

# A Lexical Semantic Approach to Psychological Dative Verbs in German

Ryosuke TAKAHASHI

## 要旨

ドイツ語には、*gehören* (belong to) や *helfen* (help) など目的語を与格で支配する2項動詞 (=与格動詞: dative verbs) が少なからず存在するが、その中には、経験者項を目的語に、そして対象項を主語にそれぞれとる *gefallen* (please) のような心理動詞も含まれる (=心理与格動詞: *gefallen*-verbs)。こうした心理与格動詞は、能格性 (ergativity) を示すなど他の与格動詞とは統語的な振舞いが異なることが従来から指摘されてきた。その一方で、これら一連の動詞の目的語が与格で実現されるという共通性が何に根ざしているのか、という点に関しては、未だ体系的な説明がなされていない。本稿では、心理与格動詞が他の与格動詞と同様、「所有 (possession)」の概念と密接な関わりをもつことを主張し、またそのことが意味構造 (semantic structure) 表記を用いたかたちで適切に捉えられることを示す。さらに、心理与格動詞が付随的にとる動作主的な意味用法 (agentive use) の検討をつうじて、同一の与格動詞がもつ多義性に対して統一的な把握が可能であることを論じる。

キーワード : *gefallen*-verbs, ergativity, possession, semantic structure, agentive use

## 0. Introduction

This article deals with psychological two place verbs in German taking the dative object, such as *gefallen* (please) in (1) (henceforth: *gefallen*-verbs). The inclusive list of the verbs to be investigated is given in (2).<sup>1)</sup>

(1) Der Film gefällt mir. (The film pleases me.)

the film pleases me-DAT<sup>2)</sup>

(2) *ahnen* (sb. senses sth.), *behagen* (please), *gefallen* (please), *missbehagen* (disgust), *missfallen* (disgust), *nutzen* (do good), *schaden* (do damage), *schmecken* (sb. tastes sth.), *schwanen* (sb. senses sth.)

Roughly speaking, these verbs describe a perceptual or psychological state of a person referred to by the dative object. The semantic role of the nominative subject is characterized as Theme,

whereas the dative object corresponds to the role of Experiencer.

The linking between the dative case and the Experiencer role of *gefallen*-verbs deserves a careful examination if one considers the fact that the dative assignment is not restricted to this role. In German, there are various two place verbs taking the dative object other than *gefallen*-verbs, as is shown in (3).

- (3) *antworten* (answer), *danken* (thank), *entwischen* (slip away), *fehlen* (lack), *gehorschen* (obey), *gehören* (belong to), *helfen* (help), *innewohnen* (sb. possesses sth.), *raten* (advise), *schmeicheln* (flatter), *zulächeln* (to-smile), etc.

In traditional studies, many semantic roles are proposed for the dative object of these verbs, as will be discussed below. Yet it is not clear why the different semantic roles including Experiencer are syntactically linked with a single morphological case. Thus, the semantic aspect shared by various dative verbs still remains an open question. In what follows, attempts are made to characterize *gefallen*-verbs semantically as well as to find their relationship to other dative verbs.

This article is organized as follows: In section 1, we will briefly review previous analyses of *gefallen*-verbs and point out their deficiencies. The ergativity exhibited by these verbs will also be demonstrated. In section 2, we will provide a new lexical-semantic account of *gefallen*-verbs, based on the proposal of Takahashi (2001, 2002). Section 3 deals with the agentive use of *gefallen*-verbs in order to capture the relationship between these verbs and dative verbs of activity such as *helfen* (help) systematically. Section 4 provides concluding remarks.

