

The resultative construction: A pragmatic viewpoint

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The difference between (1a) and (1b) has been attributed in Rothstein (2004) to the hearer's relative ease with which to relate the progress of activity to the incremental process that the resultative XP denotes (the XPs are underlined).

(1a) Mary sang the baby asleep.

(1b) #Mary ate the baby asleep. (Rothstein 2004: 111)

She says the reason behind the difference is that Mary's singing can be more readily related contextually to the incremental process of baby falling asleep than Mary's eating can be so related. Such dependence on context, however, has never been explicitly spelled out, and it is the purpose of this paper to do just that.

Given the manner/result dichotomy proposed by Rappoport (2008) and Rappoport-Hovav and Levin (2008), a VP cannot contain two phrases that denote result. Thus, the verbs that don't encode result occur with various XPs, as in (2), while the verbs that encode result can only occur with XPs that further specify the result, as in (3).

(2) We steamed the clothes dry/clean/stiff.

(3) We froze the ice-cream solid. (Rappoport-Hovav 2008)

Thus, for Rappoport-Hovav and Levin, the meaning component contained in the verb determines the kind of XPs that can appear in cases like (3).

However, I'd suggest that there is a pragmatic element involved in determining what counts as the result (cf. mono-development in Dimitrova-Vulchanova 2002). This clearly shows up in (4), where in contradistinction to (3) the XP "shut" is interpreted as further specifying the result of freezing in this particular context.

(4) His eyes were full of water and he wiped them free, terrified that they would freeze shut. (W. Stegner, *Collected Stories*)

In this connection, note that Iwata (2008) argues that shut/open form a special class.

(5) The door swings shut. (Iwata 2008)

Things like doors can swing shut or open precisely because a door has its hinges that support the motion of the door itself. Because the door doesn't move to some place but a part of it moves on its hinges, the motion involved in this kind of movement is called "internal motion". But a case like (4) do not involve internal motion but still can appear with "shut". I'd suggest a pragmatic way to connect up the "internal motion" analysis of Iwata (2008) with the unexpected pattern of freeze shut in (4) and the usual pattern of freeze solid in (3).

The best pragmatic theory available to account for (4) is Blutner's (2004) optimality theoretic pragmatics, which determines the optimal interpretations for particular lexical items through two pragmatic principles that roughly correspond to Gricean quantity and relevance maxims.

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