Expressing difficult achievements in Bavarian: the interpretation of *der*-verbs

Jakob Majdič (University of Vienna) & Sarah Zobel (University of Oslo)

In this talk, we analyze the interpretation of a class of **morphologically complex verbs in Bavarian** (a family of German varieties spoken in South-East Germany and the majority of Austria) that are formed with the verbal prefix *der-*. The verbal prefix *der-* is exclusive to Bavarian German and has a number of uses with *prima facie* distinct semantic contributions (see e.g., Sonnenhauser 2012). We will focus on single use of *der-* for which the **semantic contribution of the verbs prefixed with *der-*** is intuitively close to the combination of the implicative verb *manage* and the verbal predicate that is embedded in its complement: *der-essen ≈ manage to eat*, see (1).

(1) Der Alex hat das Schnitzel **der-**essen.   (≈ 'Alex managed to eat the schnitzel.')
    the Alex has the schnitzel DER-*eaten*

The analysis is based on judgments gathered via informal questionnaires and detailed interviews with speakers of Central Bavarian and Southern Bavarian varieties spoken in Austria, as well as our own native speaker intuitions.

Our goal is to show that **Bavarian *der*-verbs are semantically more resticted than English *manage*** (cf. Karttunen 1971, Nadathur 2019) and to identify the meaning components contributed by *der*-verbs, which together lead to the *manage*-like meaning. We argue that *der*-verbs denote **achievements** and contribute projective content conveying **difficulty** and **prior intention** in connection with the action described by the verbal root and its arguments.

Complex *der*-verbs. The prefix *der-* is exclusive to Bavarian varieties of German. The use of *der-* with the *manage*-like meaning analyzed in this talk has no counterpart in Standard German unlike other uses of the prefix (see Sonnenhauser 2012). Prefixation with *der-* in the relevant use is productive but restricted: *der-* can only combine with verbal roots that can describe intentional action, like *eat* (1) or *pour* (7); it cannot combine with stative roots (e.g., **der-wissen* 'DER-know') or roots describing unintentional action (e.g., **der-stolpern* 'DER-trip').

Shared properties. 1) The implicative verb *manage* has the characteristic entailment pattern (Karttunen 1971) shown in (2). Sentences with *der*-verbs show the same entailment pattern: (1) entails that Alex ate the schnitzel, and (3) entails that Alex didn't eat the schnitzel.

(2) a. Alex <u>managed to eat</u> the schnitzel.   → Alex <u>ate</u> the schnitzel.
    b. Alex <u>didn't manage to eat</u> the schnitzel.   → Alex <u>didn't eat</u> the schnitzel.

(3) Der Alex hat das Schnitzel nicht **der-**essen.   → Alex didn't eat the schnitzel.
    the Alex has the schnitzel not DER-*eaten*

2) The use of a *der*-verb in contrast to the unmodified verb suggests that performing the action described by the verbal root and its arguments is associated with difficulties: (1) and (3) both suggest that eating the schnitzel provided a challenge (e.g., because of the size of the schnitzel). The same is true for *manage* in (2). **3)** Causal clauses that modify *manage*-claims specify why the subject was (not) successful in performing the action described in the sentential complement, see (4) (Karttunen 1971). The same is true for causal clauses and *der*-verbs, see (5).

(4) Alex didn't manage to eat the schnitzel because it was huge.

(5) Der Alex hat das Schnitzel nicht **der-**essen, weil es riesig war.   (≈ (4))
    the Alex has the schnitzel not DER-*eaten because it huge was*

Crucially, the causal clauses in (4)/(5) cannot provide Alex's motivation for why he ate or didn't eat the schnitzel. That is, causal clauses comment on the contribution of *manage* or *der-*.

Difference between *der*-verbs and *manage*. The central difference lies in the possibility to use *manage* in contexts in which the action described in the complement was unintentional, as in (6) (Coleman 1975). The corresponding (7) can only convey that Alex's pouring of the wine was intentional and associated with difficulties (e.g., the table was hard to reach).

(6) Alex managed to pour red wine all over the table. (compatible with: It was an accident!)

