

Atelic Accomplishments in St'át'imcets (Lillooet Salish)

Overview. This paper shows that accomplishment VPs in St'át'imcets (Lillooet Salish) differ in their semantics from English accomplishment VPs. An analysis is then provided of the St'át'imcets accomplishments, and the consequences for a theory of cross-linguistic variation are briefly discussed.

Background. It is standardly assumed (e.g. Smith 1997) that accomplishment VPs are telic, and that culmination is entailed when an accomplishment is in the perfective aspect. Accomplishments contrast in this respect with activities (1). The fact that perfective accomplishments involve a culmination entailment (rather than merely an implicature) is what gives rise to the well-known imperfective paradox (2).

Atelic accomplishments in St'át'imcets. Accomplishments are distinguishable from activities in St'át'imcets by differences in out-of-the-blue judgments about tense and culmination. In the absence of overt tense marking and in the perfective aspect (marked by the absence of the overt imperfective marker), accomplishments are systematically interpreted in the past, and are judged to have culminated (3a). Activities can be interpreted in the present (3b).

However, the apparent telicity of predicates like 'ate my cake' is only an implicature: culmination can be explicitly denied without contradiction (4a,b). The past tense effect is also cancelable (4a). All the predicates in (4) are in the perfective aspect. (The progressive translation in (4a) is an artifact of the English restriction on present-tense eventive predicates.) There is a clear difference between St'át'imcets perfective accomplishments, for which denial of culmination is entirely normal and always acceptable, and English perfective accomplishments. A survey of 10 naïve English speakers resulted in judgments of marginality or ungrammaticality in 78/90 cases of perfective accomplishments with denial of culmination.

The puzzle. St'át'imcets accomplishments differ from activities, but only in a culmination implicature, not an entailment. We need to account for (i) the semantics of the St'át'imcets accomplishment VPs, (ii) the source of the culmination implicature, and (iii) the source of the St'át'imcets / English variation.

The semantics. Accomplishments are always formed from bare roots which are achievements (Davis 1996). These roots test as telic on language-internal diagnostics; they are unambiguously interpreted in the past, and their culmination cannot be explicitly cancelled (5,6). This suggests that it is the control transitivizer *-n* which removes the culmination requirement. (7) gives the denotation of the transitivizer, and (8) is the denotation of the first VP in (4a). The first clause in (4a) means roughly 'I was the agent of an event which in all inertia worlds is a fixing of the fence'. The achievements in (5,6) crucially lack the *-n* transitivizer, and therefore are not modalized, but require culmination in the actual world. Note also that the non-control transitivizer *-s* does not remove culmination when added to achievement roots in the perfective. This shows that the atelic status of the *-n* accomplishments is not merely the result of a different semantics for the perfective (as in e.g., Singh's 1998 analysis of Hindi).

This analysis draws on the modalized approach often used for the progressive (e.g., Dowty 1979, a.o.), but allows the inertia worlds to branch off at the beginning of the event, rather than at the end of the reference time (RT). St'át'imcets perfective accomplishments are therefore assigned different truth conditions from English progressives. In English *I was fixing a fence*, the event cannot culminate in the actual world within the RT. In St'át'imcets, e.g. in the first clause of (4a), the event may or may not culminate in the actual world, but either way, the event is finished before the end of the RT.

The implicature. The implicature of culmination seen in (3a) arises because in all inertia worlds, the event culminates. In the absence of other information, the hearer assumes that the 'normal' course of events takes place. The fact that the English progressive, which also involves inertia worlds, does not implicate culmination is explained by the presence in English (unlike in St'át'imcets) of a contrasting perfective form which entails culmination.

Conclusion. We have argued that St'át'imcets has culmination conditions in the lexicon (revealed by achievement roots), but the *-n* transitivizer introduces modality. Thus, culmination is not required in the actual world for verbs transitivized with *-n*, even in the perfective aspect. The absence in St'át'imcets of telic accomplishment VPs means that any analysis which enforces culmination by means of a functional head must admit that languages vary in the presence/absence or in the semantics of this head.

Data

- (1) a. I fixed the fence. ACCOMPLISHMENT; TELIC a'. I fixed the fence in an hour.
 b. I pushed the cart. ACTIVITY; ATELIC b'. *I pushed the cart in an hour.
- (2) a. I was fixing the fence. DOES NOT ENTAIL b. I fixed the fence.
- (3) a. ts'áqw-an'-lhkan ta n-kíks-a ACCOMPLISHMENT: PAST ONLY
 eat-TRANS-1SG.SUBJ DET my-cake-DET
 'I ate my cake.' "Sounds like you ate all of it."
- b. ít'em-lhkan ACTIVITY: PRESENT OKAY
 sing-INTRANS-1SG.SUBJ
 'I sang / I am singing.'
- (4) a. máys-en-lhkan ti q'láxan-a, t'u7 cw7aoy t'u7 kw-s tsúkw-s-an
 fix-TRANS-1SG.SUBJ DET fence-DET but NEG just DET-NOM finish-CAUS-1ERG
 'I fixed a fence, but I didn't finish.' / 'I'm fixing a fence, but I'm not finished with it.'
- b. ts'áqw-an'-lhkan ti n-kíks-a lhkúnsa ku sq'it,
 eat-TRANS-1SG.SUBJ DET 1SG.POSS-cake-DET now DET day
 t'u7 qelh-cál-lhkan ku k'wík'wena7 t'u natcw
 but save-MID-1SG.SUBJ DET few until tomorrow
 'I ate my cake today, but I saved a little for tomorrow.'
- c. k'ul'-ún'-lhkan ti ts'lá7-a, t'u7 aoy t'u7 kw tsukw-s
 make-TRANS-1SG.SUBJ DET basket-DET but NEG just DET finish-3SG.POSS
 'I made the basket, but it didn't get finished.'
- (5) a. √mays 'get fixed' b. √mets 'get written' c. √q'wel 'get cooked'
- (6) * mays ti q'láxan-a, t'u7 aoy t'u7 kw-s ka-máys-ts-a
get.fixed DET fence-DET but NEG just DET-NOM OOC-fix-CAUS-OOC
 'The fence got fixed, but it couldn't get fixed.' "Contradiction."
- (7) $[[-n]]^W = \lambda f \in D_{\langle 1, st \rangle} [\lambda e [e \text{ is controlled by its agent in } w \ \& \ \forall w' [w' \text{ is an inertia world w.r.t. } w \text{ at the beginning of } e \rightarrow [\exists e' [f(e')(w') \ \& \ e \text{ causes } e' \text{ in } w']]]]]$ (l = events; IFA is used)
 NB: -n surfaces as -en, an', or un'.
- (8) $[[\textit{máysen ti q'láxana}]]^W = \lambda x \lambda e [x \text{ is the agent of } e \ \& \ e \text{ is controlled by } x \text{ in } w \ \& \ [\forall w' [w' \text{ is an inertia world w.r.t. } w \text{ at the beginning of } e \rightarrow [\exists e' [\textit{the fence gets fixed in } w' (e') \ \& \ e \text{ causes } e' \text{ in } w']]]]]]$

References

- Davis, H. 1996. Deep unaccusativity and zero syntax in St'át'imcets. *ICSNL* 31:39-58.
 Dowty, D. 1979. *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
 Singh, M. 1998. ON the semantics of the perfective aspect. *Natural Language Semantics* 6:171-199.
 Smith, Carlota 1997. *The Parameter of Aspect* (2nd edition). Dordrecht: Kluwer.