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Event Structures in Linguistic Form and Interpretation (Introduction)

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Introduction

This volume comprises a selection of papers presented at the workshop "Event Structures in Linguistic Form and Interpretation", which took place at the University of Leipzig in March 17-19, 2004. The workshop was hosted by the research project "Event Structures: Grammatical and Conceptual Components of Utterance Interpretation" at the Department of Linguistics of the University of Leipzig. The central topic to be addressed was how conceptual information on event structure is encoded in linguistic expressions and how such information can be reconstructed from utterances. Answers to these questions essentially contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between lexical semantics, syntactic structure, pragmatic inference, and world knowledge in a broader cognitive perspective.

Among the many collections on event-based semantics and syntax appearing over the last ten years (e.g. Rothstein, 1998; Tenny and Pustejovsky, 2000; Higginbotham, Pianesi and Varzi, 2000; Lang, Maienborn and Fabricius-Hansen, 2003; Austin, Engelberg and Rauh, 2004; Maienborn and Wöllstein, 2005; and Verkuyl, de Swart and van Hout, 2005), this volume adopts a decidedly applied attitude in that the existence of Davidsonian event arguments is taken as given and that problems of the fundamental methodology are of minor concern. Instead, it demonstrates how the idea of event structure can be successfully applied to a wide range of empirical problems in an increasing number of languages. Thus, the topic is discussed not only on the basis of English and German but, among others, of Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Igbo as well.

The contributed papers fall into several broad classes – accounting for event structure in connection with syntactic construction, modification, situation aspect, plurality, temporal location, and natural language ontology. Accordingly, the volume is organized into six sections.

Section I: Event Structure and Syntactic Construction

The assumption of an event-related framework in research on verb meaning raises important questions for the analysis of the syntax/semantics interface. While it is uncontroversial that event structure is to some degree reflected in syntactic structure, there is an ongoing discussion about the sort of verbal information that should play a role in the syntactic derivation. Two different strategies of meaning decomposition, which can be traced back to the Genera-

tive Semantics tradition, dominate. One line (cf. e.g. Dowty, 1979; Jackendoff, 1990; Pustejovsky, 1991; Bierwisch, 1997; Rappaport and Levin, 1998) assumes that verbs have to be decomposed in the lexicon, independently of syntax, into more primitive predicates representing the structure of events designated. The fundamental assumption behind such lexicalist accounts is that the lexical-semantic entry of a verb determines its syntactic behaviour. The second, more recent line (cf. e.g. Hale and Keyser, 1993; von Stechow, 1996; Ritter and Rosen, 1998; Travis, 2000; Ramchand, 2003; Borer, 2005) follows the idea that event structure is explicitly encoded in syntax. Accordingly, the meaning of verbs is viewed as being compositionally constructed from primitives linked immediately to functional heads and abstract verbal roots. In this connection, one essential problem is whether thematic role information is projected from the verb's lexical representation, or imposed by the structural context in which the verb occurs. In particular, Kratzer (1996, 2003) has given strong evidence for the claim that external arguments are attached in the syntactic derivation through the mediation of Davidsonian event arguments.

Building on the proposal by Kratzer, **Alexander Williams** additionally questions the common assumption that patients have to be treated as internal arguments of the verb. He lays out data from resultative constructions (RCs) in Igbo and Mandarin to show that even if a verb in a simple clause requires a direct object – interpreted as patient – the same verb has no such requirement if it serves as a means predicate in a RC. These data can be explained if the patient relation is introduced by VP structure, and not by the verb. Williams argues that languages differ with respect to the number of lexically encoded arguments within the range of possible participants of the described event. This makes it possible that the lexical entries of verbs in English contain the patient argument position but the entries of verbs in Igbo and Mandarin do not. A further important general consequence of his analysis is that one has to recognize *patient* as a basic thematic predicate.

The paper by **Jo-wang Lin** is concerned with the syntactic distribution and the semantics of durative phrases in Mandarin. He argues that they can be adjoined to every maximal projection, provided that we can interpret them there without violating the homogeneity requirement. According to Lin, the event structure of verbs should be decomposed in overt syntactic structures, similar to von Stechow's treatment of the scope ambiguity of *wieder* ('again'). According to the author, this decomposition analysis explains why result-related durative phrases are syntactically more restricted – they can only occur after the direct object of the sentence – than process-related durative phrases. Finally, Lin discusses the implication of his structural account for data containing durative phrases in conjunction with incremental theme verbs, arguing that they have to be analyzed as inherently telic.

