

Resultative Predicates in English*

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1. Introduction

Vanden Wyngaerd (2001: 71), citing the following pair of examples from Tortora (1998: 342), argues that PPs have a wider distribution in resultatives than do adjectives.

- (1) a. The wedding cake melted into a slimy mess.
- b. *The wedding cake melted ugly.

Hoekstra (1992:162), based on the distinction between stage-level and individual-level predicates, says that ‘location denoting predicates, PPs, have a much wider distribution in resultatives, as locatives are very rarely, if ever, properties of individuals.’¹ Beck and Snyder (2001:49), from a different point of view, argue that the resultative construction is relatively infrequent in spoken English, whereas verb-particle constructions such as *Chris picked the book up* are quite common.

In this paper, I will try to explain why PPs have a wider distribution in resultatives than do APs based on the analysis of resultatives by Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001). In this analysis, PPs headed by *into* are mainly considered.

2 Types of Verbs and Resultative Predicates

Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001), based on the typology of resultatives, divide verbs into three types: verbs of transformation, activity verbs and de-adjectival verbs which encode the resultant state.² They assume that these verbs are different from each other with respect to the selection of resultatives, as shown in (2).

- (2) a. Verbs of transformation are compatible with PP but not with AP resultatives.

- b. Activity verbs select for AP, but not PP resultatives.
- c. De-adjectival verbs are incompatible with both AP and PP resultatives.
(Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001:757))

The selection of resultativeness in (2) derives from the following examples.

(3) Verbs of Transformation

- a. The spy shredded/tore the documents.
- b. The spy shredded/tore the documents into pieces.³
- c. *The spy shredded/tore the documents illegible.

(4) Activity Verbs

- a. John wiped/brushed/scrubbed the floor.
- b. John wiped/brushed/scrubbed the floor clean.
- c. *John wiped/brushed/scrubbed the floor (in)to a shiny surface.

(5) De-adjectival Verbs

- a. The alarm awakened the hotel guests.
- b. *The alarm awakened the hotel guests alert.
- c. *The alarm awakened the hotel guests into early risers.

(Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001:757))

Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001) assign the following primary templates to the three types of verbs.

- (6) a. Verbs of transformation: X CAUS y XFORM <manner> (y')
- b. Activity verbs: X ACT <manner> ON y
- c. De-adjectival verbs: X CAUS y BECOME <state>

(Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001:759))

They also assign the following secondary templates to verbs of transformation and activity verbs when they occur in the resultative construction.

- (7) a. Verbs of transformation: X CAUS y XFORM (y') & y BECOME y'
 - b. Activity verbs: X ACT <manner> ON y & y BE <state>
- (Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001:759))

In order to account for the difference in acceptability in (3)-(5), Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001) propose the following two conditions.

- (8) Check Off Condition: All secondary templates must be checked off against corresponding elements in a primary template.
 - (9) Unique State Condition: <state> may occur at most once in a template.
- (Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001:760))

Condition (8) says that two distinct *ys* must co-refer and condition (9) implies that if the primary template contains <state>, the secondary template must not contain another <state>.

Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001) argue that these conditions rule out the unacceptable examples in (3)-(5) as follows. In the case of verbs of transformation, the secondary template requires a new entity *y'* made by the process of transformation. This is why a verb of transformation allows only a PP resultative, as shown in (3b). In the case of activity verbs, the secondary template does not require a new entity *y'*; therefore, an activity verb allows only an AP resultative, as shown in (4b). Finally, de-adjectival verbs which encode a resultant state do not allow another state; therefore, they do not take a resultative, as shown in (5).

3. Bounded and Unbounded

There has been much discussion on the relation between the resultative construction and (un)boundedness. Vanden Wyngaerd (2001: 64) proposes the following generalization.

- (10) Restriction on Resultatives: Resultative predicates denote a bounded scale.

The following facts derive from the generalization in (10).

- (11) a. Tim danced himself {completely/almost/half/*very} tired.
 - b. Max shouted himself {completely/almost/half/*very} hoarse.
 - c. The joggers ran the pavement {completely/almost/half/*very} thin.
 - d. Charley laughed himself {completely/almost/half/*very} silly.
- (Vanden Wyngaerd (2001: 64))

Since the adverb *very* qualifies unbounded scales, it cannot occur in the resultative construction.

Vanden Wyngaerd (2001:67) also argues that the bad variants in (12) all involve unbounded scale adjectives. He assumes that the resultative constructions must satisfy the restriction on resultatives, as shown in (10).

- (12) a. Mickey laughed himself *intelligent/silly.
 - b. The New Age sounds emanating from the clock ticked the baby awake/ asleep/*fat/*thin/*gifted.
- (Vanden Wyngaerd (2001: 67))

The fact that unbounded adjectives cannot appear in (12) seems to imply, as noted in Vanden Wyngaerd (2001), that that PPs have a wider distribution in resultatives than do adjectives. Vanden Wyngaerd argues that PPs are bounded even in nonresultative contexts, as shown in (13) and (14).

