REGULATIONS ON USE

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9. Questionnaire on Event Realization

Eric Pederson

Aims

- To further refine the notion of realization, etc. as per below.

- It should also give us some idea of the spread across languages of the degrees of realization.

- The results of the questionnaire may give us indications of other means of collecting data relevant to the research topic — preferably data with greater "ecological validity" than acceptance or non-acceptance of pragmatically odd sentences by bemused informants.

Research questions

- How does a language encode the realization of an event? The "realization of an event" is understood here as the normal final state of the affected entity/ies of an event described by a minimal verb, i.e., a simple lexical root plus all *obligatory* co-verbs, inflections, etc.. For example, in English, *John killed a lizard* necessarily entails that the lizard is afterwards dead – the death of the patient is the full realization of a 'killing' event. Complex events and complex verbs may have their own (complex) realizations, but that is not the immediate research question.

- Is there strict semantic entailment that each event be realized, or can you say things like "He 'killed' him but he didn't die" or "He cut him with the knife but luckily he missed"?

- Alternatively, is there a scale of events or verb types such that they have differing strengths of realization entailed? E.g.,; "He 'broke' the vase but it was so strong it didn't break", "He ate the horsemeat, but didn't swallow", "He washed the shirt, but it's still dirty."

- Under what contextual/semantic/syntactic/pragmatic conditions can the "normal" understanding that the realization occurred be defeated?

- If full realization can be defeated (i.e., sensibly denied in subsequent clauses/utterances), what features of the event or degrees of realization, are *entailed* as having occurred? Assume for the moment that the typical agent-patient verb has something like $_1$DO $_2$CAUSE $_3$STATE as part of it's semantic characteristics. Many examples in Tamil seem to imply as far as $_1$DO but not necessarily as far as $_2$CAUSE. That is, agent hits patient (in Tamil), may only entail that agent $_1$DO something (hitting-like), but does not entail that there be $_2$any causal effect on patient. In contrast, *strangle* (in English) may entail that agent $_1$DO something such that it $_2$CAUSES something of patient, but patient need not reach the typical resultant $_3$STATE of *dead* (by asphyxiation). Many Mandarin verbs appear to be of this pattern.

- If full realization can be regularly defeated with some constructions, what constructions strictly entail full realization?

Methods

- Try to ask a minimum of two consultants. If there is significant disagreement between them, then more. I suspect that a session going through the examples below should take perhaps two hours – interesting tangents not included.

- Do not have the consultants translate the sentences given. Rather phrase them yourself as appropriate culturally and using the aspectual distinctions, you suspect are the neutral and/or relevant ones. Of course, if a consultant says that the way you said it is unacceptable, encourage acceptable wordings and record these. Note varying formulations too.

- When asking if a certain sentence can be said, ask the informant to try to think of contexts, scenarios when it could be said. Note these. If no contexts can be found where the sentence can be said, try a few contexts yourself.

- Also make note of your own experiences. Were the OK examples accepted readily, with reluctance, under certain conditions, etc.? Did you appear crazy to be even asking about the sentences? Did the consultants themselves acquire a new insight into their own language's semantics/aspectual structure? Or is the phenomena you discussed with them quite matter-of-fact?

- Keep an ear out for the same or similar phenomena in natural discourse!

Specific sentences of defeasible event realization to elicit

- Think very carefully about the frame sentence(s) you test the verbs in. Note variant sentences you try and any corresponding changes in interpretation/acceptability. Try to construct a frame sentence with minimal (or none, if allowed) aspectual marking.

- All of the English examples are given in simple past tense. Event realization is a semantic characteristic which should, in principle, apply to the semantics of events in any tense or realis condition. However, such interactions are assumed to belong to a subsequent stage of research. Simple past is chosen because it should allow for the fewest confounding factors in testing defeasibility. Of course, a language may not have a very close equivalent to English simple past. Sometimes the grammar forces you to choose between various tense (etc.) forms. Think carefully about what tense or other temporal structure forms you could best use for this elicitation. The interaction with aspectual marking is likely to be highly relevant.

- Note any special characteristics of any of these tense/aspect distinctions for the language.

- Generally for exploring event realization, it would be best to test a set of verbs on the basis of the predicate types you know for the language you will be working with. These would range across different Aktsionsarten: states - activities - achievements - accomplishments.

- Also, for initial exploration, transitive verbs are probably the most rewarding to examine for defeasibility of the final state of the object/patient. It is extremely unlikely to be pragmatically sensible to state something like "The bottle broke, but it didn't break". On the other hand, if you have the time and energy, explore what degree of realization is entailed with simple inchoative verbs of the language as well.