### 1. Syntactic and Semantic Characteristic of *Gefallen*-Verbs

In previous studies, the semantic relationship between *gefallen*-verbs and other dative verbs has not been well investigated. Heidolph et al. (1981) set up six semantic roles for the object of various dative verbs, among which “Träger der psychischen Vorgangs (bearer of the psychological event)” is listed for the object of *gefallen*-verbs.<sup>3)</sup> They go, however, no further than this simple description and stop short of the meaning core underlying these different roles. Likewise, Wegener (1985) proposes seven different semantic roles including Experiencer for *gefallen*-verbs.<sup>4)</sup> Furthermore, she posits Betroffen (Involved) as the superordinate role, and this is especially characterized in terms of the semantic feature “Belebtheit (animacy)”. Wegener argues that various concrete roles are all reduced to this abstract one. However, her definition of the category Betroffen is so vague that the characterization of the dative is obviously insufficient. Furthermore, it is also not clear why the dative exhibits affinity with animacy, which should be given an account independently.

These unsatisfactory results can be attributed to the method applied in these studies, namely

positing of semantic roles, which is today often rejected because of the lack of objective criteria (cf. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1996). Instead, current lexical-semantic researches employ the method of predicate decomposition (cf. Pinker 1989, Jackendoff 1990, Kageyama 1996, among others), which offers greater insight into the verb meaning. Following this line of approach, predicate decomposition of *gefallen*-verbs as well as other dative verbs will be undertaken in section 2.

While *gefallen*-verbs have not been well studied semantically, their special syntactic behavior, namely ergativity or unaccusativity, has been intensively discussed. Research has revealed that the nominative subject of these verbs, in contrast with that of many other dative verbs, behaves parallel with the direct object of transitive verbs,<sup>5)</sup> qualifying as internal argument. Thus, as (4) illustrates, *gefallen*-verbs in principle do not allow passivization, whereas other dative verbs do. The same contrast is observed with respect to the so-called *bekommen* (receive)-passive, whose subject is related to the dative object in the corresponding active voice, as is shown in (5).

- (4) a. Dem Mann wurde \*behagt/\*gefallen/\*geschmeckt/\*geschwamt.  
       the man-DAT became pleased/pleased/tasted/sensed  
       b. Dem Mann wurde applaudiert/geantwortet/geholfen/geschmeichelt.  
       the man-DAT became applauded/answered/helped/flattered
- (5) a. Der Mann bekommt \*behagt/\*gefallen/\*geschmeckt/\*geschwamt.  
       the man receives pleased/pleased/tasted/sensed  
       b. Der Mann bekommt applaudiert/geantwortet/geholfen/geschmeichelt.  
       the man receives applauded/answered/helped/flattered

Assuming that the passivization involves suppression of the external argument, the above data suggests that *gefallen*-verbs lack the external argument to be suppressed, to which the ungrammaticality is attributed.

Other than passivization, evidence abounds to suggest the ergativity of *gefallen*-verbs. One example is the topicalization of the subject plus past participle. In German, the past participle can constitute a VP together with the direct object and appear in the sentence-initial position, but in principle not with the subject, as is shown in (6) with the transitive verb *geben* (give) as well as in (7) with various intransitive verbs.

- (6) a. Peter hat der Frau einen Ring gegeben. (Peter gave the woman one ring.)  
       Peter has the woman-DAT a ring given  
       b. [<sub>VP</sub>Einen Ring gegeben] hat Peter der Frau.  
       c. \*Peter gegeben hat der Frau einen Ring.
- (7) \*Mädchen geholfen/geantwortet/geraten haben mir noch nie.  
       girls helped/answered/advised have me-DAT not yet

(So far, no girls have helped/answered/advised me.)

However, there are some intransitive verbs whose subject does form a VP with past participle. *Gefallen*-verbs also show this behavior, suggesting that the subject of these verbs has the same status as the direct object.

- (8) a. [<sub>VP</sub>*Mädchen gefallen*] haben ihm noch nie. (So far, no girls have pleased him.)  
girls pleased have him-DAT not yet  
b. [<sub>VP</sub>*Japanische Küchen geschmeckt*] haben ihr noch nie.  
Japanese dishes tasted have her-DAT not yet  
(So far, no Japanese dishes have tasted good to her.)

