In the endangered language Daakaka (Oceanic, Austronesian), one group of transitive verbs, such as tiwiye ‘press manually, break’ is ambiguous in lexicalizing either a manner or a result meaning component: In its manner variant (1a), the verb denotes the manner of action without entailing any result state, whereas in its result variant, the verb denotes the result state of an underspecified action (1b) (cf. Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2013 on English cut). Based on original fieldwork, I demonstrate that the respective interpretation, as either a manner or result verb, is predictable by the morpho-syntactic context in which the root appears in, i.e. the result meaning is restricted to the non-initial position in resultative serial verb constructions only (Hopperdietzel to appear).

(1) a. Bong ma tiwiye pwesye.  
Bong REAL press.manual TR branches  
‘Bong pressed manually at the branches.’

b. Bong ma ta tiwiye pwesye.  
Bong REAL cut. ITR break. TR branches  
‘Bong broke the branches by cutting them.’

While the observation of manner/result polysemy in Daakaka provides additional cross-linguistic support for the hypothesis of manner/ result complementary (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2010; cf. Gast et al. 2014 on Oceanic), it suggests that this lexicalization principle does not operate on the root or the verb level (Beavers & Koontz-Garboden 2020). Instead, it argues in favour of a structural interpretation of manner/result complementary in which the meaning of underspecified roots is determined by their relative position to eventuality-introducing functional heads (cf. Folli & Harley 2020, Mateu & Acedo-Matellan 2012). Consequently, Daakaka manner/result polysemy can be interpreted as an instance of contextual root allophony (Levinson 2010).

References:


