

On how Not to culminate

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In Romance and Germanic languages, a perfective sentence with an accomplishment predicate is taken to describe an event that has *culminated* – that is to say, an event that has reached its *telos* or inherent, natural, endpoint.

- (1) Pierre a tué son chat, #mais il n'est pas (encore) mort.
(2) Peter killed his cat, #but it is not dead (yet).

In many languages, however, perfective accomplishments are known to allow for *non-culminating readings*. There are (at least) two different ways in which culmination can be cancelled across predicate types and languages. In Mandarin (3) with causative 'burn', non culmination involves *non completion of the expected change of state* since the book burns partially, but not completely. Mandarin 'burn', however, can also fail to culminate via the *absence of the expected change of state*, as in (4) where the book fails to undergo *any* burning change whatsoever. These two non culminating construals correspond roughly to the distinction found in the literature between *failed attempt* readings and *partial success* readings (Tatevosov 2008, Tatevosov & Ivanov 2009, Lyutikova & Tatevosov 2009). We label them **partial result** and **zero result** non-culminating readings.

(3) *Partial result non-culminating reading*

Yuēhàn shāo le tā-de shu, dàn méi quán shāo-huǐ (Demirdache & Sun 2014)
Yuēhàn burn perf 3sg-DE book but neg completely burn-destroy
'Yuēhàn burned his book, but it didn't burn completely.'

(4) *Zero result non-culminating reading*

Yuēhàn shāo le tā-de shu, dàn méi shāo-zháo (id.)
Yuēhàn burn perf 3sg-DE book but neg burn-touch
'Yuēhàn burned his book, but it didn't get burnt at all.'

This talk seeks to probe a correlation gone to a large extent unnoticed in the literature, namely, that *the availability of non-culminating construals for accomplishments correlates with the control of the agent over the described event*: whenever an accomplishment admits a non-culminating construal, this is the case only if we can ascribe agenthood to the subject; if the subject of the very same verb is a (pure) causer, culmination cannot be cancelled, compare e.g. (3) and (5):

- (5) # Huǒ shāo le tā-de shu, dàn méi shāo-zháo (Demirdache & Sun 2014)
fire burn perf 3sg-DE book but neg burn-touch
Intended: 'The fire burned his book, but it didn't get burnt at all.'

Demirdache & Martin (2013) refer to this correlation as the **Agent Control Hypothesis (ACH)**. We explore here the scope of the ACH relative to each of the different ways of cancelling culmination identified above. The question we thus ask is to what extent the ACH holds crosslinguistically across the subtypes of non-culminating construals illustrated with Mandarin in (3) vs. (4): *non completion of the expected change of state* vs. the (total) *absence of the expected change of state*.

This will lead us to consider two versions of the ACH:

- (7) a. S-ACH (Strong version)

Zero result and partial result NC construals require the predicate's external argument to be

associated with '**agenthood**' properties.

b. W-ACH (Weak version)

Crosslinguistically, at least **zero result** non-culminating construals require the predicate's external argument to be associated with '**agenthood**' properties.

On the **strong** version, cancelling culmination requires agent control whether what is being denied is the occurrence in w_0 of any result ('zero result' construal), or merely that the result state satisfies the maximal value of the relevant scale ('partial result' construal). The question is whether there are languages (or predicate classes across languages) of which the ACH holds in its strong version.

On the **weak** version, the prediction is that, across languages and predicate types, **agenthood** is required to license **zero result** construals, while *partial* result construals will be, in some languages and with some predicates, licensed with causer (non-agentive) subjects.