Stative Locative Alternations as Type Coercion

Sebastian Bücking, Deutsches Seminar, Universität Tübingen
Frauke Buscher, Sonderforschungsbereich 833, Universität Tübingen

Abstract:

It is controversial whether the dynamics of argument alternations is best captured by lexico-semantic or syntactic means, cf. Ramchand (2013) for an overview. Here we consider Stative Locative Alternations (= SLAs) in German, where a basic locative PP is promoted to the subject while the subject of the basis is integrated via voll mit ('full with') or variants thereof; compare, for instance, the basis Kühe stehen auf dem Platz ('Cows are standing on the square') and its SLA alternate Der Platz steht voll mit Kühen (lit. 'The square stands full with cows'). In contradistinction to Hole's (2013) syntactic analysis of SLAs, we propose a lexicalist alternative that builds on Asher's (2011) dynamic approach to lexical semantics. More concretely, we argue that SLAs are instances of coercion defined as a repair based on type conflicts (cf. the classic example enjoy a cigarette): the voll-phrase presupposes the combination with a filling state, which yields a type conflict with the explicitly given locative state. However, the lexical properties of voll allow for mapping locative states onto filling states and, thus, for a dynamic resolution of the conflict. We draw support for our proposal from the following evidence: (i) the assignment of nominative case to the subject and the subject-verb agreement result from the underlying syntax for free; (ii) SLAs are restricted to locative states and are not compatible with other verb classes; (iii) SLAs are not merely the inversion of the locative relation described by the basis; instead, they correspond to a reconfiguration of the relevant meaning components which is determined and restricted by fine-grained typing information regarding the subject and the states involved.