

THE HELPING-EFFECT OF DATIVE CASE

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German *helfen* (help) + DAT cannot be captured by standard applicative analyses. Employing a post-Davidsonian view, the paper derives the different stative/eventive readings of *helfen*. Eventiveness is tied to DO and BECOME, but not to CAUSE. *Helfen* is related to other uses of dative in German via Brandt 2003.

One of the questions of linguistic theory is how event structure and argument structure interact with each other. This paper argues that event structure can be read off from syntactic structure directly and that the different arguments receive their interpretation because of their position within the structure.

1. Introduction

A number of German verbs such as *helfen* (help), *dienen* (serve), *schaden* (harm) and *nutzen* (avail) display a dative marking on one of their arguments. It has been a standard assumption in linguistic theory that these instances of case assignment are entirely lexically determined. In other words, it has been assumed that dative assignment to the object of these verbs does not follow a regular pattern. In the following, I would like to argue that there is a grammatical mechanism that determines this dative assignment. In order to do this, a look at the event structure of *helfen*-type verbs provides important insight. Hence, the lexical stipulation of dative-assignment is not necessary.

To start with, a closer look is taken at the stative/eventive ambiguity of *helfen*-type verbs along the lines of Engelberg 2005.

2. Kimian and Davidsonian states

In order to capture the different nature of two kinds of statives, Maienborn 2003 and Maienborn 2004 distinguish between two ontologically different kinds of event arguments. On the one hand, the well-known Davidsonian event argument is present in action sentences and in stative sentences with verbs like *sit* and *wait*. In contrast, other stative verbs like *cost* and *resemble*, as well as copular constructions contain an ontologically different argument, called the Kimian state argument.

Three diagnostics serve to distinguish between Kimian and Davidsonian stative expressions: first, manner adverbials, which specify how an event happened, can only modify a Davidsonian state but not a Kimian one. Second, event-related locative adverbials require the presence of the Davidsonian argument as well. As there is no event with Kimian states, this event cannot happen at a particular location. Third, the modifier *ein bißchen* (a little) is ambiguous between a degree reading and a temporal reading when occurring together with a Davidsonian state. In contrast, expressions that contain a Kimian state only display the degree reading.

Following Engelberg 2005, I take these three tests to diagnose the stative reading of *helfen* (help) verbs with sentential subjects.

3. Stative and eventive readings of *helfen*

In the next section, the claim of Engelberg 2005 that verbs like *helfen* (help) have stative readings whenever they contain a sentential subject is extended. The reading containing a Kimian state is not tied to the presence of a sentential subject. In other words, it is not the case that this interpretation arises only if the subject bears the category CP. Examples containing a non-animate DP subject are interpreted as containing a Kimian state as well. Furthermore, I will show that even the stative variant of *helfen* has a complex event structure accommodating a trigger argument, as well as the start and the gradual development of the helping-effect.

3.1. The active reading

The active reading of *helfen*-type verbs can be diagnosed with the help of manner adverbials such as *schnell* (quickly), event-related locative modification like *im Garten* (in the garden) and the time-span reading of *ein bißchen* (a little) which indicates that the running-time of the helping-action was short.

- (1) Die Irmi hat dem Poldi schnell ein bißchen im Garten geholfen.
The Irmi has the Poldi quickly a little in the garden helped.

3.2. The stative reading

Following Engelberg 2005, we see that *helfen*-verbs display a Kimian stative reading. First, manner adverbials do not modify the helping-event but the time until the helping-effect is reached.

- (2) Daß ihn ein Homöopat behandelt hat, / Das Medikament hat dem Poldi
That him a homeopath treated has, / the drug has the Poldi
auf eine bekömmliche Weise geholfen.
in a salubrious way helped.

Second, event-related locative modification is not possible. If they are acceptable at all, these locative modifiers must be interpreted as frame-setters. With respect to (3),

the frame-setting interpretation would be that Poldi happened to be next to a tree, when he experienced the helping-effect.

