Towards a root-sensitive approach to event structure

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Decompositional theories of verb meaning generally known as event structural theories hold that verb meanings decompose into event templates and roots (cf. Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 1998; Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 2005; Ramchand, 2008; Alexiadou et al., 2015; Beavers & Koontz-Garboden, 2020). Event templates are responsible for defining the temporal and causal structure of the event. Roots, in contrast, fill in real-world details about the event. An important consequence of this view is that the semantics of the whole syntactic structure and in turn the grammatical properties of the verbs, such as their morphology, aspectual properties or argument structure, are only determined by event templates. In this talk, I argue against this strong division of labor between event templates and roots by showing that roots play a bigger role in grammar and meaning composition. I provide evidence in favor of an event structural theory of verb meaning in which the contributions of event templates and roots need not be mutually exclusive, as assumed in standard decompositional theories, but can complement each other in some cases with grammatical consequences. I contend that root-specific entailments are grammatically relevant as they can have an impact on the syntactic structure and in turn on the grammatical properties of the surface verbs. The overall picture is that roots can impose restrictions on the syntactic structures they associate with and therefore that the semantics of the whole event structure can be fully determined by roots. This suggests that there are semantic components of the event structure that need not be represented in the syntactic structure, but can be encoded directly within the root, therefore resulting in a *simpler syntax* (cf. Culicover and Jackendoff 2005, 2006).

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