

A Comparative Study between Resultative Constructions and Body Part *Off* Constructions*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

This paper explores the interpretational parallelism between Resultative Constructions (henceforth, RCs) and Body Part *Off* Constructions (henceforth, BPOCs), as shown in (1) and (2), respectively:

- (1) a. He cried his eyes red.
b. She ate herself sick.

(Miyata (2004:47) with slight modifications)

- (2) a. Susan worked / swam / danced her head off last night.
b. Fred talked his head / his ass / his butt off, but to no avail.

(Jackendoff (1997:551))

The type of RCs in (1) is somewhat less familiar than well-known RCs representing only the literal interpretation: The sentences in (1) denote the *excess* of events described by the verbs, as well as the literal event.¹ For example, the sentence in (1a) has two possible interpretations: One reading is that as a result of crying, his eyes became red (i.e. the literal interpretation), and the other reading is that he cried to the extent that his eyes became red (i.e. the excessive interpretation). On the other hand, the sentences of BPOCs in (2), which take body part objects and the particle *off*, are usually interpreted excessively.² For instance, sentence (2a) is

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¹ This type of RCs is called unergative RCs, which take “fake” (reflexive) objects (cf Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995)). I do not deal with transitive RCs in this paper, which describe only the literal interpretation, as follows:

- (i) a. I painted the car yellow.
b. I hammered the metal flat.

Hereafter, I use RCs in the sense of unergative RCs, and focus my concern on the semantic peculiarity of RCs and BPOCs.

² Here, the term *off* covers the particle *out*, because BPOCs sometimes subsume the expression including *out*, instead of *off*. Observe the following:

construed as “Susan worked / swam / danced very hard as if her head would come off.” By the same token, the sentence in (2b) is regarded as describing the situation where “Fred talked intensely as if his head / his ass / his butt would come off.” Both of the constructions are parallel in that they have the syntactic structure [NP V NP XP], and express the intensity of events.

1.2. Purpose

RCs are considered much in the previous literature, while the number of studies dealing with BPOCs is very small (cf. Jackendoff (1990), Rapoport (1993), Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995), Boas (2000) etc.). Furthermore, very little has been explored regarding the interpretational similarity between RCs and BPOCs (cf. Sawada (2000)).

The purpose of this research is, then, to demonstrate the interpretational parallelism between RCs and BPOCs. More specifically, I claim that the meanings of both RCs and BPOCs are based on actual events, and then, the literal or excessive interpretation is derived through interpretative constraints.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 examines some previous studies about RCs and BPOCs, and points out inadequacies of these analyses. Section 3 proposes the interpretive mechanism which captures the interpretational characteristics of the RCs and BPOCs. Section 4 is dedicated to concluding this paper.

2. Previous Studies

2.1. Jackendoff (1997)

Let us first consider the analysis proposed by Jackendoff (1997). He argues that BPOCs are constructionally independent of RCs. He also suggests that the expression *V one's body part off* is inherently registered in the lexicon, with its meaning limited to the exaggeration, and concludes that BPOCs are construed as a kind of idiomatic intensifier. He illustrates the configuration and the meaning, as in (3):

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- | | | | |
|-----|----|--|-------------------------|
| (i) | a. | Sam programmed / yelled his heart out. | (Jackendoff (1997:551)) |
| | b. | He cried his eyes out. | (Miyata (2004:108)) |

Some of the studies treat this kind of sentence as RCs, in that *out* describes the resultant state of the referents denoted by the postverbal NPs. In this paper, I treat the sentences like (i) as a kind of BPOCs for the reason they include the body part objects and describe the excess of events denoted by verbs. See Nakau and Nishimura (1998), Imoto (2004), and Miyata (2004) for detailed discussions, all of which treat the sentences like (i) as RCs.