- For a specific set for comparative purposes, I suggest the following verbs/sentences (in *italics*) as well as a few example scenarios to test contextual appropriateness of some combinations. (Culturally appropriate substitutions necessary.) For a minimal set for

those with limited time/interest, I have put what I take to be an important subset of these examples in *bold italics*.

KILL

Everyone's favorite change of state verb seems to commonly be limited to strong realization of that ultimate end states.
Fred killed the snake.
Fred killed the snake dead.
Fred killed the snake hurt.
Fred killed the snake, but it did not die.
Fred killed the snake, but it was not hurt.

BREAK

Like *kill*, but quite possibly with varying $_3$BE.STATEs (e.g., bent, damaged) entailed and BE.BROKEN only a ready inference. For example, Mandarin Resultative Verb Constructions™ allow "break something bent".
Ragu broke the stick, but the stick didn't break (it bent).
Ragu broke the stick, but the stick didn't break (it only deflected off the stone).
Ragu broke the stick on the stone, but the stick didn't even hit the stone.

CUT

This may prove a good verb for testing the relevance of intentionality. Must the subject be intentional? If not, does explicitly encoded (non-)intentionality affect realization?

Animate subject:

Fred cut the snake, but it wasn't cut
Fred cut his arm, but he wasn't hurt/cut
Fred cut the snake, but it wasn't harmed (knife in contact?)
Fred cut the snake, but it wasn't hit (no contact)
Fred cut himself, but he wasn't hurt/cut
Fred cut himself on the/his arm
Fred cut Samuel
accidentally in the above?

Scenario:

Fred was chopping wood, the axe slipped at the same time a snake came out of the wood pile. Can you say *Fred cut the snake* if the axe then cut the snake? Does Fred need to still be holding the axe at the time of snake impact? What if the axe missed the snake?

Inanimate subject:
In the above scenario, can you say *The axe cut the snake*?

Can *cut* be used in examples like *The thorn cut me as I walked by*? or *I cut myself on the thorn*? Can realization be defeated in these examples?

Remember:
Check for acceptability of such adverbials as *accidentally* in the above sentences.

HIT

Be sure of the core semantics of the verb(s) in the language. Are there different verbs dependent on the instrument? If so, do these vary w.r.t. intentionality? Is there an instrument neutral "hit"?:
John Major hit the servant, but the servant wasn't harmed.
John Major hit the servant, but the servant wasn't hit.
John Major hit the servant, and the servant died (from it).

kick

= to hit with foot? to swing foot?
John Major kicked the servant, but the servant wasn't harmed.
John Major kicked the servant, but the servant wasn't hit.
Scenario: John Major was walking quickly across the room and stumbled. In the process, his leg came in contact with his servant. Can you say: **John Major kicked the servant?**

club/whip/...

Try the above sentences with an instrument specific verb. Any differences?

MAKE SOMEONE ANGRY

Do change-of-psychological-state predicates behave the same as change-of-physical-state-predicates?

Scenario 1.: Hennie did not want to get the policeman angry (e.g. he was just trying to do something, and the policeman didn't like it)

Can you say: *Hennie angered the policeman* ?
Can you say: *Hennie angered the policeman, but the policemen didn't become angry.* ?

Scenario 2.: Hennie wanted to get the policeman angry (e.g. to distract him from a crime nearby)
Hennie angered the policeman, but the policemen didn't become angry.

CLIMB

Is this a change of state verb?
Does *climb* take an object (ladder) or only a locative (on the ladder)
Hanuman climbed the ladder, but the nth step broke, so he couldn't get/go up. (n= first, second, middle, last)
Hanuman climbed the ladder, but the nth step broke, so he couldn't climb it. (n= whatever was interesting from the previous sentence)
Alternatively: *Hanuman climbed on the ladder, but the nth step broke, so he couldn't climb (on) it.* (n= whatever was interesting from the previous sentence)

Does *climb* require motion/path marking whenever there is translational motion represented? E.g., climb on an exercise machine is fine, but climb up on a real ladder is only climbing if one goes "up" (contra English *clamber*).

FALL ASLEEP / PUT TO SLEEP (≠ KILL) / SLEEP

These are typically derivationally related and are good for comparing change of state, causative, and stative predicates together. Variants of the following:
John fell asleep last night, but it was so noisy he couldn't fall asleep
John slept last night, but it was so noisy he couldn't fall asleep
John fell asleep last night, but it was so noisy he couldn't sleep
John put the baby to sleep last night, but it was so noisy she couldn't sleep

CROSS

I'm not sure why, but Tamil "cross" was especially sensitive to the second predicate.
Charon crossed the river, but the current was strong, so he couldn't cross it.
Charon crossed the river, but the current was too strong, so it was impossible to cross (impersonal construction).
The ferry crossed the river, but the current was strong, so it couldn't cross.
The ferry crossed the river, but the current was strong, so it was impossible to cross (impersonal construction).

