
Scales in Lexical Decomposition: The Role of the Root

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In decompositional approaches (Dowty 1979, Beavers and Koontz-Garboden 2020) stative and change-of-state words are built from a stative root plus an event template that determines the event or state’s temporal and causal flow. Verbs of change reflect a stative root and a BECOME-type template indicating that the state obtains at the end of the event. However, on scalar approaches to change the root instead denotes a measure function mapping entities to property degrees along a property scale, where templatic structure introduces comparison of the patient’s initial and final degrees. This approach provides a more unified way of subsuming a range of different types of changes of state under a single umbrella (creation/consumption, property change, motion; Beavers 2012) while also capturing the relationship of scale type to lexical aspect (Kennedy and Levin 2008).

We present a novel argument that English verbal roots denote states and not measure functions (see also Wellwood 2015), where the relevant state has comparison built into it already. The role of templates is to fill in the details of the root-supplied comparison and/or derive new types of comparison, while also providing access to different degree arguments for overt expression. This argument is based on evidence from sublexical modification, comparative morphology, degree modifiers, and the relationship of verbs to their corresponding adjectival forms. This approach reconciles scalar analyses of change with traditional decompositional theories, while also providing a novel argument that verbs of change are not built on simple or comparative adjectives (cp. Bobaljik 2012), but instead they are all derived equipollently from the same roots.

References: • Beavers, J. (2012): On Affectedness. *NLLT* 29, 335-370 • Beavers, J. and A. Koontz-Garboden. (2020): *The Roots of Verbal Meaning*. OUP. • Bobaljik, J. (2012): *Universals in Comparative Morphology*. MIT Press. • Dowty, D. (1979): *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Reidel. • Kennedy, C. and B. Levin. (2008): Measure of Change. In L. McNally and C. Kennedy (eds.) *Adjectives and Verbs*, OUP, 156–182. • Wellwood, A. (2015): On the Semantics of Comparison Across Categories. *L&P* 38: 67–101.