- (3) a. [_{vp} V [bound pronoun]'s head off]
 b. 'V intensely'

(Jackendoff (1997:554))

The claim proposed by Jackendoff that the *V one's body part off* expression cannot denote the literal meaning is motivated by the aspectual characteristics of BPOCs. As Tenny (1994) suggests, a telic event can co-occur with the *in*-phrase, which signals completion of events, whereas an atelic event can co-occur with the time adverbial *for*-phrase, which signals duration of events. Consider the following examples:

- (4) a. Sue worked her butt off for / *in an hour.
 b. The frog sang his heart out for the whole night / *in a night.

(Jackendoff (1997:551))

Because of the world knowledge about our body part, sentence (4a) expresses not the resultant state of Sue's butt coming off, but the durative situation where Sue worked very hard. Hence, BPOCs are compatible with the *for*-phrase, which indicates the duration of events described by verbs. The same explanation holds for (4b).³

Apparently, the generalization proposed by Jackendoff in (3) seems adequate. It is argued in the previous literature that BPOCs are considered to describe only the excess of events, because our knowledge about the inalienability of the body part balks at the literal interpretation. For instance, it seems impossible that one's head comes off as a result of working. So, the meaning of this construction is fixed to the exaggeration.

A careful examination, however, reveals that it is clearly possible for BPOCs to be interpreted literally, taking contexts into consideration. In other words, although BPOCs generally describe abnormal events, a fictional context allows for

³ In contrast to the case of BPOCs, RCs which represent the resultant state described by postverbal NPs and resultative phrases (i.e. RCs representing the literal interpretation) do not usually co-occur with the *for*-phrase, because this type of RCs specifies the endpoint of the action (cf. Tenny (1994), Miyata (2004), Rothstein (2004), Wechsler (2005) etc.). Consider the following examples:

- (i) a. Mary hammered the metal flat *for an hour / in an hour.
 b. John sang the baby asleep *for an hour / in an hour.

(Rothstein (2004:5))

In (ia), for instance, the sequence [NP XP] describes the resultant state of the metal being flat, so that this sentence is compatible with the *in*-phrase, not with the *for*-phrase. The same explanation holds of (ib).

them to be interpreted as real events. Consider the following examples (relevant portions are italicized):

- (5) a. The android was half-broken, but the engineer recklessly kept using it for making sports clothes. As a result, *the machine finally sewed its fingers off*, and they dropped under the sewing machine.
 ‘The fingers of the android came off as a result of sewing.’
- b. John, who is actually an alien, is really bad at studying. When the final exam was coming, *he finally studied his head off*, and his friends passed out upon seeing it on the floor.
 ‘John’s head came off as a result of studying.’
- c. The android was half-broken, but the engineer recklessly kept using it. As a result, *the machine finally worked its tail off*, and its body split away.
 ‘The tail of the android came off as a result of working.’

In (5a), for instance, *the android* evokes the fictitious situation where an unfeasible event possibly occurs. Such a context, then, enables us to interpret the expression *the machine finally sewed its fingers off* as “the fingers of the android actually came off as a result of sewing.” By the same token, the event described in (5b) is understood to express an actual event by the contextual support that John is an alien. The same holds of (5c).⁴

The fact that BPOCs can be interpreted literally is further confirmed by the following examples:

- (6) a. The android was half-broken, but the engineer recklessly kept using it for making sports clothes. As a result, *the machine finally sewed its fingers off in a day*.
- b. The android was half-broken, but the engineer recklessly kept using it. As a result, *the machine finally worked its tail off in a day*.

The sci-fi-like context allows sentences (6) to be interpreted as actual events, and they go well together with the *in*-phrases which indicate the completion of events. In fact, the expression *the machine finally sewed its fingers off* in (6a), for example, is compatible with the *in*-phrase, since this expression is based on the literal reading.

⁴ In order for BPOCs to be interpreted literally, some contextual factors should be involved. Although this contextual issue should be considered more deeply, I do not investigate this issue any further in this article and leave it to further research, because the main concern of this paper is the interpretive parallelism between RCs and BPOCs.

The same is true of (6b).

The empirical data show that *in*-phrases, as well as *for*-phrases, can compatibly co-occur with this construction, taking contexts into account. To the extent that the observation proposed by Jackendoff (1997) is correct, BPOCs with *in*-phrases should be ruled out. The sentences in (4), therefore, do not constitute the corroborating evidence for his claim that BPOCs bar out the literal reading.

