locational and directional prepositional phrases, adverbs, (many) particles, and some participials can move to the front of a sentence, causing an inversion of the intransitive verb and subject if no auxiliary verbs are present. This analysis is also simplified if the notion of transitive and intransitive prepositions is applied:

(4a) Outside stood three cases of Romanian beer

Downstairs rolled the two screaming dentists

(b) Off came Harpo's fake beard

On trundled the weary heroes

(c) Screaming down the hall ran two celebrated linguists

Buried here lies the producer of *A Night at the Opera*

Jackendoff posits the following rule for prepositional phrases (354):

PP → P (NP) (PP)

Some possible combinations might include:

PP → P:

Bob is *in* now.

PP → P PP:

Earlier, Bob backed the car *out of the driveway*.

PP → P NP:

By accident, he dented *up his neighbor's car*.

PP → P NP PP:

Bob's neighbor called *up Bob's insurance company for the necessary paperwork*.

Favoring transitive/intransitive prepositions over phrasal verbs and particles, I would analyze the ODCIE's sample sentence (128) *The thin cordon of*

*police could do nothing to hold back the crowd* as a verb + transitive preposition. The sentence could also end *do nothing to hold the crowd back* (verb + noun phrase + intransitive preposition). It is, in fact, this second construction that Emonds claims is basic: ". . . the deep structure position of [so-called] particles should be the same as that of other prepositional phrases: they should follow the direct object" (548).

How then do we account for the movement of the direct object after the preposition as in *hold back the crowd*? Yngve (1960) attributes this shift to the limitations of short term memory. Noting that psychologists have estimated the capacity of immediate memory as  $7 \pm 2$  (452), Yngve demonstrates several structures in English that allow new, heavier information to move to the end of the sentence, including the movement of noun phrases after prepositions (464). This has been termed "heavy noun phrase shift." The noun phrase *the crowd* is semantically heavier than the preposition *back*, so the heavy noun phrase shifts to the right of the preposition: *hold back the crowd*.<sup>11</sup> (We cannot, however, generalize this to mean that all intransitive prepositions have a missing or "understood" noun phrase.) As stipulated in semantic guideline (E), I treat all instances of heavy noun phrase shift as unshifted: *hold the crowd back* instead of *hold back the crowd*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Note that the pronoun *it* is semantically not heavy enough for this shift: *She held it back*. \**She held back it*. *She held it up*. \**She held up it*. There are other limits on pronouns. For a more detailed discussion, see Ruhl (*Monosemy* 163-172).

<sup>12</sup> Having claimed that post-verb particles should be analysed as verb + intransitive prepositions, I will continue to use the term *phrasal verb* throughout this paper for ease of a common reference.



## Chapter 6

## Idioms, Phrasal Verbs, and Underdetermination

While the notions of heavy NP shift and intransitive prepositions help to explain the syntax of "phrasal verbs", they shed little light on more pragmatic and semantic concerns: namely, how and why do native English speakers perceive divergent meanings for *hold up* in the following:

(145) The work on I95 has held the traffic up for weeks now.

(146) Two men held the jewelry store on the corner up last night just before closing.

If *hold*'s semantic contribution in these two instances differs, then we would have polysemy, rather than monosemy. Less mysterious, perhaps, but also relevant are (once-pragmatically motivated) sayings: why does *can't hold a candle to him* mean 'not (be able to) match, emulate, somebody, somebody's achievements' (ODCIE 158)? In fixed expressions, if *hold* has no separate contribution apart from other elements, a monosemic conclusion is again unwarranted.

Both of the above questions reflect the larger issue of idioms: any combination of words whose meaning is not readily understandable from the sum of its parts. In the introduction of the *Longman Dictionary of English Idioms*, the editors note the "types of idioms" that are included in their dictionary. These include: traditional idioms such as *spill the beans*; actions that stand for emotions or feelings as in *hang one's head*; pairs of words such as the noun phrase *cats and dogs* in the saying *it was raining cats and dogs*; idioms with *it* found in *live it up* or *snuff it*; allusions such as *catch 22*; sayings as in *a rolling stone gathers no*

*moss*<sup>13</sup>; typical conversational phrases such as *now you're talking*; and similes, which include *dead as a doornail* or *work like a horse* (ix, x). The editors note that phrasal verbs such as *soldier on*, *put up with*, and *make up* have not been included because they are treated in general-language dictionaries and because of a then- (1979) forth-coming book from Longman dedicated solely to phrasal verbs (x). What this diverse assemblage of so-called *idioms* has in common is a more or less fixed word order (at times resistant to syntactic manipulation, as well as substitution) and an overall meaning that is not transparently derived from the individual elements. Frequently, the result of this catch-all *idiom* designation is an escape hatch that offers an alternative to further linguistic inquiry, often reinforcing unconsciously held beliefs about the nature of language. At stake is not the designation of *idiom* but rather what that designation may obscure.

The editors of *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (OCEL) demonstrate the belief that language relating to a concrete referent is non-idiomatic while the same language applied to less concrete referents is idiomatic:

Some expressions are more holophrastic and unanalysable than others: for example, *to take steps* is literal and non-idiomatic in *The baby took her first steps*, is figurative, grammatically open, and semi-idiomatic in *They took some steps to put the matter right*, and is fully idiomatic and grammatically closed in *She took steps to see that was done*. These examples demonstrate a continuum of meaning and use that is true for many usages. (497)

(I believe *She took steps to see that was done* may not be entirely grammatically closed. Other possibilities include *The steps that she took to see*

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<sup>13</sup> Notice that *spill the beans* is a generalization that says in effect, "Do the same thing that you do when you actually spill beans." *Catch 22* and *a rolling stone gathers no moss* are also generalizations. *Hang one's head* is an example of metonymy in which the outward expression stands for an internal feeling or state. Just as hanging one's head can stand for despair, shame, etc., nodding one's head can signify agreement and shaking one's head can indicate disagreement, disbelief, etc.

*that was done were appreciated by her superiors and Her taking steps to see that was done probably saved the whole project.)*

Even while noting a continuum of meaning, the *OCEL* favors the concrete end as reflective of reality and the abstract end as figurative. Uncritically, we believe language is directly representational, with concrete reference; the more abstract examples are viewed as less compositional, more mysterious, and exceptional. In so favoring one end of the concrete-abstract continuum, we forget the inherently arbitrary nature between form and meaning, the verbal sign and its referent.

Green (1989) draws on Kripke (1972) and Putnam's (1973) work with names of people (*Aristotle*) and natural classes (*water, tigers*) to remind us that the term *semantics* can refer to the relationships within language (*sense*) and the relationship between language and the world (*reference*). Words denoting reference (nomenclature) have little if any intralinguistic sense but are highly referential. Green writes:

. . . [I]t is important not to confuse the analysis of the name of a kind such as *fish* or *water*, with analysis of the kind itself, or with people's knowledge, beliefs, or understandings about that kind. The first is part of the study of language (specifically, semantics or pragmatics); the second belongs to biology, chemistry, mechanical engineering, or whatever; and the last is part of cognitive psychology. . . . It is as nonsensical to do a semantic analysis of the word *horse* as it would be to do one of *Fred* or *Panasonic*, even though inferences, including inferences of relations among sets referred to, may be derivable from the USE of the term, for the inferences are about the sets, not about the words. (43)

The favoring of the highly concrete is a result of our confusing sense and reference; the relationships, interdependencies, motivations and effects of sense are much less apparent and accessible than is the understanding of reference.

The *OCEL* continues its explanation of idioms and the continuum of meaning:

No such continuum [of meaning] exists, however, between *He kicked the bucket out of the way* and *He kicked the bucket last night* (meaning 'He died last night'). Such idioms are particularly rigid: for example, they cannot usually be passivized (no *\*The bucket was kicked*) or otherwise adapted (no *\*bucket-kicking* as a synonym for *death*). (497)

While I agree that we do not usually passivize *kick the bucket*, it would not stretch the imagination too much to envision one physician saying to another after a hectic shift in the emergency room, "Man, it was crazy tonight, but at least there weren't any buckets kicked." Similarly, with *bucket-kicking*, one can imagine a gun-toting, action-movie figure popularizing an expression such as, "There's gonna be a whole lot of bucket-kicking goin' on 'round here tonight!" In both instances, the interpretation 'die' would still remain. The point is, *the bucket was kicked* and *bucket-kicking* may seem odd when printed on the page, devoid of any meaningful context, but people actually take more liberties with idioms than we might initially think, as witnessed by the following creative adaptations and spliced idioms printed in the *OCEL*:

A female needs an area which will provide enough food and denning sites for raising kittens, even in a year when food is in short supply. On the other paw, a male has a very much larger home range. . . . [*on the other hand*→*on the other paw*]

The Senate committee is also investigating charges that the Mafia had infiltrated the tribal bingo games in 12 of the 90 Indian reservations in

America and skimmed \$700,000 a year of the bingo profits. But this was just the tip of the teepee. [*tip of the iceberg*→*tip of the teepee*]<sup>14</sup>  
 "That seems an interesting step to go down." [*step to take + road to go down*]  
 "He stuck his ground." [*stuck to his guns + stood his ground*]  
 "Bush did lance the bubble of damaging speculation." [*lance the boil + burst the bubble*] (498)

The *OCEL*'s sample *He kicked the bucket last night* ('died'), were we forced to view it as a figurative extension of something like *He kicked the bucket out of the way*, would be curious indeed. Be *he kicked the bucket* may very well have a pragmatically motivated origin, as Charles Ruhl explains in *On Monosemy*:

The word *bucket*, according to scholarly consensus, once designated a kind of wood; it changed meaning by metonymic specialization: Material to Object-made-with-material (which also has occasioned new meanings of *straw*, *iron*, and *glass*). Buckets need no longer be made of wood (thus, the second sense has generalized) and *bucket* has lost the first sense. *Bucket* at one time could also mean (by another metonymic specialization) 'beam of wood'; a parallel expression, *kick the beam*, also meant 'die'. The best evidence for motivation (not necessarily correct) is that pigs being slaughtered, suspended by their hind legs from a beam of wood, would as an automatic nervous reflex kick the beam when they were killed. Thus, *kick the bucket* 'die' is a phrasal example of metonymy, exemplifying the pattern Cause for Effect. (66)

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<sup>14</sup> In expressions such as *on the other hand* and *tip of the iceberg*, it seems that *hand* and *iceberg* are the more "idiomatic" elements rather than the whole phrases, since we can make substitutions such as *on the contrary* and *tip of the scandal*.

If *kick the bucket* was indeed motivated by pigs at slaughter reflexively kicking a beam made of bucket wood, then we need not find any connection between *bucket* 'pail' and the *bucket* of this phrase.

And so we see that some idioms may be pragmatically motivated, with the original connection so obscure as to no longer be identified with the meaning. Not only are some of these idioms motivated, but some of them are also productive. Ruhl goes on to note that the use of *kick* appears in other expressions that also mean 'die' (Ruhl's numbering) :

- [1] "Maybe she's just afraid I'm going to *kick off* before it's time to pay the kids' college tuition."
- [2] He *kicked in* after a long and painful illness.
- [3] "Isn't your father going to dump the lot on the Daltons when he *kicks it*?"
- [4] "I wanna make a will before I *kick*." (67)

This data begs a few questions: If a designated idiom is both motivated and productive, is it still an idiom? Does being able to substitute a single synonym for a phrase indicate an idiom? (*To kill a well-known public figure* can be replaced by *to assassinate*, but we do not claim this as an idiom.) Is having a fixed form enough of a criterion to designate an idiom? If an expression becomes frozen, grammatically fixed, are its individual elements necessarily contributing something different from their contributions in non-idiomatic usages? Is the inability to appear in the passive voice or other grammatical configurations an appropriate litmus test for idiom-ness? Does this make for less than normal syntax? And if the meaning of an expression no longer seems compositional due to changes in the real world, should we automatically dub it an idiom?

Again, the problem is not the designation *idiom* so much as it is what that designation both presumes (unquestioned polysemy) and prohibits (further inquiry). Although various *hold* phrases are often listed as idioms, I believe that

*hold* contributes to its set phrases that which it contributes in all of its contexts.

The following sentences are from various idiom dictionaries<sup>15</sup>:

(147) Our club holds a meeting to talk about future projects. (*NTC's English Idioms Dictionary* 150)

*Hold a meeting* is often cited as a separate sense. We must first have an assemblage of people for a meeting to take place. This is the presumed sequence.

(Because of modern technology, this may take place over a fiber optics line.)

*Hold* simply suspends this sequence so that the meeting together of people continues until it doesn't continue any longer.

(148) He holds all the cards.

Many idioms are motivated by pragmatic understanding. In (148), we understand the meaning 'to be in a favourable position; to be in a controlling position' (*NTC's English Idioms Dictionary* 150) because of our knowledge of cards and card games.

Other examples from the *NTC* include:

(149) The guide holds forth about the city.

(150) [You] hold it, Tom! You're going the wrong way.

(151) I hold no brief for people who cheat the company.

(152) You hold your breath when you dive into the water.

(153) The soldiers hold their fire.

(154) Now, now, [you] hold your fire until I've had a chance to explain.

We understand (154) to mean 'to postpone one's criticism or commentary' (*NTC* 150) because we understand 'to refrain from shooting (a gun, etc.)' in example (153). The metaphor of argument as war is well known: *We battled all*

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<sup>15</sup> I have changed the verbs to the simple present tense. I have not included the verb + preposition (phrasal verbs) sentences with these examples because we will examine them later in the chapter.

*afternoon over whether or not to cut spending; I felt like he attacked my position without hearing me out, etc.*

(155) I hold my own in a foot-race any day.

(156) Jim holds his own after the accident, but he dies suddenly.

(157) Quiet, John. [You] hold your peace for a little while longer.

(158) I feel like scolding her, but I hold my tongue.

(159) I hold the olive branch out to [people] I have hurt. Life is too short for a person to bear grudges very long.

In (159), it is our understanding of *olive branches* (not *hold*) creates the offer of reconciliation.

(160) I hold you accountable for John's well-being.

(161) You should open the shop at eight o'clock and hold the fort until I get there at ten o'clock.

Old Western movies help to motivate our understanding of (161).

(162) Yes, it [this rule] holds true no matter what.

(163) Jack's story holds no water. It sounds too unlikely.

Funk (1993) claims that in example (163):

The literal sense, such as applied to a sound pitcher or bowl, gradually acquired in the early seventeenth century a figurative meaning, as if testing a pitcher for soundness by filling it with water—if unsound, the water would leak out. Thus, figuratively, an unsound argument or fallacious reasoning would not "hold water" if it failed to stand a test.

(38)

(164) Don't get so angry. [You] just hold your horses!

Example (164) might be productive. We also have:

(165) [You] hold your wheels a minute, would you!



(166) [You] hold your heels just one second there, Bub.

From the *NTC 's Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs and Other Idiomatic Verbal Phrases* (359), we have:

(167) I hold the attacker at bay while Mary runs away and calls the police.

Funk (1993) suggests that the stimulus for (167) *hold at bay* comes "from the French phrase, *tenir à bay*, which really means 'to hold in a state of suspense or inaction; to hold in abeyance' or, literally, 'to hold agape' "(188).

*Can't hold a candle to* is often cited as an idiom. Funk (1993) informs us that the meaning was probably pragmatically motivated when it first gained currency. He writes:

The development of this present-day simile came somewhat gradually from an ordinary custom of the sixteenth century and later. Because of poorly lighted streets it was customary for a servitor with a lighted candle to accompany his master when on foot. It was a menial service, one that required not training nor skill, nothing more than familiarity with the way. One who did not know the road was, literally, not fit to or not worthy to hold a candle to a superior. But by the eighteenth century, the sense of worthiness or of comparative ability had become the intent of the phrase. . . . (86)

While pragmatically motivated expressions do not seem to challenge *hold 's* monosemic status, what of sentences (145) and (146) from the beginning of the chapter: *The work on I95 has held the traffic up for weeks now* and *Two men held the jewelry store on the corner up last night just before closing?* These "phrasal verbs" are also routinely granted idiom status. The *OED* notes that the phrasal verb *hold up*, meaning 'rob', comes "[f]rom the robbers' practice of

commanding their victims to hold up their hands on pain of being shot" (300).<sup>16</sup>

The *OED* gives the following sample sentence:

(168) Four men. . . ordering the President. . . and the clerks to hold up their hands under threats of death, seized a sum of 2,500 dollars.

