Situations

HUL 243

3rd Oct 2024

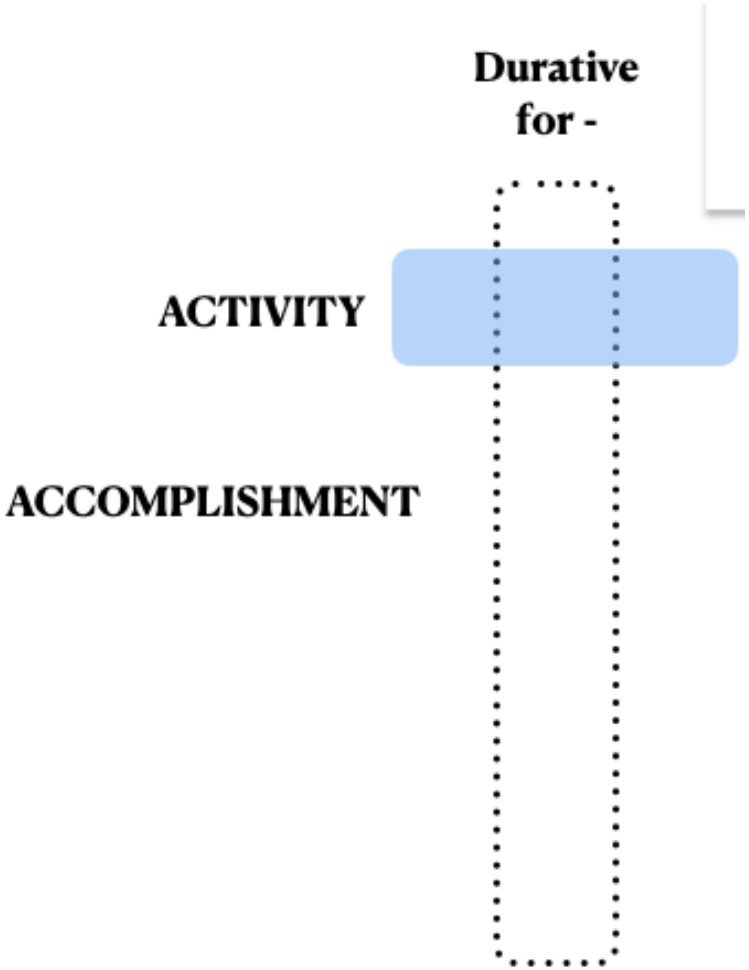
- Situation types are used to delineate the verbs into different categories
- We have already examined statives: we look at achievements, accomplishments and activity

- Adverbials such as *for five minutes* show a strong affinity for events with duration
- They are acceptable with activity verbs, not acceptable with accomplishment verbs
- Other such examples are :
  - Sam ran/pushed the cart for half an hour (activity)
  - Sam drew a circle #for half an hour (accomplishment)

- Activity predicates generally do not specify an end point/terminus, hence it's ok for them to continue over a period of time, e.g. for half an hour or for five minutes
- In contrast, accomplishments describe situations which consist of successive phases that are not the same as the whole (e.g. if you 'freeze' a point while drawing a circle, it's not the same as the others)
- Accomplishments would describe events that proceed towards their endpoint
  - Activity: run, walk, swim, push a cart, drive a car
  - Accomplishment: paint a picture, grow up, deliver a sermon

- Interestingly, if we modify accomplishments with temporal *in* -*adverbials* then it's alright
- This is a
  - Sam ran/pushed the cart #in half an hour (activity)
  - Sam drew a circle/ran a mile in half an hour (accomplishment)
- This is because unlike *for*- this will modify the entire event,