Minjeong Son and Peter Cole also present empirical support for the view that the decomposition of verb meaning is explicitly reflected in (morpho-)

syntax. According to them, such an approach provides satisfactory explanation not only for the scope ambiguity of *tasi* ('again') associated with morphological as well as lexical causatives in Korean, but also for the apparent lexical ambiguity of the verbal suffix *-kan* in Standard Indonesian. For Korean, the authors assume that an abstract CAUSE can be overtly realized by the suffix *-i-*, while the Indonesian suffix *-kan* is argued to be the overt instantiation of a RESULT predicate. Furthermore, Son and Cole suggest that their account unifies the different uses of the suffix in causative and benefactive constructions. A broader question raised by this analysis is in what extent languages differ in the way conceptual components of event structure are mapped into the syntax.

Section II: Event Structure and Modification

Sentences containing adverbial modification were one of the main reasons for Davidson (1967) to introduce event variables into semantic representations. According to him, modifiers of verbal expressions can be analyzed as first order predicates that add information about the events introduced by the respective expressions. One advantage of this approach is that it allows one to draw inferences that relate to adverbial modifiers by virtue of conjunction reduction. While Davidson's account was restricted to instrumental, local and temporal adverbials, Parsons (1990) argued that the event variable can be used in the formalization of all VP modifiers that is, including, e.g., manner adverbs such as *slowly*, *gently* or *quietly*. In the wake of Parsons, the event-based framework has been applied to a far broader range of modification phenomena and has yielded many fruitful results. However, a number of areas have shown themselves to be somehow intricate. Thus, it is well-known that many adverbials can receive different interpretations depending on their syntactic position (cf. e.g. Ernst, 2002). Besides a few proposals covering specific types of modification (cf. e.g. Maienborn, 2001), till now there is no general approach to the systematic effects that syntactic variation bears on the resulting event structure. Moreover, an open question is to what extent adverbial modification can involve reinterpretations which are triggered by semantic mismatches and executed by shifting of ontological event type (cf. e.g. de Swart, 1998; Geuder, 2000; Dölling, 2003, 2005).

The paper by **Kyle Rawlins** starts from the afore-mentioned observation that the meaning of modifying adverbs may vary depending on their syntactic position. In particular, the author is concerned with several modifier uses of adverbs like *illegally*: (a) a clausal use (= high position), (b) a manner use (= low position) and (c) two pre-adjectival uses. Rawlins argues that the meaning differences induced by placing such an adverb in different positions result purely from scope, especially from the relative scope with respect to the existential quantification over events and with respect to tense. After introducing a

semantics for all four uses of *illegally* separately, he proposes one lexical entry that expresses the core meaning of this adverb, which is identical with its interpretation in the high position. To enable adverbs to compose in a variety of positions, Rawlins assumes a family of type-shift operators that coerce sentence modifiers into modifiers of the respective types.

Adverbs in a pre-adjectival position stand in the centre of the paper by **Marcin Morzycki**. It examines adverbs like *remarkably* and *surprisingly* which modify adjectival phrases and give rise to judgments about having a property to a particular degree, although they are not degree words. On the approach proposed, the evaluative adverbs have the effect of domain widening, similar to effects observed for embedded exclamatives, and are interpreted as arguments of an unrealized degree morpheme in much the same way as nominal measure phrases have been proposed to be. At the same time, Morzycki shows that they themselves have the same denotation as the corresponding adjectives and their adverbial counterparts in the clause-modifying position. Finally, the author suggests how the analysis can be extended to ad-adjectival subject-oriented adverbs.

Kjell Johan Sæbø is interested in the question how the modification of abstract predicates by instrumental *by*-phrases can be accounted for in an event-based framework. Criterion predicates like *obey doctor's order* and *do me a favour* form one type of these predicates and have remained ill-understood until now. Also, there is no consensus on the proper analysis of the second major type of abstract predicates, the manner-neutral causative predicates like *create a fiction* and *ruin my reputation*. As is argued by the author, criterion predicates as well as manner-neutral causatives are characterized by a certain degree of indeterminacy. Whereas the former do not specify the physical criteria which an action must meet, the latter are unspecific about the way in which the change of state is brought about. Sæbø proposes an analysis where both types of predicates involve an indeterminate event predicate and where the function of the instrumental *by*-adjunct is to fill it with content via unification.

