

Events with benefits:

Towards a truth conditional definition of beneficiaries

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1 Introduction

- ‘Beneficiary’ is a thematic role that has been central to a range of constructions, such as the dative alternation and the applicative (Zúñiga & Kittilä 2010, Zúñiga & Creissels 2024).
- Like other thematic roles in current syntactic and semantic work, the ‘role’ of benefactive is generally assumed to be shorthand for a cluster of lexical entailments (Davis 2019).
- Treating thematic roles as such is an idea that goes back to at least Dowty (1989), who treats what he calls L-thematic roles as the set of linguistically relevant entailments associated with a participant (see also Ladusaw & Dowty 1988).
- Many current views, then, assume some role BEN that is licensed by a functional head such as APPL (McGinnis 2001, Wood & Marantz 2017, Nie 2019, Polinsky 2024).
- The compositional semantics makes predictions about the differences in how this new beneficiary argument links to the event and/or other participants (Pylkkänen 2008, Jerro 2021).
- What has not received sufficient discussion is what the relevant lexical entailments are with a role like BEN.
- In this talk, we discuss the truth-conditional properties associated with BEN, using the English “for X” construction as an empirical case study. We additionally note areas where we do, and do not, expect cross-linguistic variation in the semantic and thematic properties of beneficiaries.
- As is typical cross-linguistically with benefactive constructions, three broad subtypes of beneficiaries appear with ‘for’ phrases (van Valin & LaPolla 1997): plain beneficiary (1a), deputative (1b), and recipient (1c):

(1) a. **Plain:**

Mike sang a song for Kyle (to amuse/entertain/honor Kyle).

b. **Deputative:**

Mike taught the class for Kyle (so that Kyle didn't have to).

c. **Recipient:**

Mike baked a cake for Kyle (to give to Kyle).

- These three subtypes are well motivated within the typological literature (Kittilä 2005a, Kittilä & Zúñiga 2010), although languages differ in the beneficiary meanings they associate with specific benefactive constructions.
- For example, the applicative morpheme *-il/-el* in Bemba licenses a beneficiary object (2a); the post-verbal clitic *=kó* restricts the interpretation of the applied object to be specifically deputative (2b).

- (2) a. *Ábá-icé bá-ká-send-el-a im-fúmu ubu-ta*
2-children SM2-FUT-carry-APPL-FV 9-chief 14-bow
'The children will carry the bow for (the benefit of) the chief'
- b. *Ábá-icé bá-ká-send-el-a=kó im-fúmu ubu-ta*
2-children SM2-FUT-carry-APPL-FV=LC17 9-chief 14-bow
'The children will carry the bow (instead of) the chief'

(Marten & Kula 2014:3,(1))

- However, a semantic definition of the necessary and sufficient entailments that cross-cut beneficiaries has—to our knowledge—not been provided in previous work.
- Note that we are setting aside here any investigation of malefactive because to our knowledge English uses 'on' for such meanings and 'for' is only compatible with benefactive readings. However, we believe that our findings here will also extend to malefactive given their semantic similarities to plain benefactives, albeit with negative polarity (Kittilä & Zúñiga 2010).
- With this in mind, we propose the following definition of a beneficiary, shown in (3).

- (3) A beneficiary participant is a non-core individual who is prospectively impacted by the eventuality denoted by vP.

- In the following discussions we motivate the three core properties of the beneficiary thematic role:
 1. In §3 we will show that beneficiary roles are never a participant of the core event described by their associated verb.
 2. In §4 we will show that any actual benefits on the beneficiary are always prospective. They are never included in the culmination conditions of the predicate they are linked to.
 3. Finally, in §5 we will coin the term IMPACT to describe the entailed, prospective, effect on the participant that is assigned the beneficiary role.

- Ultimately, we will find that a truth-conditional approach to the beneficiary thematic role leaves on the table a number of crucial questions necessary for fully understanding their inclusion as a basic thematic participant in most languages.
- Nonetheless, our goal here is to set a truth-conditional foundation to provide both a jumping-off and comparison point for cross-linguistic variation of the beneficiary role, as well as non-truth-conditional approaches in future work.

