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Event Structure

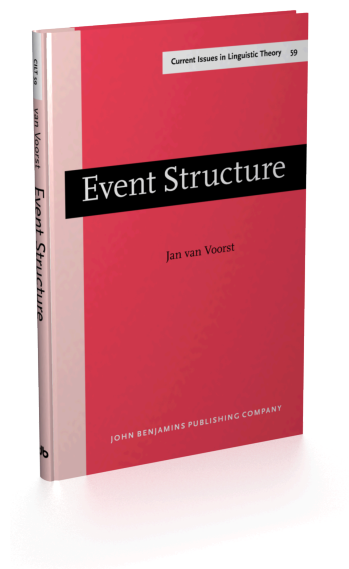
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ABSTRACT

A relation is established in this study between the semantics of the subject and the direct object noun phrase and aspect. The notion of event is central to my analysis. Events have a beginning and an end. This means in temporal terms that events have a point in time at which they begin and a point in time at which they end. However, events are not defined in temporal terms but in spatial terms. This means that they are defined in terms of the entity that can be used to identify their beginning and the entity that can be used to identify their end. These two entities are denoted by the subject and the direct object NP respectively. The name of the event is provided by the verb. It is these three notions that make up Event Structure: the entity denoting the beginning, i.e. the object of origin; the entity denoting the end, i.e. the object of termination; and the event itself. The three primitives are independently motivated in the domain of tense interpretations of sentences. Their presence or absence affects these interpretations in a systematic way.

An important theoretical consideration of my analysis is that semantic notions are only relevant to a grammatical system when they strictly tie in with phenomena occurring in that system. This means in a more traditional way that there must be a strong connection between form and meaning. The relation between Event Structure and the grammatical system is shown throughout this thesis. Different phenomena in English, Dutch and French are explained in terms of Event Structure.

Subject semantics is analyzed in terms of the notion of object of origin or in terms of the related notion of object of actualization. Unaccusativity is shown to be directly related to the presence of an object of termination in an intransitive construction. Passive is sensitive to the presence of an object of origin or of actualization in the construction it operates on. Resultative constructions can be understood better when direct objects occurring in them are not analyzed as objects of the action but as pure objects of termination. Finally, a tentative analysis is given of the semantics of the French

