

Towards a dynamic account of internal (cognate) accusatives in Classical Greek

The occurrence of additional objects which are apparently unlicensed by the core argument structure of predicates (verbs and adjectives) is relatively common crosslinguistically, with intransitive verbs appearing with apparent direct objects and transitive verbs gaining an extra object. Such additional objects are usually quite restricted in distribution within particular languages, sometimes only to intransitive verbs (and often only to unergative) and sometimes only to true, etymological, cognate objects. Classical (Attic) Greek is, however, remarkable for its relatively unrestricted use of such objects which invariably appear in the accusative. They can appear, for example, in true cognate object environments when etymologically related to an intransitive verb (1) or where the object expresses a similar or related meaning (2). Although a modifier is typically required, as with most such constructions across natural languages, no modifier need appear in certain environments where some extra information is inferable e.g. through the use of the definite article (3), where the object has a specialised use or where a plural signifies repeated activity (4). With transitive verbs, the cognate object typically indicates a 'thing' while the external or direct object denotes a 'person' (5) (although the distinction between internal and external accusatives is not always clear in these cases (6)).¹

Cognate objects have been the subject of sporadic research in linguistics over the last twenty five years or so, partly in response to the problems they pose for theories of transformational or other grammatical frameworks that adopt hierarchical and static notions of grammatical function and case. Much of the discussion surrounding this construction has had to do with whether the accusative objects are arguments or adjuncts (MacFarland 1995, Pereltsvaig 1999) with additional reflections on the characterisation of such objects as modifiers of event arguments (Moltmann 1989, Mittwoch 1998) or as predicate modifiers (Bary and de Swart 2005). In general, the adjuncthood of additional objects is accepted as the most reasonable view (although a somewhat different approach is taken in Horrocks and Stavrou 2010), but their appropriate semantics is less generally accepted.

In this paper, I adopt the suggestion of Moltman and Mittwoch that additional objects are associated with the event argument of the verb, but take a rather different approach in treating them as restrictors on that event term within an epsilon calculus approach to term construction. In particular, I propose a theory that takes such objects to be in essence reflections of a semantically underspecified accusative of extent, measuring out the extent of the event expressed by the verb, yielding representations of content, e.g. for (2) in which the main predicate *Go-out*' has an event argument that is restricted to only those events constrained to cover 'other roads' in their extent. The precise interpretation of the notion of 'extent' is inferable in context from a weak notion of extent or measuring out and the semantics of the verb, any direct object and the accusative marked noun phrase itself. The discussion is set within the framework of Dynamic Syntax (Cann et al. 2005) which does not have a strict syntactic distinction between adjuncts and arguments and thus allows more flexibility to treat accusative (and other case-marked noun phrases) in different ways, giving rise to quite subtle differences in interpretation. The paper ends with some reflections on the similarity between additional accusatives and 'free' and 'semi-free' uses of the dative such as the dative of (dis)advantage and ethical datives.

¹Description and examples from Smyth 1956, 355 ff.

- (1) *pollēn* *phluarian* *phluarounta* [P.A.19c]
much-ACC.F.SG nonsense.F-ACC.SG talk-nonsense.PRT
'Talking much nonsense'
- (2) *eksēlthon* *allas* *hodous* [X.H.1.2.17]
go-out-3.PL.AOR other-ACC.F.PL road.F-ACC.PL
'They went forth on other expeditions'
- (3) *ton* *polemon* *polemein* [T.8,58]
the.ACC.M.SG war.M-ACC.SG wage.war-INF
'To wage the (current) war'
- (4) *etriērarkhēse* *triērarkhias* [D.45,85]
be.a.trierarch-3.SG.AOR trierarch.M-ACC.PL
'He performed the duties of a trierarch'
- (5) *kalousi* *me* *touto* *to* *onoma*
call-3.PL.PRES I.ACC this.ACC.N.SG the.ACC.N.SG name.N.ACC.SG
[X.O.7.3]

'They call me this name'
- (6) *tous* *polemious* *eirgasthai* *kaka* [L.21.8]
the.ACC.M.PL enemy.M-ACC.PL do-INF bad-ACC.N.PL
'To have done harm to the enemy'

References

- Bary, C & de Swart, P. (2005) 'Additional accusatives in Latin and Ancient Greek: arguments against arguments'. In Gervain, J. (ed.) *Proceedings of the Tenth ESSLLI Student Session*: 12-24.
- Brjars, K & Vincent, N. (2008) 'Objects and OBJ'. In Butt, M & King, T. H. (Eds) *Proceedings of the LFG08 Conference*. CSLI Publications
- Cann, R., Kempson, R & Marten, L. (2005) *The Dynamics of Language*. Elsevier, Oxford.
- Horrocks, G. & Stavrou, M. (2010) Morphological aspect and the distribution of cognate objects across languages. In Rappaport Hovav, M., Doron, E. & Sichel, I. (eds.) *Syntax, lexical semantics, and event structure*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MacFarland, T. (1995) *Cognate Objects and the Argument/Adjunct Distinction*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Northwestern University.
- Mittwoch, A. (1998) 'Cognate objects as reflections of Davidsonian event arguments' In Rothstein, S. (ed.) *Events and Grammar*. Dordrecht, Kluwer: 309-332.
- Moltmann, F. (1989) 'Nominal and clausal event predicates'. In *Papers from the 25th Annual Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago, Chicago University Press: 300-314.
- Pereltsvaig, A. (1999) 'Cognate objects in Russian: is the notion "cognate" relevant for syntax?' *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 35: 161-190.