- (13) a. He washed the soap {*very/almost/completely} out of the eyes.
 - b. The soap is {*very/almost/completely} out of his eyes.
 - (14) a. He shaved his beard {*very/almost/completely} off.
 - b. His beard is {*very/almost/completely} off.
- (Vanden Wyngaerd (2001:71))

In relation to *intelligent* and *silly* in (12a), Hoekstra (1992: 162) observes that individual-level predicates cannot occur in the resultative construction, as shown in (15).

- (15) a. John laughed himself sick.
b. *John laughed himself intelligent. (Hoekstra (1992: 162))

It is in order to note again that Hoekstra (1992: 162) assumes that ‘location denoting predicates, PPs, have a much wider distribution in resultatives.’

4. Two Readings of *Into*

Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001: 761) say that ‘the preposition *into* refers to a transformation.’ It seems to me that PPs headed by *into* have two readings in resultatives: a transformation and a change of state (or location). Consider the following examples.

- (16) a. The spy shredded the documents into pieces. (=3b)
b. John hammered the metal into the ground. (Weckler (2005: 256))
c. The professor talked us into a stupor.
d. Harry coughed himself into insensibility.
e. Bill walked himself into a coma.
(Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004: 536, 537, 549))
f. He ran himself into the ground. (Faber and Marial Usón (1999: 170))
g. I lived myself into all things. (Helen Keller (1902: 36))
h. The potter rounded the clay into a ball.
(Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001:761))
i. John drank himself into an early grave.
j. John golfed himself into a divorce.

These examples indicate that PPs headed by *into* have several readings. For example, sentence (16a) refers to a transformation and (16c) a change of state. It is also interesting to note that (16b) refers to a change of location. Other examples have change of state readings. The fact that the preposition *into* is frequently used in resultatives seems to derive from its LCS, as shown in (17).⁴

- (17) into: [_{Path} TO ([_{Place} IN ([_{Thing}])))]

In (17), Place can refer to a state. Sentence (18), for example, has a state reading.

(18) John is in good health.

The LCS shown in (17) is compatible with a transformation and a change of state, since it contains a directional Path TO. It is helpful here to note that Helen Keller uses *into* frequently in her books. It seems to me that this is because the preposition *into* can refer to a change of state in many cases.⁵ These data indicate that PPs have a wider distribution in resultative than do APs, because APs have only change of state readings.

5 Concluding Remarks

It is often said that PPs have a wider distribution than do APs. We have seen that this observation derives from the fact that PPs have two readings in the resultative construction. If the two conditions proposed by Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001) are correct, PPs are compatible with transformation and change of state readings. This is because the PP headed by *into*, for example, provides a new entity y' or refers to a change of state. Furthermore, the PP headed by *into* denotes a bounded scale, as shown in (17). Boundedness can be regarded as a basic element of the resultative construction.

Notes

*I am grateful to Guy Modica for acting as an informant. Needless to say, all remaining errors and inadequacies are my own.

1 Hoekstra (1992: 159) observes that *be smoking* is a stage-level predicate and the simple present *smoke* an individual-level predicate. It is helpful here to look at Vanden Wyngaerd (2001). He regards the *there*-sentence as a test distinguishing stage- and individual-level predicates, as shown in (i).

(i) There are firemen available/*intelligent. (Vanden Wyngaerd (2001: 69))

Example (i) indicates that the individual-level predicate *intelligent* is not compatible with the *there*-sentence. For discussion on the difference between stage- and individual-level predicates, see Carlson (1977, 1980).

2 Fong, Fellbaum and Lebeaux (2001) also mention the following types of resultatives, but they do not demonstrate their templates.

- (i) a. hammer the metal flat
b. hammer the metal into a bowl
- (ii) a. The substance froze/solidified solid/hard.
b. The substance froze/solidified into a hard block.

Since *hammer* is regarded as an activity verb, it will be necessary to discuss the similarity and difference between this type of activity verbs and verbs such as *wipe*, *shred* and *scrub* which select for AP, but not PP resultative. In the case of *freeze*, for example, it encodes a resultant state. It will also be necessary to consider why it allows another resultant state, as shown in (ii). This fact may be accounted for by the further specification constraint (FSC) proposed by Tortora (1998). Tortora (1998: 341) says that ‘a verb that is inherently delimited may occur with a resultative, so long as the resultative acts as a further specification of the result already inherent in the verb’s meaning.’ Let us look again at (1), repeated here as (iii).

- (iii) a. The wedding cake melted into a slimy mess.
b. *The wedding cake melted ugly.

Vanden Wyngaerd (2001:71), following FSC, says that ‘a verb that is inherently delimited (such as *arrive* or *melt*) may be accompanied by a resultative.’

3 It is in order to notice that Rapoport (1993) does not regard sentences like (3b) as the resultative construction. According to her, ‘the PP modifies the action of the verb, and not the NP’s resultant state.’ (Rapoport (1993: 181)). Rapoport, citing the following sentences, says that these examples are not true resultatives.

- (iv) a. Ben cut the bread into pieces.
- b. Joshua broke the glass into pieces.
- c. Gawain stabbed him to death. (Rapoport (1993:181))

Rapoport's observation indicates that it will be necessary to define the resultant state in the resultative construction.

- 4 For discussion of the LCS of *into*, see Jackendoff (1983, 1990).
- 5 For relevant discussion, see Yoneyama (2009).

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