The grammar of "counter-to-fact"

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1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic Typology 17 (2013), a newly introduced call-for-contributions rubric "*What exactly is…?*"

Three categories on top of a list of categories in need of clarification because they are "unclear in current descriptive and theoretical practice: avertive, frustrative, apprehensional" (Plank 2013: 267)

OBJECT OF INVESTIGATION

- **Avertive**

- **Frustrative**

- **Apprehensional**

MAIN CLAIM

The linguistic phenomena usually referred to as the *avertive*, the *frustrative* and the *apprehensional* belong not to three but to five – sematically related , and yet – distinct grammatical categories, all of which involve different degrees of counterfactuality of realization of the verb situation in the area of Tense-Aspect-Mood (hence "counter-to-fact TAM categories"):

(i)   *Apprehensional*

(ii)   *Avertive*

(iii) *Frustrated Initiation*

(iv) *Frustrated Completion*

(v)   *Inconsequential*

The reason why these structures have remained a challenge to straightforward linguistic description is that they are <u>semantically elaborate grammatical categories</u> (on the notion of semantically elaborate grammatical categories, cf. Kuteva 2009, 2010), which defy the applicability of traditional approaches to categorization

MAJOR GOAL

To account for these grammatical categories in terms of an adequate model of linguistic categorization

For this purpose, we apply the notion of *Intersective Gradience* (introduced for the first time in the morphosyntactic domain in Aarts 2004, 2007) to the morphosemantic domain

Thus the present approach reconciles two major approaches to linguistic categorization:

- **classical, *Aristotelian* approach**

- **more recent, *gradience/fuzziness* approach**

<u>Sharp</u> categorical <u>boundaries</u> with a <u>gradient</u> <u>number</u> of defining properties of category members

Semantically elaborated grammatical categories: Different categories display <u>strict</u> <u>boundaries</u> and a potential <u>convergence on some features</u>

2. COUNTERFACTUAL SEMANTICALLY ELABORATE CATEGORIES: TENSE-ASPECT-MOOD (TAM)

Semantically elaborate grammatical categories encode <u>more than one</u> schematic meaning across different semantic-conceptual domains (Kuteva 2009, 2010)

Avertive/Non-precipitative (Abbi 1980)/ANA (Kuteva 1998): *A bounded verb situation – viewed as a whole – which was on the verge of taking place in the past, but didn´t:*

Kayardild (Evans 1995: 261)
bulkurdudu   ngijin-   jina   baa- nangarra   krthurr-ina
crocodile.NOM 1SG.POSS- M.ABL bite- nangarra   shin- M.ABL
'A crocodile almost bit me on the leg.'

Grammatical feature values of the Avertive:

- **Past**

- **Imminent**

- **Counterfactual**

- **Perfective**

Proximative (König 1993, Heine 1994)/Prospective (Comrie 1976)/Immediate Future (Comrie 1985):

A temporal phase located close before the initial boundary of the situation described by the main verb

Swahili (Heine 1992)

(a) *Ngoma   i-   na-   taka   ku- pasuka.*

Drum   C9- PRES- want   INF- split

'The drum is about to split.'

(b) *Mvua   i- li-   taka   ku- nyesha.*

rain   it- PAST- want   INF- rain
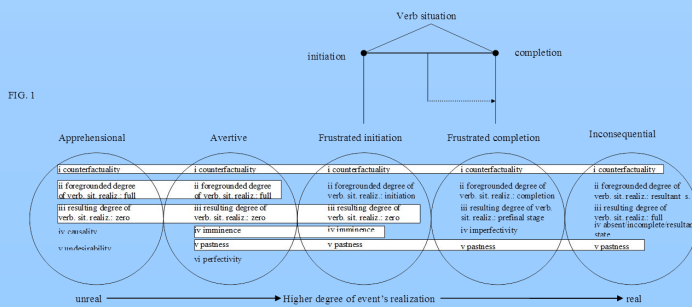
'It was about to rain.'

Grammatical feature values of the Proximative:

  - **Imminent**

The semantics of the Avertive subsumes the semantics of the Proximative

Present proposal

In the TAM semantic-conceptual domain there exist — across languages — at least five counterfactual semantically elaborate grammatical categories

FIG. 1

In this representation the shared components of the various semantically elaborate categories is visualized using 'boxes'.

The (i)-though-(v) ordering: synchronic continuum of the counterfactuality of different degrees of realization of the verb situation

2.1   APPREHENSIONAL

It denotes <u>undesirable</u> verb situations (in the past and non-past) to be avoided:

(1)   Yidiny (Dixon 1980: 380)

Yiŋu	*waguuja*	*garba-*	*ŋ*	*gudaga-*	*ŋgu*
this.ABS	man.ABS	hide-	PRES	dog-	ERG

bajaa-	*l- ji*
bite-	APPREHENSIONAL

'The man is hiding, lest the dog bite him (i.e. for fear that the dog might otherwise bite him).'