The similar contrast can be observed with respect to the split topicalization. In German, a noun can appear separated from its modifying adjective when the noun corresponds to the direct object as in (9), while the subject noun and its modifier can in principle not be split, as is shown in (10).

- (9) a. Er hat nur bunte Hemden.  
he has only colorful shirts  
b. *Hemden* hat er *nur bunte*. (Fanselow 1991: 296)
- (10) a. Nur kluge Mädchen haben mir geantwortet/geholfen.  
only clever girls have me-DAT answered/helped  
b. \**Mädchen* haben *nur kluge* mir geantwortet/geholfen.

Again, *gefallen*-verbs are exceptional in that their subject noun can indeed be separated from its modifier, indicating that this noun is internal argument just as the direct object is.

- (11) *Fisch* hat ihm *nur geräucherter* geschmeckt/gefallen.  
fish has him-DAT only smoked tasted/pleased

Thus, the ergativity of *gefallen*-verbs is so remarkable that any approach to these verbs should give its careful consideration to this fact.

While ergativity is commonly understood as a syntactic phenomenon in the first place, lexical-semantic researches have revealed that this phenomenon can to a large extent be semantically determined (cf. Perlmutter 1978, Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, Kageyama 1996, among others). Wegener (1991) and Fanselow (1992) also attempt to capture the syntactic behavior of the subject of *gefallen*-verbs in relation to its semantic role Theme. Yet they restrict themselves merely to the status of the nominative subject, whereas they do not consider how the dative assignment of these verbs is semantically motivated. It is much more desirable to derive both ergativity of these verbs and the dative realization directly from the semantics of the verb, which we will examine below.

## 2. A Lexical-Semantic Account of *Gefallen*-Verbs

### 2.1 General Assumptions about Dative Objects

In this section, we will propose a new lexical-semantic account of *gefallen*-verbs in order to capture their ergativity as well as relationship with other dative verbs. Before going into the analysis, however, we begin by introducing some basic assumptions about the dative object in general developed by Takahashi (2001, 2002).

Takahashi (2001, 2002) put forward the idea that various dative verbs in German, with some exceptions, have a single grammatically relevant meaning component. Concretely, the claim is that the dative assignment of these verbs is related to and determined by the concept of “possession”, the relation existing between two things. Furthermore, this concept is not primitive, but rooted in a more basic concept, namely that of “locative relation” between theme and place. This idea can be supported by the following examples with various verbs which select alternatively a prepositional phrase or the dative object.

- (12) Das Buch ist {auf dem Tisch/mir}. (The book {is on the table/belongs to me}.)

the book is on the table/me-DAT

- (13) a. Er schickte die Kiste an die Wohnung. (He sent the box to the apartment.)

he sent the box to the apartment

- b. Er schickte {ihr/\*der Wohnung} die Kiste. (He sent her/the apartment the box.)

he sent her-DAT/the apartment-DAT the box

- (14) Der Hund ist {mir/\*der Wohnung/aus der Wohnung} entwischt.

the dog has me-DAT/the apartment-DAT/from the apartment away-slipped

(The dog {gave me the slip/got away from the apartment}.)

In (12), the simplest stative verb *sein* (be), which describes a locative relation, can also take the dative object and express a possessive relation.<sup>6)</sup> In (13) as well as (14), the dative object *der Wohnung* (the apartment) is not compatible with the three place verb *schicken* (send) nor with the prefixverb *entwischen* (slip away), since the apartment can easily be interpreted as goal or source, but only with difficulty as recipient or possessor. The relative unacceptability of (15)b with the particle verb *zuwerfen* (to-throw) can also be accounted for in a similar way. The conjuncts in this example prove to be contradictory because the verb *zuwerfen*, in contrast to the corresponding simplex verb *werfen* (throw) plus *zu* (to) as preposition in (15)a, implies a resultative state of possession that is difficult to cancel.

- (15) a. Ich warf den Ball zu ihr, aber er erreichte sie nicht.

