Intro
ooo

Agenda
oo

SoA
ooo

Methodology
oo

Distr.
ooooo

Int. Concl.
ooo

Dowty's Rule
oo

New Rule
o

Concl.
o

Refs.
o

On the Semantics of Raised Possessor

Ekaterina Levina
University of Texas at Austin

42nd Annual Meeting of the Department of Linguistics,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
May 6, 2022

Verb alternations

Verb alternation: one verb appears in two (or more) different syntactic frames

(1) **Dative alternation**
- a. *Peter gave Mary a book.*
- b. *Peter gave a book to Mary.*

(2) **Locative alternation**
- a. *Peter sprayed paint on the wall.*
- b. *Peter sprayed the wall with paint.*

(3) **Body-part possessor ascension alternation**
- a. *Peter kissed Mary's cheek.*   **NPoss**
- b. *Peter kissed Mary on the cheek.*   **AccEPC**

What is interesting about verb alternations?

- Meaning differences between the alternating forms
- The source of these differences
- Verb alternations as a playground for the research on verbal semantics: identification of classes of verbs (e.g., Levin 1993)

Goals of the presentation

- More fine-grained verbal taxonomy motivated by the verbal behavior in the alternations in question

- Lexical rule that allows to account for these alternations

Agenda

- State of research: alternating forms and associated verbal meanings

- Body-part possessor ascension: bundle of alternations

- New verbal taxonomy

- Dowty's (2001) approach to body part-possessor ascension and its shortcomings

- Adjusted lexical rule for body-part possessor ascension

Underlying assumption

Different meanings tend to be expressed in different forms.

$$\Downarrow$$

Different forms are indicative of meaning differences.

(4) **Entailment of physical integrity**:
  a. *Peter touched Mary's arm.*   **−**
  b. *Peter touched Mary on the arm.*   **+**

Further known differences btw. AccEPC and NPoss

- Affected possessor in AccEPC vs. distant possessor in NPoss
  (e.g., Chappell and McGregor 1996, Heine 1997).
  Weak affectedness ≠ Beavers's (2011) affectedness

- In AccEPCs, possessor is mostly animate

- Verbs appearing in AccEPC are mostly verbs of direct physical
  influence

- Levin (1993):

     Different from *hit*-, *cut*-, and *touch*-verbs, *break*-verbs do not
     allow NPoss-AccEPC alternation.

     (5)   a.   *Peter touched Paul on the arm.*
           b.   **Peter broke Paul on the arm.*

Explanations for *break*-verbs

Levin (1993): *Break*-verbs do not entail physical contact.

? But *verletzen* 'injure', which also lacks this entailment, is fine:

    (6)   *Peter hat seinen Freund am Bein verletzt.*
            Peter has his friend:ᴀᴄᴄ on the leg injured
            'Peter injured his friend on the leg.'

Explanations for *break*-verbs

Dowty (2001): "out-of-order" entailment holds for the part, but not for the whole.

? But what about other *break*-verbs, such as *deformieren* 'deform' and *einschlagen* 'smash'?

    (7)   * *Peter hat seinen Freund am Bein   deformiert*.
           Peter has his friend:ᴀᴄᴄ on the leg deformed
           int.: 'Peter deformed his friend on the leg. '

▶ **What prevents *break*-verbs from appearing in NPoss-AccEPC alternation?**

Methodology

- Verbs considered: *damage*-verbs with different levels of affectedness (cf. Beavers 2011)

- Analysis of syntactic behavior of these verbs as related to the NPoss-AccEPC alternation

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

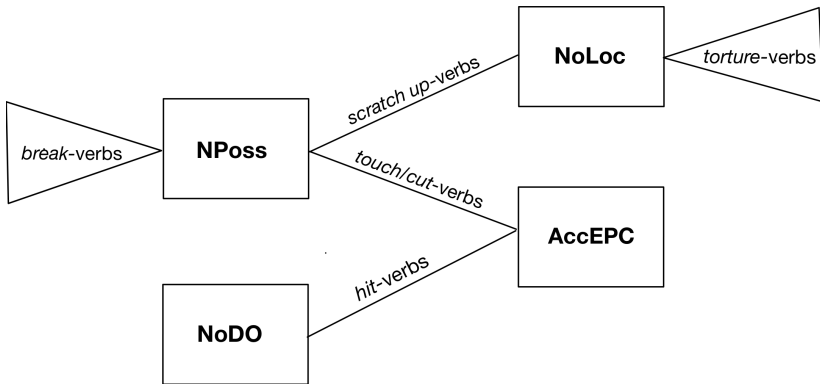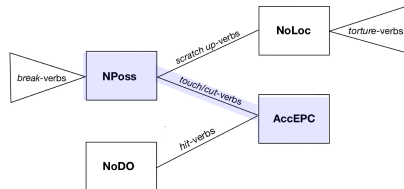There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes
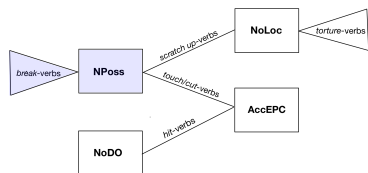

