

Aspectual and Volitional Properties of Control Marking in Comox-Sliammon

Background Thompson (1985) claims that AGENT CONTROL is a primitive property of Salish languages. Under his analysis, control predicates indicate that an agent carries out the action denoted by the predicate in full volition and ability, while limited control predicates indicate that the event was unintentional or that the agent completed the action therein only after some difficulty (pp. 392-3). For example:

<p>(1a) [+CONTROL] tu⁰-ut-as shoot-CTR-3ERG “He shot at it (intentionally)”</p>	<p>(1b) [-CONTROL] tu⁰-əx^w-as shoot-LCTR-3ERG (i) “He shot it accidentally” (ii) “He finally managed to shoot it”</p>
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(Comox-Sliammon, adapted from Watanabe, 2003, pp. 202-3)

Watanabe (2003) and Jacobs (2011) offer an alternative analyses of the alternation between control and limited control transitivizers as essentially aspectual. They show that predicates suffixed with the limited control transitivizer in Squamish and Comox-Sliammon require that the event they denote be bounded – ‘that the natural endpoint encoded in the verb is the actual endpoint of the event that occurred’ (Jacobs, 2011, p. 4) because limited control predicates necessarily entail the culmination of an action; to deny the result state of a limited control predicate is contradictory, but the result state of a predicate suffixed with the control transitivizer can be denied felicitously.

(2a) Non-culmination with control marking

kəp-t-ut=čən	ʔiy	x ^w aʔ	kəp=as
cut-CTR-PST=1SG.IND	and	not	cut=3CNJ
“he (tried to) break it, but it did not break”			

(2b) Non-culmination with limited control marking

#kəp-əx ^w -an-ut	ʔiy	x ^w aʔ	kəp=as
cut-LCTR-1ERG-PST	and	not	cut=3CNJ
“he broke it but it did not break”			

(Comox-Sliammon, adapted from Watanabe, 2003, p. 205)

Kroeber (1985) offers a combined analysis for Comox-Sliammon: control predicates entail a volitional preparatory stage but not a result; limited control predicates entail a result but not a volitional preparatory stage. The evidence for a volitional preparatory stage is the fact that only control predicates can be complements of object-to-subject Equi verbs:

(3a) Object-to-subject Equi with control marking

χ ^w ah-at-ut=č	tu ⁰ -ut=as	tə	qigaθ
tell-CTR-PS=1SG.IND	shoot-CTR=3SG.CNJ	DET	bear
“I told him to shoot the bear.”			

(3b) Object-to-subject Equi with limited control marking

#χ ^w ah-at-ut=č	tu ⁰ -əx ^w =as	tə	qigaθ
tell-CTR-PS=1SG.IND	shoot-LCTR=3SG.CNJ	DET	bear
“I told him to shoot the bear.”			

(Comox-Sliammon, adapted from Kroeber, 1985)

Problems There are problems for each approach in Comox-Sliammon. Contrary to Thompson’s (1985) AGENT CONTROL analysis, there are cases where limited control morphology is used for predicates where the agent is in full control of the action. The context for (4) is that Bruno intentionally took a hammer to his tooth because having broken teeth is a requirement to join a gang.

(4a) Limited control morphology with an intentional agent

čəp-əx^w-əm Bruno jinis
break-LCTR-PASS B. tooth

“Bruno (intentionally) broke his tooth.”

(4b) Control morphology with an intentional agent

#čəp-t-əm Bruno jinis
break-CTR-PASS B. tooth

“Bruno broke his tooth.”

Contrary to Watanabe’s (2003) and Jacobs’ (2011) aspectual analyses, there are cases where limited control morphology is rejected when there is a strong requirement of volitionality.

(5a) Control with strong requirement of volitionality

ʔoʔo-mut=č mək^w-t kiks ʔiy mək^w-əx^w=an
no.intent-INT=1SG.IND eat-CTR cake and eat-LCTR=1SG.CNJ

“I did not want to eat cake, but I did.”

(5b) Limited control with strong requirement of volitionality

#ʔoʔo-mut=č mək^w-əx^w kiks ʔiy mək^w-əx^w=an
no.intent-INT=1SG.IND eat-LCTR cake and eat-LCTR=1SG.CNJ

“I did not want to eat the whole cake, but I did.”

For Kroeber’s (1985) combined analysis (also for Thompson’s analysis), problematic cases have been found where control morphology is used where the causer of the event is non-volitional, such as a natural force.

(6a) Non-volitional causer with control morphology

puʔəm gaq-t ʔemən
wind open-CTR door

“The wind opened the door (slightly).”

(6b) Non-volitional causer with limited control morphology

puʔəm gaq-əx^w ʔemən
wind open-LCTR door

“The wind opened the door (fully).”

Analysis The data suggests that control marking in Sliammon-Comox involves both aspect and volitionality, but it varies pragmatically with the context of its use. When there is no possibility of a volitional reading, as in (6), the volitionality requirement disappears and the morphology purely marks aspect. When the possibility of a volitional reading becomes available, control morphology is employed in accordance with the property that is most salient, as in (4). When there is a strong requirement of volitionality, the aspectual properties are neutralized and the morphology purely marks volition, as in (5).

References

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