

## Why Does IT Always Rain on Me?

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The aim of this article is to discuss a possible argument structure representation for weather verbs (*to rain, to snow, to thunder* a. o.) in the framework proposed by Hale and Keyser, in "Prolegomenon to a Theory of Argument Structure" (2002): on such a view, weather verbs consist of the underlying structure V+ N (*rain* = 'FALL RAIN'), resulting in the actual form possibly by conflation. The article sets forth to establish whether such an analysis is cross-linguistically adequate in the case of those languages that have weather verbs (English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian a. o.), taking into account the various ways of talking about the weather: (i) impersonal constructions (*Piove., It rains.*), (ii) weather paraphrases (*Tombe la pluie.*), (iii) extraposed 'subject' constructions (*Il a plu toute la journee une petite pluie fine.*), (iv) agent constructions (*The Lord thundered from heaven., He rained his tears on me.*)

We try to answer the question whether weather verbs are unaccusative or unergative, by trying to see how they behave with respect to unaccusativity tests: *there*-sentences, locative inversion, resultatives, past participle used as a modifier inside NPs, auxiliary selection (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995, Avram 2003). The data seem to suggest that weather verbs sometimes behave like unaccusatives and sometimes like unergatives (in different languages, as well as in the same language). If so, then the argument structure we proposed for weather verbs must undergo reanalysis, given the fact that subjects of unergatives occupy a different position in the structure from 'subjects' of unaccusatives (SpecV versus complement of V). Apart from intransitive uses, weather verbs can also enter other types of constructions (transitive, or with a prepositional complement a.o.), which might be thought to pose problems to our analysis of weather verbs as 'FALL SOMETHING.'

Particular attention will be given to the notion 'cognate object'. In "Syntax and Human Experience" (1991), Nicolas Ruwet and John A. Goldsmith argue that the extraposed 'subject' in an example such as:

- (1) *Il a plu toute la journee une petite pluie fine.* ( (40) (a) )  
'There rained all day a little drizzling rain.'

is actually a cognate object. We will look at the alleged properties of COs (they mainly occur with unergatives, they can be promoted under passivization, they can undergo *it*-pronominalization (in situ) (Iwasaki 2007). In discussing the CO status of the nominal following the weather verb, we will also take into account agent constructions such as:

- (2) *God rains this rain to make us feel brand new.*

Another issue of interest is the status of the 'subject' of weather verbs (an expletive, a *pro* or even a PRO, leaving aside the poetic cases when it is an Agent nominal). In order to account for the fact that there is control between *it/pro* and the PRO following it in "It sometimes rains after PRO snowing." (Chomsky 1981: 324), we adopt the view that *it* is (pseudo-) referential. The question we will try to answer is whether this referentiality comes from the fact that *it* more or less stands for *the sky* (Cause) or *God* (Agent), or it is due to it being coindexed with the noun coming after FALL (Patient).

## References

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