I threw the ball to her but it reached her not

- b. ??Ich warf ihr den Ball zu, aber er erreichte sie nicht.

I threw her-DAT the ball Prt but it reached her not

Based on these observations, we can now assume that these verbs contain the semantic structure (16) in common, which basically denotes a locative relation between theme and place. We assume further that the argument *z* is expressed via prepositional phrase when the subindex of the predicate BE AT corresponds to LOC, whereas the same argument is assigned with dative when the subindex is POSS. Under this assumption, for example, the three place verb *schicken* (send) is given the complex semantic structure (17), which is composed of the event of activity and that of change-of-state. Note that the variables *x* and *y* correspond to the external and internal argument respectively on the level of argument structure (cf. Grimshaw 1990).

(16) [ *y* BE AT<sub>LOC/POSS</sub> *z* ]

(17) *schicken* (send): [ *x* ACT ] CAUSE [ BECOME [ *y* BE AT<sub>LOC/POSS</sub> *z* ] ]

Developing this idea, those verbs which lexically specify only the dative are assumed to contain the semantic structure (18) with the index POSS.

(18) [ *y* BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> *z* ]

Note that the affinity of the dative case with animacy results from the proposal here, i.e. the dative codes a person in many cases because a possessor is typically human.

The basic idea presented above can also be applied to various dative verbs of activity. Thus, the verb *helfen* (help) is assumed to have the complex structure (19). This structure is essentially parallel to that of three place verbs such as *schicken* (send), except that the *y* place, which would otherwise correspond to the accusative object, is lexically saturated with the constant specific to each individual verb such as **HELP**, as is shown in (19).

(19) *helfen* (help): [ *x* ACT ] CAUSE [ BECOME [ **HELP** BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> *z* ] ]

The structure (19) predicts that the argument *z* be assigned with the dative, which is empirically correct.

The idea of saturation with constant can be supported independently. To take one example, the *bekommen*-passive, for which one accusative object is normally needed as in (20)a, can indeed be formed with dative verbs of activity, suggesting that their *y* place is lexically saturated.

(20) a. Sie bekommt \*(das Auto) repariert.

she receives the car repaired

b. Sie bekommt von Hans geholfen.

she receives by Hans helped

To summarize, we have seen that various dative verbs in German are characterized in terms of the concept of possession, which can be well captured with the semantic structure (16) or (18). In what follows, we will investigate whether this idea can be extended to cover the *gefallen*-verbs under discussion.

## 2.2 The Semantic Structure of *Gefallen*-Verbs

The concept of possession introduced above, seems to be *prima facie* not applicable to *gefallen*-verbs. Thus, (21)a does not imply that the child owns the film itself. Intuitively, however, we can nevertheless understand that the dative entity is closely related to the nominative entity by means of perception or emotion. This intuition in fact shows up in the paraphrasability of these verbs with their related noun plus verbs such as *haben* (have) or *finden* (find), as is shown below.

- (21) a. Der Film behagt/gefällt dem Kind.  
the film pleases the child-DAT
- b. Das Kind hat/findet Behagen/Gefallen an dem Film.  
the child has/finds pleasure/favor at the film
- (22) a. Das Essen schmeckt mir.  
the dish tastes me-DAT
- b. Ich habe/finde Geschmack an dem Essen.  
I have/find taste at the dish
- (23) a. Sein naher Tod hat ihr geschwant.  
his close death has her-DAT sensed
- b. Sie hatte Schwanen von seinem nahen Tod.  
she had sense of his close death

This paraphrasability suggests that the concept of possession can also be applied to *gefallen*-verbs in some way. Based on these observations, we propose semantic structures such as (24) or (25) for these verbs.