GO TO SEE A MOVIE

Obviously, you might want to vary this, but an explicit GO TO GOAL predicate is worth testing to see if it behaves like the simpler predicates above. Also, clearly no patient.
The family went to the play last night, but it was too crowded, so they couldn't get there to see it.
The family saw the play last night, but it was too crowded, so they couldn't see it.

EAT

Quantification. Plus, what does *eat* mean anyway? Activity verb? Agent cause patient to go into tummy?
Wimpy ate the hamburger, but he didn't eat all of it.
Wimpy ate the hamburger, but he didn't eat it.
Wimpy ate the hamburger, but he didn't swallow all of it.
Wimpy ate the hamburger, but he didn't swallow any of it.

CHOKE/CLEAN

Talmy analyses different verbs as having different semantic entailments about their usual realizations. That is, differences in defeasibility across languages are not differences in constructions or grammatical differences, but have to do with the semantic types of verbs typically found in each language – similar to his lexicalization patterns analysis of "path-conflating" verbs, etc. Finding */OK translation equivalents to his English examples of differing semantics of the verbs giving different strengths of entailed realization may help test his position:
The stranger choked/stabbed/strangled/drowned him.
*The stranger choked/stabbed/?strangled/*drowned him to death.*
I soaked/washed/cleaned the shirt — but it didn't become clean.
Note that despite the same root: cleaning something does not entail that it must be resultantly clean for many English speakers. Verbs deriving from *clean.Adj, (be.)white,* etc. may or may not require the end result of the stative source.

Aktionsart of specific verbs and aspectual marking in general

- As with "try to" constructions, use care about any marking for aspect. You need to determine (as best you can): 1) Which aspects of an event are encoded in Change of State verbs in your language (or some motivated subset of them); 2) which are morphologically / paradigmatically / constructionally marked; and 3) which are left to pragmatic inference.

- What aspectual marking is obligatory/common/available in the grammar?

- What are the semantic values and normal interpretations for "completive", "incompletive", "progressive",...?

- How does evidential marking affect the interpretation? (Is evidential marking obligatory in any cases?)

- How is intentionality of the grammatical subject denoted/conveyed?
- Is there an implicational hierarchy of verb types (of commitment to the completion of event realization) along the lines of kill>cut>hit>wash>go? (i.e., a hierarchy which can be analysed in terms of more commitment to realization for accomplishment verb and achievement verbs with less for activity verbs).

Questions to ask of (or at least keep in mind for) each elicited utterance

- Often the exact phrasing of other clauses will have profound effects on the acceptability of the whole utterance. For example, the Tamil translation of "I crossed the river in a boat, but it was impossible to cross" rated fine with my primary informant. However, "I crossed the river in a boat, but I didn't cross it" was completely unacceptable. An interpretation of this: second clauses which supply information which is about the world or state of affairs (first example) only indirectly contradicts the event realization of the first clause. When there is a direct contradiction (second example), the sentence becomes unacceptable. In Tamil generally, one can say sentences with the "meaning" X DO CAUSE Y BE.STATE, but Y NOT BE.STATE. Whereas, X CAUSE Y BE.STATE, but X NOT CAUSE Y BE.STATE is non-sensible in Tamil — the second clause does not provide additional information; it is simply contradictory. This is worth exploring in any language.

- Are there any special conditions (aspects, modifiers – especially within the main clause) under which the event realization becomes defeasible?

- Conversely, if full realization of a minimal verb can be regularly defeated, what contructions block this defeasibility (or strictly entail full realization)? For example, in Tamil, one can readily say the translational equivalent of "He broke the vase, but it didn't break." However, one **cannot** say "He broke-Perfective the vase, but it didn't break."

- Can the semantics of the verbs suggested (e.g., "kill") be periphrastically expressed ($\cong$ *make die*)? or must they? If they can be expressed both ways, what effect on realization do the two formulations require?

- What morphological classes do these verbs fall into? Alternatively, which verbs classify with which other verbs, both formally and semantically?

- How does the presence of adverbials corresponding to those in the following list affect the interpretation of event realization? : *accidentally, on purpose, for X time, in X time, almost, definitely.*

- How does the definiteness of the object affect defeasibility? One would expect indefinite objects to be more likely to be asserted as not-affected. Incorporated objects even more so *(We went fishing/berry-picking, but didn't catch/find any)*. Do indefinite/impersonal agents affect the readings?

"Try to"

In investigating event realization and it's conditions of defeasibility, it is important to ensure that any construction with a semantic value of the sort "attempt to V" or "to almost V" is kept distinguished from the main elicitation questions.

That's all for now. Have fun!