

# Durative adverbials and homogeneity requirements

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## Abstract

Modifiers which specify the duration of some eventuality have been used to distinguish telic and atelic predicates since Vendler (1957) and Dowty (1979). *In*-adverbials appear only with telic or non-homogeneous event descriptions and *for*-adverbials with atelic or homogeneous event descriptions. These restrictions are usually stipulated for durative modifiers directly or they follow from some property specific to the head of the modifier. This paper argues that no such stipulations are necessary. First, it is claimed that homogeneity must be defined as cumulativity and not as downward or upward monotonicity. Second, it is argued that the (non-)cumulativity of the modifier PPs coincides with the (non-)cumulativity of the predicate of times it modifies. The same cumulativity value for predicates and durative modifiers can be ensured by an agreement process and no additional assumptions are necessary.

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## 1. The homogeneity requirement of durative modifiers

It is well known (see Vendler, 1957; Dowty, 1979 and many others thereafter) that durative modifiers impose homogeneity requirements on the predicates they modify, as illustrated in (1). Usually, a given predicate of times can only be modified by *for/throughout* or by *in* adverbs, depending on whether the predicate is homogeneous or not, respectively.<sup>1</sup> If a certain predicate permits modification by both types of modifiers, then the interpretation differs depending on the nature of the durative adverbial. In (1c), if the modifier is *for/throughout*, the interpretation is that John read only part of the book. If the predicate of times is modified by *in*, John read the book to the end. As expected, the predicate of times is homogeneous in the former, but non-homogeneous in the latter case.

- (1) a. John slept { *for eight hours / throughout the afternoon / #in ten minutes* }  
b. John fell asleep { *#for eight hours / #throughout the afternoon / in ten minutes* }  
c. John read the book { *for eight hours / throughout the afternoon / in ten minutes* }

The homogeneity requirement — the restriction on the homogeneity of the predicate of times imposed by the durative — can be explicitly stated in the definition of the durative adverbial or its adpositional head (e.g. Dowty, 1979; Rothstein, 2004). Alternatively, it can be argued to derive from some other property of the modifier or its head (see Moltmann, 1991; Krifka, 1998). This paper explores the possibility that the homogeneity requirement does not need to be stipulated for the

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms 'durative modifiers' and 'durative adverbials' interchangeably, to refer to modifiers which measure the duration of some predicate of times. If a specific type of durative modifier (either an *in* or a *for*-modifier) is relevant for the discussion, it is stated explicitly.

durative modifiers, but rather it follows from the meaning of the spatial counterpart of the P heads. Specifically, I argue that the durative modifiers are either cumulative or non-cumulative and they must appear with an equally cumulative or non-cumulative predicate of times.

In addition to the durative modifiers shown above, the paper also considers bare durative modifiers and those which have overt structural case marking. The case marked durative adverbial is illustrated by a Hungarian example in (2b).

- (2) a. John slept *two hours*  
 b. János két órát aludt  
 J-nom two hour-acc slept  
 ‘János slept two hours’

The discussion is mostly concerned with English examples. On occasion, Hungarian durative modifiers are also mentioned. Hungarian durative adverbials are relevant in two respects. First, all of the postpositions which appear in durative expressions have spatial uses as well, which is reflected in the glosses provided (see (3)). Second, the durative modifiers that appear with non-homogeneous predicates of times can appear with an adposition which does not express containment. The postposition *alatt* ‘under’ in (3c,d) differs from the preposition *in* in this respect; the relevance of the postposition *alatt* is elaborated in section 5.<sup>2</sup>

- (3) a. János {nyolc órán keresztül/ nyolc órán át} aludt  
 J-nom eight hour-on across eight hour-on through slept  
 ‘János slept for eight hours’ (homogeneous)  
 b. # János {tíz percen keresztül/ tíz percen át} el aludt  
 J-nom ten minute-on across ten minute-on through away slept  
 #‘János fell asleep for ten minutes’ (non-homogeneous)  
 c. # János {nyolc óra alatt/ nyolc órán belül} aludt  
 J-nom eight hour under eight hour-on inside slept  
 #‘János slept in eight hours’ (homogeneous)  
 d. János {tíz perc alatt/ tíz percen belül} el aludt  
 J-nom ten minute under ten minute-on inside away slept  
 ‘János fell asleep in ten minutes’ (non-homogeneous)

I assume that the italicized expressions in (1), (2) and (3), as all durative modifiers, modify a predicate of times and that they specify the length of some relevant time interval.<sup>3</sup> I refer to the correlation between the (non-)homogeneity of the predicate of times and the form of the modifier as the (non-)homogeneity requirement imposed by the modifiers. At this point, this convention only serves convenience; it is not implied that the modifier grammatically selects the predicate.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 focuses on the properties of predicates of times and on earlier treatments of durative adverbials. First, it is argued that homogeneity should be defined as cumulativity. In the overview of earlier treatments of duratives, it is shown that the (non-)homogeneity requirement of *for*- and *in*-adverbials is explicitly stipulated in those approaches. Section 3 focuses on the spatial counterparts of durative modifiers (if they exist). The discussion addresses PPs headed by *in*, *through(out)* and also the spatial counterparts of Hungarian durative modifiers. It is shown that cumulativity and monotonicity can be determined for the spatial PPs discussed. Section 4 introduces a treatment of durative modifiers which parallels that of spatial PPs; the cumulativity and monotonicity values are the same for spatial PPs and their durative counterparts. Section 5 presents the proposed treatment of the homogeneity requirement – where the (non-)cumulativity value of the durative matches the (non-)cumulativity value of the predicate of times modified. It is also shown that the monotonicity values of duratives and predicates of times do not necessarily match, which provides further support for defining homogeneity as cumulativity.

<sup>2</sup> Some comments about (3) are in order. The suffix *-Vn*, glossed as ‘on’, has superessive interpretation if it appears without an additional postpositional head (e.g. *az asztal-on* ‘on the table’). The suffix is obligatory with some postpositions, including *belül* ‘inside’, *keresztül* ‘across’ and *át* ‘through’; in these cases, it does not contribute to the interpretation of the PP. The preverbal *el* ‘away’ is a telicizing particle; usually it results in the expected telic interpretation of an otherwise atelic predicate (e.g. *menni* ‘to go’ ~ *el-menni* ‘to go away’). With some predicates, including *aludni* ‘to sleep’, the particle *el* results in an inchoative interpretation, as reflected in the translation for (3b), (3d); the meaning is not compositional.

<sup>3</sup> The time interval measured is not the runtime of the eventuality of John sleeping or falling asleep. Rather, the runtime of the eventuality must contain the time interval measured with *for* and the runtime must be a (proper or nonproper) part of the time interval measured with *in* (see Krifka, 1998).

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