(24) *gefallen* (please): [ PLEASURE-of-y BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> z ]

(25) *schmecken* (taste): [ TASTE-of-y BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> z ]

These semantic structures comprise only the predicate BE AT and are thus essentially parallel with the structure of stative verbs. The crucial point is that the subject place of BE AT is lexically saturated with the constant such as PLEASURE or TASTE, just as the y place of the structure of *helfen* (help) is filled with HELP in (19). In contrast to the case of *helfen*, however, each constant of *gefallen*-verbs is directly connected to the variable y by means of “-of-” and conceptualized as closely related to this variable. Thus, the semantic structure (24) roughly means “the pleasure, which is related to the theme y, is owned by z”. This concept is not originally ours, but a similar idea can be found in Heidolph et al. (1981: 345): “die Bewertung betrifft aber nicht den im Subjekt beschriebenen Gegenstand (...), sondern den von ihm hervorgerufenen Zustand (the evaluation, however, concerns not the theme described by the subject, but the state provoked by that theme (my translation))”.<sup>7), 8)</sup> Furthermore, there is some

linguistic evidence which gives support to the semantic representation above.

The first motivation comes from the data with respect to nominalization. As Wegener (1985) points out, *gefallen*-verbs are exceptional in that their object entity can be coded in genitive in the corresponding nominalization, while the same coding is not available for other dative verbs, including the stative verb *innewohnen* (sb. possesses sth.), the activity verb *helfen* (help), as well as the three place verb *schicken* (send).

- (26) a. meinem Bruder gefällt diese Frau (Wegener 1985: 310)  
 my brother-DAT pleases this woman
- b. das Gefallen meines Bruders (an dieser Frau) (ibid.)  
 the pleasure my brother-GEN (at this woman)
- (27) a. Der Frau wohnt eine gewisse Gemütlichkeit inne.  
 the woman-DAT lives a certain snugness inside
- b. \*das Innewohnen der Frau (an/mit/zu einer gewissen Gemütlichkeit)  
 the inside-living the woman-GEN (at/with/to a certain snugness)
- (28) a. Das Kind hat der Frau geholfen.  
 the child has the woman-DAT helped
- b. \*die Hilfe/das Helfen der Frau (von dem Kind)  
 the help/the helping the woman-GEN (by the child)
- (29) a. Die Frau schickt dem Kind ein Geschenk.  
 the woman sends the child-DAT one present
- b. \*das Schicken des Kindes  
 the sending the child-GEN

Although Wegener notes only the coding ability of the object entity of *gefallen*-verbs, attention should also be paid to the fact that the nominative entity of various verbs (and also the accusative entity in case of three place verbs) can potentially be coded in genitive, while the same does not hold for that of *gefallen*-verbs. Compare the following examples with the corresponding sentences in (26)-(29).

- (30) \*das Gefallen dieser Frau (zu meinem Bruder)  
 the pleasure this woman-GEN (to my brother)
- (31) das Innewohnen einer gewissen Gemütlichkeit (in der Frau)  
 the inside-living one certain snugness-GEN (in the woman)
- (32) die Hilfe/das Helfen des Kindes (für die Frau)  
 the help/the helping the child-GEN (for the woman)
- (33) das Schicken der Frau (Agent), das Schicken eines Geschenks (Theme)  
 the sending the woman-GEN the sending one present-GEN



The above data can now be accounted for with the proposed semantic representation and an additional theoretical assumption. Let us suppose the dative object is the lowest-ranked with respect to lexical operations or word formations and can normally not be coded in genitive when there is another argument available. Thus, two variables x and y can be marked with genitive for the verb *schicken* (send), whereas the variable z cannot. Likewise, the variable z of *helfen* (help) as well as *innewohnen* (sb. possesses sth.) cannot be coded in genitive, since in both cases, the other variables x and y are available respectively.

(34) *schicken* (send): [ x ACT ] CAUSE [ BECOME [ y BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> z ] ]

(35) *helfen* (help): [ x ACT ] CAUSE [ BECOME [ **HELP** BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> z ] ]

(36) *innewohnen* (sb. possesses sth.): [ y BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> z ]

(37) *gefallen* (please): [ **PLEASURE**-of-y BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> z ]

In contrast to these, conditions are somewhat different with respect to *gefallen*-verbs. In this case, the subject entity is not available for the genitive coding because the corresponding variable y is connected to the constant on the conceptual level so tightly that the genitive presumably cannot map this variable alone. Consequently, the variable z, which is the only one left, can exceptionally be selected and coded in genitive.

