

abstract Fillmorefest (originally for ICLC 11)

Causative event framing: the Causee issue

This contribution looks into special properties of English causative verbs that show a wide spectrum of distribution patterns. These verbs extend their canonical complementation frames (as transitives) as they license constructions like transitives/ditransitives, inchoatives, resultative, fake object resultatives or allowing way-constructions and motion phrase complementation. This alternation or ‘elasticity in argument structure’ (Onozuka 2007) means that some arguments may be missing or not realised or there are more than expected. The grammaticalization patterns of these constructions are therefore based on different conceptualizations of the causative event in which interlocutors focus salient aspects of the event or neglect arguments as cognitive defaults (cf. Haase 2009 *fc.* on causer neglect). Goldberg 2001 has identified three determinants of patient omission under low discourse prominence in which the causee can be deleted. These determinants are atelicity, iterativity and de-emphasis. In this contribution, the reality of the determinants is assessed in a quantitative survey of constructions in which causee neglect can be observed. Contrary to the claim that inchoatives are not causatives (Talmy 2000) it will be argued that inchoatives act as cognitive causative primitives. Further, it will raise the question whether causatives are resultatives in cases where the result is not an exemplification or emphasis of the causal action as in the resultative options of

- (1) a. John broke the glass into pieces (result = emphasis of causal action)
 b. John broke the glass into the bin (result = caused motion)

which is less acceptable in 1d.

- c. The glass broke into pieces
d. The glass broke ?into the bin

The study thus recognizes results from acceptability tests of clause types like *?John amused the audience away* and investigates speaker cues of resultativity. It will be hypothesized that learner judgment on this type of causative is determined by several morphosyntactic cues. This is evidenced by a subset of causatives that disallow causative-inchoative alternation (sing, kill) but that must be distinguished further when it comes to result conceptualization:

- (2) a. John sang a song
 b. John sang Helen crazy

but cf.

- c. *The song sang
d. *Helen sang crazy

in opposition to

- (3) *John killed Bill into pieces

Discussion will involve data from elicitation tests of German students. The added layer of result-specified causation is then integrated into a larger class of cues as proposed in Haase (2006). It further speculates that the linguistically significant syntactic properties (i.e. properties that enable the spectrum of constructions referred to above) are semantically determined and have therefore a cognitive-conceptual core.

References

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