

VERBS

ASPECT AND ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

(seven chapters on causal-aspectual representation)

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Comments welcome!

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A note to the reader

The following are seven chapters on a model of semantic representation for the aspectual and causal structure of situations that are encoded as simple verbs in English, along with a discussion of some of the English constructions in which they occur. They replace the representations used in Croft 1986 through Croft 1998a. These chapters will eventually form part of a book of this name.

There is an important sense in which the circulation of these chapters is premature, as will become immediately apparent to any reader. There is virtually no reference to the vast literature on aspect and argument linking. While this is certainly a criticism of the current manuscript, I equally certainly intend to remedy this in the final version. However, I would very much like to know about related work that I may not (or may!) already know about. There IS a vast literature on these two topics, and I make no pretense to having mastered it. So all pointers to relevant literature are welcomed. (This is also the reason that the references are similarly abbreviated: what little there is in there is due largely to the fact that two chapters are based on works in press.)

Also, there is virtually no reference to parallel phenomena in languages other than English. This is also a shortcoming that must be remedied. The analysis of argument linking is based on cross-linguistic research reported in Croft 1986, 1991 etc., and I believe the empirical generalizations reported therein are still largely valid. A very brief introduction to the most essential aspects of my earlier analysis and the kinds of empirical generalizations it can be used to account for is given in §3.1. Of course, this will be expanded in the final version.

The analysis of aspect is not based on any earlier published work of mine, although it has occupied me for many years, initially in collaboration with Jerry Hobbs; and it has of course benefited from the work of many others who I have read or spoken to. The English data that it is intended to account for is sprinkled through chapters 1-2, and crop up again in the later chapters. Of course, this analysis will require cross-linguistic support not available here or elsewhere. I am aware of only a few reference grammars or article-length studies that are sensitive to the interpretation of different classes of predicates in the various tense-aspect constructions of languages. And of course I must pay respect to antecedent studies in a similar spirit, notably Dahl 1985 and Anderson 1982. Nevertheless, I would like to know about studies in other languages in the same spirit as the one in chapters 1-2 below.

Finally, this represents work in progress. Due to other commitments, I do not expect to revise these chapters or add to them until September 2003. So all comments before—or after—that date are very welcome!