Another aspect of modification of event expressions is highlighted by **Marius Egg**. He offers a unified approach to cases in which modifiers or affixes refer to embedded eventuality arguments in the semantics of the modified expression or base, respectively. Addressing modification of deverbal nouns by an adjective like *beautiful* in *beautiful dancer*, restitutive readings of *again*-sentences, and the effect of prefixation in German verb nominalisations like *Losgerenne*, the author argues that all three cases can be analyzed as interface phenomena in which a modifier or affix may semantically apply to only a part of the semantic contribution of its modified expression or base. Within this part, the eventualities that are bound in the semantics of the modified expression or base as a whole emerge as open arguments. The analysis is modelled in a framework based on underspecification and makes use of potential scope ambiguities in the semantics of the expressions discussed.

Section III: Event Structure and Situation Aspect

Situation aspect (cf. Smith, 1991), also called *lexical aspect* or *Aktionsart*, which is concerned with the internal temporal constitution of events and its linguistic reflection, is perhaps the most prominent semantic field where the Davidsonian approach has achieved remarkable advances. Although the literature on this phenomenon is vast, there remain many questions that are not convincingly solved yet. Since Vendler's (1967) classification of verbal predicates into four classes – activities, states, accomplishments and achievements – researchers aim at the clarification of the determining factors of these classes. Features like dynamicity, durativity, telicity and gradability play a central role in the discussion. Do such features characterize the underlying events or are they part of the verbal meaning or both of them? If they are considered to be features of the events, then one has to distinguish between several ontological types (or sorts) of events, i.e. between events of change, processes, and states (cf. e.g. Bach, 1986a,b; Parsons, 1990; Piñón, 1995; Dölling, 2005). Another possibility that has proven itself to be of great benefit is the approach proposed by Krifka (1989, 1992, 1998), which identifies quantization (telicity) and cumulativity (atelicity) as properties of verbal predicates. Here, the tight interaction between the referential information of a verb and that of its arguments (or adjuncts) is crucial for the explanation of aspectual composition (cf. e.g. Filip, 1999; Engelberg, 2000; Rothstein, 2004).

Susan Rothstein argues that the semantics behind the Vendlerian verb classes is best captured with the help of two sets of features: whether or not the event in its denotation is durative, and whether or not it denotes an event of change. But the verbal class of semelfactives (e.g. *knock*) and that of degree achievements (e.g. *cool*) pose notorious problems for the Vendlerian classification. Rothstein proposes an operation of S-summing in order to explain why degree achievements, although verbs of change, also have atelic interpretations. This operation forms singular events out of sums of temporally adjacent events. While S-summing normally does not apply to verbs of change, because two events of change cannot be immediately adjacent to each other, it can apply to degree predicates, because they are characterized as changes in values on a scale. Semelfactives differ from activities in that they come with natural beginnings and endpoints and therefore can be perceived as atoms. If that is the case, the interpretation of a semelfactive verb is telic.

Eri Tanaka's paper aims at an explanation for why Japanese lacks so-called strong adjectival resultative constructions. Its starting point is the assumption that one should differentiate between incremental theme verbs and motion verbs on the one hand, and change of location/state verbs on the other hand. Only the latter should be represented by the BECOME-operator that serves as a source for their telic interpretation. Verbs of the first group are atelic in Japanese and are interpreted as referring to a path or scale. Telic inter-

pretations with verbs of this group are only possible if the path/scale is bounded by the object-NP or a postposition (e.g. *–made* 'up to'). Tanaka takes the complementary distribution of the two postpositions *–ni* ('in/at/to') and *–made* as further evidence for the distinction between the two verb groups. She suggests that weak resultatives are formed on the basis of change of location/state verbs – hence BECOME-verbs – and that the adjectives modify the result state. Strong adjectival resultatives are based on verbs of the first group, but Japanese adjectives lack the possibility to bind/to limit the path/scale and therefore Japanese lacks this sort of construction.

The paper by **Eric McCready and Chiyo Nishida** is concerned with Spanish reflexive intransitives (RIs), i.e. constructions containing the reflexive clitic *se* in conjunction with a non-transitive verb. After establishing the differences between RIs and their transitive counterparts, the authors note that (dynamic) RIs have three distinctive properties. They require a quantized subject NP, they license a dative argument which stands in some relation to the event described by the sentence, and they coerce the verbs they appear with to achievements denoting a transition, or the onset or the final end of a process or a state. McCready and Nishida model these facts by introducing a presupposition of telicity on the VP associated with reflexive *se*, allowing RIs to be associated with an additional, possibly implicit, argument, and, finally, placing meaning postulates on verb classes associating the temporal interval of the event with the initial or final point of a path.

