Expressing difficult achievements in Bavarian: the interpretation of *der*-verbs
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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 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 restricted 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 *managed to eat* the schnitzel. → Alex *ate* the schnitzel.

b. Alex *didn’t manage to eat* the schnitzel. → Alex *didn’t eat* the schnitzel.

(3) Der Alex hat das Schnitzel nicht *der*-essen. → Alex didn’t eat the schnitzel.

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))

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 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 (≈ ‘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)
(9) Der Alex der-isst in 10 Minuten das Schnitzel. (‘eat the schnitzel’ = accomplishment)

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) \( [\text{der-essen}] = \lambda y. \lambda e. \text{BOUNDARY}(e, \lambda e'. \text{eat}(e', y)) \)

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).

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.  
\( \approx \) ‘As expected, Alex managed…’

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?  
\( \approx \) ‘Did Alex manage to eat the schnitzel?’