

Pragmatics and Gradience in Hindi Perfectives

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Telic Perfective Predicates

Maya ate an apple.

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- Telic => natural ending point; change of state
- Perfective => closed, terminated situation that cannot be continued (Smith, 1997)
 - Incompatible with assertions of continuation or incompleteness, e.g. cannot follow with “She didn’t finish it” or “Half the apple remains”
- Accomplishment => ending point determined by extent of the incremental theme, i.e. by the apple (Krifka, 1989, 1992, 1998; Dowty, 1991)



Simple vs. Complex Perfectives

SV: maayaa-ne seb-ko **khaa-yaa** par use puuraa nahiin khaa-yaa
Maya-ERG apple-ACC eat-PERF but it-ACC full not eat-PERF
'Maya ate the apple but not completely.'

- SVs compatible with arbitrary endpoints and partial realization – but, the default interpretation is completive

Simple vs. Complex Perfectives

SV: maayaa-ne seb-ko **khaa-yaa** par use puuraa nahiin khaa-yaa
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CV: maayaa-ne seb-ko **khaa li-yaa** (# par use puuraa nahiin khaa-yaa)
Maya-ERG apple-ACC eat take-PERF but it-ACC full not eat-PERF
'Maya ate the apple (# but not completely).'

- CVs compatible only with natural endpoints and full event realization

Questions

- How should we characterize the SV-CV perfective distinction in Hindi?
- How do Hindi speakers interpret SV and CV telic perfective predicates?

Outline

- ✓ Introduction
 - Previous theoretical work
 - Current experiment and results
 - Discussion

The Neutral Perfective

- Singh (1991, 1998) – A new species of perfective is needed, the neutral perfective
 - This perfective does not require the event to be completed
- A semantic proposal couched in a homomorphism theory of telicity
 - SV-CV distinction is semantic in nature
 - The difference lies in how much of the theme object is affected
 - => Relies on having an incremental theme
 - A new thematic relation relating the event and the affected object, and a “totality” operator to derive a “total” version of the thematic relation for the CV perfective

The Neutral Perfective (cont.)

- Does not explain the default completive interpretation of SV perfectives
- Cases where an SV-CV meaning distinction is not expected under this account:
 - Accomplishments lacking strict incrementality (e.g. *give a gift to Maya*)
 - Achievements, or events lacking a process component
 - Activities, or events lacking an inherent or intended endpoint

A Pragmatic Alternative

- Kothari (2008) – suggests a pragmatic characterization:
 - SV perfectives only *implicate* natural or successful event completion, whereas CV perfectives *entail* it
 - Explains the default completive interpretation for SVs
- Crucial to this account is the notion of “event success”, which is when the event is carried out to its intended ending point

Event Success

- Natural culmination corresponds to some contextually- or culturally-determined “event success” condition, which allows for greater flexibility
 - The SV-CV distinction is not limited by the internal structure of the event (i.e. not restricted to accomplishments or incremental themes)
 - What counts as a “successful” event is expected to vary greatly across events – some events are more amenable to being counted as “successful” even upon partial completion (e.g. *reading ‘War and Peace’*)

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Our Study

- Examine the comprehension of SV and CV telic perfective predicates with partially-completed and fully-completed events
 - Elicit true/false for SV and CV sentences as descriptions of video clips
- Look at both accomplishments with and without incremental themes as well as achievements

Predicates

- Close door / drawer
- Cover pot / basket
- Draw circle / flower
- Eat cookie / chocolate
- Extinguish candle / lit newspaper
- Fill with marbles / milk
- Pluck banana / twig
- Wake person1 / person2

Predicates

	Predicate Type
Draw	Incremental theme
Eat	Incremental theme
Fill	Incremental theme
Extinguish	No incremental theme
Close	No incremental theme
Cover	No incremental theme
Pluck	No incremental theme
Wake	No incremental theme