In this sentence, the meaning 'rob' from *hold up their hands under threats of death* is pragmatically assigned. *Hold* presupposes the sequence of putting hands up into the air and signals a cessation of further sequence. Holding hands up is more general than being robbed; that is, it has a much broader application. *Hold up* 'rob' is a specialization of having hands up in the air. In sentences such as *The gunmen held the people up*, we have a metonymic substitution from part to whole: the word *hands* is replaced by *people*. In sentences like (146), *Two men held the jewelry store on the corner up*, we no longer have a direct reference to people nor their hands. Again, we have a case of metonymic specialization, Place to People, with *the jewelry store* referring to the people in the store.<sup>17</sup>

In chapter 5, I outlined Emonds and Jackendoff's reasons for looking at the phrasal verb as a verb + (intransitive) preposition construction. I have continued to use the term *phrasal verb*, but I believe the transitive/intransitive preposition analysis has more to offer native speakers. For one thing, it encourages us to look again at the semantic nature of prepositions. How do prepositions and main verbs interact, creating the meanings that they do? How is it that we understand sentence (145) *The work on I95 has held the traffic up for weeks now* to mean that traffic has been slow going on I95?

These questions originate from the notion that language is a closed intralinguistic system, with compositionality being impervious to pragmatics. But in our earlier idiom analysis we noted that sometimes meaning is nonlexical,

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<sup>16</sup> Another phrase for this practice is *stick-up*. Interestingly, robbers can announce *This is a hold-up* or *This is a stick-up*, but while *They were held up* occurs frequently, *?They were stuck up* is questionable.

<sup>17</sup> This is not uncommon: *The White House had no comment on the matter*.

compositional only when we consider pragmatic knowledge. Understanding (169) *The Diamond Detectives hold their hand. All goes well, and de Graaf is on his way to the bus with a fortune in his pockets when the detectives pounce* (ODCIE, vol.2 286) depends upon a pragmatic understanding that to *hold their hand* entails doing nothing overtly.

Also at work is the belief we witnessed earlier in the chapter in the OCEL's treatment of idioms: language applied to a concrete referent is non-idiomatic while the same language applied to less concrete referents is idiomatic. Certainly, if we view the meaning of *up* as being a concrete directional marker in a one-to-one contrast with *down*, the notion of slowing forward movement in (145) *hold traffic up* becomes enigmatic.<sup>18</sup> It is, however, conceivable that the nature of prepositions is highly abstract and possibly monosemic rather than concrete and inherently polysemous. This view of prepositions rests on the belief that language is underdetermined; that is, words contribute less than is usually thought. As noted in chapter one, even with a minimally explicit context, such as the word *map* written on a chalkboard, the mind supplies pragmatic information.

Ruhl (1989) writes about the underdetermination of language:

. . . *the general condition of all language use is underdetermination.* . . .

As we consciously attempt to understand what is lexicalized, we always see more than what the words contribute. If we have been trained to believe (and we have) that most of what we understand is conveyed by the words, then we naturally load those words with too much meaning. There are a sufficient number of "fully generated" expressions (like *eat the cookie, wash the car*) that seem to fully "mirror the reality" (though they don't). These confirm us in the belief that full linguistic compositionality is not only possible, but even the (desirable)

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<sup>18</sup> I believe that in the case of *hold traffic up*, *up* simply contributes a completive sense to *hold*.

norm. Further, when we do acknowledge underdetermination, we are too confident in our ability to determine what has been omitted. . . .

(80,81)

As an example, Ruhl offers Gleitman and Gleitman's observation that the compound *mailman* underdetermines its meaning even though it is both motivated and understandable. Although its semantic contribution is " 'man-[some indefinite verbal relationship]-mail' ", we are left to supply the knowledge that the mailman, who just might be a woman, brings the mail (Ruhl 80). Pragmatically speaking, we also know that the regular mailman doesn't deliver overnight express mail, doesn't deliver mail on Sundays nor holidays, dislikes menacing dogs, won't be deterred by rain nor sleet, etc. By contrast, the fireman doesn't bring fire, but rather puts it out, even on Sundays and holidays. Of course, the policeman neither delivers police nor puts police out, but rather has been hired to police the citizenry.

Ruhl claims this underdetermination applies to prepositions, as well:

A major barrier to understanding prepositions has been the belief that concrete senses are more basic than abstract senses. To make matters worse, this contrast is usually additionally defined as literal versus metaphoric. . . . Thus, for prepositions the "directional" senses. . . [*He walked in the door, The dog jumped on the table, etc.*] are considered basic, while the "aspectual" senses. . . [*He walked in, The dog jumped on, etc.*] seem mysterious, arbitrary, and idiomatic. (168)

Ruhl has formulated a concretion condition that applies to words which are not lexically determined along the concrete-abstract continuum. It states, "The degree of concretion will be computed pragmatically, appropriate to the apparent message and references being conveyed" (29). Applying this concretion

condition, Ruhl essentially reverses the usual concrete-to-abstract direction of semantic inquiry. He writes:

According to my Concretion Condition, the most abstract sense is the inherent sense; pragmatic modulations make prepositions concrete. If we consider the "aspectual" meanings basic, we can explain their apparent arbitrary nature: they are the meanings of highly general words, whose mutual contrasts are unconscious. Within specified domains like "direction", however, they are interpreted more specifically, so their contrasts are more understandable consciously. (168)

I have repeatedly claimed that *hold*'s semantic contribution in all contexts is to presuppose a sequence and then suspend that sequence. To find similarly abstract meanings of various prepositions would be quite an undertaking, requiring a very large database. This is, of course, beyond the scope of my research on *hold*. I do hope, however, to show in my treatment of *hold* + preposition combinations that concretion may indeed be pragmatically computed, just as Ruhl's concretion condition claims.

## Chapter 7

*Up and Down*

Although I make no attempt to solve the inherent mysteries of prepositions, in chapters 7 and 8, we will see that prepositional phrases do not change the semantic contribution of *hold*.

As we saw in chapter 6, Ruhl's concretion condition proposes that prepositions are highly abstract by nature. This theory seems more obvious with words such as *the*, whose meaning is so abstract that its semantics collapses into syntax, leaving us with little more than a syntactic marker. This is possible based on Ruhl's syntax-semantics-pragmatics continuum. On this continuum, if we define the word *abstract* as 'closed', we can view syntax as the most abstract, closed class, with fewer categories and reduced variation. Semantics is less abstract and has more distinction. Pragmatics is the most open and concrete, offering infinite distinction. Semantics keeps us inside the language; pragmatics links the language (and hence its user) to reality, even when that reality is a construction of the human mind.

It is possible that the meanings of the closed class of prepositions are so abstract as to be largely or wholly syntactic, with concrete and intermediate senses achieved through pragmatics. While not able to offer any conclusion about the nature of individual prepositions, I do feel confident in claiming that prepositions are, if not monosemic, at least not as polysemous as we have believed. Just as *hold*'s limited and unified semantic contribution allows for infinite variation, perhaps the abstract nature of prepositions allows them to

participate in an array of sentences, absorbing meaning from context. Although I believe prepositions to be highly abstract, I have nonetheless divided the sample sentences under the headings of *directional*, *intermediate*, and *non-directional*. I chose this organization because it allows us to best explore contributing factors to the concrete and abstract interpretations.

Consider the data on *hold up*:

Directional in space:

- (170) She holds the window up while I prop it open.
- (171) A club member holds his walking stick up.
- (172) [You] hold your right hand up and repeat these words after me.
- (173) A belt holds my husband's trousers up.
- (174) It's as if a weak string holds his head up.
- (175) His uniform holds his shoulders up.
- (176) Four great pillars of Jasper . . . hold the back of this altar up.

These directional sentences depend on the positioner and the direct object being concrete; (173) through (176) demonstrate that the positioner need not be human.

