On the Conceptual Meanings and the Discourse Structures
of Resultative Constructions in English
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In this study, I deal with two types of resultative constructions in English (henceforth, RCs), as in (1):

(1) a. Terry wiped the table clean.   (Miyata (2004:55))
     b. He cried his eyes out.   (Miyata (2004:108))

The sentence in (1a) is literally interpreted: The surface of the table became clean as a result of the wiping event. In contrast, (1b) cannot be interpreted literally; it is interpreted as hyperbole: He cried very hard as if his eyes were out. Although both of the examples in (1) have the form [NP V NP AP] in common, their interpretations differ from one another. I will call the former type of RC literal RCs; the latter hyperbolic RCs. Where, then, does this difference come from? In what follows, I give conceptual and discourse accounts of the difference.

To examine the difference, let us begin by considering the semantics of the literal RCs in more detail. The meaning of the literal RCs can be represented by three conceptual components, which cannot be further decomposed:

(2) a. I hammered the metal flat.   (Simpson (1983:149))
     b. I had brushed my hair very smooth.   (Goldberg (1995:181))

The event denoted by sentence (2a) consists of three conceptual components: The subject referent makes an action against the metal; the metal undergoes the change in its shape; and the shape of the metal is *flat*. In the same way, the meaning of (2b) can be represented by the three conceptual components. I shall call these parts of the event Semantic Primitives (henceforce, SPs): causing-event, change-of-state, and result state. The SPs have essential functions that characterize the semantics of literal RCs. I individually consider the functions of the three SPs below.

First, let us consider the result state. It indicates the state of the entity after it undergoes the causing-event and the change-of-state. It is well known that the result state is closely correlated with telicity of a sentence. For example, as Wechsler (2005) suggests, the result state described by a result phrase delimits an atelic event, by which makes the sentence telic. Consider the examples in (3):

(3) a. John hammered the metal {for an hour / *in an hour}.

b. John hammered the metal flat {*for an hour / in an hour}.

(Wechsler (2005:9))

In (3a), the sentence expresses an atelic event, since it only permits the temporally unbounded adverbial phrase *for an hour*. In contrast, in (3b), the result phrase makes the event telic, and it only permits the temporally bounded adverbial phrase *in an hour*. As is obvious from the sentences in (3), the result state brings about the telicity of a sentence, which is one of the characteristics of the literal RCs.

Second, the causing-event functions as an "ignitor," which causes an entity to change its state. Simpson (1983) suggests that verbs appearing in RCs must affect the object. Thus, verbs of perception do not affect the object and do not appear in RCs; verbs of perception which focus on the manner can appear in RCs, as in (4):
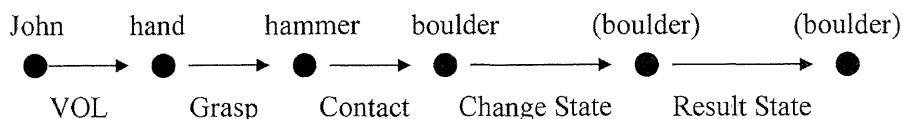
(4) a. * Medusa saw the hero {stone / into stone}.   (Simpson (1983:146))
     b. ? Medusa stared the hero into stone.   (Simpson (1983:154))

In (4a), the event denoted by the perception verb *see* does not cause the hero to change to stone. In contrast, in (4b), the perception verb *stare*, which focuses on the manner of the action, can appear in the literal RCs, because it can be interpreted to induce the change of state of the hero into stone. Thus, verbs appearing in RCs must be the ones which induce the change of state of the object referent. This implies that the causing-event is one of the prominent characteristics inherent to literal RCs.

Third, let us look at the change-of-state. In Cognitive Grammar, the change-of-state has been considered as the linkage between the causing-event and the result state. For example, Croft (1991) suggests the action chain, which represents the relation between a sequence of events, as in (5):

(5) John broke the boulder with a hammer.

John   hand   hammer   boulder   (boulder)   (boulder)

●──→ ● ──→ ● ──→ ● ─────→ ● ─────→ ●

VOL   Grasp   Contact   Change State   Result State

(Croft (1991:166))

In the schema in (5), the process of changing the state of *the boulder* is expressed by *Change State*. What is suggestive in (5) is that the change-of-state can be treated as an independent constituent. RCs also have the same conceptual link as the action chain. In (1a), for example, the cleanliness of the table changes from dirty to clean, which can be described as the link *Change State* in the schema in (5). That is, the

change-of-state is treated as one of the essential meanings in a sequence of RCs.

