

## Eventive readings of German *wie*-complements

Interrogative complements introduced by *wie* ('how') embedded under, e.g., perception verbs exhibit two different readings. Consider the example in (1). In (a) the *wie*-complement has a *manner reading* addressing the question of how Berta got on the bus, which is indicated with the help of the *namely* continuation. In (b) the *wie*-complement has an eventive reading merely conveying the event, or process, of Berta getting on the bus. This reading licenses insertion of the temporal particle *gerade* ('just') and a progressive paraphrase with *dabei sein*. The difference between the two readings can also be observed with gradable adverbs, as in (2). In the manner reading in (a) the adverb has to be fronted together with the complement specifying a particular / high degree, whereas in the eventive reading the adverbs stays in situ as part of the event description.

- (1) a. Anna sah, wie Berta in den Bus stieg – nämlich zögernd und schwerfällig.  
b. Anna sah, wie Berta (gerade) in den Bus stieg (wie Berta dabei war, in den Bus zu steigen).
- (2) a. Anna sah, wie schwerfällig Berta in den Bus stieg.  
b. Anna sah, wie Berta (gerade) schwerfällig in den Bus stieg.

Eventive readings of *wie*-complements have been mostly ignored in the literature. They occur mostly with perception verbs (*sehen, hören, ...*) but also with report verbs (*berichten, erzählen, ...*) and cognitive verbs (*erinnern, daran denken, ...*). They are also found in analogous constructions in, e.g., English and French although with slightly different distribution and usage constraints. In this talk, we will focus on German. Eventive readings of *wie*-complements will be compared (i) to bare infinitives and declarative complements, (ii) to manner readings of *wie*-complements and, (iii) to temporal *wie*-clauses, aiming at a semantic analysis explaining why *wie*-complements can evoke manner as well as eventive readings.

The few references discussing eventive readings of *wie*-complements (Clement 1971, Vater 1975, Falkenberg 1989) agree in observing that the complement must denote an eventuality (activity, accomplishment, achievement) – states are excluded. Bare infinitives, but not declaratives, come with the same restriction, cf. (3). Moreover, as observed by Falkenberg, eventive readings are imperfective, giving rise to the imperfective paradox, cf. (4).

- (3) Anna sah \*Berta müde sein / \*wie Berta müde war / dass Berta müde war.  
(4) Anna sah, wie Berta in den Bus stieg, aber auf der vorletzten Stufe umdrehte.

Considering characteristics discussed for direct perception reports (Barwise 1989), *wie*-complements are veridical, as are bare infinitives and declaratives (if a sees  $\phi$ , then  $\phi$ ), and they are epistemically positive, like declaratives but unlike bare infinitives (if a sees  $\phi$ , a knows that she sees  $\phi$ ), cf. (5).

- (5) Ralph sah wie ein Spion einen Brief versteckte, # aber er dachte, der bindet sich die Schuhe zu.

Comparing eventive readings of *wie*-complements to manner readings, we already saw that they differ with respect to the adverb position, cf. (2). In addition, *wie* can be stressed in the manner reading (... *WIE Berta in den Bus stieg*) but not in the eventive one. Finally, comparing eventive readings of *wie*-complements to temporal *wie*-clauses there is a clear syntactic difference since the

latter are adjuncts while the former are arguments of the respective matrix verb. On the other hand, the two constructions share aspectual properties, in particular the exclusion of statives and the imperfective interpretation. Thus event readings of *wie*-complements, but not manner readings, can easily be turned into temporal *wie*-clauses (by reduplicating the agent) and appear very close in meaning, compare (6a) and (b).

- (6) a. Anna sah, wie Berta (gerade) in den Bus stieg.  
 b. Anna sah Berta, wie sie (gerade) in den Bus stieg.

The semantic analysis has to account for commonalities and differences of the two readings of *wie*-complements – and in particular for the question of why both readings are expressed by *wie*. We start from a similarity interpretation of *wie* analogous to the one suggested for the German demonstrative *so*, see Umbach & Gust (2014). Grossly simplifying, *wie* denotes similarity between two entities  $x$  and  $y$  with respect to a set  $F$  of features of comparison:  $\lambda y \lambda x. \text{sim}(x, y, F)$ . The similarity relation is, again grossly simplifying, implemented such that two items are similar with respect to a given set of features if their values are identical,  $\text{sim}(x, y, \{f_1 \dots f_n\})$  iff  $f_1(x)=f_1(y), \dots, f_n(x)=f_n(y)$ .

It will be suggested that *wie*-complements evoke similarity classes, more precisely, classes of events similar to the observed event. Thus the observed event is similar to other events of the same type with respect to relevant features of comparison:

- (7)  $\exists e(\text{sehen}'(e^*)(\text{Anna})(e) \ \& \ e^* \in \{e' \mid \text{sim}(e', e^*, F)\} \ \& \ \text{besteigen}'(\text{bus})(\text{Berta})(e^*))$

The different readings of *wie*-complements are brought about by different varieties of features. The manner reading makes use of features selecting manners (in a broad sense) of getting on the bus, e.g. speed (slowly, ...), posture (upright, ...), instrument (with a cane, ...), etc. (see Schäfer 2013). This yields a class of events that are Berta-getting-on-the-bus-events and are similar in manner to the actual event. The observed event is (trivially) an element of this class.

The hallmark of the eventive reading is imperfectivity. We follow the widely accepted idea that imperfectivity amounts to the presence of the subinterval property (see Deo to appear). That is, an imperfective sentence  $s$  asserted to be true at a reference interval  $r$  is consistent with the possibility of  $s$  being true at superintervals of  $r$ . In the case of eventive readings of *wie*-complements we assume that the observed event  $e^*$  is an element of a class of events that share the property of being stages of a Berta-get-on-the-bus-event and being subsumed by the same superinterval (which is itself an interval containing the entire Berta-get-on-the-bus event).

According to this analysis the observed event is the same in the two readings, and is the same as in the bare infinitive: Anna saw (a stage of) an event of Berta getting on the bus. The additional effect in *wie*-complements is one of highlighting by means of evoking a similarity class – highlighting manner in the manner reading and imperfectivity in the eventive reading. Since the observed event is the "generator" of the class, membership is trivial. Still, adding the similarity class emphasizes the respective features of comparison. Note that in this analysis you need not assume that manner is an entity you can see – what you see is the event, but you see it in the context of the similarity class. Likewise, you don't see imperfectivity – but by seeing the event in the context of a set of events that

are related in the way stated above the subinterval property is highlighted. The impact of similarity classes in the suggested analysis is close to the impact of alternatives in sentences with 'free' focus (i.e. ones that do not contain a focus sensitive operator), which are just "in the air".

### References

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