A syntactic alternative is to add a PP:

Direction in space with second PP:

- (177) Archie holds the airplane up during bad weather.
- (178) The Alert holds her head up with a ship twice her size.

In the following intermediate sentences, *up* is sometimes used with epitomes, models, or ideals.

Intermediate *up*:

- (179) You hold your manship up.
- (180) His strength holds [itself] up.

(181) Our stores hold [themselves, their profits] up well.

(182) Gold holds its price up.

Intermediate *up* with second PP or *as*:

(183) She holds [herself] up for the sake of the kids.

(184) The charges hold [themselves] up in court.

(185) She holds her daughter up as an example to her son.

(186) Friends hold Wesleys and Oberlins, Saints and Prophets up to your emulation.

(187) He holds a model of life-long learning up to his students.

(188) So then she just holds him up to ridicule.

(189) He held the Government up to hatred and contempt.

In (187), she is holding her daughter up to her son as the epitome of some desirable quality. In (188) and (189) we do not hold the positioner up as a reminder of an ideal, but rather to expose the positioner to something negative, *ridicule, hatred, and contempt*.

In (184) the fact that the charges hold up means they remain, they hold true, and they are intact. It is possible that this is an example of the completitive *up*, or perhaps we have *up* contributing a sense of something being settled, such as when we decide to *put up with a relationship* or when we *put preserves up*. We would need to look at more data to see if *up*, like *down*, can sometimes contribute to a sense of settledness.

*Up* is often used non-directionally:

Non-directional:

(190) Her carousing holds her husband's military career up.

(191) A cow holds her milk up.

(192) An accident holds the traffic up.

(193) The weather holds [itself, good conditions] up.



Example (191) might be better analyzed at directional *up*.

In numbers (190) through (193), *up* does not have a one-to-one directional relationship with *down*, but rather imparts emphasis or completeness. If we contrast number (192) *An accident holds the traffic up* with

(194) An accident holds the traffic back,

we note that *hold traffic back* imparts more of a sense of the traffic's straining.

This is supplied by the word *back* combined with our knowledge that traffic always wants to move forward. In *hold traffic up*, the sense of forward strain is somewhat lessened because *up* has a one-to-zero contrast here, merely serving to emphasize the suspension of sequence that *hold* signals. We can further weaken this sense of strain with

(195) An accident holds the traffic at a complete standstill.

In (193) we do not know whether this suspension of weather is good or not. It could follow that

(196) If this weather holds up, we won't be able to golf this afternoon

or

(197) If this weather holds up, we should go ahead and put in the garden.

In the following data, we see that *up* and *down* are antonyms:

Direction in space:

(198) So, in this dream, he holds me down; and I just scream and scream.

(199) The heavy beam holds him down, and he cannot rise.

(200) The paperweight holds the papers down.

Direction in space with second PP:

(201) The hunter holds the animal down until the porters arrive.

(202) With his big boot, he holds this other guy's face down on the ground.

In sentence (198) one person holds down another. The verb *hold* presupposes that one person has overtaken another, and the sequence is there

suspended. The notion of *down* 'direction in space' is supplied by our knowledge of people and their possible interactions and effects on one another. We can see in sentence (198) how automatically our minds provide the missing details. For instance, we assume he is intentionally holding her down. But if we change (198) to read *So, in this dream, the waves hold me down; and I just scream and scream*, our pragmatic knowledge changes the idea of intention for us. Notice that in (200) we assign no intention to the paperweight and no active resistance or struggle on the part of the papers.

Beginning with (203) we have direction on a relative scale. The word *down* hasn't changed, but the direct objects have become less concrete. We can hold weight (203), volume (204), and prices (207) down because the measurement of weight is calibrated on a linear scale using numbers, amplitude is also measured on a man-made scale, and prices fluctuate higher or lower. *Up* and *down* also have a contrastive relationship in the following examples:

Direction on a relative scale:

(203) She holds her weight down.

(204) They hold the volume down.

(205) The cruel rule of the former king holds the whole nation down.

(206) We hold the student intake down because of the cuts in the grants

(207) A surplus of oil holds the prices down.

(208) Birth control pills hold acne down.

(209) Fears of extremism and tickets priced between \$150 and \$350 each hold attendance down.

Direction on a relative scale with second PP:

(210) Men hold the truth down in uprightousness.

(211) A disability holds me down in life.

(212) The fellow who's got the right stuff in him holds his own place down with

one hand.

Although the non-directional examples of *up* were unrelated to *down*, the non-directional *down* sentences may be related to *up*. Note the following data:

Non-directional:

(213) She holds two jobs down.

(214) Some friends hold his grocery business down while he is sick.

(215) Lange holds third base down.

Sentence (213) relies on the belief that things that are close to earth are more settled and stable while things that are up in the air are less stable: *She has both feet on the ground* versus *Our plans are still up in the air*. Merely by noting that jobs are being held down, we are able to conjure up the threat of loss of stability and therefore imply struggle.

Throughout these examples we see that real world knowledge influences our semantic interpretation of *up* and *down*. Prepositions are complex, and much remains to be investigated, but we see that *hold*'s semantic contribution is unchanged throughout these example sentences.

## Chapter 8

*On, To, On to, and Onto*

In the last chapter we noted that *hold* and the prepositions *down* and *up* functioned throughout an abstract-to-concrete range. *Hold* and *down* in (199) *The heavy beam holds him down* are more concrete than in (213) *She holds two jobs down*. The degree of concretion seems to be modulated by pragmatic knowledge just as Ruhl's concretion condition claims.

Ruhl (1989) also proposes a movement condition that states, "The relevance, degree, direction, rate, and specific means of movement are computed pragmatically, appropriate to the apparent message and references being conveyed. Movement is both concrete and abstract" (35).

*To* can sometimes indicate movement towards a goal:

(216) [You] hold the brake pads to the rim.

(217) I hold you to that promise.

*To* here seems to suggest an appropriate means of movement, direction, rate, etc., based on and regulated by our real-world understanding of brake pads, rims, people and promises, just as Ruhl's movement condition suggests.

Even though *hold* is a verb of "rest" many of the *hold* + preposition sentences suggest movement as in:

(218) She holds [her hand] to the railing to keep from falling on the ice.

In the following sentence, just as with (218) above, we seem to have movement towards a concrete goal:

(219) With all her might, she holds [her hands] onto the fishing pole that arches

under the weight of the struggle,

But, in fact, this movement occurred prior to the *hold* sentence. When she first reached for and grabbed the fishing pole, there was movement towards a goal.

The *hold* sentence presupposes this sequence of movement and suspends it.

Because *hold* is a stance verb, its prepositions actually initiate no new movement.

A few *on* sentences include:

(220) I would have had an awful job handling an empty airplane, but that eight hundred pounds of cement holds me on the field.

(221) [You] hold [yourself] on [the line]; I'll get her for you.

(222) They hold a referendum on next Tuesday.

(223) Twenty Klan members hold a recruitment rally on the steps of the Civil War-era building.

(224) Someone holds him on the animal.

*On* can indicate time (222) and location (223), as well as reason (218). *On* is often intransitive:

(225) He holds [himself] on by his eyelids.

For (221) and (225), I have provided a reflexive object that is unnecessary yet understood. We get very different senses of *on* from (224) *hold him on the animal*, (223) *hold a recruitment rally on the steps*, and (222) *hold a referendum on Tuesday*. We see meaning pragmatically modulated by our understanding of animals, rallies, people, steps, referendums, and Tuesdays.

There is a range of *to* data, with both concrete and abstract positioners and objects:

(226) He holds a radio to her ear, as though the years they spent avoiding each other had been no more than a few weeks.

(227) My feet hold me to the earth.

(228) He holds his nose to the grindstone.

- (229) I hold a candle to my shame.
- (230) No one can serve two masters; for either he hates the one and loves the other, or he holds to one and despises the other.
- (231) Liberal big spenders hold themselves to a 4 percent increase each year.
- (232) You hold to your original story because it sounds so much better.
- (233) You hold him to his word.
- (234) The international community holds Guatemala and El Salvador to similar standards.
- (235) She holds people to the language.
- (236) Guilt holds you to old patterns.