2 Background: L-thematic Roles

- Before delving into the aspects of our proposal for the definition of beneficiaries, we first provide a broader background on entailment-based approaches to defining thematic roles.
- The use of thematic roles as labels for clusters of specific lexical entailments persists (albeit implicitly in much current work).¹
- For example, there have been fruitful investigation using entailment-based approaches of many thematic roles, e.g., instruments (Koenig et al. 2008) or locatives (Zwarts & Winter 1997, 2000, Zwarts 2005).
- However, the truth conditional meanings associated with beneficiaries has been under-analyzed in formal work on argument realization.
- The centrality of lexical entailments to thematic roles (Carlson 1984, Chierchia 1985, Dowty 1989) has unofficially undergirded most current approaches to argument structure, wherein functional heads license an argument with specific semantic properties.
- For Dowty (1989), entailments associated with a specific argument are the set of properties that are entailed by the truth of the larger predicate, as formalized in (4); this derives individual thematic roles for a particular verb.

- (4) Given an n -place predicate δ and a particular argument x_i the *individual thematic role* $\langle \delta, i \rangle$ is the set of all properties α such that the entailment
- $$\Box[\delta(x_1, \dots, x_i, \dots, x_n) \rightarrow \alpha(x_i)]$$
- holds. (emphasis in original) (Dowty 1989:76,(4))

- Intuitively, this gives the set of things that can be concluded about x from knowing that x *builds* y is true.
- A particular thematic role type is the set of entailments common to individual thematic roles across verbs.

- (5) Given a set T of pairs $\langle \delta, i_\delta \rangle$ where δ is an n -place predicate and i_δ the index of one of its arguments (possibly a different i for each verb), a *thematic role type* τ is

¹While the explanatory value of thematic roles as deriving syntactic generalizations has been heavily problematized (Zubizarreta 1987, Hovav & Levin 1988, Dowty 1989, 1991, Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005), we contend that there persists a value in understanding the kind of meaning associated with benefactive constructions like ‘for X.’ How this squares up with broader concerns about thematic roles as a theoretical tool for explanation is a question we leave for future research.

the intersection of all the individual thematic roles determined by T . (emphasis in original)

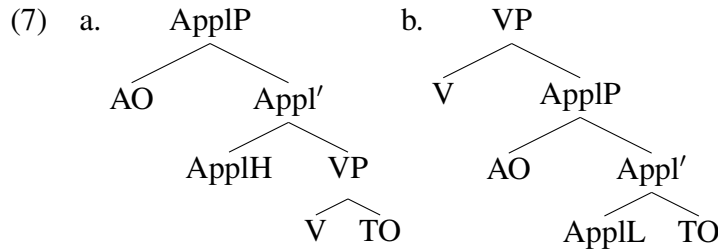
(Dowty 1989:77,(6))

- From the thematic role types as defined in (5), only a (presumed) subset of these is relevant for linguistic generalization, and this linguistically-relevant set is termed by Dowty the “L-thematic roles.”
- The relevant entailments for Agent and Patient (what we term ‘core’ participants) are well understood (though debated) and have been incorporated into event structural work on argument realization (Cruse 1973, Van Valin & Wilkins 1996).
- For example, Kratzer (1996), building on observations from Marantz (1984), proposes a little- v head which licenses the Agent thematic role. Similarly, Ramchand (2008) ties the ordering of subevents and their participants to the hierarchical syntactic structure of their licensing functional heads.

2.1 A Gap in the Definition of Beneficiaries

- Like other roles, beneficiaries are treated as being licensed by a functional head, perhaps most influentially through an Appl head (Pylkkänen 2008; see also Nie 2020).
- Under Pylkkänen’s (2008) account, the Merge height of ApplP determines what the argument licensed by SpecApplP is associated with.²
 - High applicatives (where ApplP merges over VP) denote a relationship between the event denoted by the V and the applied object. This is cached out as deputative and plain benefaction.
 - Low applicatives (where ApplP merges under VP) denote a relationship between the individual denoted by the verb’s theme object and the applied object. This is crucially cached out as transfer-of-possession, or recipient benefaction.