As mentioned above, Jackendoff does not consider the specific correlation between RCs and BPOCs. However, an immediate consequence of the observation above is that RCs and BPOCs are parallel in their interpretation. Specifically, these constructions behave in the same way with respect to their aspects. This implies that these constructions are parallel. As an alternative to his claim, I propose some interpretive process which explains that BPOCs can be interpreted both literally and intensively. I will discuss this issue in section 3.

2.2. Sawada (2000)

Before discussing the interpretive process, let us overview Sawada (2000). Sawada studies the meanings of BPOCs in relation to those of RCs. He claims that BPOCs are overlapped, but cannot be identified, with RCs, in that they share the intensifier reading, as follows:

- (7) a. Mary ate herself sick. (Miyata (2004:35))
 - b. The joggers ran the pavement thin. (Goldberg (1995:184))
 - (8) a. "... I've skied my butt off," said Moe, a square-jawed, square-talking Alaskan.
 - b. They danced their butts off at the party.
- (Sawada (2000:363))

As is mentioned in section 1.1, unergative RCs may be regarded as describing the excess of activities denoted by main verbs. Sentence (7a), for example, can be construed as "Mary ate something to the extent that she became sick." By the same token, BPOCs usually describe the exaggeration like "I have skied very much as if my butt would come off," as in (8a). In this regard, he concludes that BPOCs can be viewed as an instance of RCs, though they may not be a typical case of RCs.

Sawada also argues that the intensive meaning of BPOCs is derived from our world knowledge of body part. For instance, when we hear someone utters a statement like "John laughed his head off," we get in an interpretive conflict, because of the unfeasibility of the event. To solve the conflict, a certain process of reconciliation should come into play. He proposes the processes of interpretive

reconciliation like the following:

- (9) a. Avoid an interpretation against the knowledge of body part integrity.
- b. Seek another way of interpretation, if available.

(Sawada (2000:376))

In addition, if another interpretation is available, the following rule is invoked:

- (10) Rule of construal for intensification

Interpret the postverbal sequence as an intensifying complex.

(Sawada (2000:376))

Through the constraints in (9) and (10), the excessive interpretation of BPOCs is derived.

Basically, I conform to his claim, in that the excessive meaning of BPOCs is derived through the constraints, as in (9) and (10). These rules seem to be reasonable to reconcile the gap between the form and the meaning of BPOCs.

However, the observation proposed by Sawada (2000) seems to pose a problem. As well as the problem in the analysis of Jackendoff (1997), Sawada ignores the literal reading of BPOCs. So, along with his idea, it follows that the overlap between RCs and BPOCs is limited only to the intensifier reading. In addition, the rules in (9) and (10) are established only for BPOCs, not for RCs, as is obvious from the fact that they are relevant to the body part. While he refers to the intensifier reading of RCs and BPOCs, he never mentions the literal interpretation of BPOCs. This is because he stands on the position that BPOCs cannot be interpreted literally. Thus, his analysis results in failing to capture the parallelism between these constructions in terms of the literal interpretation.

Sawada investigates BPOCs and RCs in terms of the semantics. His observation leads to the following prediction: If these constructions are semantically similar, they are also similar in their syntax. However, his observation does not deal with the similarity between them in terms of the syntax. In the following discussion, then, I overview the syntactic behaviors and parallelism of RCs and BPOCs, which cannot be ignored to capture the similarity.

First, let us consider the omissibility of XP. In the literature of RCs, it is widely acknowledged that unergative RCs do not permit the omission of resultative phrases (cf. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995), Wechsler (2005), Nogawa (2007) etc.). Observe the following examples:

- (11) a. Dora shouted herself *(hoarse).
 (Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:35))
 b. The dog barked him *(awake).
 c. You may sleep the unborn baby *(quiet) again.
 (Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995:36) with slight modifications)

Since unergative verbs are inherently intransitive, they cannot take any object NPs. The occurrence of the resultative phrases, however, allows the occurrence of the object NPs, and these sentences become impeccable. The sentence in (11a), for example, is not acceptable without the occurrence of the adjective *hoarse*. The same holds of (11b) and (11c).

