

Obligatory adjuncts in weak accomplishments

Abstract

The primary goal of this paper is to provide a unified explanation for the obligatory adjunct phenomenon in English and in Hungarian. Data from Hungarian (i.e. from a language where event structure and information structure are both overtly encoded in syntax) shows that both of the two competing theories known from the literature: the event structure account as well as the pragmatic account have their contribution to the phenomenon. My explanation is based on the assumption that accomplishments fall into two types with different syntactic and semantic properties, called weak and strong accomplishments, both in Hungarian and in English. The infelicity of the sentence: *The house was built*. results from the fact that it is grammatical in contexts where it can be interpreted as a strong accomplishment and it is ungrammatical if it can be interpreted only as a weak accomplishment. I claim that the so-called obligatory adjunct effect can be best understood as following from the neutralization of the requirement that weak accomplishments have a non-specific theme argument. As known from Hungarian, the neutralization occurs in the presence of a focused element.