In (226) *hold a radio to her ear* we get the feeling of movement towards her ear. However, the movement is presupposed.

The reflexive object is often omitted with *on to*:

- (237) Mom holds [her hands, herself] on to Dad's arm.
- (238) I hold [my hands] on to the handles.
- (239) She holds [herself] on to herself.
- (240) Saddam Hussein holds [himself, his influence] on to Warba and Bubiyan islands.
- (241) Gorby holds [himself] on to his day job.
- (242) [You] hold [yourself] on to your convictions.
- (243) I hold [myself] on to my visceral indifference.
- (244) You hold [yourself] on to your pocketbook.

Although I have added reflexive objects, my definition of *hold* does not necessitate an object. And in fact, there is good reason to omit this object, according to Dixon (1991) who claims that the appearance of a preposition after

the verb changes the focus of the sentence. Using the verb *hold* as an example, he writes:

The canonical sense focuses on the affect the activity has on an object, e.g. *John held the pig (then it couldn't run away)*. If the subject clutches something so as to affect himself—e.g. *John held onto the post (so that he wouldn't be blown off his feet by the gale)*—then a preposition is inserted, marking the fact that the actual identity of the object is of peripheral interest, and that it is not affected by the action.

In summary, a preposition can be inserted before the object NP of a transitive verb to indicate that the emphasis is not on the effect of the activity on some specific object (the normal situation) but rather on the subject's engaging in the activity. (279,280)

A few *onto* examples include:

(245) I hold onto his parka.

(246) [I] hold onto a string of dogs.

(247) All of these women hold onto skills and relationship.

(248) We hold onto last year's numbers.

(249) I hold onto the sides of my stomach as we hit one bump after another.

(250) You hold onto that (hypothesis).

The sense of movement is greater in (245) than in the rest of the *onto* sentences. With the stereotypical 'grasp' sentences, we can envision someone reaching out and grabbing something.

The data in chapters 7 and 8 support Ruhl's concretion and movement conditions. We see that the notion of concrete or abstract is assigned to *hold* often based on pragmatic understanding once we have factored in the concreteness or abstractness of the positioners and objects. Prepositions, too,

seem more or less concrete based on our real-world understanding of the context. We also see that any movement assigned to *hold* is a function of presupposing a sequence.



## Chapter 9

## Conclusion

Further research is needed to determine *hold*'s semantic field. *Hold* is a hyponym of *have*; *keep* seems to be a hyponym of *hold*. *Take* and *get* also seem related. The *-tain* words have the following (historical) relationship to *hold*:

<i>attain</i>	=	'hold to'
<i>contain</i>	=	'hold with/together'
<i>retain</i>	=	'hold back/in'
<i>maintain</i>	=	'hold [with] hand'
<i>sustain</i>	=	'hold under/up, onward'
<i>detain</i>	=	'hold from'
<i>abstain</i>	=	'hold away'
<i>obtain</i>	=	'hold toward'
<i>pertain</i>	=	'hold through'
<i>entertain</i>	=	'hold among'

The Latin *-ten* 'to cause to continue; endure; hold on to' (*AHD* 2129) has several derivatives: *tend*, *tendon*, *attend*, *contend*, *extend*, *intend*, *pretend*, *tenacious*, *tenant*, *tenure*, and *continue*.

While this study is by no means exhaustive, I believe there is strong evidence to suggest a monosemic conclusion for *hold*. Perhaps making a monosemic determination is difficult after years of expecting and finding polysemy. After all, Ruhl's (1989) premise that our first hypothesis should be a single meaning for a word until proven otherwise reverses the standard approach to assigning meaning. His concretion and movement conditions further challenge long-standing assumptions about the polysemous nature of verbs and prepositions,

but they allow us to reverse the semantic overloading that was seen in the sample definitions of *hold* in chapter one.

As diverse as the contexts of *hold* are, a semantic unity remains constant throughout. Not unlike the progressive aspect, *hold* marks the suspension of a presupposed sequence for a time, the length of which can range from a second (*She held the hot cup only a second before dropping it on the floor*) to a lifetime (*She held his memory dear for the rest of her life*). I believe that the suspension of sequence that *hold* signals is temporary, although I do not claim this as part of its meaning.

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## Abbreviation Key

This is a key to the parenthetical sources for the actual sentence given in appendix A. The complete bibliographic information for each listing can be found under the author's name in the Works Cited in Data section.

<i>A</i>	<i>The Alchemist</i> , Paulo Coelho
<i>AD</i>	<i>Alligator Dance</i> , Janet Perry
<i>AF</i>	<i>Absent Friends</i> , Frederick Busch
<i>AHD</i>	<i>American Heritage Dictionary</i> , Third Edition
<i>AS</i>	<i>Among Schoolchildren</i> , Tracy Kidder
<i>B</i>	<i>Bartlett's Familiar Quotations</i>
<i>Bic</i>	<i>Bicycling Magazine</i>
<i>BL</i>	<i>Boy's Life</i> , Robert McCammon
<i>C</i>	<i>Cosmopolitan Magazine</i>
<i>CAL</i>	<i>Composing a Life</i> , Mary Catherine Bateson
<i>CM</i>	<i>A Course in Miracles</i> , Helen Schucman
<i>CPD</i>	<i>The Cleveland Plain Dealer</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>The Canton Repository</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>A Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principle</i> , Mitford Mathews
<i>DBDJ</i>	<i>Dave Barry Does Japan</i> , Dave Barry
<i>DG</i>	<i>Delcorso's Gallery</i> , Philip Caputo
<i>DN</i>	<i>Daily News Record</i>
<i>EB</i>	<i>Ebony Magazine</i>



<i>ES</i>	<i>Essence Magazine</i>
<i>G&amp;D</i>	<i>Gifts and Decorative Accessories</i>
<i>GL</i>	<i>Great Literature</i>
<i>HF</i>	<i>The Weekly Home Furnishings Newspaper</i>
<i>II</i>	<i>A Desk-Book of Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases in English Speech and Literature, Frank Vizetelly</i>
<i>KGW</i>	<i>The Kitchen God's Wife, Amy Tan</i>
<i>KM</i>	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee</i>
<i>KW</i>	<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou</i>
<i>L</i>	<i>Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
<i>NAEG</i>	<i>A New Approach to English Grammar, R. M. W. Dixon</i>
<i>NASB</i>	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
<i>NC</i>	<i>There Are No Children Here, Alex Kotlowitz</i>
<i>NS</i>	<i>Native Speaker</i>
<i>NTC</i>	<i>NTC's English Idioms Dictionary, Richard Spears and Betty Kirkpatrick</i>
<i>NTCPV</i>	<i>NTC's Phrasal Verbs and Other Idiomatic Verbal Phrases, Richard Spears</i>
<i>ODCIE</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, A. P. Cowie and R. Mackin</i>
<i>ODCIEv2</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, Volume 2: Phrase, Clause &amp; Sentence Idioms, A. P. Cowie, R. Mackin, and I. R. McCraig</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition</i>
<i>PSJ</i>	<i>Possessing the Secret of Joy, Alice Walker</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>A River Runs Through It, Norman Maclean</i>
<i>SGEL</i>	<i>A Student's Grammar of the English Language, Sidney Greenbaum and Randolph Buirk</i>
<i>US</i>	<i>The U.S. News and World Report</i>

- V-P* "Verb-Preposition Constructions and Small Clauses  
in English", Bas Aarts
- VPLS* *The Virginian Pilot-Ledger Star*
- W3:* *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*
- WER* *Whole Earth Review*
- WF* *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, Janet Burroway
- WKW* *Working Woman Magazine*
- WW* *Wild Women: Contemporary Short Stories by Women  
Celebrating Women*, Sue Thomas, ed.