The same explanation can be applied to the case of BPOCs. Observe the following:

- (12) a. They worked their butts *(off) when they were young.
 (Sawada (2000:366))
 b. She laughed her head *(off) at the party. (Sawada (2000:366))
 c. Sylvester cried his eyes *(out). (Nogawa (2007:95))

As is the case with the verbs in RCs, the verbs in BPOCs (i.e. *work*, *laugh*, and *cry*) are inherently intransitive. The occurrence of the particles *off* and *out* makes these sentences acceptable. So, it is reasonable to consider that the particles *off* and *out* are indispensable for the acceptability of BPOCs, and that RCs and BPOCs syntactically behave in the same way.

Let us turn to the second syntactic characteristic: the moveability of XP. Unergative RCs do not allow resultative phrases to occur or move in the postverbal position. Consider the following expressions:

- (13) a. * I poured dry the glass.
 (I poured the glass dry.)
 (Bolinger (1971:75))
 b. * He laughed silly himself.
 (He laughed himself silly.)
 (Seuren (2002:203))

In (13a), the resultative phrase *dry* cannot precede the postverbal NP *the glass*. In (13b), by the same token, the resultative adjective *silly* cannot immediately follow the verb *laugh*.

of the origin of idioms.

3. Proposal

3.1. *Fundamental Philosophy of the Parallelism between RCs and BPOCs*

In this subsection, I would like to sketch the fundamental philosophy for understanding the interpretive parallelism between RCs and BPOCs. Here, I assume that the meanings of both RCs and BPOCs are based on an actual event. For example, although we normally understand the event described by BPOCs as expressing the excess, which is the unmarked reading for this construction, we, indeed, bases the interpretation of this construction on the actual event described by *V one's body part off*. To take an example, the excessive reading of the expression *the dog barked its head off* is based on the actual situation where the head of the dog came off as a result of barking. In other words, we represent such a weird situation in our mind, as if it actually occurred. However, it is true that such an abnormal situation is unfeasible in the real world. So, we may be forced to interpret this expression in a different way to fill the gap between the representation in our mind and the real world.⁵

The same explanation can be applied to the case of RCs. In the case of *cry one's eyes red*, for example, we imagine the situation where one's eyes literally became red. Based on the representation in our mind, we are to choose the interpretation (i.e. the literal or excessive interpretation) along with the context or discourse.

In the following subsection, I observe the origins of the idioms *kick the bucket* and *cats and dogs*, both of which encourage the view that even the excessive interpretation of RCs and BPOCs is based on actual events.

3.2. *The Origin of Idioms*

Here, I briefly outline the origins of the idioms *kick the bucket* and *cats and dogs*. The reason I take up these idioms is that the derivation of the meanings of these idioms is applicable to the interpretive process of RCs and BPOCs. In the literature of idioms, it is widely acknowledged that, as their property, the sum of the lexical meanings does not amount to the whole meaning of idioms, and is inherently listed in the lexicon as a whole. Idioms are, therefore, fixed in their words, and any substitution leads to ungrammaticality.

First, let us consider *kick the bucket*.⁶ According to CALD, the meaning of

⁵ Note that, here, the actual interpretation (i.e. the literal or excessive interpretation) depends on the contextual or discourse factor. I will not pursue this issue in detail in this paper, and focus my concern on demonstrating that the meanings of RCs and BPOCs are derived in the same way.

⁶ A number of previous studies focus their concern on the distinction between encoding

kick the bucket is defined as “to die.” In the previous literature, it is argued that this expression is semantically fixed to the meaning of *die* and that each of the constituents (i.e. *kick*, *the*, and *bucket*) cannot be decomposed. So, *kick the bucket* does not tolerate the progressive form nor the present perfect progressive form, because of the fixedness. Observe the examples in (15):

- (15) a. # Hermione was kicking the bucket for weeks. (McGinnis (2002:668))
 b. ??She has been kicking the bucket for the last six month.
 (Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994:497fn))

In (15), the progressive and the perfective expression are ruled out, because, in these cases, the expression *kick the bucket* represents “to die.”

