One Transition Point Hypothesis

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Different classes of predicates can often describe the same event in the real world, suggesting that the properties distinguishing predicate classes are linguistically defined and unlikely to be directly found in the real world. *Transition points* of events, namely their beginnings (*initial points*) and ends (*final points*), have also been considered in predicate classification (see, e.g., van Voorst 1988; Smith 1991/1997; Bar-el 2005). While an event in the real world can have both an initial point and a final point, I argue that the linguistic representation of initial and final points is subject to a constraint called *One Transition Point Hypothesis* (OTPH).

(1) <u>OTPH: An event may have at most one transition point linguistically represented.</u>

Evidence. I draw on data from Mandarin. The *first* test for transition points involves *at X time* adverbials. The predicate *zuo zuoye* 'do (one's) homework' in (2a) is an activity. The adverbial 'at 7 o'clock' can only target the initial point of the event, and (2a) means that the event usually starts at 7 o'clock. In (2b), the predicate differs minimally by including the completive marker *-wan* on the verb, which transforms the activity into an accomplishment. Crucially, 'at 7 o'clock' can no longer modify the initial point and instead targets the event's final point. Therefore, (2b) only means that the event usually ends at 7 o'clock, without implying that the event usually starts at 7 o'clock and ends later. This suggests that the completive marker not only adds a final point to the event but also suppresses its originally available initial point, fitting with the OTPH.

(2) a.

(3)

Х viban qidian b. qidian zuo zuoye. Х viban zuo-wan zuoye. Х usually 7.o'clock do homework Х usually 7.o'clock do-CMPL homework 'X usually starts to do his homework at 7.' 'X usually finishes his homework at 7.'

The *second* test is the adverb *chadian* 'almost.' When the predicate is an activity, as in (3a), 'almost' is interpreted with the event's initial point, resulting in a *counterfactual* reading. (3a) implies that X did not even begin his homework. When the completive marker *-wan* is added, as in (3b), 'almost' can only be interpreted with the event's final point, yielding an *incompletive* reading. This suggests that X started his homework but did not finish it. Crucially, it does not have the meaning that he did not start the homework at all. If the initial point were still present in (3b), the *counterfactual* reading would also be available, contrary to fact.

a.	Х	chadian zuo zuoye.	b.	Х	chadian zuo-wan	zuoye.
	Х	almost do homework		Х	almost do-CMPL	homework

'X almost started to do his homework.'

✓ 'X almost finished doing his homework.'

x 'X almost started to do his homework.'

Telicity does not imply final points. *Prima facie*, linguistic final points appear to correlate with telicity, as the predicates that project linguistic initial points, namely activities, are atelic, and the completive marker *-wan*, which introduces a linguistic final point, induces telicity. However, upon examining bare accomplishments and resultatives, only the latter patterns with accomplishments marked with *-wan* in projecting linguistic final points.

The verb chi 'eat' combined with a quantized argument like 'a/that bag of chips' forms a

canonical bare accomplishment. In (4a), when the object is 'a bag of chips,' the adverbial 'at 7 o'clock' can only modify the event's initial point. (4b) yields only the *counterfactual* reading and lacks the *incompletive* reading. Both tests show that bare accomplishments although being telic lack linguistic final points.

(4) a. wo yiban qidian chi yi bao shupian.
I usually 7.0'clock eat one bag chips
X 'I usually finish eating a bag of chips at 7 o'clock.'
✓ 'I usually start to eat a bag of chips at 7 o'clock.'
✓ 'I usually start to eat a bag of chips at 7 o'clock.'
✓ 'I almost started to eat that bag of chips.'

Х

In contrast, the same tests show that resultatives have linguistic final points.

- (5) a. X yiban qidian jiao-xing wo. b. X chadian jiao-xing wo.
 - X usually 7.o'clock yell-**awake** me \checkmark 'X usually wakes me up at 7 o'clock.'

✓ 'X tried to wake me up and I almost awoke.'

x 'X usually starts to yell at me at 7 o'clock.' **x** 'X almost started to yell and wake me up.'

almost yell-awake me

I argue that resultatives and *-wan* actually instantiate the aspectual property *resultativity* (see Folli & Harley 2005, 2006), which serves as the linguistic representation of final points.

Counterexamples. English bare accomplishments seem to violate the OTPH. For example, Dowty (1979:58) notes that in *John almost painted a picture, almost* can target either the initial point of the event, resulting in the counterfactual reading ("John almost started to paint"), or the final point, resulting in the incompletive reading ("John almost finished painting a picture"). This suggests that bare accomplishments have both initial and final points.

Explanation. I argue that English bare accomplishments are actually structurally ambiguous: one structure aligns with Mandarin bare accomplishments, which only project linguistic initial points, the other corresponds to Mandarin resultative accomplishments, which project only linguistic final points. Evidence for this comes from a class of accomplishments called *defeasible causatives*. They implicate event culmination (i.e., a result), which can, however, be cancelled when the subject is volitional. For example, in English, the verb *teach* allows both volitional and non-volitional subjects (6a-b). However, only when the subject is volitional can the sentence be followed by an explicit denial of the result that the learner learned something. (6) a. *Ivan* taught me Russian, but I did not learn anything.

b. *Lipson's textbook* taught me Russian, #but I did not learn anything. (Martin and Schäfer 2017:87) I argue that the predicate in (6a) is a bare accomplishment, while the predicate in (6b) is a resultative accomplishment. Evidence comes from the Mandarin counterpart verb in (7). In this language, the verb 'teach' is a bare accomplishment. It can only take a volitional subject, and result cancellation is possible (see (7a) and (7b), where *X* stands for a personal name). When the resultative 'know' is added, the predicate can take either a volitional or non-volitional subject, and the result cannot be cancelled any more (see (7c). This suggests accomplishments are ambiguous in English. As a result, they are not counterexamples to the OTPH.

(7)

a. X jiao-le wo eyu, dan wo shenme ye mei xuehui. b. *na ben shu jiao-le wo eyu.
X teach-PFV me Russian but I didn't learn anything that CL book teach-PFV me Russian
c. X/na ben shu jiao-hui-le wo eyu, #dan wo shenme ye mei xuehui.

X/that CL book teach-know-PFV me Russian #but I didn't learn anything

Conclusion. I proposed and empirically motivated a constraint on the linguistic representation of transition points, the OTPH, which posits that each event can linguistically represent at most one transition point. This hypothesis has significant implications for predicate classes. First, it

implies that predicates should be classified based on resultativity rather than telicity. Second, accomplishments are not a uniform class and may align more closely with other classes.