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benefactive construction

construction pairing the meaning ‘agent carries out action involving *patient/theme* for the benefit of a *beneficiary*’ either with the form [NP_{1-subj} V NP_{2-obj} PP] or with the form [NP_{1-subj} V NP_{3-obj} NP_{2-obj}].

Benefaktiv-Konstruktion

Konstruktion bestehend aus der Form [NP_{1-subj} V NP_{2-obj} PP] oder der Form [NP_{1-subj} V NP_{3-obj} NP_{2-obj}] und der Bedeutung ‚Agens führt eine auf ein *Patiens* oder *Thema* gerichtete Handlung zum Nutzen eines *Benefaktivs* (*Nutzniessers*) aus‘.

The role of the *agentis* realised by the subject-NP (NP₁), the role of the *patient/theme* by an object-NP (NP₂) and that of the *beneficiary* either by a PP or another object-NP (NP₃). The formal variants of the Benefactive Construction are exemplified in (1) and (2) respectively:

(1) [Sally]_{NP1-subj} [bought]_V [a book]_{NP2-obj} [for John]_{PP}.

(2) [Sally]_{NP1-subj} [bought]_V [John]_{NP3-obj} [a book]_{NP2-obj}.

Benefactive constructions consisting of three NPs encode the *beneficiary* either as a primary object-NP (i.e., the first of two object NPs), yielding the double object pattern as in English, Indonesian and Bantu, or as an indirect-object-NP, instantiating the direct-and-indirect-object pattern of German, Japanese, Italian, Spanish and Sinhala (cf. *Shibatani* 1996: 174). Another formal variant of the benefactive construction, different from those in (1) and (2), expresses the *beneficiary* as a verbal affix, as illustrated by the following example from the Papuan language Hua (cf. *Foley* 1986: 98):

(3) zu ki-na d-te

house build-3P.Sg. Ben 1P.Sg.-put 3P.Sg. Decl

He built me a house.

The patterns in (1) and (2) differ syntactically in that the PP realising the role of the *beneficiary* in (1) has the status of an adjunct, while the primary-object-NP in (2) is an argument (cf. *Shibatani* 1996: 159). Hence, the PP of the PP variant combines more freely with different types of verbs than the primary-object-NP of the double object variant, cf. (3) and (4) (examples and acceptability judgements from *Allerton* 1978):

(4) Uncle Jim cleaned some shoes / washed some socks / answered some letters / watched a television programme for Margaret.

(5) Uncle Jim cleaned Margaret some shoes / ?washed Margaret some socks / ?*answered Margaret some letters / *watched Margaret a television programme.

To account for the restrictions observed with respect to the double object pattern, different constraints have been proposed, including lexico-semantic and morphophonological properties of the verb, the aspect of the beneficial event, and the semantics of the *agent* and *beneficiary* (see *Fellbaum* 2005 for an extensive discussion).

Some authors have claimed that the double object variant of the Benefactive Construction in English lacks a purely benefactive interpretation, because the *beneficiary* is always at the same time a *recipient* (cf. *Colleman 2010*). In other languages, the double object pattern may additionally be used to refer to other types of benefactive events, as exemplified by (6) for French and (7) for German:

(6) [Je]_{NP-subj} [lui]_{clitic-dat-ind-obj} [[ai][repassé]]_V [sa chemise]_{NP-dir-obj}

[*Colleman 2010: 230*].

‘[I]_{NP-subj} [him]_{clitic-dat-ind-obj} [[have] [ironed]]_V [his shirt]_{NP-dir-obj}.’

I have ironed his shirt for him.

(7) [Das Mädchen]_{NP-subj-nom} [trägt]_V [der alten Frau]_{NP-dat-ind-obj} [die Tüten]_{NP-acc-dir-obj} [hoch]_{V-Particle}.

[The girl]_{NP-subj-nom} [carries]_V [the old woman]_{NP-dat-ind-obj} [the bags]_{NP-acc-dir-obj} [upstairs]_{V-Particle}.

The girl carries the bags upstairs for the old woman.

The indirect object-NP in these examples does not express a *recipient-beneficiary* but rather the person who, being the owner of the entity referred to by the direct-object-NP, benefits from the action carried out on his/her property (Cf. *Allerton 1987: 28*, *Colleman 2010: 230*), and the person benefitting from the *Agent*'s substituting for him/her as the performer of the action (*Colleman 2010: 228*), respectively. *Fellbaum (2005)* points out that much of the literature on the benefactive construction in English is based on constructed data. Using data from the World Wide Web, she shows that expressions like *Baby open me your door* and *Honey, can you iron me a shirt?* are also attested for English. Though such expressions received mixed grammaticality judgements in an earlier study (cf. *Allerton 1978*), they also indicate that the semantic constraints on the Benefactive Construction proposed in the literature are frequently violated and extended in actual language use (cf. *Fellbaum 2005: 235*).

Literature

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