Predicates

	Predicate Type
Draw	
Eat	
Fill	
Extinguish	Return to initial state
Close	
Cover	
Pluck	
Wake	Return to initial state

Predicates

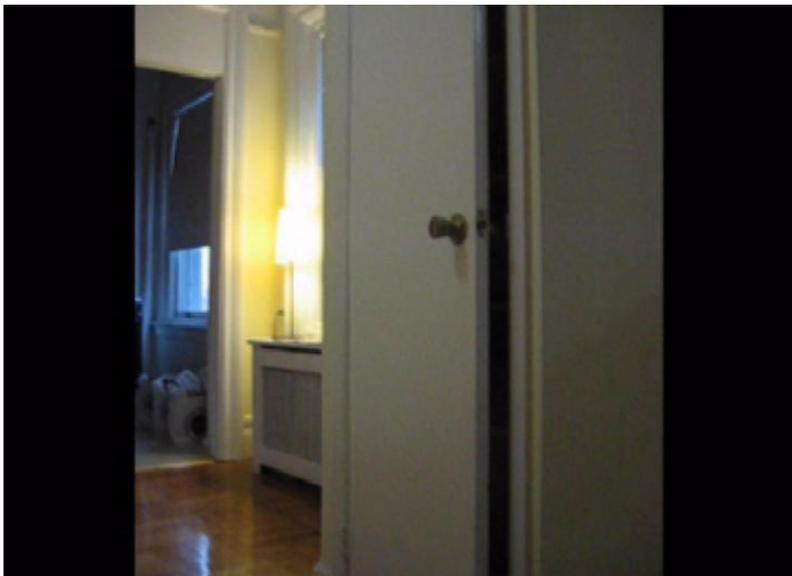
Close



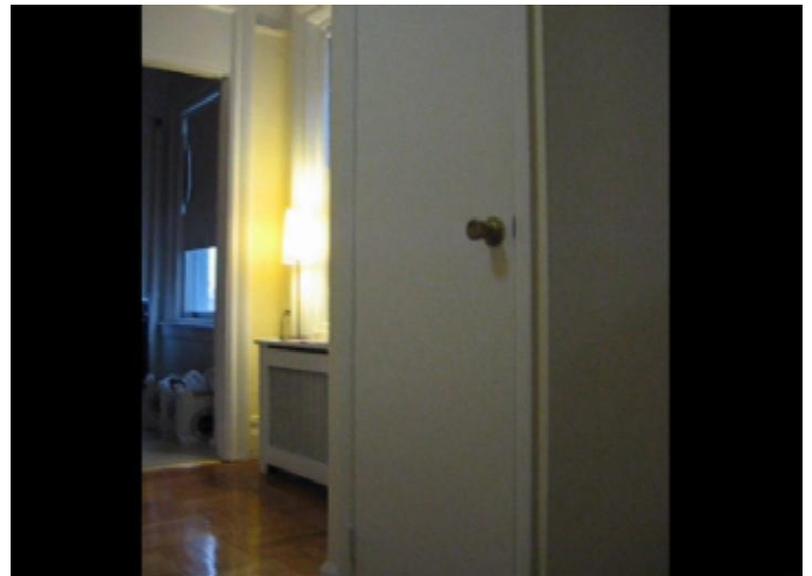
Predicates

Close

Partial



Full



Auditory Stimuli

SV: **us-ne** **darvaaze-ko** **band** **ki-yaa**
He/she-ERG door-ACC close do-PERF
'He/she closed the door.'

CV: **us-ne** **darvaaze-ko** **band** **kar** **li-yaa**
He/she-ERG door-ACC close do take-PERF
'He/she closed the door.'