- Classifying Activity vs Accomplishment

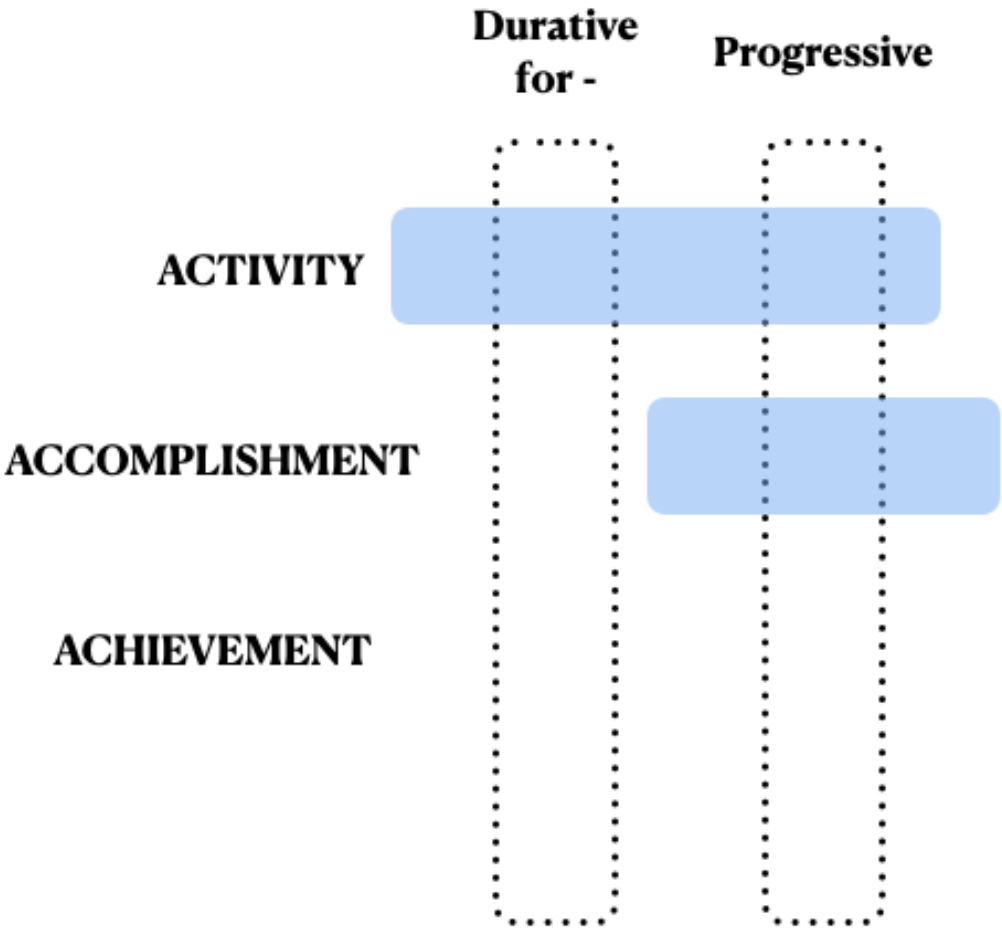


Compatibility with progressive

- What activity and accomplishment predicates have in common is a compatibility with the progressive aspect
  - John was running (activity)
  - John was drawing a circle (accomplishment)
- What does this mean? It means that these are situations that continue in time in different phases
- However, note the the following is not possible with the progressive
  - #Bill was noticing that Mary had a new hat

