Telicity and the Meaning of Objective Case

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0. What I plan to do in this talk

• Present a syntactic and semantic analysis of the well-documented telicity effects associated with case marking for direct objects in Finnish.

• Present techniques for observing the same telicity effects in languages that have no systematic choices for how they case mark direct objects: German and English.

• Look at some of the consequences of the proposed analysis for the meaning of inflectionless verb roots and significant Aktionsart classifications (the question of ‘indirect access’ of Zucchi 1999).

1. Languages with choices for objective case

• Detailed case studies: Ramchand 1997 (Scottish Gaelic), Kiparsky 1998 (Finnish).

• Kiparsky 1998: In Finnish, case for direct objects is determined at the VP level. Direct objects have partitive case if their VP is ‘unbounded’ and accusative case if their VP is ‘bounded’.
(1) a. **Ammu - i - n karhu - a.**
    shoot - past -1sg bear - part
    I shot at a bear.
    I shot at the bear.

    b. **Ammu - i - n karhu - n**
    shoot - past - 1sg bear - acc
    I shot the bear.
    I shot a bear.

(2) a. **Ammu - i - n karhu - j - a**
    shoot - past - 1sg bear - pl - part
    I shot bears.
    I shot at bears.

    b. **Ammu - i - n karhu - t**
    shoot - past - 1sg bear - pl - acc
    I shot the bears.

(3) a. **Ammu - i - n kah-ta karhu - a.**
    shoot - past - 1sg two-part bear - part.
    I shot at two bears.
    I shot at the two bears.

    b. **Ammu - i - n kaksi karhu - a**
    shoot - past - 1sg two-acc. bear - part
    I shot two bears.
    I shot the two bears.

- Similar cases: Antipassives, conative alternation.

(4) a. **Sie hat an einem Handschuh gestrickt.**
    She has at a mitten knit

    b. **Sie hat einen Handschuh gestrickt.**
    She has a mitten knit
• Why should there be a connection between a semantic property of VPs and case morphology on direct objects?

• Interpretable verbal inflectional features can provide the connection by attracting uninterpretable case features (Chomsky 1995, Pesetsky & Torrego 2000).

2. What an interpretable [acc] feature could do: A proposal

• A certain class of verbs have lexically specified conditional culmination conditions:

  Shoot- $\lambda x \lambda e \left[ \text{shoot-at}(x)(e) \land \Box \left[ \text{culminate}(x)(e) \rightarrow \text{hit}(x)(e) \right] \right]

  Climb- $\lambda x \lambda e \left[ \text{climb-up}(x)(e) \land \Box \left[ \text{culminate}(x)(e) \rightarrow \text{reach}(\text{top-of } x)(e) \right] \right]

• Culmination is a relation between individuals and events.

• My complete reading of chapter one of your thesis might be the same event as my incomplete reading of your whole thesis (see discussion in Zucchi 1999).

1. Types: Individuals $e$, propositions $t$, eventualities $s$. Variables: $x_e$, $y_e$, $e_s$, $e'_s$, $e''_s$, $P_{<st>}$, $R_{<e<st>}$.

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• At LF, both the uninterpretable [acc] feature and the uninterpretable index on the moved direct object DP have disappeared via checking.

• The index on interpretable [acc] is interpreted as binder for the trace of the direct object (Heim & Kratzer 1998).

• Interpretable [acc] = [telic] is a verbal inflectional feature that imposes a culmination requirement: $\lambda R \lambda x \lambda e [R(x)(e) \& \text{culminate}(x)(e)]$

3. **Step 1: Disregard Finnish NP-related partitive**

• ‘Bare plural’ objects always have partitive case, regardless of telicity of verb.

• Many languages, including earlier stages of Finnish, only have the NP-related partitive (Kiparsky 1998).
• Partitive is also used DP-internally in Finnish:

(5)  

\[
\text{Ammu - i - n      kaksi      karhu - a}
\]
\[
\text{shoot - past - 1sg two-acc  bear - part}
\]

I shot two bears.
I shot the two bears.

• Conjecture: Kiparsky’s NP-related partitive is an instance of DP-internal partitive with an unpronounced D (which could then bear either partitive or accusative case, you can’t see which one).

• DP-internal partitive:

Meaningful nominal inflectional feature [part]: \( \lambda y \lambda x [x \leq y] \)
Maps kinds into properties, e.g. \( \lambda x [x \leq \text{gold}] \), \( \lambda x [x \leq \text{dogs}] \)

4. Step 2: Finnish VP-related partitive

• Atelic verbs always have partitive objects, regardless of the kind of object.

(6)  

\[
\text{halveksia (' despise'), ihailla ('admire'), kadehtia ('envy'), rakasta ('love'), matkia ('imitate'), ravista ('shake'), keinutta ('rock'), koskettaa ('touch'), hieroa ('massage')}\]

('massage')....
(Kiparsky 1998, 281)

(7)  

\[
\text{katsella ('watch'), kuunella ('listen'), koettaa ('try'), opetta ('teach'), tukea ('support'), opiskella ('study'), pelata ('play' (a game)), leikkiä ('play' (with toys)), soittaa ('play' (an instrument), vartioida ('guard'), vetää ('pull')}\]

('massage')....
(Vainikka, 1989, 323)

• VP-related partitive: interpretable verbal inflectional feature

[part] = [atelic]: \( \lambda P \lambda e \exists e' [e < e' & P(e')] \)
Culmination condition imposed by interpretable [acc] would require pragmatic meaning adjustments for atelic VPs.

