Resume

The main topic of the dissertation is the nature of inner aspect of the VP, and the relation between the decompositional and the quantificational approaches to this problem. Decompositional approaches, such as Ramchand (2002) or Pustejovsky (1995), analyze eventualities into simpler components, organized by some kind of structure. In this view, an eventuality is telic if, in decomposition, it can be shown to involve a result component (also referred to as the culmination or termination component, or as the telos). Quantificational approaches, such as Krifka (1998) or Borer (2005b) see telicity as a property of the predicate of an eventuality, usually described as boundedness, lack of the subinterval property, or a specified quantity. The major advantage of the decompositional approaches is that they directly match the syntax-semantics interface of the VP with the conceptual image of an eventuality. Quantificational approaches blur the picture in this respect, because they involve effects like distributive readings, which are not a typical interpretational component of the VP domain. On the other hand, the major advantage of the quantificational approaches is that they assign similar or the same properties to (the predicates of) eventualities and nominal expressions. This enables them to capture the phenomenon of incremental themes (participants that appear to measure out the eventuality in which they take part), by relating the predicates of eventualities and those of their arguments.

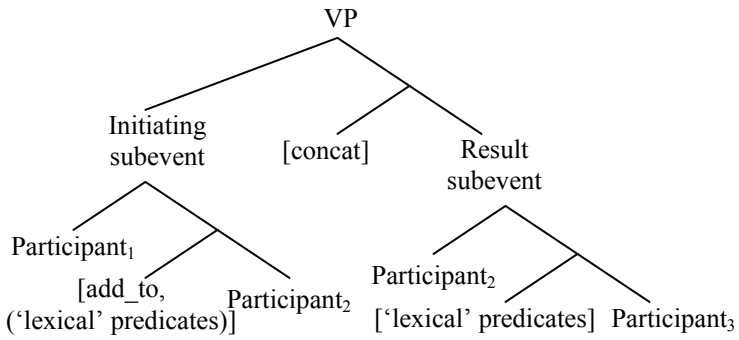
The dissertation presents a new approach, which not only combines the two approaches above, but also shows how they are directly mutually related, and how some quantificational properties can be derived from the domain of decomposition. I start from a relatively traditional decompositional view, in which a telic eventuality is composed of one process and one state (among others, Pustejovsky 1995, Parsons 1990). I refer to the process as the initiating subevent and to the state as the result subevent. This structure, referred as the telic template, involves several restrictions, the major of which is that the same property of the same participant that is affected in the initiating subevent has to be assigned a fixed value in the result subevent. Including this restriction also includes a phase transition as a part of the interpretation of the telic template: there is a point at which the sequence of values assigned to the affected property of the affected participant in the initiating subevent switches to the fixed value assigned to it in the result subevent. In other words, there is one temporal point at which the initiating subevent ends and the result subevent starts.

It is shown how the phase transition component of the telic template defines a unit of counting for any eventuality represented by the template. While atelic eventualities, processes and states, have the properties of a mass: they are unbounded, undivided and homogeneous, telic eventualities are countable, and the unit of counting is one phase transition from the process in the initiating subevent, to the state in the result subevent. This establishes a direct correspondence between the phase transition component in the semantics of the VP and the classifier, i.e. grammatical number, component in the NP, which has the same effect of defining the unit of counting. And, since countability is a property from the domain of quantification, the component of phase transition is the element that directly connects the decompositional and the quantificational aspects of eventualities.

Having defined a unit of counting, the predicate of a telic eventuality can be subject to countable quantification. This is how telicity produces effects in the domain of quantification.

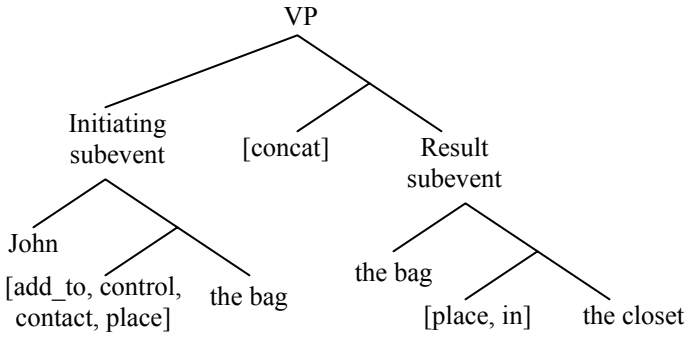
In the template, the relation between the initiating and the result subevent is represented as a concatenation. A phase transition can be seen as an asymmetric concatenation of two phases, in this case a process and a state. This is why the template is structurally represented as a predication involving a two place predicate of concatenation and two arguments: the initiating and the result subevent, as in (1). The predicate marked as *add_to* in the head of the initiating subevent contributes the process interpretation. In the specifier of the initiating subevent stands the participant that initiates this dynamicity ($Participant_1$), and in the complement stands the participant that is affected by the process ($Participant_2$). In the result subevent, the specifier position is taken by the same participant that is affected in the initiating subevent ($Participant_2$), and it is interpreted as the bearer of the result state. The lexical predicate in the head of this subevent, together with the participant in the complement ($Participant_3$), specify the result value of the affected property of $Participant_2$.

(1) The telic template



This is illustrated in (2). In the initiating subevent, John initiates some dynamicity, involving control over this initiation, contact between him and the affected participant and the property of place. The result subevent specifies the property of place of the bag as in (or contained by the place of) the closet. The interpretation of the entire VP is that John initiates a process that affects the place of the bag and at the end of which the bag is in the closet, and that the initiating component involves control by John, his contact with the bag, and perhaps a number of other similar predicates that are not represented for reasons of simplicity.

(2) An example for the template: ‘John put the bag into the closet.’



The telic template is argued to present the verbal counterpart of bare plurals, nominal expressions specified for countability, but lacking any quantification. Just like the nominal plural, the telic template can be subject to quantification. Quantifying predicates project the Quantification Phrase (QP), appearing immediately above the VP. It is argued that tests of inner aspect in fact only indicate whether an eventuality can be interpreted with a quantifying predicate, dividing eventualities to the quantified and non-quantified ones. Since QPs can only project over countable predicates and the telic template defines the unit of counting for the predicate of an eventuality, the set of quantified eventualities is a subset of the set of telic eventualities. However, in their bare plural readings, more commonly referred to as the iterative readings, telic eventualities are non-quantified, which shows that telicity and inner aspect are two different properties.