- (6) a. $\llbracket \text{ApplH} \rrbracket := \lambda x \lambda e [benefactive(e, x)]$
b. $\llbracket \text{ApplL} \rrbracket := \lambda x \lambda y \lambda f_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \lambda e [f(e, x) \wedge theme(e, x) \wedge to.the.possession(x, y)]^3$



(Pylkkänen 2008:16-19,26-27)

²See Myler & Mali (2021) for a further enrichment of this typology by the introduction of Super High Applicatives.

³We should note that, formally speaking, there is nothing that requires the meanings associated with the two Appl heads be tied to their proposed syntactic position (Jerro 2021), a point made more generally for argument licensing heads by Wechsler (2005) in response to Kratzer’s (1996) little- v proposal.

- The two possible positions for merger of Appl in Pylkkänen’s system captures differences in whether the applied object comes into the possession of the direct object (for a Low Applicative) or not (for the High Applicative).
- This distinction does capture certain systematic differences between, e.g., the English double-object constructions and Bantu applicative morphemes (though we return to this in the conclusion).
- Our interest here is in the truth conditional properties of a conjunct like *benefactive*(*e, x*), which has remained largely unanalyzed.⁴
- With this goal in mind, we propose the following, repeated from (3):

(8) A beneficiary participant is a non-core individual who is prospectively impacted by the eventuality denoted by vP.

- Three points are crucial in this definition, and we discuss each in turn; namely, beneficiaries are (i) non-core participants in the event they are associated with, (ii) whose actual benefit from their associated event is prospective, but (iii) are prospectively impacted in some way by the event they are associated with.

3 Non-Core

- One of the few analyses of beneficiaries in their own right comes from van Valin & LaPolla (1997), who—building on work by Jolly (1991, 1993)—discuss a range of uses of English ‘for’ phrases.
- Relevant to our discussion here, they treat ‘plain’ beneficiary and deputative readings as emerging from a PURP operator; the decompositions they propose in (10) correspond to the plain beneficiary and deputative readings in (9a-b), respectively.⁵

- (9) Robin baked a cake for Sandy
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| a. ...to amuse her. | Plain Beneficiary |
| b. ...so that she wouldn’t have to. | Deputative |
- (10) a. [**do**’(Robin, ∅)] CAUSE [BECOME(**baked**’(cake))] PURP [BECOME(**entertained**’(Sandy))]
b. [**do**’(Robin, ∅)] CAUSE [BECOME(**baked**)] PURP [NOT [**do**’(Sandy, ∅)] CAUSE [BECOME(**baked**’(cake))]]]

⁴The literature often uses “beneficiary” and “benefactive” somewhat interchangeably; we use “beneficiary” to denote the thematic role label and “benefactive” as a morphosyntactic construction which licenses a beneficiary thematic role.

⁵van Valin & LaPolla (1997) also analyze recipient readings with ‘for’ phrases, as well as a small set of verbs which select for ‘for’ phrase arguments, as in the following examples, respectively:

- (1) a. Lucy longs for a diamond ring.
b. Robin baked a cake for Sandy.

As we discuss at various points below, recipients are overlapping but distinct from beneficiaries. As for ‘long for’, we note that the complement of ‘for’ is not a beneficiary, and so we treat this as a separate, homophonous use of ‘for’ with distinct semantic properties which we leave aside here. We leave the question regarding the broader (if any) link between all these types of ‘for’ phrases for future research.