(3) ??Daß er eine Tablette geschluckt hat, / Die Tablette hat dem Poldi neben
 That he a pill swallowed has, / the pill has the Poldi next to
 einem Baum geholfen.
 a tree helped.

Third, *ein bißchen* (a little) can only express the degree of the helping-effect, not the temporal length of the helping-event.

(4) Daß er die Tablette geschluckt hat, / Die Tablette hat dem Poldi ein
 That he the pill taken has, / the pill has the Poldi a
 bißchen geholfen.
 little helped.

3.3. The helping-effect

That a helping-effect is present in the event structure can be detected with the help of different temporal adverbials. First, time-span adverbials specify the time how long the helping-effect holds. They do not modify the help of the helping-action.

(5) Daß er eine Spritze bekommen hatte, half dem Poldi drei Stunden
 That he an injection got has, helped the Poldi three hours
 lang / während der Behandlung.
 long / during the treatment.

Other temporal modifiers such as *after 20 minutes* express the onset of the helping-effect. They do not specify how long it takes until a helping-action starts.

(6) Die Tablette hat dem Poldi nach zwanzig Minuten geholfen.
 The pill has the Poldi after twenty minutes helped.

Finally, Engelberg 2005 notes that the helping-effect is always relativized with respect to a particular domain. In other words, the helping-effect applies to a particular domain like the financial or the health status.

(7) Das hat dem Poldi finanziell / gesundheitlich geholfen.
 This has the Poldi financially / with respect to his health helped.

In sum, the tests show that even in the stative reading, there is an implicit BECOME-operator present, which expresses the onset of the helping-effect.

4. The structure of *helfen*

The structure of *helfen*-type verbs must, therefore, accommodate the helping-effect, the dative-argument and the actor/trigger argument. Moreover, the variability between an agent and a trigger must be captured by the underlying grammatical structure. The solution provided by Engelberg 2005 relies on non-standard semantical

principles which violate the compositionality principle. In the following, Engelberg's insights are reformulated in the framework of Brandt 2003.

4.1. The dative argument

Engelberg 2005 points out that the helping-effect, in order to be understood as such, must be helpful to the person denoted by the dative argument, i.e., the helping-effect must be "good" with respect to some benefactive individual. A helping-event or a helping-trigger is therefore judged as "good" if its effect is high on a personal scale. Hence, the dative argument is interpreted as a scale, to which the helping-effect is relativized.

This scalar interpretation of dative arguments has been developed by Brandt 2003 and extended by Brandt 2005 for *too*-comparatives with datives in German. According to Brandt, constructions involving a dative and a *too*-comparative as in (8) are interpreted in such a way that the degree of the comparative is evaluated with respect to a structure that is introduced by the dative argument. Thus, the book in (8) may not be too heavy in general, it might just be too heavy for this particular man.

(8) Einem Mann war das Buch zu schwer.
 A man was the book to heavy.
 'the book was too heavy for a man' [Brandt 2005:p.18 (65)]

Brandt argues that datives, *cipients* in his terms, are located in a special temporal projection, *tP*, which saturates a locative variable argument that is present in VP. I take the datives of *helfen*-verbs to be licensed in the specifier of *tP* as well.

In Brandt 2005, a uniform semantics for all kinds of cipients (including double object constructions, *too*-comparatives and existential constructions) is given.

(9) $\neg\text{AT}(x_{\text{theme}}, p_{\text{loc/deg}}, i) \ \& \ \text{AT}(x_{\text{theme}}, p_{\text{loc/deg}}, i') \ \& \ i < i'$
 [Brandt 2005:p.18 (69)]

The formula in (9) expresses that $p_{\text{loc/deg}}$, a particular (location or) degree, does not hold of x_{theme} (which corresponds to the helping-effect here) at i , but it does at i' . Furthermore, Brandt argues that $\text{AT}(x_{\text{theme}}, p_{\text{loc/deg}}, i')$ is an assertion that can be understood to hold as the result of an event. On the other hand, $\neg\text{AT}(x_{\text{theme}}, p_{\text{loc/deg}}, i)$ corresponds to a presupposition that expresses the state of affairs before the event represented in the structure has taken place. Brandt shows that the assertion can be identified with VP, whereas the presupposition is associated with the cipient. It is possible to interpret the indices temporally, with i preceding i' . Regarding *helfen*, the degree of goodness must be higher in worlds (i') where the helping-trigger has taken place than in worlds (i) where it didn't occur.