John Beavers focuses primarily on the factors governing durativity in dynamic predicates to build a broader picture of the aspectual behaviour of descriptions of events of change. His main objective is to show that there is a general correlation between the durativity of an event and the gradability of the scale of change of a participant. He argues that Krifka's homomorphism model designed originally to explain the nature of telicity of incremental theme verbs can be generalized to cover a wide range of dynamic predicates following a scalar approach to telicity and, in consequence, also explains the durativity/gradability correlation. Essential for the analyses by Beavers is a distinction between two types of mereological complexity: structures with two sub-parts (begin, end) and structures with at least three sub-parts (begin, middle and end). In addition, the paper outlines relevant lexical, pragmatic and contextual constraints on durativity and gradability and discusses their possible origins.

Section IV: Event Structure and Plurality

Quite a number of recent event-based studies deal with the question of how distributive, collective and cumulative readings arise. Traditional analyses attribute this difference between the addressed readings to the quantificational make-up of the NPs occurring in the respective sentences. But since the work

of Schein (1993) and Lasersohn (1995), it has been recognized that event structure must play a major role in accounts of plurality, including distributive, collective and cumulative interpretations (cf. e.g. Landman, 2000; Kratzer, 2003). In this connection, there is an ongoing discussion about the question of whether verbal predicates are lexically already marked for plurality. Moreover, the plurality question points towards a broader problem: although there is a huge amount of literature on quantification, the formal approaches to these phenomena rarely make use of events. With the growing acceptance of event semantics it became apparent that a combination of event-based theories and theories of quantification is necessary. In this context, the influence of the event type on the existential force of the subjects and objects of verbs presents another challenge.

Angelika Kratzer pursues some of the consequences of the idea that there are at least two sources for distributive/cumulative alternation of readings in English. One source is lexical pluralization. Following a proposal by Krifka and Landman, she assumes that all verb stems are born as plurals independent of the particular language and the particular nature of its NPs. The second source of cumulative/distributive interpretation in English is directly provided by plural NPs. Kratzer proposes that such phrases with plural agreement features are able to pluralize adjacent verbal projections. The difference between the two possibilities lies in the fact that distributive/cumulative interpretations on the basis of lexical pluralization allow the occurrence of singular NPs within the sentences, which is impossible with the second type. She shows that the phenomena discussed in her paper all pose conceptual problems for analyses not based on events, but can be given elegant accounts within a version of the Davidsonian event semantics.

The objective of the contribution by **Kimiko Nakanishi** is closely connected to the last one: It examines empirical data on collective and distributive interpretations of constructions in Japanese and German, where a quantificational expression appears separated from its host NP. The author assumes that such split quantifiers measure the events in the verbal domain, but only if the relevant VP denotes a part-whole structure, i.e. a lattice of events. Furthermore, she assumes that, with the help of the mapping based on the homomorphism from events to objects, the measure function applies indirectly to the events by measuring the objects denoted by the host NP. According to her, this mechanism of event measurement satisfactorily accounts for why split quantifier constructions usually disallow collective readings. In addition, Nakanishi discusses some examples where, by contrast, a collective reading is available in such a construction and argues that the proposed analysis is capable of handling these cases, too.

A specific type of multiple participants in a single event is focussed by **Alexis Dimitriadis'** paper. The author presents a wide range of data on reciprocals, especially on irreducibly symmetric and discontinuous reciprocals,

found in numerous languages. It is essential for an irreducibly symmetric predicate like *meet* that it expresses a relationship between two arguments where, in contrast to ordinary reciprocals, both arguments necessarily have thematically identical participation in any event described by means of it. As it is shown by Dimitriadis, irreducible symmetry plays a prominent role in many discontinuous constructions, in which the logical subject of a reciprocal verb appears to be split between the syntactic subject and a comitative *with*-phrase. Taking into account the well-known problems with assigning the same thematic role to different participants, he proposes an analysis where the symmetric events are decomposed into sub-minimal events specifying the distinct relations of each participant to the complex event.