A careful observation, however, bears out the fact that *kick the bucket* does express the literal event where a foot hits the bucket. In this interpretation, the passivization (i.e. the lexical decomposition) is certainly permissible.⁷ Observe the following examples:

- (16) *kick the bucket*
 a. * The bucket was kicked by all of the bad guys. (Horn (2003:247))
 (On the interpretation where one died)
 b. The bucket was kicked by John. (Yasui (1978:26))
 (On the interpretation where one’s foot hit the bucket)

When *kick the bucket* is perceived as describing “to die,” the passivization is impossible as in (16a), while when the expression describes the event in which one kicks a bucket, it is actually possible as in (16b). As Morris and Morris (1988) state, the bucket in *kick the bucket* is originally the one on which a person who is trying to commit suicide, tying a noose around his neck, is standing.⁸ The point is

idioms and decoding idioms. According to Croft and Cruse (2004), the former is the one that is interpretable by the inference from words, but is arbitrary for this expression with this meaning (e.g. *answer the door*, *wide awake*, and *bright red* etc.). The latter, on the other hand, is the one that cannot be decoded from the summation of words’ meaning: One cannot figure out the meaning of the whole at all from the meaning of its parts (e.g. *kick the bucket* and *pull a fast one* etc.). Encoding idioms is also known as idiomatically combining expressions, and decoding idioms is acknowledged as idiomatic phrases (cf. Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994)). Although the system of encoding idioms and decoding idioms should be explained much more closely, I will not pursue this issue any further in this article. For details, see Makkai (1972), Fillmore, Kay, and O’Connor (1988), Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994), and Croft and Cruse (2004).

⁷ See Fiengo (1974) for further details about the condition of the literal interpretation.

⁸ There is another theory about the origin of this expression. The word *bucket* is, indeed, the corruption of *buquet* in old French, which is the wooden frame to slaughter the pig. The pig, then, thrashes about a bit (i.e. kicks the *buquet*) and dies finally. See Gibbs (1990) for the detailed

that the meaning of *die* in this idiom is based on an actual event in which one kicks the bucket to commit suicide.

A similar observation is detectable in the case of the idiom *cats and dogs*. Observe the following examples:

- (17) a. It was raining cats and dogs ... (BNC CHE)
 b. What must you be careful of when it's raining cats and dogs?
 (BNC CHR)

As is obvious from the definition in (18), the sentences in (17) describe the degree of the rain:

- (18) *it is raining cats and dogs*
 something that you say when it is raining heavily (CALD)

This idiom is based on the relation between cats and dogs. It is traditionally said that cats and dogs dislike each other at least in the culture of the English language. This relation is obvious from the following examples:

- (19) We're fair to each other, and we fight like cats and dogs. (BNC ED7)

Here, the degree to which they fight each other is described by the expression *cats and dogs*. This is because the intensity of their fight is just like the relation between cats and dogs. In the case of *it is raining cats and dogs*, too, the furiousness of thunder or lightning is just like the fight of cats and dogs, so that *it is raining cats and dogs* is used to describe *it is raining furiously*. The point is that, in the case of the idiom *cats and dogs*, too, the intensity of events stems from actual events, which encourages my claim that the interpretation of RCs and BPOCs is based on actual events.

So far, I have observed the origins of idioms. In the present-day English, most of the idioms seem to have nothing to do with the original event. However, as is the case with the idioms exemplified above, some of the meanings of idioms are based on actual events, and the other meanings are derived based on the actual events. I employ this interpretive process for arguing the parallelism between RCs and BPOCs in the next subsection.

3.3. *The Parallelism between RCs and BPOCs*

The idea that some of the idioms are based on actual events sheds light on capturing the parallelism between RCs and BPOCs. I assume that the interpretations of both RCs and BPOCs are based on actual events, regardless of the fact that these events seem unfeasible in the real world.

