

Double prevention in Austronesian and Salish

Ileana Paul and Henriëtte de Swart

University of Western Ontario, Utrecht University

Many languages have “completive” markers: morphemes that indicate that an action has culminated. Fauconnier (2013) points out that many of these completives involve additional meanings: non-volitionality, suddenness, ‘manage to’, or surprise. On the basis of a comparison of four languages, we argue that the term “completive” is a misnomer, and culmination falls out as a side effect of the double prevention semantics that underlies such markers. We analyze double prevention in the enriched model of causation of Wolff (2007, 2014), show how it accounts for the different readings, and explain how double prevention leads to culmination.

The data come from two Austronesian languages (Malagasy, Phillips 2000; Tagalog, Dell 1983/4) and two Salish languages (Skwxwú7mesh, Jacobs 2011; St’át’imcets, Davis et al. 2009). All four have dedicated morphology that has been analyzed as completive in the literature. Crucially, completives in all four allow for the range of meanings discussed by Fauconnier, but in addition an ability reading is also available. Example (1) illustrates the *maha-* prefix in Malagasy and (2) illustrates the limited control suffix *-nexw* in Skwxwú7mesh.

- (1) Mahaongotra fantsika amin’ ny tanana Rabe. [Malagasy]
PRS-AHA-pull.out nail with DET hand Rabe
‘Rabe can pull out nails with his hands.’
- (1) chen kwélash-nexw-Ø ta míxalh [Skwxwú7mesh]
1S.SUBJ shoot-LCTR-3OBJ DET bear
‘I managed to shoot the bear.’ or ‘I accidentally shot the bear. (Jacobs 2011:192)

To account for the range of readings, we adopt Wolff’s (2007, 2014) force-theoretic framework that allows for a fine-grained approach to causation and enablement relations. According to Wolff, enablement or allow relations are often complex in that they rely on the composition of two prevention (‘cause not’) relations: B prevents C, but A prevents B, so A enables/allows C. One of the interesting features of the prevent relation is that it doesn’t require events: the state of the plug being in the sink prevents the water from flowing down the drain, and no input of energy is needed. Moreover, forces may be virtual, grounded in world knowledge or the specific context at hand (e.g. gravity acting on the water).

We treat completives as markers that encode double prevention. The ability and ‘manage to’ readings arise as effects of the semantics in the following way (e.g. (1)): the nails are firmly embedded in a piece of wood and resist extraction but Rabe overcomes this inertia (with strength or persistence). In other words, there is something preventing the nails from being pulled out, but Rabe prevents this and is able to (or manages to) pull them out. For the accidental readings, e.g. (2), we can say that I was intending to shoot the deer, but then something distracted me and prevented my intended behaviour, and I accidentally shot the bear.

There is one important point of variation among the languages discussed: the entailment of culmination varies within and across these languages. In Malagasy, *maha-* entails culmination in the past and future tenses, but the present tense gives rise to a dispositional or general ability reading (1). In St’át’imcets, however, culmination is only an implicature (Davis et al. 2009). The interaction of culmination with tense/aspect weakens the claim that completion is hard-wired into the semantics of these markers. In Wolff’s system, culmination is not necessarily entailed by

double prevention. To account for the variation in culmination, we argue that the completive markers all have a circumstantial modal base (Davis et al. 2009). We show how to extend this analysis to the languages under discussion in the different tenses and aspects.

References

- Davis, H., L. Matthewson, and H. Rullmann. 2009. “Out of control” marking as circumstantial modality in St’át’imcets. In *Cross-linguistic semantics of tense, aspect, and modality*, eds. L. Hogeweg, H. de Hoop & A. Malchukov, 205–244. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dell, F. 1983/1984. An aspectual distinction in Tagalog. *Oceanic Linguistics* 22/23, 175-206.
- Fauconnier, S. 2013. Completives as markers of non-volitionality. *Folia Linguistica* 47:35-53.
- Jacobs, P. 2011. *Control in Skwxwú7mesh*. PhD thesis, UBC.
- Phillips, V. 2000. The interaction between prefix and root: The case of *maha-* in Malagasy. In *Formal issues in Austronesian linguistics*, eds. I. Paul, V. Phillips & L. Travis, 85-104. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Wolff, P. 2007. Representing causation. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 136:82-111.
- Wolff, P. 2014. Causal pluralism and force dynamics. In *Causation in grammatical structures*, eds. B. Copley & F. Martin, 100-119. Oxford: Oxford University Press.