4.2. The cause or trigger argument

The trigger/agent argument is licensed in the specifier of the little *v* projection (c.f. Kratzer 1996). The difference between the two can be captured with different types

of *v* (e.g. Harley 1995, Folli and Harley 2002) or with different labels (*v* vs. *V*; cf. Arad 1998). As it may be, I take a DO-operator to be present in *v* if there is an agent.

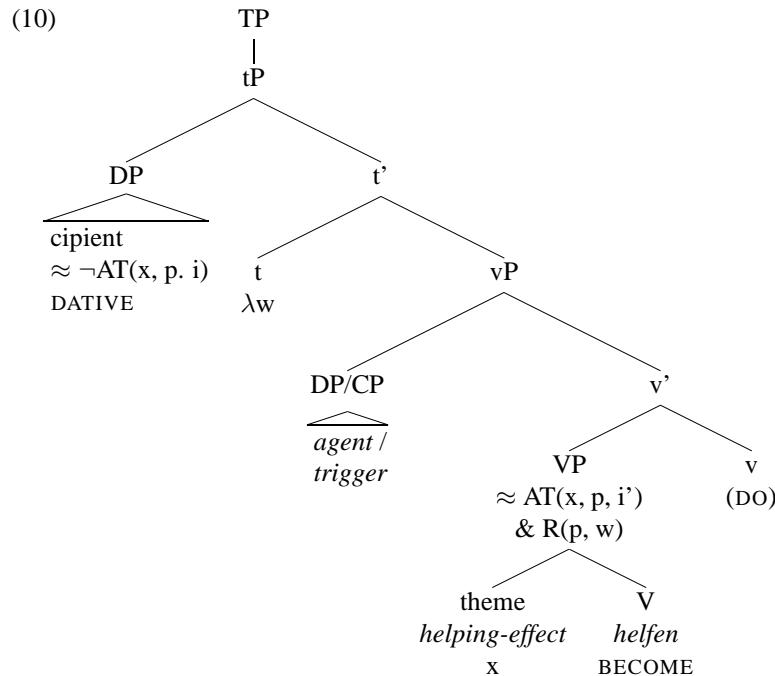
4.3. The resultant state

As seen above, the resultant state of the helping-action, i.e., the helping-effect, is present in the structure of *helfen*-type verbs. Following the approach by Hale and Keyser 1993, the resultant state is located in the lowest projection within the verbal structure. In particular, I take the helping-effect to be anchored in VP and to correspond to x_{theme} of Brandt. The BECOME-operator, which is responsible for the gradual onset of the helping-effect, is located in the lexical entry of *help* in *V*.

The domain of the helping-effect is a further specification of the helping-effect itself. Thus, modifiers like *financially* specify x_{theme} directly. Hence, there is no further semantic mechanism necessary to accommodate the domain of the helping-effect.

4.4. Summary

In sum, *helfen*-verbs have a structure as illustrated in (10). This phrase marker, modelled after Brandt 2003, consists of *vP* for the trigger/agent, *tP* for the licensing of the cipient, and *VP* for the resultant state/helping effect.



5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper argues for a particular event structure of *helfen*-type verbs. First, there is an agent or a trigger argument which function as the cause of the helping-effect. Second, there is a benefactive argument which carries dative case, expressing a personal scale of "goodness". Third, a helping-effect arises gradually a result of the helping-action or trigger.

The analysis of *helfen*-type verbs extends the theory of *Cipient Predication* developed by Brandt 2003, integrating the aspectual operators DO and BECOME. A CAUSE operator is not necessary to capture the behavior of *helfen*.

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