Properties:
(i)   Counterfactuality
(ii)   Foregrounded degree of verb situation realization: <u>full</u>
(iii)   Result degree of verb situation realization: <u>zero</u>
(iv)   Undesirability of verb situation
(v)   Causality: Verb Situation 1 – which may also be implicit – causes avoidance of undesirable Verb Situation 2.

2.2   AVERTIVE

A bounded verb situation – viewed as a whole – which was on the verge of taking place in the past, but didn´t.

It denotes past events that <u>almost</u> took place, but did not.

(2) Southern American English (Kytö and Romaine 2006):

      I liketa had a heart attack.

      'I almost had a heart attack.'

Properties:

(i)   Counterfactuality
(ii)   Foregrounded degree of verb situation realization: <u>full</u>
(iii)   Result degree of verb situation realization: <u>zero</u>
(iv) Imminence
(v)   Pastness
(vi) Perfectivity.

2.3   FRUSTRATED INITIATION

It denotes a past verb situation that was <u>about to begin</u>, but was frustrated before initiation.

(3)   Tibetan (Old Tibetan Ramayana, De Jong 1977)

      nu.bo 'i '   *dab.ma* *ñi.mas*   *tshig*   *la*

      my.brother GEN   wing   sun.INS get.burnt   ALL

      thug   *nas*

      arrive/reach/touch   ELA

      '(Bird speaking:) 'My younger brother was about to get burnt by the sun' (but I prevented it).

Frustrated initiation in (3) encoded by:

- <u>Postverbal allative</u> for marking infinitivity

  (instead of postverbal illative)

- <u>Auxiliary</u> *thug* (motion towards a certain point without crossing it).

Properties:

(i)   Counterfactuality

(ii) Foregrounded degree of verb situation
      realization: <u>initiation</u>

(iii) Result degree of verb situation realization: <u>zero</u>

(iv) Imminence

(v)   Pastness.

2.4   FRUSTRATED COMPLETION

It denotes a past verb situation that <u>began</u>, but could not be <u>completed</u>.

(4)   Russian

On   ubeždal   menja,

he   convince.IMPERFECTIVE.PAST   me

no   ne   ubedil.

but   not   convince.PERFECTIVE.PAST

'He tried to convince me, but he couldn't.'

Frustrated completion is indicated by:

● Adversative: *no* "but"

● Negation: *ne* "not"

● Imperfective past in the first clause

● Perfective past in the second clause

Russian (with thanks to Claude Hagège p.c.)

Sneg   tajal,   tajal,

snow   melt.IMPERFECTIVE.PAST   melt.IMPERFECTIVE.PAST

no ne rastajal.

but NEG   melt.PERFECTIVE.PAST

'The snow started to melt but could not melt away completely.'

Properties:

(i)   **Counterfactuality**

(ii)   **Foregrounded degree of verb situation realization: <u>completion</u>**

(iii) **Result degree of verb situation realization: <u>prefinal stage</u>**

(iv)   **Pastness**

(v)   **Imperfectivity of prefinal stage.**

2.5   INCONSEQUENTIAL

It denotes the <u>lack</u> – or the lack of completeness and stability – of the expected <u>results/consequences</u> of a verb situation that has been realized in the past.

(5)   Hua (Haiman 1988: 53)

hako- mana-   *(o)*

seek- 1SG.INCONSEQUENTIAL- (CLAM.VOC)

'I sought (but couldn't find)!'

'I looked (in vain)!'

The Inconsequential is indicated by the affix *–mana-* which is a cluster of the meaning components:

- Pastness (temporal)
- Completion (aspectual)
- Counterfactuality of expected result (modal).

Properties:

(i)   Counterfactuality
(ii)   Foregrounded degree of verb situation
       realization: <u>resultant state</u> after a realized
       verb situation
(iii) Result degree of verb situation realization: f<u>ull</u>.
(iv)   Absent/Incomplete/Instable resultant state
(v)   Pastness

3.   ABSTRACT SEMANTIC PROTOTYPES

Only the Apprehensional has been relatively well-studied in the literature so far

Previous linguistic descriptions

The Avertive, Frustrated Initiation, Frustrated Completion and the Insequential have – most of the time – not been given recognition as grammatical structures in their own right, most likely due to the intrinsic challenge that semantically elaborate grammatical categories present to categorization.

