What is asymmetric about goals and sources?

Introduction. Corpus analyses and psycholinguistic experiments show that there is a conceptual bias for goals over sources (Stefanowitsch & Rohde 2004, Lakusta & Landau 2005, Assadollahi et al. 2006). For example, change of possession events are more frequently described from a goal-perspective (e.g. buy) than from a source-perspective (e.g. sell). Similarly, manner of motion verbs appear more often with goal PPs than with source PPs, although both types of PP are optional with these verbs. The question arises, then, whether the goal-over-source bias results in particular semantic and/or syntactic rules distinguishing goals from sources. For example, there are proposals by Filip (2003) and Nam (2004) that argue for an aspectual asymmetry between goals and sources. Whereas goal PPs such as to the house are standardly assumed to bring about a telic interpretation of the event, source PPs such as from the house are argued not to affect the telicity value of the event under this view. The main goal of this paper is to show that there is no general aspectual asymmetry between goals and sources. Rather, goals and sources play the same role in a motion event.

Theoretical background. Following Jackendoff (1983), it is generally assumed that directional PPs can be of three different types. SOURCES specify where the path starts (e.g. (away) from, out of, off), GOALS specify where the path ends (e.g. to, into, onto), and ROUTES describe trajectories without endpoints (e.g. across, through, past). Under semantic approaches to directional PPs such as Fong (1997) or Zwarts (2005), there should not be an asymmetry between goals and sources other than that they are mere mirror images of one another (away from – to, out of – into, off – onto). For example, under Fong’s (1997) approach, source and goal PPs in common that they involve a two-stage structure, a negative and a positive phase, and that they have exactly one positive phase that overlaps either with the starting point or the ending point. Assuming that the structure of the PP is mapped onto the structure of the event when the verb combines with the directional PP (see, for instance, Krifka 1998), the event should have two phases as well. Such a structure, then, is the structure of transitions, which are generally associated with telic events (e.g. Pustejovsky 1991).

The data. An aspectual difference between goals and sources should be observable both in syntax and semantics. For example, if only goal modifiers derived telic predicates, but source modifiers did not, the former should be compatible with in-adverbials but not with for-adverbials, whereas it should be the reverse with the latter. However, (1) shows that we find both goal and source expressions that are compatible with in- but not with for-adverbials and vice versa. Similarly, there are both goal and source expressions with which again is ambiguous between a repetitive and a restitutive reading. This is only possible with telic events that are complex consisting of a process and a transition (Pustejovsky 1991, von Stechow 1996). At the same time, there are goal- and source-directed motion events with which again can only have the repetitive reading, indicating that these events are simple, only referring to a process and thus being atelic (2).

Under the assumption that constituents that bring about a telic interpretation of the event are more deeply embedded within the VP than locative adjuncts that do not affect the telicity status of the event (e.g. under a small clause analysis of Kayne 1985, Hoekstra 1992, 1994, 1999, among others), such telicising constituents should also behave differently from adjuncts in languages that are more restricted as to what can be displaced from within the VP. Hence, under a general aspectual asymmetry between goals and sources, there should also be a difference in the displacement properties, since goals would be more deeply embedded within the VP whereas sources would simply be adjuncts. However, examples from Dutch show that this is not generally the case. There is evidence from pied-piping (3) and P-incorporation (4) that there are both goals and sources that allow or disallow such operations. Hence, rather than supporting an aspectual asymmetry between goals and sources, the data show a distinction between different P elements participating or not participating in telic pair formation, allowing or disallowing certain operations and thus being more or less deeply embedded within the VP.

Analysis. Under the assumption that directional PPs are arguments of motion verbs, I follow Krifka (1998), Zwart (2005) and others in that the internal structure of the PP is mapped onto the structure of the motion event and can thus determine the general aspectual properties of the predicate. Since goal PPs headed by e.g. to as well as source PPs headed by e.g. out of denote bounded paths (Zwarts 2005) and license a bipartite transition structure as outlined above, the combination of such PPs with a motion verb yield a telic predicate. Other PPs headed by towards or from, on the other hand, denote
unbounded paths and the event is atelic if these PPs combine with motion verbs that denote a process in and by themselves. Syntactically, I will assume the general structures in (5). The structure in a. is the structure for telic events, which are represented as a bipartite event structure containing at least a VP associated with the process subevent and a res(ult)P associated with the result state subevent, following Ramchand (2005). The structure in b., on the other hand, is the structure found with spatial PPs that are VP-adjuncts and thus do not affect the telicity value of the event. I will furthermore assume that particles, no matter whether they denote goals or sources, always head a resP and thus bring about a telic interpretation of the event. In Dutch, then, PPs that contain prepositions allow dislocation whereas those containing postpositions and particles do not. Furthermore, simple postpositions (e.g. uit, heen) can form a complex predicate with the verb in syntax incorporating into it (and thus arguably turning into particles) whereas morphologically complex ones (e.g. vandaan) cannot. Thus, the differences observed boil down to differences between particular P elements and their position in a more complex PP structure and the relation to the VP rather than supporting a general (semantic) aspectual difference between goals and sources.

(1)

a. We ran to the store in / * for ten minutes. (telic)
   She ran into the store in / * for ten minutes.
   He ran away in / * for ten minutes.
   They ran out of the store in / * for ten minutes.

b. You ran towards the store * in / for ten minutes. (atelic)
   I ran (away) from the car ?? in / for ten minutes.

(2)

a. Mary drove to New York again. ambiguous
   John went away again.

b. Paul drove (away) from New York again. repetitive only
   Anna drove towards Groningen again.

(3)

a. *Welk bos in ben jij gelopen?
   ‘Which forest did you walk into?’
   a.’ *Welke stad uit ben je vertrokken?
   ‘Which city did you depart from?’

b. Naar welke brug ben je gelopen?
   ‘Which bridge did you walk to?’
   a. Van welke brug ben je gelopen?
   ‘Which bridge did you walk from?’

(4)

a. … dat ze de jas over de stoel hebben heen gelegd
   ‘… that they put the jacket over the chair’
   a.’ … dat hij de tas van mij heeft weg genomen / af gepakt
   ‘… that he took the bag away from me’

b. … dat dit boek (van) onder het bed is (?*vandaan) gekomen
   ‘… that this book disappeared from under the bed’

(5)

a. [ VP V [resP res [PathP Path [PlaceP Place DP ]] ] ]

b. [ VP V [ PathP Path [PlaceP Place DP ] [V: V ... ]] ]

Selected References