- This analysis treats the benefactive constructions as corresponding to a multi-clausal ‘purpose’ operator, shown in (11). This purpose operator creates a modal relationship between two ‘states of affairs’ (LS), the first (LS_1) is the one denoted by the verb, while the second (LS_2) is the desirable consequence of LS_1 .
- Given that the causal chain between LS_1 and LS_2 can be arbitrarily long, the purposive operator is similar to frustratives in that the consequential LS_2 may not be an *entailed* consequence of the event, it may be an implied one, e.g. based on real world knowledge (Overall 2017, Davis & Matthewson 2003).

$$(11) \quad want'(x, LS_2) \wedge DO(x, [LS_1 \dots CAUSE \dots LS_2])$$

(van Valin & LaPolla 1997:383)

- While most work on the lexical semantics of event structure associates each thematic participant with its own subevent, Jolly and van Valin & LaPolla’s approach treats the beneficiary participant as part of a subevent that is outside of the core event denoted by the modified verb.
- This is because work on benefactive constructions has consistently noted that the beneficiary is not entailed by the event it modifies (Kittilä & Zúñiga 2010).

(12) Santiago sang a song \nrightarrow Santiago sang a song *for someone*

(13) Santiago opened the door \nrightarrow Santiago opened the door *for someone*

(14) Santiago baked a cake \nrightarrow Santiago baked a cake *for someone*

- This ostensibly distinguishes the recipient of dative verbs (*give*, *send*, and *throw* verbs; Levin 2008) from the benefactive recipient added to other verbs (Everdell 2025).
- On van Valin & LaPolla’s approach, a recipient of a dative verb is an inherent participant in the event *viz a viz* the goal (Beavers 2011), while a benefactive recipient is a participant of a sending event intended to be brought about by the core event denoted by the verb.
- However, van Valin & LaPolla’s analysis predicts that modifiers like *almost* should be able to pick out a distinct subevent associated with the beneficiary. Dative verbs do show distinct motion and reception subevents, as in (15)

(15) *almost* modification

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| a. | I almost sent a package to Humberto | |
| | ...but I forgot | motion |
| | ...but Wendy collected it instead. | reception |
| b. | I almost gave a package to Humberto | |
| | ...but I forgot | motion |
| | ...but Wendy swiped it | reception |
| c. | I almost threw the ball to Humberto | |
| | ...but I tripped | motion |
| | ...but Wendy intercepted it | reception |

- However, such modifiers do not pick out a receiving or benefitting event that is distinct from the core event expressed by the verb.
- Notice in each case *almost* can target the initiation of the event, but cannot target a putative benefitting subevent (i.e. the beneficiary cannot almost benefit).

- (16) I almost baked a cake for Paola
 ...but I didn't have flour
 #...but I dropped it en route.
- core event
benefit (recipient)
- (17) I almost opened the door for my dog
 ...but the door was stuck
 #...but the screech of the hinges scared her away.
- core event
benefit (deputative)
- (18) I almost sang for Paola
 ...but I lost my voice
 #...but the lyrics disgusted her
- core event
benefit (plain)

- We see in this section based on *almost* modification, that the beneficiary is not a member of a subevent of the verb's core event. At least not one that can be syntactically accessed.
- This follows from the the non-core status of a benefactive; its non-core status also means that it does not add to the truth conditions of the core event described by the verb.
 - This is to say, the successful culmination of an event modified by a benefactive construction *never* entails that the beneficiary actually benefits. The culmination conditions of the event are the same as they are without the beneficiary
- We strengthen this point in §4, where we discuss the benefit to a benefactive as always existing in the prospective portion of an event they modify, following Beavers (2011).

4 Prospectivity

- Returning to Jolly (1991, 1993) and van Valin & LaPolla (1997), they observe that the benefit in a benefactive construction necessarily occurs as a consequence of the core event described by the verb.
- Thus, the benefaction occurs (a) after the core event denoted by the verb, to which we add that it (b) floats over the top of the event.
- By (b) we mean that the benefaction appears to act both as a motivation for the core event denoted by the verb and as a consequent outcome of the core event.
- We see evidence of the inherent prospectivity of beneficiaries in the interpretation of past perfect inflected verbs, as in (19). In each case the TAM marking expresses that the core event denoted by the verb has been completed, but the benefaction is not temporally bound by the TAM inflection.