The second motivation comes from the data regarding prenominal use of past participle. As the following examples show, the past participle of typical ergative verbs such as *auffallen* (sb. notices sth.) can modify their logical subject in its prenominal use, whereas that of *gefallen*-verbs cannot.

(38) die ihm aufgefallenen/unterlaufenen Fehler,	der ihr entfallene Name
the him-DAT noticed/happened mistakes	the her-DAT escaped name

(39)*das ihm gefallene/behagte Bild,	*der mir geschwante Tod
the him-DAT pleased picture	the me-DAT sensed death

This contrast can also be explained in terms of our semantic representation. The variable y of *gefallen*-verbs, which would be modified by the past participle, is conceptualized as closely related to the constant, and this constant is semantically equivalent to the very past participle. Consequently, the modification would lead to semantic redundancy and is therefore not allowed.

Further motivation concerns whether there is any subtle semantic difference between *gefallen*-verbs and their synonymous expressions shown above. Pesetsky (1995) argues that Theme of psychological predicates in traditional sense should be divided into two distinct roles, namely Cause and Target/Subject Matter, citing the following examples.

(40) a. Bill was very angry at the article in the *Times*. (Pesetsky 1995: 56)

b. The article in the *Times* angered Bill greatly. (*ibid.*)

(41) a. John (was) worried about the television set. (Pesetsky 1995: 56)

- b. The television set worried John. (*ibid.*)  
 c. Mary's poor health worried John, but John did not worry about Mary's poor health. (*ibid.*)

According to Pesetsky, the truth conditions of the two sentences in (40) are noticeably distinct. For (40)a to be true, Bill's anger must have been oriented to the article itself, whereas this is not necessarily the case for (40)b. (40)b is also true when Bill found the article splendid and was offended by something else, say, political corruption. Based on these observations, Pesetsky terms the prepositional object in (40)a Target of emotion, whereas the subject in (40)b is characterized as Cause. The same difference holds for (41)a and (41)b. The fact that (41)c reveals no contradiction also renders this role distinction plausible.

Although Pesetsky's argument is based on English, the same distinction holds for psychological verbs taking the accusative Experiencer object and their paraphrases in German. Thus, the following examples are all judged as acceptable, without causing any contradiction.

- (42) a. Der Artikel ärgerte ihn, aber er ärgerte sich nicht über den Artikel.  
 the article angered him but he angered himself not about the article  
 b. Die Nachricht ängstigte Hans, aber er ängstigte sich nicht vor der Nachricht.  
 the news worried Hans but he worried himself not about the news  
 c. Das Fernsehen enttäuschte ihn, aber er war nicht enttäuscht darüber.  
 the television disappointed him but he was not disappointed about-it

However, *gefallen*-verbs constitute an exception to this role distinction. As (43) illustrates, the conjunction of a *gefallen*-verb and the negated form of its paraphrase results in contradiction. This indicates that Cause and Target, if one must label them, cannot be differentiated from each other in case of these verbs.

- (43) a. \*Der Film hat mir gefallen, aber ich hatte/fand kein Gefallen an dem Film.  
 the film has me-DAT pleased but I had/found no pleasure at the film  
 b. \*Das Essen hat mir geschmeckt, aber ich fand kein Geschmack an dem Essen.  
 the dish has me-DAT tasted but I found no taste at the dish  
 c. \*Sein naher Tod ahnte mir, aber ich ahnte seinen nahen Tod nicht.  
 his close death sensed me-DAT but I sensed his close death not

In our account, the explanation for this behavior is straightforward. Since the theme and the psychological state are understood to be closely related, the emotion or sense of the experiencer must be aimed at the theme that provokes this very psychological state, but not at something else, with which the proposed structure is in accordance.

To summarize, we have proposed for *gefallen*-verbs the semantic structure whose variable y is conceptually related to the constant of each individual verb. This semantic structure can account

for the characteristic of these verbs observed in section 1. Their dative object is characterized as Experiencer because the corresponding variable *z* has a possessive relation with constants denoting perceptual or psychological state such as **PLEASURE**. The ergativity of *gefallen*-verbs is also directly derived from the proposed representation, i.e. these verbs show this syntactic behavior because the variable *y*, which is realized as syntactic subject, corresponds to the internal argument.<sup>9)</sup>

### 3. Agentive Use of *Gefallen*-Verbs

We have proposed above semantic structure such as (24) for *gefallen*-verbs and demonstrated some supporting evidence. In this section, we will investigate the agentive use of *gefallen*-verbs as well as its syntactic peculiarity so that we give further motivation to our proposal.

It is a well known fact that the subject of many psychological verbs can optionally be agentive, as is illustrated by the following example.

- (44) Ihr Tischnachbar suchte, ihr zu gefallen. (Heidolph et al. 1981: 345)  
 her desk-neighbor tried her-DAT to please

Interestingly, when *gefallen*-verbs are used agentively, they do not exhibit their ergative behavior anymore. Thus, neither VP- nor split topicalization is possible, whereas passivization is exceptionally allowed, suggesting that the subject in this case may qualify as external argument.

- (45) \**Ein Tischnachbar gefallen* hat absichtlich ihr noch nie.  
 a desk-neighbor pleased has intentionally her-DAT not yet

- (46) \**Tischnachbarn* haben *nur fremde* absichtlich ihr gefallen.  
 desk-neighbors have only foreign intentionally her-DAT pleased

- (47) dem Opa soll (von den Kindern) gefallen werden. (Wegener 1985: 214)  
 the grandpa-DAT should (by the children) pleased become

The agentive use is also distinct from the ergative one in that the former, but not the latter, implies some causing event volitionally entertained by the subject entity. In this sense, the agentive use can also be regarded as causative. Accordingly, the following complex structure can be set up for the agentive use of the verb *gefallen*.<sup>10)</sup>

- (48) *gefallen* <agentive>: [ *y* ACT ] CAUSE [ **PLEASURE**-of-*y* BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> *z* ]

The structure (48) roughly means that “*y*’s volitional activity causes *z* to have pleasure in *y* herself”, which captures our intuitive understanding of this use quite appropriately.

The structure (48) comprises both the semantic structure for the ergative use and that for the activity event, namely [ *y* ACT ]. Note that this complex structure is essentially parallel with that of dative verbs of activity. This is no accident. Rather, *gefallen*-verbs and dative verbs of activity often show a systematic relationship to each other. There are in fact also reverse cases, where

dative verbs of activity are used ergatively. One representative verb is *helfen* (help) in the following example.

- (49) *Medikamente haben dem Opa schon lange nicht mehr geholfen.*  
medicines have the grandpa-DAT already long not more helped  
(No medicine has been help to the grandpa for a long time.)

Using syntactic tests, Wegener proves the ergativity of *helfen* in this use. Thus, the non-agentive interpretation exceptionally enables the VP- as well as split topicalization, while the passivization is no longer possible.

- (50) [<sub>VP</sub>*Medikamente geholfen*] haben dem Opa schon lange nicht mehr. (Wegener 1991: 99)

- (51) *Medikamente haben ihm nur homöopathische geholfen.* (ibid.)  
medicines have him-DAT only homeopathical helped

- (52) er bekam von Fritz/\*von dem Medikament geholfen. (ibid.)  
he received by Fritz/by the medicine helped

Accordingly, the semantic structure of *helfen* in its ergative use can now be represented as follows.

