Thematic roles, aspect and the ACH

Since thematic roles are directly associated with entailments, this paper investigates the ACH, encoding thematic roles based on Reinhart (2000, 2003), which distinguishes the intentional planning agent [+m], from the causal, executive agent [+c]. Predicates assigning [–m] to subjects are argued to have performative, veridical force, presupposing the intended result of the corresponding [+m] atelic activity. Focus reflexives, perception verbs and Dutch data support this account.

Perception verbs commonly lexicalize the fundamental conceptual distinction between atelic activities of gathering information by sensory means and their causally correlated effects of assimilating that information cognitively, with aspectually telic accomplishments, cf. (1).

(1) a. John **watched** the game, but he did not **see** Mary score.
   b. John **listened** to the concert, but he did not **hear** the trumpet play.
   c. John **touched** the blanket, but he did not **feel** its softness.

Entailments hold only from the telic to the atelic predicates, e.g. (1a) is true, either if John simply failed to see Mary score while he was watching, or Mary did not score at all. The latter is excluded if (1a) is complemented with a sentence-final focus reflexive *himself*, inducing a veridical presupposition that Mary did score and attributing perceptual failure to the subject, cf. (2).

(2) John$_i$ watched the game, but he$_i$ did not see Mary score himself$_i$.

Sentence-final focus reflexives co-vary only with animate, agentive subjects, even though they are not in argument position and hence not properly bound by the subject (Papangeli & ter Meulen (2011)).

Other epistemic verbal predicates have thematically distinct atelic and telic uses, cf. (3).

(3) a. John explained/clarified the result to his students for weeks/in just one class.
   b. The result explained/clarified the problem to the students instantly/in just one class
      /*for a week.
   c. The power point presentation explained/clarified the problem to the students
      instantly/in just one class/*for a week.

The agent [+c, +m] is assigned to its subject in (3a), as John is both the intentional, as well as the executive, causal agent, modified by either atelic or telic ADV. In its exclusively telic uses (3bc) [-c, -m] theme role is assigned to its subject in (3b), as the result has neither an intentional nor an executive role, and the instrument role [+c, -m] to the presentation in (3c), a causal role, but no intentional one. The conceptual relation between an intentional agent x's activity of explaining y to z and the x's intended result of making y understand why or how z happened, is entirely open, since no one can force someone else to change his mind. As in (1), an [+c, +m] agent might end explaining something unsuccessfully, as the completed explanation may not be understood as such. They only license sentence final focus reflexives, cf. (4abc).

(4) a. John$_{(+c,+m)}$ explained the result to his students himself.
   b. * The result$_{(-c, -m)}$ explained the problem to the students itself.
   c. * The powerpoint$_{(+c, -m)}$ presentation explained the problem to the students itself.

In Dutch (5abc), translating (4abc), these thematically distinct predicates are lexically distinct, still supporting an entailment from telic **verklaren** (*explain* - theme subject) to the either telic or atelic **uitleggen** (*explain* – agent subject).

   (5) a. Jan$_{(+c,+m)}$ **legde** het resultaat aan zijn studenten (zelf) **uit**.
         J lay-$_{PAST3PS}$ the result to his students (himself) out.
      b. Het resultaat$_{(-c, -m)}$ **verklaarde** het probleem voor de students (*zelf).
         The result ver-clear-$_{PAST3PS}$ the problem to the students (*itself)
      c. De powerpoint presentatie$_{(+c,-m)}$ **verklaarde** het resultaat voor de studenten (*zelf).
         The pp ver-clear$_{PAST3PS}$ the results to the students (*itself).

The telic => atelic entailments enrich the telic only verb meaning, assigning a [–m] role to the subject with performative, veridical force. Since **verklaren** in certain contexts is translated with *declare,* requiring veridical complements analogous to the [–m] subjects of *explain*, this account finds independent support: if the intended effect of the corresponding [+c, +m] action is realized, it cannot subsequently be denied.

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