Sheila Glasbey investigates which verbal predicates disallow existential readings for their bare plural objects and, in addition, which adjectival predicates disallow existential readings for their bare plural subjects. One of her observations is that, contrary to the usual picture, many verbs and adjectives which might well be classified as individual level predicates give not only generic but also existential interpretations. Using a situation-theoretic framework, the author argues that, generally, such a reading is made possible by the presence of a localising situation, which may be provided by the event argument of the verb or by an appropriate context. According to her, psych-verbs with experiencer subjects like *hate* as well as adjectival predicates lack event arguments and, therefore, may allow an existential reading for their bare plurals only with the help of a specific context. The proposal is that, in both cases, the reading comes from a so-called existential inference which is licensed by the respective situation.

Section V: Event Structure and Temporal Location

The significance of temporal location for the determination of event structure should be obvious (cf. e.g. Parsons, 1990; Kamp and Reyle, 1993). According to common understanding, the tense of the verb serves primarily to localize the respective event in time – notably before, around, or after the time of utterance (or speech). A more recent approach takes another stance (cf. Klein, 1994): Tense does not directly specify the time of the event; rather, it locates the time interval about which the utterance asserts something with respect to the utterance time. Viewpoint (or grammatical) aspect (cf. Smith, 1991), i.e. the device for making distinctions between, e.g., perfective and imperfective, on the other hand, concerns the relationship of event time to tense time. Thus, not only tense but also viewpoint aspect is defined in terms of temporal relations. While there is a huge amount of research on the two grammatical categories and on the interaction between them, there is much less work on how they interact with quantificational NPs or with quantificational adverbials in terms of

scopes, as well as with particles like *already* or *still*. In addition, specific questions arise from languages which lack at least one of the categories to express the temporal location of events. For example, Mandarin has no tense marker and, hence, no grammaticalized means to impose a constraint on the time about which the assertion is made. An important problem which has to be investigated is how the temporal location system fills such a ‘gap’.

In their paper, **Cornelia Endriss and Stefan Hinterwimmer** present novel evidence for an analysis of Quantificational Variability Effects (QVEs) as by-products of a quantification over events/situations. They compare adverbially quantified sentences containing indefinites modified by relative clauses with sentences containing corresponding quantificational NPs modified by relative clauses, showing that the former have to obey a constraint in order for QVEs to arise that does not hold for the latter: the tense of the relative clause verb has to agree with the tense of the matrix verb. While this is completely unexpected under the assumption that QVEs come about via direct quantification over individuals, the authors show that a natural explanation is possible under the assumption that the events quantified over have to be located in a salient time interval, and that this interval is determined on the basis of a pragmatic strategy dubbed *Interval Resolution Strategy* that favours local information.

Marko Malink deals with the interplay of negation, quantifiers and phase particles *schon* (‘already’), *noch* (‘still’), *noch nicht* (‘not yet’) and *nicht mehr* (‘not anymore’). In particular, he provides a scope analysis of German sentences such as *Einige sind noch nicht da* (‘Some people are not there yet’) or *Niemand ist mehr da* (‘Nobody is there anymore’). In order to correctly account for the intuitive meaning of such sentences, he proposes to split negative phase particles such as *noch nicht* and negative quantifiers such as *niemand* into a negation and a purely positive part. He then shows that the negation has a different scope position than the positive part of the phase particle or quantifier to which it belongs. He goes on to specify a compositional formal account of quantified phase structures within a generalized quantifier framework. Malink argues that in the sentences under consideration, phase particles have a bridging function connecting the VP and the subject-quantifier.

A different view on properties of phase particles or, in other words, aspectual adverbs is taken by **Alice G. B. ter Meulen**. With the overall aim of a better understanding of temporal coherence of information states, she examines the relation between the objective content of English aspectual adverbs and the subjective information which can be also conveyed by them. According to the author, the four basic aspectual adverbs – *not yet*, *already*, *still* and *not anymore* – constitute a logical polarity square in the temporal domain of events, showing the fundamental relationship between current, past and future reference times. In addition, they have usages associated with marked high pitch prosody, where, besides the factual information, the speaker’s attitude regarding the flow of events or its perceived speed is expressed. To capture

them, ter Meulen introduces a modal operator which quantifies over alternatives to the current course of events, dependent upon the speaker's epistemic state.

