Manner/Result Complementarity and the Limits of Event Structure

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One fruitful application of frame representations in linguistics has been in developing well-articulated theories of "event structure", i.e. the aspect of verbal meaning by which events are broken down into their component subevents. Event structures are assumed to be constructed from two basic components. First is a small set of basic, universal event-denoting predicates (CAUSE for causation, ACT for action, and BECOME for change) that are composed hierarchically into a frame representation called an "event template", which defines the broad causal and temporal contours of the event described by the verb. The limited set of possible event templates available on most theories organizes verbs into broad semantic classes (actions, changes-of-state, caused events, etc.). Second is an idiosyncratic "root" or "constant" contributed by each specific verb that fills in the real world details of some part of the action or change, distinguishing different verbs with the same event templates. Event structures have been fruitful in predicting facts about how event participants are realized syntactically and how verbs combine with various temporal modifiers. They have also been used to make predictions about possible and impossible verb meanings. A recent example of this is the work of Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2010) (RHL), who have claimed that while verbs may encode result meanings (types of changes; *break*, *shatter*, *cut*, *enter*) or manner meanings (e.g. types of actions; *run*, *swim*, *wipe*, *sweep*), there seem to be no monomorphemic verbs that combine manner and result together, e.g. lexicalizing a meaning such as "enter by running". This fact, RHL suggest, follows from constraints on how event structures are constructed: verbs encode one and only one idiosyncratic root, and since roots can either encode manner or result (i.e. modify an ACT or be the state argument of a BECOME), but not both, a complementarity is predicted between these two meanings in any single verb. If true, this claim has important ramifications not just for what constitutes a word meaning, but also gives us insights into cross-linguistic lexicalization patterns such as those proposed by Talmy (1975, 2000) and Slobin (1996) regarding manner vs. change-of-location meanings in typologies of motion encoding Beavers et al. (2010).

In this talk I present joint work with Andrew Koontz-Garboden (University of Manchester), wherein we examine in more detail whether this complementarity exists and if so, why. We suggest first that many previously proposed diagnostics for manner and/or result in a verb's meaning are insufficient to diagnose these two semantic components, and are also often interdependent in ways that make them inappropriate for supporting a complementarity claim. Thus we develop a new set of truth-conditionally grounded tests, and show that there are verbs encoding both components at once, including verbs of manner of killing (*crucify*, *guillotine*), cooking (*sauté*, *braise*), and throwing (*hurl*, *toss*). However, we also examine several classic diagnostics for event structure in verb meaning—including scopal operators like *again* and prefix *re-* (Dowty, 1979; von Stechow, 1996)—and demonstrate that there is evidence supporting RHL's single-rootedness claim as a fact about event structures. This suggests that while verbs may encode both manner and result at a truth conditional level, verbs cannot literally have both manner and result roots at the same time. We thus conclude that

sometimes manner roots also encode result, and some result roots also encode manner, a fact which correctly predicts subtle inference patterns about scopal modifiers. However, this result means that while event structures may make accurate predictions about how verb meanings are decomposed into their component pieces, they ultimately do not make predictions about possible meanings truth-conditionally since the component pieces are not constrained semantically. Such mixed results do not necessarily blunt the ramifications of manner/result complementarity, but they do suggest limits on the linguistic predictions event structures can make.

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