## Appendix A

## Actual Sentences

- (1) held the reins tightly (*AHD*)
- (2) held the hose on the fire (*AHD*)
- (3) The swimmer couldn't hold her breath any longer. (*AHD*)
- (4) The dam held the flood waters. (*AHD*)
- (5) The doctrine holds that people are inherently good. (*AHD*)
- (6) Can the baby hold herself up yet? (*AHD*)
- (7) The defense held. (*AHD*)
- (8) The ship held to a southwesterly course. (*AHD*)
- (9) The hijacker was holding the revolver. (*SGEL*)
- (10) John grabbed/picked up the axe (and then held it tightly). (*NAEG 101*)
- (11) Exactly how many more police can prevent a boy from losing hold of his life--simply because he wanted to hold a candy bar? (*CPD 1/21/94*)
- (12) "They held their half-full champagne glasses." (*NS*)
- (13) We stood together, me holding the lamp, a small pinewood island beneath our feet. (*BL 102*)
- (14) He was holding a chunk of wood, its bark bleached and dried, mollusks still gripping its surface. (*BL 82*)
- (15) Jem was carrying my ham costume, rather awkwardly, as it was hard to hold. (*KM 257*)
- (16) She wore a white skirt and yellow sweater and a thin gold necklace, which she held in her fingers, as if holding her own reins, while waiting for children to answer. (*AS 1*)
- (17) "So there this wacko Tanya Harding is holding flowers and a stuffed animal like she's all sweet or something." (*NS*)

- (18) Berry Tamura, 74, remembers three old men who attended every game at Manzanar and bet so much money that none trusted either of the others to keep the cash, so every inning, a different member of the trio would hold the stakes. (*WER*, Winter '90 36)
- (19) "When I walked in her room, my mom was just holding it (brooch) in her palm, turning it over and over, but she wasn't crying or anything." (NS)
- (20) "I can always know when he's nervous because he holds the pencil between his fingers, and he threads it all through them." (NS)
- (21) John carried/held the banana in/with his hand/teeth. (*NAEG* 100)
- (22) Yet the least drop of Spanish blood, if it be only of quadroon or octoroon, is sufficient to raise them from the rank of slaves, and entitle them to a suit of clothes--boots, hat, cloak, spurs, long knife, and all complete, though coarse and dirty as may be--and to call themselves Espanolos, and to hold property. . . . (*GL*)
- (23) "I think the article said that the Bosnian government holds only like 50 heavy weapons or something." (NS)
- (24) "The way we go at it, it's kind of like troops trying to hold a bunker or something." (NS)
- (25) During the three-month cease-fire agreement, the troops held the bunker without incident. (NS)
- (26) We had escaped the Branlins for now, but Gotha and Gordo held grudges. (*BL* 174)
- (27) Mbatl subsides into silence, but looks me in the face and holds my gaze. (*PSJ* 161)
- (28) If I didn't know the words he wanted, I knew their meaning, but I held my silence. (*AD* 66)
- (29) Pye Tee shifted on the couch, started to disagree, but changed her mind and held her peace. (*AD* 191)
- (30) "You always try to hold the good and let the others go right by you." (NS)
- (31) "He holds those two conflicting beliefs and I think it's going to tear him apart; you can't live with that much conflict." (NS)
- (32) "I didn't hold the blame, if you ask me." (NS)
- (33) The people of Kyoto themselves now hold the answer to the question Professor Hall posed two decades ago: "Is not Kyoto ultimately doomed, like so much of traditional life, to be by-passed or to succumb to the glacial advance of a homogenous international style?" (*WER* Winter '90, p. 64)

- (34) "Why don't you two go and hold your arguments somewhere else; I'm truly sick of it." (NS)
- (35) "I just read the paper and the Flashes now hold the longest losing streak ever." (NS)
- (36) . . . the captain should immediately hold an auction of his things. . . . (GL)
- (37) "Democratic and Republican leaders hold periodic formal debates, but no one will watch them." (NS)
- (38) "I know what we could have done; we could have held a big rally and burned all the Bert and Ernie dolls." (NS)
- (39) "It was 100 degrees, and on a game day, I needed to take a rest, but they would hold a meeting; they were trying to tire me out." (*WER*, Winter '90, p. 36)
- (40) "They held all these workshops on sexual harassment and abuse and women's legal rights and stuff like that." (NS)
- (41) The English mind turns every abstraction it can receive into a portable utensil, or a working institution, such is their tenacity, and such their practical turn, that they hold all they gain. (GL)
- (42) "You should invest 70 percent and hold the other 30 percent for a rainy day." (NS)
- (43) Critics also charge that the Japanese tend to equate the bombing of Hiroshima with the attack on Pearl Harbor, the two events canceling each other out, leaving neither side holding the moral high ground. (*DBDJ* 175)
- (44) She just sits and talks; holds court. It hardly matters what she says. (*PSJ* 154)
- (45) "My God, she's so smart I bet she holds a bachelor's and two master's, you know." (NS)
- (46) He holds two concepts, which may be in conflict: one is his world view, his sense of the way the world is; the other is his sense of morality, the way the world ought to be. (*WF* 298)
- (47) "Your bladder holds urine." (NS)
- (48) "I love the way your hair holds a curl without even having a perm." (NS)
- (49) My whirling hands stay at the noon/ Each cell within my body holds a heart/ And all my hearts in unison strike twelve. (*B*)
- (50) The blood was dark red and thick, and Johnny's swollen eyes couldn't hold a focus. (*BL* 172)

- (51) Taking her stand in front of the green chalkboard, discussing the rules with her new class, she repeated sentences, and her lips held the shapes of certain words, such as "homework," after she had said them. (*AS* 4)
- (52) For the ego must seem to keep fear from you to hold your allegiance. (*CM* 302)
- (53) Now it wasn't curiosity that held Dunlop, but awe at the cruelty and cowardice of what he was witnessing. (*DG* 263)
- (54) In the holy instant guilt holds no attraction. (*CM* 320)
- (55) Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting/ So were it with me if forgetting could be willed/ Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring/ Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled. (*B*)
- (56) "That river's a great spot because it holds a lot of different kinds of fish." (*NS*)
- (57) He said Great Britain holds the key to peace because it has the power. (*CPD* 1/22/94)
- (58) "Alaska still holds such adventure, and certainly not just for the hunters." (*NS*)
- (59) Her head might have been held for the slow exposure by an unseen rod behind her neck. (*RR* 75)
- (60) We don't let people sell their organs or work at slave wages; we don't hold new mothers to pre-adoption arrangements; we don't permit the sale of children. . . . (*N* 12/90)
- (61) Barbara Bush, whose autobiography "A Memoir," hits stores next month, is through holding her tongue on the issue of abortion. (*VPLS* 8/13/94)
- (62) The pitcher holds two pints but contains only one. (*AHD* 406)
- (63) "That pot holds two quarts." (*NS*)
- (64) There are boxes handcrafted from old books that retail for \$85 to \$385 and hold anything. (*DN* 12/13/90)
- (65) . . . Pye Tee, thinking the bottle held dressing, had poured pancake syrup on a green salad. (*AD* 202)
- (66) The next day, he gave his son a pouch that held three ancient Spanish gold coins. (*A* 9)
- (67) "Meanwhile, I want to ask you to do something," said the wise man, handing the boy a teaspoon that held two drops of precious oil. (*A* 32)

- (68) That pot holds two quarts of potato salad. (NS)
- (69) That pot holds two quarts of potato salad for the church picnic. (NS)
- (70) That pot holds two quarts of water. (NS)
- (71) The pot held two quarts of potato salad for the church picnic until the hungry parishioners dug in. (NS)
- (72) "I hear that hotel holds 800 people." (NS)
- (73) "If this elevator only holds ten men, we're in a lot of trouble here, but squeeze in anyway." (NS)
- (74) More than 50 boot camps in 30 states hold 8,000 young inmates. (*CPD* 11/7/94)
- (75) I wound up looking at the door of our refrigerator, studded with fruit-shaped magnets holding shopping lists and Lissa's drawings and Linda's reminders. . . . (*AF* 238)
- (76) I woke up that way, sitting in the rocker with its loose right arm holding a watery drink. (*WF* 321)
- (77) The principal of the West Coast specialty store, who requested anonymity, revealed his outfit was financed from within and so could hold goods if this season were slow, without the concerns other retailers may have. (*HF* 11/26/90 64)
- (78) You could even tell the difference in the aspen that were yellow tinged with brown, and the ones that were yellow and still holding green. (*WW* 239)
- (79) But the furniture was the same: the bed, the tall dresser, the stool and vanity table, the mirror that once held her face. (*KGW* 179)
- (80) There is much to be shared in old Kyoto neighborhoods. From morning yawns to evening squabbles, the thin walls of the traditional wood-frame houses hold no secrets. (*WER*, Winter '90 64)
- (81) "The tree holds their clubhouse and all of their little-kid secrets." (NS)
- (82) He felt the urge to go out into the desert, to see if its silence held the answers to his questions. (*A* 104)
- (83) The ceiling caught and held my attention. (*KW* 197)
- (84) To him, who subtilizes thus with me/  
There would assuredly be room for  
doubt/  
Even to wonder, did not the safe word/  
Of Scripture hold supreme  
authority. (*GL*)
- (85) "Banks only hold a certain percentage of deposits; they move it around a