(7) Der Alex hat den Rotwein über den ganzen Tisch **der-**schüttet.
    the Alex has the red.wine over the whole table DER-*poured*

The subject of a *der*-verb even needs to have a *prior intention* to perform the action described by the modified verb and its arguments: e.g., (3) cannot be used to report that Alex just happened to not eat the schnitzel; (3) conveys that Alex failed to (fully) realize his plan to eat the schnitzel.

Proposal. (For reasons of space, the projective content is only described informally.)
1) Asserted content. Independently of the aktionsart of the verbal root, *der*-verbs are *achievements*, which is supported by how they interact with temporal adverbials (e.g., Dölling 2014). In (8), the time-point adverbial can only locate the time at which the challenge was overcome ($\approx$ 'At 10:03, Alex managed to {pull / start pulling} the box.') And in (9), the time-span adverbial can be understood as measuring the interval from the time of speaking until Alex is done eating the schnitzel; the eating itself can take more or less than 10 minutes. Neither reading is possible for the sentence counterparts of (8) and (9) containing only the roots without *der-*.

(8) Der Alex hat die Kiste um 10:03 **der-**zogen.   ('pull the box' = activity)
    the Alex has the box at 10:03 DER-*pull*

(9) Der Alex **der-**isst in 10 Minuten das Schnitzel.   ('eat the schnitzel' = accomplishment)
    the Alex DER-*eats in 10 minutes the schnitzel*

We propose that *der*-verbs describe a *boundary* (in the sense of Piñon 1997) of the type of event that is described by the verbal root and its arguments. For instance, the truth-conditional contribution of *der-essen* 'DER-eat' is given in (10).

(10) ⟦der-essen⟧ $= \lambda y.\lambda e.$ BOUNDARY$(e, \lambda e'.$ eat$(e', y))$

According to (10), *der-essen* takes an individual y and an event e such that e is a boundary of an eating of y. Note that we mean *boundary* temporally and *not* in the sense of *telos*; every durative event has a left and a right boundary: its temporal beginning and end. Following Kratzer (1996), we assume that the denotation of the external argument is added compositionally via the head of vP. Hence, on the truth-conditional level, (1) conveys that Alex participated (as an agent) in a boundary of an eating-the-schnitzel event (e.g., the end of that event). • The proposal captures the observed entailment pattern: An utterance of a positive sentence with a *der*-verb asserts the existence of a left or right boundary; hence, the event described by the verbal root (at least partly) took place. An utterance of a negative sentence asserts that no left or right boundary exists; hence, the event described by the verbal root did not take place. The proposal also captures that causal clauses cannot comment on the event described by the verbal root.
2) Projective content. We propose that a *der*-verb contributes two sorts of projective content that are both temporally dependent on the tense of its containing clause.

(11) DIFFICULTY: The speaker believes that someone in the agent's contextual comparison class is unable to perform the action.

(12) PRIOR INTENTION: The agent plans/planned to perform the action described by the verbal root and its arguments.

According to (11), the speaker communicates with the use of a *der*-verb that they believe that not everyone in the agent's group could overcome the challenge set by the action that is de-

scribed by the verbal root and its arguments (e.g., the size of the schnitzel for (1)). Crucially, though, *der*-verbs do *not* convey that the speaker believes that *the agent* is unable to perform the action; if that were the case, the sentence in (13) would be contradictory, contrary to fact.

(13) Der Alex hat, wie erwartet, das Schnitzel **der-**essen.   (≈ 'As expected, Alex managed...')
     the Alex has as expected the schnitzel DER-*eaten*

The content in (12) directly encodes that *der*-verbs require intentionality on the part of the agent. • The projectivity of (11) and (12) is motivated by the fact that neither the expression of difficulty nor the requirement of intentionality is affected by negation or question formation:

(14) Hat der Alex das Schnitzel **der-**essen?   (≈ 'Did Alex manage to eat the schnitzel?')
     has the Alex the schnitzel DER-*eaten*

Selected references: Karttunen. 1971. Implicative verbs. *Language 47*. • Nadathur. 2019. *Causality, aspect, and modality in actuality inferences.* • Piñon. 1997. Achievements in an event semantics. *SALT 7.* • Sonnenhauser. 2012. Zirkumstantielle Modalität im Bairischen: Das verbale Präfix *der-. ZDL* 79.