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semantic verb class

group of verbs sharing at least one semantic property.

semantische Verbklasse

eine Gruppe von Verben, die zumindest eine semantische Eigenschaft teilen.

Verbs may be semantically classified in different ways. In synonymy dictionaries and thesauri, verbs and other word classes are often classified on the basis of the extra-linguistic categories they relate to, e.g., ‘life’: *blühen* (‘bloom’, ‘blossom’), *reifen* (‘ripen’), *heranwachsen* (‘grow up’), ...; ‘wanting and actions’: *trachten* (‘strive’), *begehren* (‘desire’), *wollen* (‘want’), *wünschen* (‘wish’), ...; *arbeiten* (‘work’), *handeln* (‘act’), *tun* (‘do’), *fischen* (‘fish’), *basteln* (‘make’), ...; ‘time’: *dauern* (‘last’), *harren* (‘await’), *währen* (‘last’), ... (cf. Dornseiff 1970).

In the literature on semantics, verbs are additionally often classified according to their event-structural properties. Following Vendler (1967), verbs as well as VPs may be either "activity", "accomplishment", "achievement", or "state" expressions, depending on the type of event they refer to. Activity and accomplishment expressions may be used (in English) with continuous tenses, i.e., they are both used to refer to processes going on in time. Activities have no set terminal point and go on in a homogeneous fashion: any part of the process is of the same nature as the whole. If it is true that someone has been running for half an hour, it must also be true that he/she has been running for every period within that half hour. Examples of activity expressions are *run* and *push a cart* (cf. Vendler 1967: 100-101). Accomplishments like *running a mile* and *drawing a circle* differ from activities in that they involve a terminal point which must be reached "... if the action is to be what it is claimed to be" (Vendler 1967: 100). Thus, *run a mile* and *draw a circle* are examples of accomplishment terms (cf. *ibid*: 100-102). Achievement and state expressions cannot be used with continuous tenses, indicating that the corresponding events are not processes going on in time. Rather, they may be predicated of a subject for a given time with truth or falsity. Achievements (*reach the hilltop*, *win the race*, *spot*, *recognize*, ...) can be predicated only for a single moment of time. The corresponding verbs and verbal expressions are called "achievement terms" (cf. *ibid*: 102). States (*know*, *believe*, *love*, *dominate somebody*, ...) can be predicated for shorter or longer periods of time. Verbal expressions used to refer to such events are called "state terms" (cf. *ibid*).

Semantic verb classes play a crucial role in Construction Grammar, because constructions may have different meanings depending on the class of verbs they interact with (cf. Goldberg 2006: 20-21). For example, the **cause-receive** predicate of the Ditransitive Construction may interact or "fuse" with verbs of certain classes. When it interacts with verbs of transfer-of-possession, the ditransitive expression is interpreted as referring to actual successful transfer (as in *Joe passed Sally the salt*). When it fuses with a creation verb, the construction is used to convey the meaning 'intended transfer' (as in *Joe baked Sally a cake*). When used with verbs of refusal, it expresses the negation of transfer (as in *Joe denied Sally a popsicle*), and so on (cf. Goldberg 1995: 31-39).

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