First, let us consider the case of BPOCs which are interpreted literally. The sentences below are the examples cited earlier in (5):

- (20) a. The android was half-broken, but the engineer recklessly kept using it for making sports clothes. As a result, *the machine finally sewed its fingers off*, and they dropped under the sewing machine.
- b. John, who is actually an alien, is really bad at studying. When the final exam was coming, *he finally studied his head off*, and his friends passed out upon seeing it on the floor.
- c. The android was half-broken, but the engineer recklessly kept using it. As a result, *the machine finally worked its tail off*, and its body split away.

It is true that, without any contextual support, BPOCs generally represent the excess of events, and the configuration [NP XP] functions as an intensifier of events. However, as shown in the examples in (20), the literal reading of BPOCs is certainly detectable. This is because we represent the situation in our mind where one's head literally comes off. In (20a), for example, we represent such a desperate situation in our mind in which the fingers of the machine came off as a result of sewing. In addition, the sci-fi-like context helps us to interpret this expression as describing the literal event. In the case of (20b), too, it is regarded as describing the actual event where John's head literally came off. In fact, the literal construal would be impossible if we cannot imagine the situation in our mind where John's head literally came off as a result of studying. The same explanation holds of the case in (20c).

Let us turn to the case of BPOCs which represent the excess of event:

- (21) a. Susan worked / swam / danced her head off last night.
- b. Fred talked his head / his ass / his butt off, but to no avail.

(= (2))

Even in the case of excessive reading, too, it is derived on the basis of actual events. Put differently, we assume that the intensifier reading is based on the events in

which one's body part comes off as a result of the action denoted by verbs. However, in the case of BPOCs, we would get in an interpretive conflict without any context. Here, I stipulate the interpretational constraints which associate the representation in our mind with the actual interpretation. I modify the constraints in (9a) proposed by Sawada (2000) as (22a) for a more general explanation:

- (22) a. Avoid an interpretation against the knowledge of feasibility in the real world.⁹
- b. Seek another way of interpretation, if available. (= (9b))
- c. Interpret the postverbal sequence as an intensifying complex. (= (10))

Note that these interpretive mechanisms can be cancelled if BPOCs can be regarded as expressing literal events, as in the cases of (20). The excessive interpretation is derived through the constraints in (22). In (21a), for example, the situation where Susan's head came off crashes to our encyclopedic knowledge, (i.e. the application of the constraint in (22a)). So, it should be reinterpreted in another way (i.e. the application of the constraint in (22b)). Then, the constraint in (22c) is applied and the excessive reading is derived. The same interpretive process holds true of (21b).

This interpretive process and the constraints in (22) are also valid for the case of RCs. Recall that the type of RCs in question here has both the literal and excessive interpretation in potentia, but I assume that both the literal and excessive readings are based on actual events. Observe the following examples:

- (23) a. He cried his eyes red.
 - b. She ate herself sick.
- (= (1))

Let us first consider the case of the literal interpretation. In (23a), for example, we represent such a situation in our mind where his eyes actually became red as a result of crying. In the case of (23b), too, the real situation in which she became sick as a result of eating something is represented in our mind. In these cases, the representation and the actual meaning are compatible, and the literal interpretation is reasonably invoked without the application of the constraints in (22).

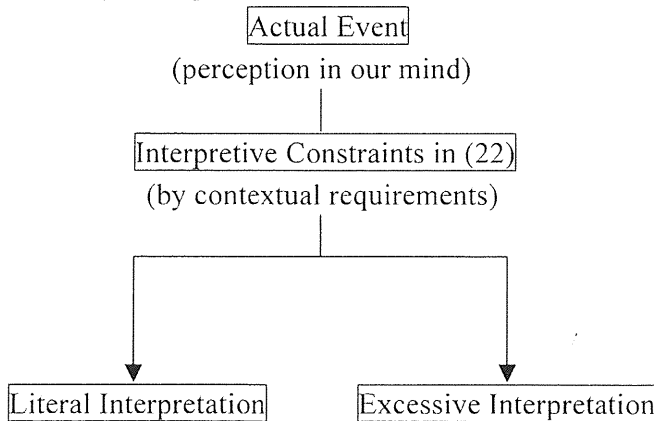
Next, I consider the case of the excessive interpretation. Even if it is difficult to perceive the expressions in (23) as describing the literal events, we do

