Results and directed motion in Germanic

Several Germanic languages have two different but closely related constructions: a resultative construction such as English hammer the metal flat and a directed motion construction, such as English elbow one’s way into the crowd (Jackendoff 1990). The English way-construction is identified by the word way, but is often very similar in meaning to sentences which do not include way and are identical in form to resultatives; see, e.g., (1) and the discussion in Christie (2011). According to van Egmond (2006), Dutch has one regular resultative construction and two directed motion constructions that differ in form and meaning (2a–c). In Norwegian, it appears that resultatives and directed motion constructions are identical in form, except for the form of the AP result phrase and the PP locative/goal phrase (Seland 2001; (3a–b)).

This paper has two goals: 1) It provides a mini-typology of resultative and directed motion constructions in Germanic. 2) It considers how Swedish fits into the Germanic typology, and specifically focuses on a word order quirk that involves verbal particles.

Compare the two examples in (4), both attested examples retrieved from the internet. The examples are very similar in meaning: they both mean that the subject got into something by means of gnawing. Following Toivonen (2002) and Lyngfelt (2007), I suggest that they differ in that (4a) is a resultative, where the end state is “being in the fruit”, and example (4b) is a directed motion construction parallel to the English way-construction. True resultatives are necessarily telic, whereas directed motion constructions may or may not be telic. Resultatives describe how the subject or object reaches an end state or location, and the directed motion construction describes movement along a path or towards a goal, possibly metaphorical.

In clauses with no particles, PP resultatives and directed motion constructions do not differ in form, and it is difficult to tell what reading is intended. Sentence (5), retrieved from the internet, serves as an example. Note that (5) can be translated either as a resultative or a way-construction in English. However, the examples in (4) contain the particle in and the examples differ in word order. In these examples, the word order signals the distinction, but the meanings are still quite close. The distinction in meaning is sometimes clearer; see, e.g., (6).

I propose that the distinction in word order illustrated in (4) and (6) is due to constraints on what may occur in the pre-object particle position in Swedish. The pre-object particle position cannot host locational adjuncts, but it can host secondary predicates such as result phrases. Secondary predicate XPs and adjunct XPs can of course appear after the object (as in (5)).

This proposal will be formalized in Lexical Functional Grammar as follows: 1) Pre-object verbal particles are non-projecting words that adjoin to the V0 node within the VP (whether or not the verb itself is actually in the VP). 2) The non-projecting particle node is marked with the specification {↑=\downarrow \lor (↑XCOMP)=\downarrow}. This restricts the function of the particle to a co-head function (needed for purely idiomatic uses and aspectual particles) or a secondary predicate (XCOMP) function. Adjuncts are not permitted. 3) So-called particles (e.g., upp, in, bort) are not non-projecting words when they occur after the object. In that case, they are simply regular projecting words, typically prepositions that project PPs.
(1)  
   a. ...and eventually drank his way into a solitary oblivion. (www)  
   b. He drank himself into oblivion night after night in a lonely apartment. (www)

(2)  
   a. Miranda zoop zich in coma.  
      ‘Miranda drank herself into a coma.’  
   b. Miranda zong zich in de top 40.  
      ‘Miranda sang her way into the top 40.’  
   c. Jan schopt zich een weg door de menigte.  
      ‘Jon kicks his way through the crowd.’

(3)  
   a. spare seg blakk  
      ‘save oneself broke’  
   b. Hun har skutt seg til sommer-OL.  
      ‘She has shot her way to the Summer Olympics.’

(4)  
   a. De larverna gnagar in sig i frukten.  
      ‘They [the grubs] gnaw themselves into the fruit.’  
   b. Insekten gnagar sig in i färskt lärkvirke.  
      ‘The insect gnaws its way into fresh larch wood.’

(5)  
   Stort grattis även till Simon & Angelica som dansade sig till final i BBC/BUD.  
   ‘Big congratulations also to Simon & Angelica who danced themselves/their way into the finals in BBC/BUD.’

(6)  
   a. Ester målade in sig i ett hörn. (RES)  
      ‘Ester painted herself into a corner.’  
   b. Ester målade sig in i ett hörn. (DIRECTED MOTION)  
      ‘Ester painted her way into a corner.’

References