- (19) a. Mwaūra had baked a cake for Jacinta
 ...and was preparing to give her the cake tomorrow
- Recipient

- b. Mwaũra had opened the door for Jacinta
...and was waiting for her to come over. Deputative
- c. Mwaũra had sang for Jacinta
...and was getting ready to send her the track. Plain
- To take this further, we see in (20) that it is possible to mark the verb for a completed event, while explicitly denying the possibility of the beneficiary ever benefitting.
- (20) a. Mwaũra baked a cake for Jacinta
#...but there is no cake.
...but Jacinta will never receive it or find out about it (e.g. because the cake came out gross) Recipient
- b. Mwaũra taught the class for Jacinta
#...but Mwaũra didn't teach the class.
...but Jacinta completely forgot the class was happening that day, and Mwaũra will never tell her. Deputative
- c. Mwaũra sang a song for Jacinta
#...but no sound came out of Mwaũra's mouth.
...but Jacinta will never know of its existence (e.g. because Mwaũra is too shy). Plain
- Beavers (2011) divides predicates into two portions: prospective and non-prospective. He shows that different classes of ditransitives (in English) divide their prospective and non-prospective portions differently.
 - For example, *leaving/loss of possession* predicates entail a change of location and loss of possession by the agent (i.e. non-prospective), but do not entail the transfer of possession (i.e. the goal is only prospectively a recipient). In contrast, *verbs of giving* make both the loss of possession and transfer of possession non-prospective
 - Compare the possible continuations of the past inflected *send* and *give* in (21) and (22), respectively. While the theme's change of location cannot be canceled for either, as in (21a) and (22a), the transfer of possession can for *send*, as in (21b), but not for *give*, as in (22b).
- (21) Humberto sent Aurora a package
a. #...but it never left his house.
b. ...but Wendy stole it en route
- (22) Humberto gave Aurora a package
a. #...but it never left his hands.
b. #...but Wendy stole it en route.
- While Beavers (2011) finds lexical semantic properties of the predicate to be defining of the prospective and non-prospective portions, we find that beneficiaries are always participants of the prospective portion of a predicate.
 - The non-prospective portion of an event modified by a benefactive is consistently determined by the core event formed by the verb (see Beavers 2011 for relevant discussion; also Martin 2019, Beavers & Koontz-Garboden 2020), while the benefactive construction exclusively adds prospective material.

- Returning to *send* versus *give*, the addition of a beneficiary does not change the felicity of the (a) and (b) continuations.
- Instead, we see in (23c) and (24c) that the only change of the additional beneficiary is a new prospective benefactive implicature.

- (23) Humberto sent Aurora a package *for Jacinta*
- a. #...but it never left his house.
 - b. ...but Wendy stole it en route
 - c. ...he hoped doing so would make Jacinta forgive him.

- (24) Humberto gave Aurora a package *for Jacinta*
- a. #...but it never left his hand.
 - b. #...but Wendy stole it en route
 - c. ...he hoped doing so would make Jacinta forgive him.

- While the benefitting is always prospective, we find a difference between deputative beneficiaries and other types of beneficiaries. Namely, the agent substitution portion is non-prospective.
- Consider the plain and deputative readings of *for Ngugi* with *teach* in (26) and (27), respectively. Notice that a plain benefactive does not preclude Ngugi from being a co-agent, a deputative benefactive does.
- Ngugi may or may not benefit from Humberto's actions (i.e. the benefit is prospective), but the deputative beneficiary is precluded from being an agent (i.e. the deputation is non-prospective).

- (25) Humberto taught the class and Ngugi taught the class with him.

- (26) **Plain**
 [Context: Humberto wants to honor his former mentor Ngugi by teaching a class on his contribution to decolonial literature.]
 Humberto taught the class for Ngugi...and Ngugi taught the class with him.

- (27) **Deputative**
 [Context: Humberto didn't see Ngugi on campus today and decides to do him a favor by covering Ngugi's 1:30pm Kenyan history course.]
 Humberto taught the class for Ngugi...#and Ngugi taught the class with him.