- (53) *helfen* <ergative>: [ **HELP**-of-y BE AT<sub>POSS</sub> Z ]

In (53), the constant **HELP** is not embedded in the structure template of dative verbs of activity, but in that of *gefallen*-verbs. This idea can also capture the following example quite well, the acceptability of which varies depending on the context.

- (54) *Krankenschwestern geholfen haben dem Opa schon lange nicht mehr.*  
nurses helped have the grandpa-DAT already long not more  
(No nurses have been help to the grandpa for a long time; OK as ergative use)

The example is not acceptable on the agentive interpretation, but informants point out that the acceptability will improve if nurses are interpreted as some instrument. For example, if the speaker means that the mere existence of a charming nurse would cheer the grandpa up, the same sentence will sound quite natural. This varying interpretation exactly corresponds to our two semantic structures of *helfen*. Under the agentive interpretation, nurses do not qualify as help by themselves, but the help can only be achieved through their preceding activity. On the contrary, the ergative interpretation does not necessarily presuppose any activity. In this case, it is nurses themselves that is understood as help, which is correctly captured by the structure (53).

In this section, we have handled the agentive use of *gefallen*-verbs as well as the ergative use of dative verbs of activity. These verbs show two different interpretations, yet this polysemy is not random, but can systematically be explained with our semantic representations. The crucial point is that the semantic structures of both agentive and ergative uses contain the constant such

as **HELP** in their y place, regardless of whether the event of activity is included or not.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

In this article, we have proposed for *gefallen*-verbs the semantic structure whose variable y is connected to the constant specific to each individual verb. We have seen that this idea captures their syntactic as well as semantic characteristic well.

While we have shown the semantic relationship between various dative verbs, we have not considered, due to want of space, how *gefallen*-verbs are different from psychological verbs taking the accusative object. The Experiencer role is in fact not unique to the dative case, there are also many psychological verbs whose Experiencer object is assigned with the accusative, including *ärgern* (anger) or *ängstigen* (worry) which are shortly mentioned in section 2.2. In order to make the distinctive characteristic of *gefallen*-verbs clearer, careful comparison between the dative and the accusative object is also necessary. We leave this point for future research.

#### Notes

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- 1) We exclude the verb *imponieren* (impress) from the list, since the syntactic behavior of this verb is quite distinct from that of other *gefallen*-verbs, which is presumably attributed to the etymology of the verb (lat. *im-ponere*: into-lay). This verb must therefore be handled separately.
- 2) In this article, the following codes are used; DAT: dative, GEN: genitive, Prt: particle. The markings of the nominative as well as the accusative are omitted.
- 3) The other roles listed are: Gegenstand im Vergleich (object in comparison), Patiens (patient), Person/Gegenstand im Dominanzverhältnis (person/object in domination), Erkenntnisträger (bearer of knowledge).
- 4) The other roles are REC (Recipient), BEN (Benefactive), Co-AG (Co-Agent), CAUSE, COR (Correspondent), REF (Referent).
- 5) In German linguistics, the term “transitive verbs” refer only to those verbs that take at least one accusative object. Those verbs taking only dative or genitive, but no accusative objects, are termed “intransitive verbs”.
- 6) This use is regionally as well as stylistically restricted.
- 7) Strictly speaking, Heidolph et al. (1981) give this semantic description only to some verbs such as *missfallen* (disgust). We argue, however, that the description is valid for all the *gefallen*-verbs.

- 8) A similar view can also be found in Koda (1999), though his classification of dative verbs is different from that of Heidolph et al. (1981) as well as mine.
- 9) The above discussion implies that the constant connected to the variable *y* is visible for word formation, namely nominalization as well as prenominal use of past participle, but not for syntactic linking of the same variable, which seems somewhat contradictory. This contrast can presumably be attributed to the unique property of word formation, which is different from that of sentence formation in general. We leave this point for future research.
- 10) Takahashi (2001) assumed that *gefallen*-verbs are originally causative both in their ergative and agentive uses, which should be now corrected to the new proposal.

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