

## Analyzing Italian Motion Verbs within the RRG framework: the Causative Active Accomplishments

Verbs of motion have been the object of several semantic analysis, since they are intrinsically related to the spatial dimension, which represents, together with the temporal dimension, the basis of human cognition.

The analysis focuses on causative movement verbs which have a complex structure consisting of a predicate indicating the causing action or event linked to a predicate indicating the resulting state of affairs. Methodologically, the concept of transitivity is important, since only transitive verbs which imply an induced motion of the theme have been examined here. See examples in (1):

- (1) a. *I soldati lo conducono in una stanza.*  
'The soldiers lead him into a room.'
- b. *Un coinquilino lo trasportò nel vicino ospedale.*  
'A neighbour carried him into the near hospital.'
- c. *La polizia ha pressato la folla sull'altro lato.*  
'The police pressed the crowd to the other side.'
- d. *Il postino consegnò una lettera a Mary.*  
'The postman delivered a letter to Mary.'

Examples above illustrate verbs belonging to different lexical fields: accompaniment, transporting, pushing, and delivering verbs, respectively (Ibanez Moreno & Ortigosa Pastor 2004). Focusing on *Aktionsart*, they are *causative active accomplishment* verbs invoking a state of affairs that goes from the original point of the theme to the endpoint.

The data are analyzed within the functional theoretical framework proposed by the model of Role and Reference Grammar [RRG] (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005). RRG is unique in recognizing bounded activities as a distinct *Aktionsart* category, labeling them 'active accomplishments' (Van Valin 2005: 33). As the examples in (1a-d) show, the verbs license an agent and a theme which carry out the action of moving from one location to another together. As Van Valin (2013) observed, the bounded (telic) causative actions are incremental processes, which are 'measured out' by the incremental theme or path. Induced motion verbs like *condurre* 'lead', *trasportare* 'carry', *pressare* 'press', or *consegnare* 'deliver' have an 'incremental path' (Dowty 1991), which is simultaneously (' $\wedge$ ') the distance covered (the PROCess component) by both the agent and theme. A possible semantic logical structure is presented in (2):

- (2) [**do'** (x, [**predicate'** (x, z)] CAUSE [**do'**(z,[**go'**(z)])  $\wedge$  PROC **cover.distance'** (x, z)] & INGR **be-at'** (y, z)

The logical structure in RRG shows the three maximally possible arguments: the two macroroles (ACTOR and UNDERGOER) and the primitive abstract predicate (LOCATION); if we specify the corresponding microroles: AGENT, THEME, and GOAL. A corpus-based analysis will allow to observe how the semantic restrictions of such predicates operate on the thematic roles of the arguments (e.g. the semantic features [+/-animate] or [+/-human]).

During the discussion, the causative active accomplishments will be compared with other accomplishment movement verbs.

We will show how RRG can be useful for describing and analyzing the syntactic and semantic structures of such Italian constructions, in order to capture the ambiguities of these constructions through the mapping of semantic relations onto the syntactic ones (and vice versa), which instantiate a particular type of clause linkage constructions.

## References

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