Hooi Ling Soh and Meijia Gao's paper investigates the meaning of Mandarin sentential *-le* with specific focus on its relation to English perfect tense and to the particle *already*. They propose that the transition marker *-le* encodes the assertive meaning that the situation in question is realized prior to a reference time (in a Reichenbachian sense), along with the presupposition that a situation opposite to the one described by the sentence exists immediately before the point of realization. The reference time is either the utterance time, or, when the particle *jiu* is used, some specified time in the past or the future. The authors discuss the similarities that have been previously noted between sentential *-le* and English perfect in terms of the presence of a result state and a continuative reading and argue that the relevant readings are not entailed by *-le*. On their analysis, the transition marker shares its assertive meaning with perfect tense and its presupposition with *already*.

Section VI: Event Structure and Natural Language Ontology

There is perhaps no topic in semantics in which questions of meaning are so intimately interwoven as with ontological questions such as the concept of event. In order to analyse what information on event structure is encoded in linguistic expressions one needs an account of the ontology underlying natural language. Such a theory of the world, i.e. of what basic sorts of entities there are, what fundamental properties the entities have and how they are related, does not necessarily correspond to the categorial commitments of current natural science, especially of micro physics. Instead, natural language ontology (cf. Bach, 1986a) has to accommodate every kind of entity which can be the object of ordinary talking and thinking. More specifically, the ontological analysis is not primarily concerned with the way the world really is but rather with the way we conceptualize it for the purposes of every-day life. Thus, it has to do with entities which result from projecting our cognitive framework onto environmental input and, for this reason, are also dependant on the concrete point of view we take. Over the past years, an increasing number of domains of such entities have been distinguished in investigating the common sense world. Following the crucial innovation by Link (1983) to assume specific lattice structures on the domains of pluralities and of quantities of matter, Bach (1986b) and, in particular, Krifka (1989, 1992, 1998) have extended this algebraic approach to events. Many others, of which only some could be referred to in this introduction, have contributed to this far-reaching field of research. As a result, semantics is provided now with a system of assumptions that precisely charac-

terize the structure of the domain of events and its relationship to the domain of objects.

Regine Eckardt addresses an apparent conflict between two applications of event ontology for semantics. Thus, scholars aiming at modelling the difference between telic and atelic predicates commonly assume that certain properties – the properties of homogenous reference – of events are inherited by all their parts, no matter how small they are. However, proposals modelling negative polarity items are forced to assume a level where parts of events are so small that they can no longer inherit properties denoted by a natural language predicate. After summarising the two positions, Eckardt proposes three possible solutions for this dilemma, and discusses two of them, the construction of infinitesimal events and a solution capitalizing on the Sorites paradox. Both of the treatments appear to capture some of the essence of how in every-day reasoning very small events are thought about. She concludes that till now there are no conclusive arguments in favour of one or the other of these options.

Another subject which is immediately connected with basic problems of ontology is investigated by **Christopher Piñón**. His paper gives an account of verbs of creation (e.g., *build*, *compile*, *draw*, *write*) which are known to take an internal argument denoting a physical object that is effected or brought into being as a result of the event named by the verb. The author argues that such verbs are actually ambiguous with respect to the sortal character of their internal argument. In particular, the internal argument of a verb of creation may also denote what he calls a *template*, i.e. an abstract individual that is physically instantiated in the course of the event described by the verb. This idea allows to analyze performance verbs of creation (as *sing* in *sing a song*) and those denoting the creation of templates (as *compose* in *compose a symphony*). Moreover, Piñón can also explain data such as *Sarah built the house that Rebecca designed* where *the house that Rebecca designed* designates a house template (or design) which Sarah builds an instantiation of. To this end, he proposes a set of sort-shifters that serve to capture systematic ambiguity among verbs of creation like *build*.

We like to thank the reviewers of the workshop for their great help and patience: Markus Egg, Veronika Ehrich, Stefan Engelberg, Hana Filip, Fritz Hamm, Angelika Kratzer, Manfred Krifka, Claudia Maienborn, Susan Rothstein, Arnim von Stechow, and Henriëtte de Swart. Furthermore, we want to thank the authors of the contributed papers for their cooperation all the way through.

The conference received financial support from the Centre for Higher Studies at the University of Leipzig, which is gratefully acknowledged. The research project "Event Structures: Grammatical and Conceptual Components of Utterance Interpretation" at the Department of Linguistics of the University of

Leipzig as well as the preparation of manuscript for publication were funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Sebastian Hellmann and Stefan Keine deserve special thanks for their accurate formatting of the manuscript. Thanks also to David Dichelle and Ryan Young for checking the English of non-native speakers involved in the volume.

Leipzig, January 2007

Johannes Dölling, Tatjana Heyde-Zybatow and Martin Schäfer

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