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What information do verb roots encode?: the view from morpho-semantics

Through the lens of the reversative affix *un-* and the restitutive affix *re-*, I explore verb roots and make a new proposal about the lexical semantics of verbs. I argue that these affixes tell a story of derivational morphology that is based not on categorization of verbs into neat aspectual and decompositional classes, but on the result of the verb's action on the object and whether or not such a result state permits reversal and restitution. The argument structure of these affixes shows us that morphology interacts with semantics in a true compositional sense, whereby the affectedness of the object is a crucial factor in determining compatibility and composition. I propose an approach to verb meaning that encodes this important information as outcomes: the lifespan properties of the object after the action occurs on it. This theory argues for compositional semantic interpretation at a sub-lexical level, while also showing how sentential and pragmatic factors affect verb meaning and derivational affixation.

Related paper: Bhadra, D. (2024). Verb roots encode outcomes: argument structure and lexical semantics of reversal and restitution. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 47, 557–610. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10988-024-09409-5>