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## Adjectives and Telicity - An Empirical Study of Resultative Adjective Constructions in German

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Lea Hefler-Reusch  
Goethe Universität  
Frankfurt  
lea.hessler@stud.uni-  
frankfurt.de

Merle Weicker  
Goethe Universität  
Frankfurt  
weicker@em.uni-  
frankfurt.de

Petra Schulz  
Goethe Universität  
Frankfurt  
p.schulz@em.uni-  
frankfurt.de

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Telicity variation in transitive change of state verbs, more precisely degree achievements (e.g., *to dry* vs. *to widen*), has been attributed to the scalar properties of the adjectival core of the particular verbs (Kennedy & Levin 2008). Focusing on the scalar properties of adjectives, the present experimental study investigates adjectives with an upper closed scale (such as *clean* and *empty*) regarding telicity (Kennedy & McNally 2005).

We asked whether German-speaking adults (N=21) assign a semantically telic interpretation to sentences containing an adjective. A novel Truth Value Judgement task was developed, containing 16 test items varying in event type (COMPLETE/INCOMPLETE) and structure (ADJECTIVE/NO ADJECTIVE). The sentences contained the incremental theme verbs *wipe*, *blow-dry*, *drink*, and *iron*; in the ADJECTIVE condition they were combined with *clean*, *dry*, *empty*, and *flat*, respectively. If the adjective causes semantic telicity, incomplete events should not be accepted in the ADJECTIVE condition in contrast to the NO ADJECTIVE condition. Accordingly, the comparison of sentences with and without an adjective for incomplete events is crucial for our question. The acceptance of incomplete events in the ADJECTIVE condition was very low (Mean = 0.38/4, SD = 0.57) and significantly below the acceptance rate in the NO ADJECTIVE condition (Mean = 2.81/4, SD = 0.13,  $t(20) = -6.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Our findings provide first experimental evidence for the hypothesis that upper closed scale adjectives are strong telicity markers, resulting in semantic telicity when combined with incremental theme verbs and a quantized NP. We conclude that incremental theme verbs do not already introduce scales as part of their lexical meaning; the scale is supplied by adjectives that exhibit an upper closed scale.

**References:** • Kennedy, C. & Levin, B. (2008): Measure of change, 1–30. • Kennedy, C. & McNally, L. (2005): Scale structure, degree modification, and the semantics of gradable predicates. *Language* 81 (2), 345–381.