- good deal." (NS)
- (86) Even some of his adversaries acknowledge Galbraith's ideology is holding sway these days. (CPD 1/23/94)
- (87) "The love of justice just doesn't hold virtue like it used to anymore." (NS)
- (88) An unusual investment opportunity holds great promise. (CPD 1/22/94)
- (89) Furthermore, the industries' efforts to keep inventories under control, while compounding the slowdown now, hold a comeback's seeds as retailers must eventually go back into the market to refill empty shelves. (DN 12/12/90 16)
- (90) Next Monday's deadline for the heavy guns to be pulled back or bombed holds its threat of the start of a widened conflict. (CR 4/15/95)
- (91) But the person who oversees the day-to-day business of the CIA's clandestine services is the deputy director of operations, and the most recent person to hold that job, Richard Stolz, retired from it last week . . . . (US 12/31/90)
- (92) Chretien holds eight cabinet posts. (CPD 8/19/94)
- (93) White, an employee of the elections board since 1975, will fill the seat now held by Kenneth Fisher. (CPD 1/23/94)
- (94) By the year 2000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women will make up about 47 percent of workers, and minorities and immigrants will hold 26 percent of all jobs, up from 22 percent in 1990. (WKW 1/91 45)
- (95) Also, more people of color and women hold positions comparable to those of white males, so we notice the adverse effects of subtle discrimination, such as the inability to get promoted to upper management. (WKW 1/91 53)
- (96) "President Clinton holds the highest office." (NS)
- (97) "He holds the highest enlisted rank." (NS)
- (98) President David Daberko holds the title of CEO of the bank. (CR 3/16/94)
- (99) "He holds his index finger rigid and upright." (NS)
- (100) "Blossom was holding his feet steady, but then he started losing ground." (NS)
- (101) If your opinions and commitments appear to change from year to year or decade to decade, what are the more abstract underlying convictions that have held steady, that might never have become visible without the surface variation? (CAL 15)
- (102) Oh! bind me that I may not despair; hurl me into the deepest dungeon, that



I may dash my head against the damp walls, groan for freedom, and dream how I would rescue him if fetters did not hold me bound. (*GL*)

- (103) "I think this is a good offer and we should just hold fast for now." (NS)
- (104) Don't be afraid to use a large amount of glue to hold the pin secure. (*G&D* 12/90 36)
- (105) Now, holding the two sticks parallel, raise them over your head and signal to the waiter that you would like him to please bring you a fork. (*DBDJ* 161)
- (106) "Next time I want you to hold the door open long enough for her to get completely through. Understand?" (NS)
- (107) Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon/ Drops his blue-fringed lids, and hold them closed. . . . (*B*)
- (108) I saw Linda at the end of the sofa, smoking. . . . She drew on it until the ash glowed, and she held it deep, then let it out slowly, in a long luxurious soft plume. (*AF* 241)
- (109) The Roman world is falling, yet we hold our heads erect instead of bowing our necks. (*B*)
- (110) She held her shoulders straighter and began to sway her hips. . . . (*AD* 103)
- (111) "He couldn't even hold the ship straight; you should have seen it." (NS)
- (112) The philosopher does not hold aloof in order that he may gain a reputation; but the truth is, that the outer form of him only is in the city: his mind, disdainful of the littlenesses and nothingnesses of human beings, is "flying all abroad" . . . . (*B*)
- (113) "Can a homeowner be held liable just because it happened on his property?" (NS)
- (114) Men hold themselves cheap and vile: and yet a man is a fagot of thunderbolts. (*GL*)
- (115) "Knowing what I know now, I can't hold myself safe a single moment." (NS)
- (116) Yet do I hold that mortal foolish who strives against the stress of necessity. (*B*)
- (117) "She holds them spellbound; it's really neat to watch." (NS)
- (118) "They hold themselves very fortunate just to have made it, let alone come out ahead." (NS)

- (119) A man content to live in poverty--I hold him rich, though not a shirt hath he. (*GL*)
- (120) She is not making a person, because the fertilized egg already is a person; she's only caring for it, or housing it, or even (as one imaginative federal judge recently wrote), holding it captive. (*N 12/31/90*)
- (121) "She's the one holding him so ineffective; I'd fire her if I was him; I mean really." (*NS*)
- (122) Be our joys three parts pain!/ Strive, and hold cheap the strain. . . . (*B*)
- (123) He was holding his overcoat closed at the neck, his other hand was jammed into his pocket. (*KM 73*)
- (124) She is gazing at a drawing of a tiny, putrid, Chinese woman's foot, and reading the notation that says the rotten smell was an aphrodisiac for the man, who liked to hold both small feet helpless in his large hand. . . . (*PSJ 176*)
- (125) The pilots held the aircraft high enough off the LZ to prevent anyone from grabbing hold of the landing gear, but low enough to make the rotors whip up a compressed tornado that drove the crowds back. (*DG 96*)
- (126) Yes, as everyone knows, meditation and water are wedded forever. . . . Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? (*B*)
- (127) "The PTA is holding the budget tight this year." (*NS*)
- (128) The thin cordon of police could do nothing to hold the crowd back. (*ODCIE 157*)
- (129) The thin cordon of police holds the crowd up. (*NS*)
- (130) I switched the light off. (*V-P 277*)
- (131) I looked the information up. (*V-P 277*)
- (132) "They held the party for the winning team after the game." (*NS*)
- (133) After the game, they held the party for the winning team. (*NS*)
- (134) They held the party after the game for the winning team. (*NS*)
- (135) They held, after the game, the party for the winning team. (*NS*)
- (136) The thin cordon of police holds the crowd back. (*NS*)
- (137) The thin cordon of police holds the crowd up. (*NS*)
- (138) They hold the party after the game. (*NS*)

- (139) They're getting along better; she was holding his hand at the airport. (NS)
- (140) They're getting along better; she was holding his hand at the airport. (NS)
- (141) "The administration holds his one bad attitude against everyone, and I, for one, resent it." (NS)
- (142) Having shipped for an officer when he was not half a seaman, he found little pity with the crew, and was not man enough to hold his ground among them. (GL)
- (143) "You should have seen her; she was holding her hand onto his jacket for dear life." (NS)
- (144) Reverend Sykes shuffled some papers chose one and held it at arm's length. (KM 123)
- (145) "The work on I95 has held the traffic up for weeks now." (NS)
- (146) "Two men held up the jewelry store on the corner last night just before closing." (NS)
- (147) Our club held a meeting to talk about future projects. (NTC 150)
- (148) How can I beat him when he holds all the cards. (NTC 150)
- (149) The guide held forth about the city. (NTC 150)
- (150) Hold it, Tom! You're going the wrong way. (NTC 150)
- (151) I hold no brief for people who cheat the company. (NTC 150)
- (152) Do you hold your breath when you dive into the water? (NTC 150)
- (153) The sergeant told the soldiers to hold their fire. (NTC 150)
- (154) Now, now, hold your fire until I've had a chance to explain. (NTC 150)
- (155) I can hold my own in a foot-race any day. (NTC 150)
- (156) We thought Jim was holding his own after the accident, but he died suddenly. (NTC 150)
- (157) Quiet, John. Hold your peace for a little while longer. (NTC 151)
- (158) I felt like scolding her, but I held my tongue. (NTC 151)
- (159) I always try to hold out the olive branch to someone I have hurt. Life is too short for a person to bear grudges for very long. (NTC 151)
- (160) I hold you accountable for John's well-being. (NTC 151)
- (161) You should open the shop at eight o'clock and hold the fort until I get