Figure 1: Verb classes and alternations

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes

1. *cut/touch*-verbs:

berühren 'touch', *küssen* 'kiss', *beißen* 'bite', *attackieren* 'attack', *verletzen* 'injure', *zurichten* 'beat up', *schneiden* 'cut'

(8)   *Peter küsste Maries Wange.*
      Peter kissed Marie's cheek
      SUBJ V OBJ$_{NPoss}$ **NPoss-frame**

(9)   *Peter küsste Marie   (auf die Wange).*
      Peter kissed Marie:ACC (on the cheek)
      SUBJ V OBJ$_{Possessor}$ (**PP**$_{Possessee}$)   **AccEPC-frame**

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes

2. *hit*-verbs:

schlagen 'hit', stoßen 'push'

(10) *Peter schlug *(in) Pauls Gesicht.*
      Peter hit   *(in) Paul's face
      SUBJ V PP$_{NPoss}$ **NoDO**-frame

(11) *Peter schlug Paul   ins Gesicht.*
      Peter hit   Paul:ACC in the face
      SUBJ V OBJ$_{Possessor}$ (**PP**$_{Possessee}$)   **AccEPC**-frame

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes

3. *scratch up*-verbs:

zerkratzen 'scratch up/ scratch all over',
vernachläßigen 'abandon, neglect ', and resultatives

(12) *Die Katze zerkratzte   die Wange des Mädchens.*
      the cat   scratched up the girl's cheek
      SUBJ V OBJ$_{NPoss}$ **NPoss-frame**

(13) *Die Katze zerkratzte   das Mädchen (*auf der Wange).*
      The cat   scratched up the girl   (*on the cheek)
      SUBJ V OBJ$_{Possessor}$ (*PP$_{Possessee}$)   **NoLOC-frame**

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes

4. *break*-verbs:

brechen 'break', *deformieren* 'deform', *einschlagen* 'smash'

(14)   *Peter hat Pauls Bein gebrochen.*
       Peter has Paul's leg broke.
       'Peter broke Paul's leg. '

(15)   * *Peter hat Paul   am Bein   gebrochen.*
       Peter hat Paul:ᴀᴄᴄ on the leg broke
       int.: 'Peter broke Paul on the leg. '

Results: alternating frames and verb classes

There are four alternating forms => Five verb classes
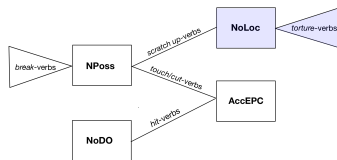
5. *torture*-verbs:

quälen 'torture', *peinigen* 'tantalize', *kränken* 'hurt', *plagen* 'plague'

(16)   *Peter hat Paul gequält.*
       Peter has Paul tortured.
       'Peter tortured Paul. '

(17)   * *Peter hat Paul   am Bein   gequält.*
       Peter hat Paul:ᴀᴄᴄ on the leg tortured
       int.: 'Peter tortured Paul on the leg. '
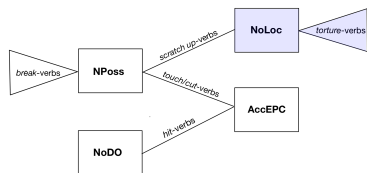
Results: crucial observations
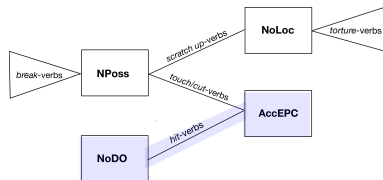
- Affectedness expressed in AccEPC-frame (weak affectedness) is related to the ability of the affectee [+ANIM] to perceive the action