In those cases where some uses of these elaborate categories are recognized, they are usually lumped together – in varying ways – depending on the language examined and the theoretical framework adopted

Following the logic of a "common denominator":

ABSTRACT SEMANTIC PROTOTYPE in order to capture a varying number of these structures

- **Plungian (2001): Antiresultative as a marker of a course of event that has been disrupted**

This notion enables us to include Frustrated Completion and the Inconsequential, but excludes the Avertive and Frustrated Initiation, in which the verb situation was not initiated.

Studies employing abstract semantic prototypes: Intellectually very appealing because they capitalize on grammatical polysemy/heterosemy observed in a number of languages: Aikhenvald (2003), Malchukov (2004), Epps (2008).

Kuteva (1998, 2001): due to lack of lack of sufficient cross-linguistic data indicative of the opposite, The Avertive and Frustrated Initiation are treated as the same gram, whereby the latter is regarded as the less grammaticalized version of the former.

NB: In all of the above accounts it is assumed that the boundaries between functions/uses of the morphemes concerned are fuzzy and blurred

PROBLEM

Accounts based on *abstract semantic prototypes* blur differences between semantically elaborate categories

EXAMPLE

In the typological literature on South American languages the "umbrella" term *Frustrative* has been used for a number of counterfactual TAM categories almost on an "anything goes" principle

Result

A theoretical extreme such as leveling up the differences between two verb situations which are totally opposite in temporal-aspectual-modal nature, i.e. a fully realized one vs. a fully non-realized one:

A FRUSTRATIVE refers to an event that did not have the expected outcome or was finished unsuccessfully. The action can be left unfinished, or be finished but not as expected, or be done in vain. It involves emotive frustration on the part of the speaker, but not necessarily so. It is not an INCOMPLETIVE, which just states that an action is not finished, regardless of whether the outcome was expected or desired. One could say that semantically a FRUSTRATIVE marker can be an INCOMPLETIVE with added frustration in those cases where the action is not finished, but this is only a part of FRUSTRATIVE meaning. Actions may very well be finished, which prohibits INCOMPLETIVE meaning, but not with the desired outcome. (Mueller 2013: 158)

4.   EVIDENCE FOR THE PRESENT APPROACH

We hypothesize:

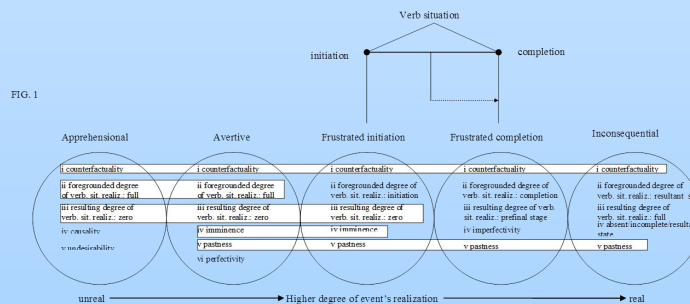The grammatical polysemy claimed for the above structures reflects their historical development

QUESTION: Given such a polysemy, are these distinct grammatical categories in the first place?

ANSWER: Yes

(i) There exist clear-cut formal oppositions between particular TAM counter-to-fact semantically elaborate categories within the system of particular languages, e.g. in Ainu (Refsing 1986) Frustrated Completion and the Inconsequential are marked differently;

(ii) In many cases, when examined in greater detail, what at first sight looks like a grammatical polysemy turns out to involve the occurrence of the same marker within *different* constructions, e.g. in Tariana (Aikhenvald 2003) - *tha* frequently refers to a non-successful action, i.e. the Inconsequential, but in correlation with non-visual Evidentials, it assumes an Avertive function.

5.   CONCLUSION

FIG. 1

In this representation the shared components of the various semantically elaborate categories is visualized using 'boxes'.

The model of "Intersective Gradience" (Aarts: 2004, 2007) relates to different categories that may share a subset of distinctive properties, but maintain strict boundaries.

Aarts 2004, 2007 model: *Intersective Gradience* **based on morpho-syntactic criteria**

Present study: *Intersective Gradience* **based on morpho-semantic criteria**

This extention of Aarts´ model enables us to account for the semantically elaborate categories of the Apprehensional, Avertive, Frustrated Initiation, Frustrated Completion and the Inconsequential

These categories:

(i)   occupy the same conceptual-semantic space, i.e. the TAM counter-to-fact space;

(ii) are notionally related to each other (most plausibly on grounds of grammaticalization processes);

(iii) have sharp boundaries.

The form-meaning pairings studied here are best accounted for if they are treated as belonging to semantically elaborate grammatical categories, which may share some properties but retain distinct and well-defined boundaries.

Such an account recognizes gradience but retains discreteness.

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