

On Aspectual Operators

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This talk explores the properties of a small group of adverbial-like elements, including Sw. *väl*, *knappt*, Eng. *once*, Fr. *une fois*, *à peine*, It. *una volta*, *appena*. The presentation will concentrate on Swedish *väl* which will generally be glossed as ‘once’ (but the reader should be aware that the two words do not have the same distribution). When added to an imperfective/progressive small clause such as (2), *väl* yields an inchoative reading of sorts, that by contrast is not available in (1):

- (1) Springande mot nödutgången (ropade vi på hjälp/såg vi att elden hade spridit sig ...)
running toward the emergency exit (we cried for help/we saw that the fire had spread ...)
‘while we were running ...’
- (2) Väl springande mot nödutgången (ropade vi på hjälp/såg vi att elden hade spridit sig...)
once running toward the emergency exit (we cried for help/we saw etc.)
‘when/once we had started to run ...’

When, on the other hand, the small clause is perfective, the contribution of *väl* is less obvious: in a sentence pair such as (3)-(4) there is no contrast comparable to that of (1)-(2):

- (3) Framkommen till stationen (ringde han hem på mobilen)
arrived at the station (he called home on his mobile phone)
- (4) Väl framkommen till stationen (ringde han hem på mobilen)
once arrived at the station (...)

I will assume a theory where grammatical aspects are considered operators taking scope over predications (de Swart 1998). In such a frame, Swedish *väl* and similar elements can be considered lexicalised aspectual operators, presumably of the kind de Swart labelled PERFECT. When *väl* takes scope over an imperfective action, as in (2), *väl* changes its aspectual reading. When *väl* takes scope over an action that is already perfective by itself, as in (4), *väl* leaves no crucial contribution to the aspectual reading but can rather be considered pleonastic.

The paper will discuss how the properties of small clauses introduced by *väl* can follow from the (sometimes complicated) interaction of aspects and event types, for instance the fact that *väl* licenses individual level secondary predication that is otherwise unacceptable:

- (5) *Svensk fick hon rösta i riksdagsvalet.
swede could she vote in the parliamentary election
- (6) Väl svensk fick hon rösta i riksdagsvalet.
once swede could she vote in the parliamentary election

Reference

de Swart, Henriette (1998) Aspect Shift and Coercion. *NLLT*, 16:2, 347-385