Results: crucial observations

- Affectedness expressed in AccEPC-frame (weak affectedness) is related to the ability of the affectee [+ANIM] to perceive the action

Results: crucial observations
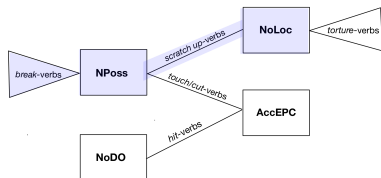
- Affectedness expressed in AccEPC-frame (weak affectedness) is related to the ability of the affectee [+ANIM] to perceive the action

- Specific result states do not allow localization [-LOC]; NPoss-NoLoc is not a verb alternation

Results: crucial observations

- Affectedness expressed in AccEPC-frame (weak affectedness) is related to the ability of the affectee [+ANIM] to perceive the action
- Specific result states do not allow localization [-LOC]; NPoss-NoLoc is not a verb alternation
- Only restrictive modifiers are allowed in the locative PP$_{Possessee}$ => specifies further the manner of action => *torture*-verbs don't allow locative PP$_{Possessee}$
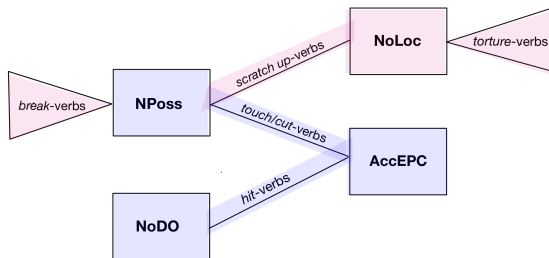
Results: account for alternations

Traditional account for verb alternations:

- A lexical rule that productively derives a lexical entry from a basic one.

- The lexical rule applies under filtering conditions (to sort out verbs not participating in the alternation)

Results: account for alternations

What do we need to account for?

Existing approach

Filtering conditions in Dowty's (2001) lexical rule:

- "out-of-order"-condition:
  "out-of-order" entailment holds for the part, but not for the whole

  ? other *break*-verbs

Existing approach

Filtering conditions in Dowty's (2001) lexical rule:

- "part-to-whole spread" of the result state

  ? *scratch up*-verbs

Existing approach

Filtering conditions in Dowty's (2001) lexical rule:

- "part-to-whole spread" of the result state

  ? *scratch up*-verbs

(18) *Peter hat Paul   am Arm / Rucksack   gepackt*.
     Peter has Paul:ACC **at the arm /backpack grabbed**
     lit.: 'Peter grabbed Paul at the arm/ at the backpack.'

(19) *Peter hat Paul   am Arm / *Rucksack   berührt*.
     Peter has Paul:ACC **at the arm/ *backpack touched**
     lit.: 'Peter touched Paul at the arm/*at the backpack.'

  ? Conditions for "part-to-whole spread"

Results: improved lexical rule

Adopted from Dowty's account:

- Input verbs: any kind of verbs

Adjusted filtering conditions - "the spreading conditions":

- Verbs must not entail a specific result state (cf. Beavers's (2011) quantized change)

- Possessee is physically attached to the possessor

- Possessor must be able to perceive the action physically

Conclusions:

- Body-part possessor ascension alternation: four syntactic frames

- Five classes of *damage*-verbs
    - *break*-verbs
    - *touch/cut*-verbs
    - *scratch up*-verbs
    - *hit*-verbs
    - *torture*-verbs

- For the derivation of AccEPC-frame, the filtering conditions of the lexical rule need to be adjusted as related to the **specificity of the entailed result state**, the **possessor's ability to physically perceive the action**, which is conditions by the **physical attachment** between the possessor and the possessee.

References

Beavers, J. (2011). On affectedness. *Natural language & linguistic theory 29*(2), 335–370.

Chappell, H. and W. McGregor (1996). Prolegomena to a theory of inalienability. *The grammar of inalienability: A typological perspectiv on body part terms and the part-whole relation*, 3–30.

Dowty, D. (2001). The semantic asymmetry of 'argument alternations' (and why it matters). *GAGL: Groninger Arbeiten zur germanistischen Linguistik* (44), 171–186.

Heine, B. (1997). *Possession: Cognitive sources, forces, and grammaticalization.* Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Levin, B. (1993). *English verb classes and alternations: A preliminary investigation.* University of Chicago press.