5. Languages without VP-related partitive: A crucial difference

- Suppose English and German lack VP-related partitive. They might still have DP-internal partitive, though. If they do, bare plurals and mass nouns need an unpronounced D, and that D must have a case feature, which can only be [acc], given the available options for checking that feature:

(8) Er hat Strassen überquert. Implies completion
    He has streets crossed
    He crossed streets.

(9) Er hat Briefe geschrieben. Implies completion
    He has letters written
    He wrote letters.

(10) Hän kirjoitt-i kirje-i-tä. Does not imply completion
    He/she write-past-3sg letter-pl-Part
    a. He wrote letters (...and left)
    b. He was writing letters (...when I came)
    c. He was writing the letters (...when I came)

6. [telic] as a telicity watershed

If [telic] imposes the culmination requirement for VPs that have a conditional culmination condition, the culmination requirement shouldn’t be there yet below [telic].
(11)  

a. **Wir haben den Berg weiterbestiegen.**
We have the mountain on-climbed
We went on climbing the mountain.

b. **Wir haben die Strasse weiterüberquert.**
We have the street on-crossed
We went on crossing the street.

c. **Wir haben das Geschenk weiterausgepackt.**
We have the gift on-unwrapped
We went on unwrapping the gift.

d. **Er hat die Suppe weitergegessen.**
He has the soup on-eaten
He went on eating the soup.

*Weiter-*  (first shot):

\[ \lambda R \lambda x \lambda e \exists e' [ \tau (e') <_{\text{time}} \tau (e) \& R(x)(e') \& R(x)(e+e') ] \]
(12)  a.  **die unbestiegenen Berge**  
the unclimbed mountains

b.  **die unüberquerten Strassen**  
the uncrossed streets

c.  **die ungestrickten Pullover**  
the unknit sweaters

d.  **die ungelesenen Bücher**  
the unread books

e.  **die unausgepackten Geschenke**  
the ununwrapped gifts

f.  **die ungegessenen Steaks**  
the uneaten Steaks

g.  **die ungefüllten Gläser**  
the unfilled glasses

7.  **Syntactically constructed telicity: the impact of [telic]**

(13)  a.  **Wir haben den Berg bestiegen.**  
We have the mountain climbed
We climbed the mountain.

b.  **Wir haben die Strasse überquert.**  
We have the street crossed.
We crossed the street.

c.  **Sie hat die Suppe gegessen.**  
She has the soup eaten
She ate the soup.

d.  **Sie hat den Pullover gestrickt.**  
He has the sweater knit
She knit the sweater.

e.  **Sie hat das Geschenk ausgepackt.**  
She has the gift unwrapped.
She unwrapped the gift.
8. Lexical telicity

- **eat up** \( \lambda x \lambda e \) \([\text{eat}(x)(e) & \text{finish}(x)(e)]\)

(14) a. *Wir haben die Suppe weiteraufgegessen.*
We have the soup on-up-eaten
‘We went on eating up the soup’.

b. *Wir haben das Buch weiterausgelesen.*
We have the book on-finish-read

(15) a. *die unausgelesenen Bücher*
the un-out-read books

b. *die unaufgegessenen Äpfel*
the un-up-eaten apples

c. *die unausgetrunkenen Gläser*
the un-out-drunk glasses

9. Contextual telicity forced by [telic]

(16) a. We surveyed the continent in/for two years.

b. We cooked the egg in/for five minutes.

c. We milked the cow in/for ten minutes.

d. We planned the trip in/for two weeks.

e. She cleaned the house in/for two hours.

(17) a. *Wir haben den Kontinent weitervermessen.*
We have the continent on-surveyed

b. *Wir haben das Ei weitergekocht.*
We have the egg on-cooked

c. *Wir haben die Kuh weitergemelkt.*
We have the cow on-melked
(18) a. unsurveyed continents  
b. uncooked eggs  
c. unmilked cows  
d. unplanned trips  
e. uncleaned houses

10. Maximalization forced by [telic]

(19) a. At this very moment, he is shlepping your suitcase.  
b. * At this very moment, he shleps your suitcase.

• Higher aspectual operators (‘view point aspect’ of Smith 1992)

(20) a. My shlepping of your suitcase  
b. My shlepping your suitcase

• -ing can have scope over [telic]

(21) a. * At this very moment, the baby laughs.  
b. We had a good laugh.  
   (Hale & Keyser 1993, 73)
11. Differences between ‘conative’ and ‘progressive’ meanings

(22) a. I was shooting the buffaloes.
    b. I shot at the buffaloes.

Scenario: A herd of buffaloes is running towards me and I fire a shot to make them turn around and run in the opposite direction.

(23) a. Nina was knitting a mitten.
    b. Nina hat an einem Handschuh gestrickt.

Scenario: Nina was in the process of knitting an incomplete mitten as a prop for a movie. Since an incomplete mitten was needed for that particular movie, the mitten never meant to be completed.

(24) a. John and Mary worked on a baby.
    b. John and Mary were working on a baby.

• The predicates ‘culminate’ and ‘hold’ of Parsons 1990 cannot be defined via the semantics of the progressive (pace Zucchi 1999).

12. Summary
• [telic] is a verbal inflectional feature that is identical to interpretable [acc].
• [telic] attracts the uninterpretable case feature [acc].
• [telic] imposes a culmination requirement.
• Aktionsart differences are differences with respect to culmination conditions specified by the meanings of VPs: (a) unconditional culmination

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conditions, (b) conditional culmination conditions, and (c) no culmination conditions.

- [telic] can activate conditional culmination conditions that are determined by the meaning of the VP it operates on, or trigger contextual culmination conditions, including maximalization as a last resort.

References