Achievements

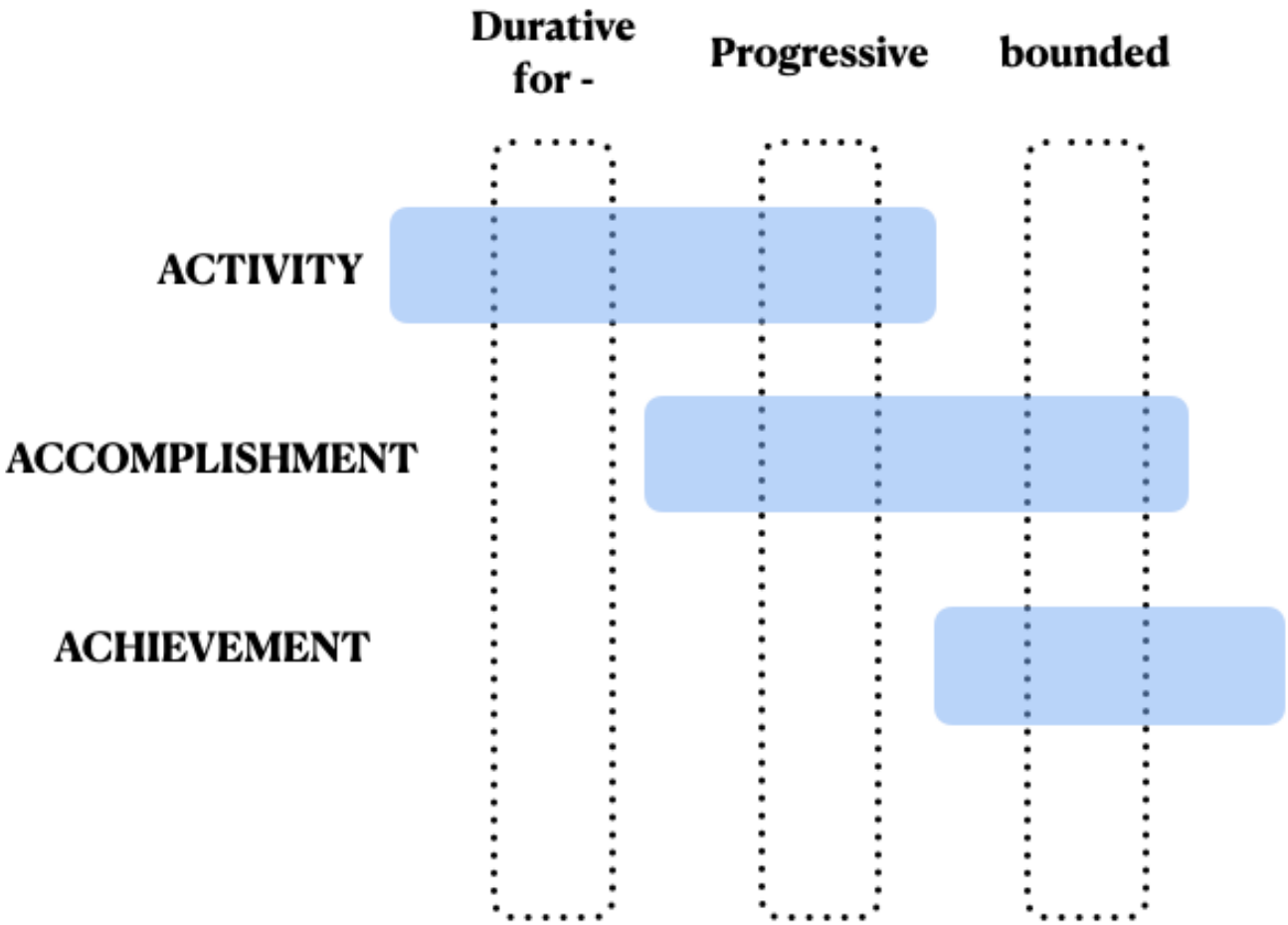
- Achievements are events that occur at a single moment
- An achievement would generally result in a new state, instantaneously
- E.g. find a flower, reach the top, win a race
- Such verbs are not compatible with the progressive


Durative
for -
Progressive
ACTIVITY
ACCOMPLISHMENT
ACHIEVEMENT

Tests for Achievements

- Occurrence at a single moment: modifiable by adverbials that refer to specific moments in time
  - The detective found the victim's body at 4 PM (achievement)
  - # John drew a circle/built a house at 4 PM (accomplishment)
  - # John ran at 4 PM (activity)

- Activity, Accomplishment, Achievement



Semelfactive

- Semelfactives are instantaneous events without an end point
- Examples are *cough*, *knock*, *sneeze*, *blink*
- Such events involve such instantaneous action that it is virtually within no time
- It is possible to combine semelfactives with an for-adverbial for an iterative interpretation