So far, I have observed that the three SPs serve essential functions in the semantics of the literal RCs. On the basis of the above consideration, the semantic difference between the literal and the hyperbolic RCs can be explained by the presence of the SPs in the sequence of events. That is, the literal RCs consist of three SPs; the hyperbolic RCs lack the result state, i.e., the result state is not realized. For example, the literal RC in (1a) entails the result state of the table being clean, but the hyperbolic RC in (1b) does not entail the result state of his eyes being out. This is supported by the following contrast:

(6) a. Terry wiped the table clean {in / *for five minutes}.   (Miyata (2004:46))
     b. He cried his eyes blind {for / *in an hour}.   (Miyata (2004:48))

The literal RC in (6a) selects *in an hour* for the adverbial phrase, since the result state *clean* makes it bounded. In contrast, the hyperbolic RC in (6b) only permits the temporally unbounded adverbial phrase *for an hour*. It indicates that in the case of hyperbolic RCs, the state described by the result phrase does not function as the endpoint in the sequence of events, denoting that the state is not in fact realized.

Although the semantic difference between the two types of RCs is explained by SPs, there still remains a problem: What decides the interpretation of RCs? See the example of the RC in (7), which is ambiguous in the interpretation:

(7) He ate himself sick.   (Goldberg (1995:192))

This example receives either the literal or the hyperbolic interpretation: In the case of the literal interpretation, the referent of the subject ate something, and as a result, he actually became sick; in the case of the hyperbolic reading, he ate something as if he became sick.

Then, how can we identify the presence or absence of the result state in RCs? To solve this problem, it is reasonable to observe the discourse characteristics which license the two types of RCs. Now, let us consider the contexts in which the literal RCs occur, as in (8), and in which the hyperbolic RCs occur, as in (9):

(8) a. So I cut out a straight section of wire coat hanger, heated one end until it was cherry red, <u>hammered it flat</u>, then, when it cooled, filed the edges smooth and drilled a small hole in it.   (BNC ECJ)
     b. When a certain number of choices have been logged, the computer will <u>wipe the screen clean</u>, "breed" from the preferred biomorph and display

the next generation of mutant progeny. (BNC J52)

(9) a. Diana cried her eyes out with nervous exhaustion. *She wanted William; she wanted to go home, she wanted to be anywhere but Alice Springs.*

(BNC ECM)

b. He is a very jealous person. He had told me that he didn't want to go out with me anymore. I cried my eyes out, *I felt so lost and lonely, he couldn't do this to me, not after all he'd said.* (BNC FU1)

In (8a), the process of making the needle is described as a factual report. The text in (8b) also describes the factual report of the computer virus. In (9a), the writer of the sentence empathizes with Diana, as indicated by the italicized free indirect speech. The text in (9b) also describes the writer's empathy with the subject, as the italicized free indirect speech shows. Given this, the discourse characteristics of the literal and the hyperbolic RCs are summarized as follows: Literal RCs occur in the factual reports; hyperbolic RCs occur in the context in which the writer of the sentence empathizes with the character in the text. In light of SPs, in the case of literal RCs, there is a description which presupposes the resultant state of entities, because literal RCs entail the result state. In contrast, in the case of hyperbolic RCs, there is no description which presupposes the result state, because hyperbolic RCs do not entail it.

However, there are cases to which these generalizations cannot apply, as in (10):

(10) a. My grandmother had prepared a light Christmas buffet, heavy on homemade candies and cookies, and we ate ourselves sick, opened presents [...] (http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/christmas-story)

b. A departure so delayed I won't make my connecting flight. *Once again, I am stranded. This time, I break down completely, huge wracking sobs.* I [...] cry my eyes red and swollen. (http://www.kellyhills.com/blog/)

The passage in (10a) is written in a report style, so it is predicted that the underlined RC is regarded as the literal reading. However, it is understood as the hyperbolic reading. In (10b), the writer empathizes with the referent of the subject, as indicated by the italicized indirect speech, so it is predicted that the underlined RC is interpreted as hyperbole. However, it is actually recognized as the literal reading.

I have proposed that the difference in interpretation is reduced to the presence or absence of one of the SPs, i.e., result state. In addition, licensing its presence or absence in the relevant RC seems to have something to do with the given discourse, although, some examples have not been fully explained in this study. Thus, I will leave the issue of the discourse factor licensing the result state in the future research.