- there at ten o'clock. (*NTC* 152)
- (162) Does this rule hold true all the time? Yes, it holds true no matter what. (*NTC* 152)
- (163) Jack's story doesn't hold water. It sounds too unlikely. (*NTC* 152)
- (164) Don't get so angry. Just hold your horses! (*NTC* 152)
- (165) "Hold your wheels a minute, would you! I'm trying to say, 'Good-bye,' here." (NS)
- (166) "Hold your heels just one second there, Bub." (NS)
- (167) I held the attacker at bay while Mary got away and called the police. (*NTCPV* 359)
- (168) Four men. . . ordering the President. . . and the clerks to hold up their hands under threats of death, seized a sum of 2,500 dollars. (*OED* 300)
- (169) The Diamond Detectives held their hand. All went well, and de Graaf was on his way to the bus with a fortune in his pockets when the detectives pounced. (*ODCIEv2* 286)
- (170) Hold the window up while I prop it open. (*NTCPV* 362)
- (171) "Whoa now, just a minute," said a club member, holding up his walking stick. (*KM* 166)
- (172) Hold up your right hand and repeat these words after me. (*L* 291)
- (173) My husband has lost so much weight that he has to wear a belt to hold his trousers up. (*L* 291)
- (174) When the cuffs clicked behind his back, Terence's head dropped as if it had been held up by a string. (*NC* 92)
- (175) He was a very old, very dark-skinned man whose uniform looked as if it could hold up his shoulders without him. (*C* 12/90 226)
- (176) Four great pillars of Jasper. . . hold up the back of this altar. (*OED* 300)
- (177) "Archie's not that good yet; he has a hard time holding up the airplane during bad weather." (NS)
- (178) Upon the whole, we were perfectly satisfied that the Alert might hold her head up with a ship twice as smart as she. (*GL*)
- (179) How that ever ye do, hold up you manship. (*OED* 300)
- (180) "I wonder how long his strength will hold up." (NS)

- (181) "Our stores usually hold up pretty well, around the holidays, especially."  
(NS)
- (182) He tells me gold holds up its price still. (*OED* 300)
- (183) "She doesn't have the option of breaking down; she has to hold up for the sake of the kids." (NS)
- (184) "Yeah, but will the charges hold up in court?" (NS)
- (185) "She's always holding her daughter up as an example to her son, so who knows." (NS)
- (186) Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation Wesleys and Oberlins, Saints and Prophets. (*GL*)
- (187) "He's one of those types of professors who holds up a model of life-long learning to his students." (NS)
- (188) "So then she just holds him up to ridicule, right in front of everybody else, too." (NS)
- (189) [He] held up the Government . . . to hatred and contempt. (*OED* 300)
- (190) "Her carousing held up her husband's military career." (NS)
- (191) When . . . a cow holds up her milk there is some disturbing element.  
(*OED* 300)
- (192) "An accident held up the traffic." (NS)
- (193) "If the weather holds up, let's do it." (NS)
- (194) An accident holds the traffic back. (NS)
- (195) An accident hold the traffic at a complete standstill. (NS)
- (196) If the weather holds up, we won't be able to golf this afternoon. (NS)
- (197) If this weather hold up, we should go ahead and put in the garden. (NS)
- (198) "So, in this dream, he holds me down; and I just scream and scream."  
(NS)
- (199) The heavy beam held him down, and he could not rise. (*NTCPV* 359)
- (200) "The paperweight holds down the papers; don't move it, Honey." (NS)
- (201) The hunter held the animal down until the porters arrived. (*NTCPV* 359)
- (202) "So, with his big boot, he holds the other guy's face down on the ground."  
(NS)

- (203) "She should hold her weight down more." (NS)
- (204) "I wish they would hold the volume down." (NS)
- (205) "For years, the whole nation was held down by the cruel rule of the former king." (NS)
- (206) Last year we had to hold down student intake because of the cuts in the grants. (*ODCIE* 157)
- (207) "A surplus of oil should hold the prices down." (NS)
- (208) But women who stop taking birth control pills, which seem to reduce oil and hold down acne, experience a recurrence of oily skin and acne. (*Eb* 12/90 96)
- (209) Attendance was held down not only by fears of extremism but by tickets priced between \$150 and \$350 each--far out of reach for most Egyptians, whose income averages just \$550 a year. (*VPLS* 11/27/94)
- (210) Men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. (*OED* 298)
- (211) I had a disability that held me down in life. (*NTCPV* 359)
- (212) The fellow who's got the right stuff in him is holding down his own place with one hand. (*OED* 299)
- (213) "She holds down two jobs." (NS)
- (214) Some friends held down his grocery business while he was sick. (*W3* 1079)
- (215) Put Callahan in centrefield and let Lange hold down third base. (*DA* 818)
- (216) Use a third-hand tool or toe strap to hold the brake pads to the rim. (*Bic* 12/90 88)
- (217) "I'm going to hold you to that promise." (NS)
- (218) "She was holding to the railing to keep from falling on the ice." (NS)
- (219) "With all her might, she held onto the fishing pole that arched under the weight of the struggle." (NS)
- (220) I would have had an awful job handling an empty airplane, but that eight hundred pounds of cement held me on the field. (*CPD* 11/15/94)
- (221) "Hold on; I'll get her for you." (NS)
- (222) "They're supposed to hold a referendum on Tuesday." (NS)
- (223) Twenty Klan members held a recruitment rally on the steps of the Civil

War-era building. (*CPD* 10/8/94)

- (224) "The only reason he made it was because he was held on the animal." (NS)
- (225) [He was] holding on by his eyelids. (*II* 213)
- (226) He held a radio to her ear, as though the years they spent avoiding each other had been no more than a few weeks. (*AD* 95)
- (227) I felt suddenly--unbearably--exposed, that there was nothing but my feet to hold me to the earth. (*AD* 61)
- (228) "He's the type that always holds his nose to the grindstone." (NS)
- (229) Must I hold a candle to my shame? (*B*)
- (230) No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. (*NASB* Matt. 6:24)
- (231) Liberal big spenders are holding themselves to a 4 percent increase each year. (*CR* 12/17/93)
- (232) "You should hold to your original story because it sounds so much better." (NS)
- (233) "You just can't hold him to his word, which really ticks me off." (NS)
- (234) The international community holds Guatemala and El Salvador to similar standards. (*CR* 10/1/94)
- (235) "She's probably the best person on staff for holding people to the language. . . ." (*VPLS* 6/10/95)
- (236) "Guilt holds you to old patterns." (NS)
- (237) By this time Mom had come up beside us and was holding on to Dad's arm. (*BL* 186)
- (238) "So I told her that I always hold on to the handles." (NS)
- (239) Just thinking of the precious possibility, she dug her nails into her palm, as if she were attempting to hold on to herself. (*Es* 12/90 58)
- (240) Saddam Hussein may yet stake a claim to the Rumaila oil field, hold on to Warba and Bubiyan islands and retreat from the rest of Kuwait. (*US* 12/3/90)
- (241) Seems Gorby better hold on to his day job. (*US* 12/3/90)
- (242) "Sometimes it's hard to just hold on to your convictions, let alone be some shining example." (NS)

- (243) I closed my eyes and laid my head back, trying to hold on to my visceral indifference, but it fell right away. (*C* 12/90 226)
- (244) "You better hold on to your pocketbook around here." (NS)
- (245) I held onto his parka. (*CR* 8/19/94)
- (246) "She was trying to hold onto a string of dogs." (*CR* 8/21/94)
- (247) All of these women are conservers, holding onto skills and relationships that may be recycled at a later date. (*CAL* 234)
- (248) For the season as a whole, he added, "I think we can hold onto last year's numbers and maybe show some small increases." (*DN* 12/18/90)
- (249) He was driving fast along the straight road, and I had to hold onto the sides of my stomach as we hit one bump after another. (*KGW* 297)
- (250) "It sounds like a good hypothesis, but you don't have to hold onto that." (NS)