- While Ngugi may prospectively benefit from Humberto teaching his course on behalf of him, the deputative benefactive entails that Ngugi is not an agent of the teaching event. Thus, deputative beneficiaries seem to add an entailment that they, non-prospectively, cannot be the agent.

- (28) A **deputative** beneficiary participant is a non-core individual who is prospectively impacted by the eventuality denoted by vP **and is not an agent of the eventuality denoted by vP**.

5 Impact

- As we have shown in §4, benefactives are unlike other thematic roles in that the so-named benefit they may receive is entirely prospective.
- Moreover, it is not the case that the beneficiary is entailed to *benefit* (i.e., positively) from the event.
- For example, with a plain beneficiary reading as in (29a), the sentence is felicitous even if the beneficiary participant did not particularly enjoy the event.
- Similarly, with the deputative sentence in (29b), the person for whom the event was done could be unhappy with the work.
- With recipient beneficiaries (29c), receiving the theme may not necessarily be a positive benefit.

- (29)
- a. Mike sang the song for Kyle, but Kyle found it annoying.
 - b. Mike prepared the lecture for Kyle, but there were inaccuracies and this made Kyle's life harder.
 - c. Mike baked a cake for Kyle, but Mike is terrible at baking and it made Kyle deathly ill.

- Thus, what does appear to be entailed by a beneficiary role is a more general notion that we will term IMPACT. We see in (30a) and (30b) that the benefactive construction is odd if the beneficiary has no response whatsoever to the action done on their behalf.
- Instead, our most ready interpretation of (30a) is that the continuation is felicitous in a context where Kyle actively works against having a reaction. Mike's actions have impacted Kyle, such that a neutral reaction is not the default feeling.
- For (30b), the continuation is odd unless we expect the event to somehow emotionally effect Kyle (i.e. they are depressed and Mike's actions were insufficient to help Kyle). The same utterance is odd in a context where *Kyle still felt nothing* is an expected outcome of the event.

- (30)
- a. [Context: In a situation where Kyle is aware that Mike prepared the lecture on his behalf]
Mike prepared the lecture for Kyle, ...#but Kyle felt nothing at all. (on intended reading)
 - b. [Context: In a situation where Kyle is aware that Mike prepared the lecture on his behalf]
Mike prepared the lecture for Kyle, ...#but Kyle *still* felt nothing at all. (on intended reading)

- What the examples in (29) and (30) show is that cases where the beneficiary does not experience the impact of the event are only compatible with contexts where there was some expectation that they *should* have experienced an impact.

- Recall from §4 that the benefaction is always prospective, it is never the case that a beneficiary *must* experience the impact of the event. Beyond this, even if there is successful action directed to the beneficiary, their experience of the event is not necessarily positive.
- Negative-valence beneficiaries have typically been labeled ‘maleficiaries’ (Kittilä 2005a, Kittilä & Zúñiga 2010).

(31) a. *Elle lui a fermé la porte.*
 she 3SG.DAT PST closed the door
 ‘She closed the door on her/him.’

French

b. She told a lie on him.

AAE (Jones 2018)

c. *ba-ki-hyom-el-an-a*
 2S-PST-be.angry-APPL-RECIP-FV
 ‘They were angry at each other’

Kindendeule (Ngonyani 1998:79,(20))

- The ‘for’ construction in English does not readily encode strongly negative maleficiary readings:

(32) a. She closed the door for me \neq She closed the door on me.
 b. She taught the class for me \neq She taught the class to spite me.
 c. She baked a cake for me \neq She baked a cake which, upon receiving, negatively impacted me.

