

Building resultative properties: On the interpretation of adjectival passives

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In this talk I will offer an account of the interpretive richness of adjectival passives at the semantics/pragmatics interface. Adjectival passives will be analyzed as assigning to the subject referent an arbitrarily complex property derived from the base verb (plus additional verbal modifiers). Under this view adjectival passives are more or less spontaneously built property descriptions by which individuals can be categorized wrt. certain goals established within a given context (cf. Barsalou's notion of *ad hoc* categories). This provides the background for a new attempt to account for the notorious ambiguity of adjectival passives; cf. Kratzer's (2000) distinction of a target state reading and a resultant state reading. I will propose an analysis that takes the observed ambiguity to be an instance of semantic underspecification. According to this view, the characteristic meaning spectrum of adjectival passives emerges from the interplay of lexical semantics, grammar, and discourse context.