⁹ For convenience of discussion, I do not define the specific scope of the real world and the imaginary world.

imagine the situation in our mind where the resultant state realizes. However, if we encounter the interpretive conflict due to the contextual or discourse factor, we must reinterpret the expression in a different way. Here, the constraints in (22) are valid for RCs. If we are in a context where the literal reading is difficult, we encounter the interpretive conflict, and seek another interpretation (i.e. the application of the constraints in (22a) and (22b)). To apply the constraint in (22c), then, the excessive reading is derived. In (23a), for instance, if it is difficult to interpret the expression *cry one's eyes red* as denoting the resultant state due to the contextual factor, we are forced to interpret this expression in a different way. To apply the constraint in (22c), the excessive reading is derived. The same explanation holds of (23b).

To sum up this argument, by assuming the interpretive process and the constraints in (22), we successfully capture the parallelism between RCs and BPOCs: Both RCs and BPOCs base their meanings on an actual event in our mind, and the excessive interpretation is derived through the constraints in (22).¹⁰ The interpretive process and the constraints are roughly schematized as follows:

(24) The interpretive process of RCs and BPOCs



Before concluding this paper, I would like to refer briefly to contextual factors in relation to the literal and excessive interpretation of RCs. Observe the following

¹⁰ One may point out the difference between the real world and the fictitious world. It is true that the literal reading of BPOCs can be accepted under the fictitious context, while that of RCs is admissible under any circumstances. However, if we cannot represent the actual situation in our mind in which one's head comes off as a result of an action described by verbs, the literal interpretation of BPOCs would not be inherently possible. Therefore, I can reasonably say that there is the interpretive parallelism between RCs and BPOCs, and, inherently, the excessive reading of these constructions is based on actual events. Again, although the contextual issue should be considered more carefully, I leave it to further research, because this issue is not a main concern of this paper.

examples (relevant portions are italicized and underlined):

- (25) Rome underwent the same process, by which its “illegal aliens,” called “slaves,” built the Roman Empire whilst *Romans ate themselves sick*, went to vomitoriums and back to the feasts. And, we all know what happened to the Roman Empire. (Kudo (2009:50))
- (26) My grandmother had prepared a light Christmas buffet, heavy on homemade candies and cookies, and *we ate ourselves sick*, opened presents, and admired the ocean view, the blush-orange spotlit islands offshore, industrial but lovely in the night. (Kudo (2009:52))

According to my informant, the expression *Romans ate themselves sick* in sentence (25) is interpreted as “romans became sick as a result of eating something.” The expression *we ate ourselves sick* in sentence (26), on the other hand, is regarded as describing the excess of the event. This interpretational difference between (25) and (26) seems to be closely concerned with contextual factors. In (25), with the help of the underlined expression *went to vomitoriums*, we can interpret the italicized portion literally. On the other hand, in (26), there is no contextual clue for *we ate ourselves sick* to be interpreted literally. Rather, the situation of a Christmas party would cause the speaker to feel high. So, the expression in (26) is considered to represent the excess of the event. Although the contextual factors should be considered in detail, I do not explore this issue any further in this article. It must be a matter for future research, however.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have concerned myself with the parallelism of interpretation between RCs and BPOCs. The most fundamental claim of this paper is that both of the construal of RCs and BPOCs is based on actual events, instantiating the interpretive process of the idioms *kick the bucket* and *cats and dogs*. Based on the actual event, the literal or excessive interpretation is derived. If we get in an interpretive conflict (i.e. we cannot interpret the expression literally) due to the contextual or discourse factor, the constraints in (22) are applied to reconcile the representation in our mind with the actual event in the real world. This interpretive process and the constraints, then, can give a unified account to my assumption that RCs and BPOCs are parallel in their interpretation.

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