- What we propose here is the polarity-neutral label of ‘impact’ to indicate that the emotional state of the beneficiary participant is influenced in some way.
- Using ‘impacted’ in the definition of beneficiaries allows for the range of positive and negative ways that the beneficiary participant may feel about the eventuality that is being done for them.
- Across languages, the typical polarities of positive/negative impact differ, but what is shared is that all participants in these constructions are impacted in some way.
- What this definition rules out is a case where a successful act of the eventuality leaves the beneficiary completely unimpacted (i.e., neutral) to the eventuality done for them.
- Due to the fact that the entailment of impact is prospective—recalling §4—it is often the case that the beneficiary participant is unaware of the eventuality, and this means that the beneficiary may not have any feelings about the event because they are not aware of it.
- However, for our judgments of the examples in (30), the beneficiary is crucially aware that the eventuality took place, and—for us—must be emotionally impacted in some way (even if very slightly).⁶

⁶Capturing the relevant mental states involved in being “emotionally impacted” is a question that we leave for future research. We note briefly that there could be parallels between the emotional impact associated with beneficiaries and the social effect associated with, e.g., slurs and other kinds of political speech (Beaver & Stanley 2023). We return to this point in the conclusion.

- Thus, all constructions under the umbrella of *benefactives* (including *malefactives*) must entail a prospective impact. Although specific constructions may involve a polarity modifier specifying the impact on a space of good and bad.
- The calculation of impact, and further insights to its properties, is not readily modeled using an entailment-based approach, as shown previously. Thus, we leave these to future research under non-entailment based approaches, and as we will discuss in the conclusion.

5.1 Volitionality and Animacy

- For Jolly and Van Valin Jr. & LaPolla, the intended benefaction, or impact, motivated them to assume beneficiaries entail volitionality, or purposefulness, of the agent, based on examples such as:

- (33) a. #John knows Greek for mental exercise.
b. #Rita found a fifty-mark note for fun.

(van Valin & LaPolla 1997:383,(7.93), citing Jolly 1993)

- However, we disagree that this is hardwired into the meaning of beneficiaries. Consider (34) and (35) where the context is crucially that the agent did the action unintentionally.
- In (34), the agent did not intend to water their neighbor’s plants, however, the actions of the agent cannot have precluded the beneficial outcome to the neighbor (i.e. the agent did not attempt to *not* water their neighbor’s plants).
- In (35) the *accidentally* adverb means that the agent did not set out to cook the beneficiary dinner, but at some point during the cooking event, likely realized there would be extra food and never attempted to prevent that outcome. This is to say that *accidentally* here cannot mean the agent tripped and fell and out popped extra food for Jacinta’s benefit.

- (34) [Context: I was watering my plants, and accidentally and unknowingly watered my neighbors plants, too. My neighbor responds]
Oh, you watered my plants for me!

- (35) [Context: Mwaūra told Jacinta he was only making himself dinner, but ended up cooking a much larger batch so that Jacinta could have some]
Well I guess I’ve accidentally made dinner for you!

- Thus, neither intentionally nor volitionality is entailed in the meaning of a benefactive construction. Instead, we believe that the prospective impact entailment of benefactives implies intention and volition on the part of the agent, but this implicature only arises from the teleological construction of the event (i.e. do P in order to benefit z).
- Benefactives can involve involuntary agents (Kittilä 2005b) or arise from unintended (impactful) side effects of the event they modify (analogous to frustratives; see Kroeger 2024 for overview). However, in each case the teleological construction of the event cannot *preclude* a prospective impact to the beneficiary.

- We expect the real world knowledge of events to effect exactly how unintentional or involuntary the agent and their actions can be at all times during an event’s development. For example, real world differences in *watering* versus *cooking* events mean that the examples in (34) and (35) are not unintentional in quite the same way.
- Work on applicatives has noted the relationship between animacy and the benefactive thematic role (Bliss 2010, Pacchiarotti & Zúñiga 2022, Zúñiga & Creissels 2024), in some languages benefactives seem to be restricted to animates, for example East Cree (Junker & Toivonen 2015).
- Animate participants certainly make good beneficiary participants. However, we see in (36) that inanimate participants are also acceptable as beneficiaries so long as they can be construed as somehow benefiting from the core event described by the verb.

- (36) a. I bought some new paint for the house.
 b. I made a box for the pillows, they looked nice there.
 c. Robin sang a song for his Model T Ford, it is a truly wonderful machine.

