

Semi-copulas: event composition and aspect composition

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The empirical domain of this paper are semi-copula verbs (*become* and *stay* in addition to the regular *be* copulas in English, Portuguese, Spanish and other languages). These verbs are a complicated case of hybrid behavior, since, with auxiliary and aspectual verbs, they share the property of taking predicates as complements and not assigning thematic roles on their own; at the same time, these verbs do not behave as auxiliary or regular aspectual verbs (e.g. *begin*) and causatives (*make*), since they can appear with non-verbal complements but surprisingly never with infinitival complements (a well-known property of raising verbs like *seem*). What all these verbs have in common is that they seem to act as verbalizers: they take non-VP predicates as complements and combine with them to form an eventuality of sorts or a complex eventuality having BE as part of its meaning component (Jackendoff 1996). Verbalizers are either transparent with respect to aspectual composition (all the work is done by the complement and its argument) or they denote one basic subevent that needs to be combined with another subevent (state or process), besides providing category information. Because they denote basic event information to form a good testing ground for issues related to the licensing of subevents.

In the mapping to the syntax, one commonly held assumption (explicitly stated in Hovav and Rappaport 1998 as the 'Argument Realization Condition') is that each argument XP in the syntax must be associated with an identified subevent in the event structure. In its strongest version, there are as many arguments as there are basic subevents. The question we would like to address in this paper is whether the converse is also true. Must subevent predicates, such as CAUSE, BECOME, etc, from which events are composed, always be associated to an argument in order to be visible in the syntax, i.e., to be modifiable, or can we have subevent predicates unlinked to arguments but still visible and able to be modified?

Using tools from Distributed Morphology and the Generative Lexicon, we would like to argue that not only arguments need to be linked to subevents but subevents also need to be associated to arguments (directly or indirectly) in order to be part of an event structure and affect the aspectual class of a verbal complex. We argue, however, that although all unlinked syntactically realized arguments result in unacceptability, not all subevent predicates that are unlinked to arguments cause unacceptability. The unlinked predicate has in some cases the potential to remain as part of the constant and idiosyncratic meaning of the verb complex. Crucially, however, this subevent cannot participate in the aspectual composition of the expression nor can it be modified.