

Surprise readings

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In a wide variety of languages, the verbs *go* and *take* may combine with another verb in a complex predication to produce certain aspectual readings (see e.g. Ekberg 1993, Butt and Ramchand 2005, Wiklund 2007), see (1), (2) (from Butt and Ramchand), and (3). Notably, what may be labeled an *inceptive* reading seems to be common; a reading where the onset of the event denoted by the embedded predicate is in some sense emphasized. Some but not all of these also involve a touch of surprise, unexpectedness, or suddenness (henceforth *surprise reading*) in the absence of prosodic reflections of the emotional state of being surprised. For instance, (3a) and (3c), but not (3b), involve a surprise reading in this sense. In St'át'imcets (Lillooet Salish), the circumfix *ka-...-a* produces what appears to be a related reading in certain contexts (accidentally, suddenly), apparently in the absence of an inceptive reading, see (4) (from Davis et al. 2007). This paper investigates the distribution of surprise readings more closely and a number of hypotheses about how the relevant surprise may be derived; concerning thematic properties, lexical specifications of the verbs involved, event types, and pragmatic inferences. It will be shown that a number of factors conspire to make the distribution of surprise readings seem uneven. Nevertheless, certain syntactic ingredients are required for the 'inceptive' surprise reading to emerge.

- (1) He **went** and married Anna.
- (2) nadya=ne xat luk^h li-ya. (Hindi/Urdu)
Nadya.F=Erg letter.M.Nom write take-Perf.M.Sg
- (3) a. Han **gick** och dog. (Swedish)
he go.Past & died
b. Han **gick** och läste en bok.
he go.Past & read.Past a book
c. Han **tog** och läste en bok.
he take.Past & read.Past a book
- (4) **ka-sék'**w-s-as-a ta=nk'wanústen'=a ta=twéww'et=a. (St'át'imcets)
CIRC-break-CAUS-3ERG-CIRC DET=*window*=EXIS DET=*boy*=EXIS
'The boy broke the window accidentally.'