- However, given cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences in how the world’s entities are divided into animate and inanimate (Trompenaars et al. 2021), we expect differences in animacy restrictions across speech communities.
- We use impact here as a broad term, within which speech communities will place their own views on what it means to ‘be impacted’ and who/what can be impacted.

6 Conclusion

- In this paper, we have focused on the entailments associated with beneficiary participants, keeping with the vast majority of work in argument realization which has investigated the truth-conditional content of verbal participants.
- From taking this view, we have identified the central truth conditional aspects of the meaning of a beneficiary, summarized in (37), along with a modified meaning for deputative beneficiaries:

- (37) A beneficiary participant is a non-core individual who is prospectively impacted by the eventuality denoted by vP.
 (38) A deputative beneficiary is a beneficiary participant who is not an agent of the eventuality denoted by vP

- This has provided further clarity to the meaning associated to beneficiary participants, but it has also identified a gap for future research: lexical entailments are not the whole story to understanding beneficiaries.
- In other words, calculating whether someone has (prospectively) benefitted from an action involves real-world information about social interactions (cf. our discussion of impact), and this kind of information is not readily modeled from lexical entailments alone.

- Unlike entailments associated with, e.g., Agents which can be derived entirely from entailments associated with the verb (cf. Dowty’s methodology as summarized in §2), part of the meaning of a beneficiary involves how the beneficiary themselves might have felt as a result of the action.
- The prospectivity observed across all uses of the benefactive construction (at least in English) further suggests that entailments are not the whole story, since nothing is entailed at all beyond the core meaning of the event to which the beneficiary is adjoined, modulo deputatives.

6.1 A future beyond truth conditions

- In concluding, we note ideas from related work that may be helpful in theorizing the relevant meanings associated with beneficiaries; for example, Nadathur & Bar-Asher Siegal (2024) provide a plausible way to incorporate benefactives within a causal model framework.
- Causal models treat events as a set of causal pathways that are linked to real world knowledge, which produce or preclude culmination conditions (Woodward 2003, Hausman 2005) and determine expected co-occurrences or consequential outcomes (Nadathur 2023, Nadathur & Everdell submitted).
- Nadathur & Bar-Asher Siegal (2024) propose that event types are specified for a set of causal pathways that occur within the context of a larger class of event. For example, the verb *hand* can be analyzed as involving a manner modifier on a *give* event.
- While both verbs have the same culmination conditions, the recipient gains possession of the theme (Beavers 2011), the causal pathways associated with *hand* are specified for involving the use of the agent’s hand as an instrument, whereas the causal pathways associated with *give* are underspecified for how the theme reaches the recipient.

(39) I gave Wendy the plate.

(40) I handed Wendy the plate.

- Along the same lines, we might suggest that ‘baking a cake’ and ‘baking a cake for someone’ imply different actions by the baker (e.g. selecting ingredients with the beneficiary in mind).
- Although they are similar truth conditionally, they are different in the types of causal pathways they permit. Any event involving a benefactive is only produces causal pathways that prospectively produce some impactful outcome on the beneficiary and preclude any which do not.
- This would predict that investigations into frustratives would be useful for future cross-linguistic research (Kroeger 2017). It is likely that benefactives will restrict the types of interpretations of frustratives to those which somehow relate to the benefaction.
- We also see future areas of fruitful investigations from a resonance-based approach to meaning (Beaver & Stanley 2023), which means comparing beneficiaries to politically charged speech (e.g. slurs), as well as incorporating ideas from work on miratives, illocutionary expressives, and other kinds of not-at-issue content (see, e.g., Rett 2021).
- The goal of the present paper was to take a Dowtian (1989) approach to the role of beneficiary in order to better understand its truth conditional content.

- In so doing, we have identified that certain aspects of benefitting involves meaning beyond lexical entailment, most notably the actual benefitting part (i.e. impact).
- The exciting, and currently open, question for future work is the degree to which other meanings are relevant to the meanings associated with thematic roles; while this has not received much, if any, attention previously, we see considerable promise in exploring this in the future.

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