Methods

Participants: 25 native Hindi speaking adults

Mixed design:

- Each participant viewed 2 different scenes for each predicate
- Both scenes were either Full or Partial
- One was SV, the other CV

Task: true/false judgment

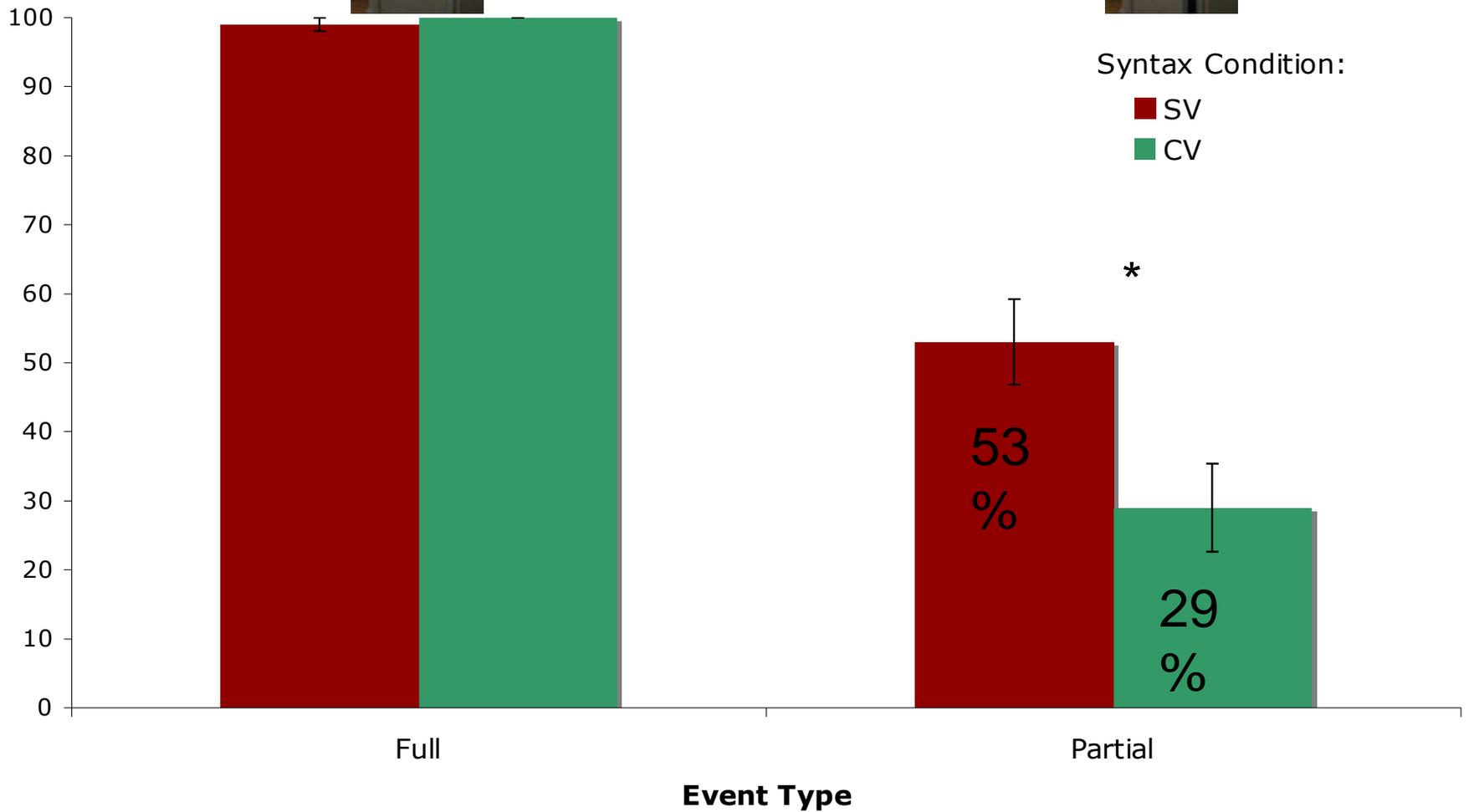
Predictions

Fully-completed events: both SV and CV sentences accepted

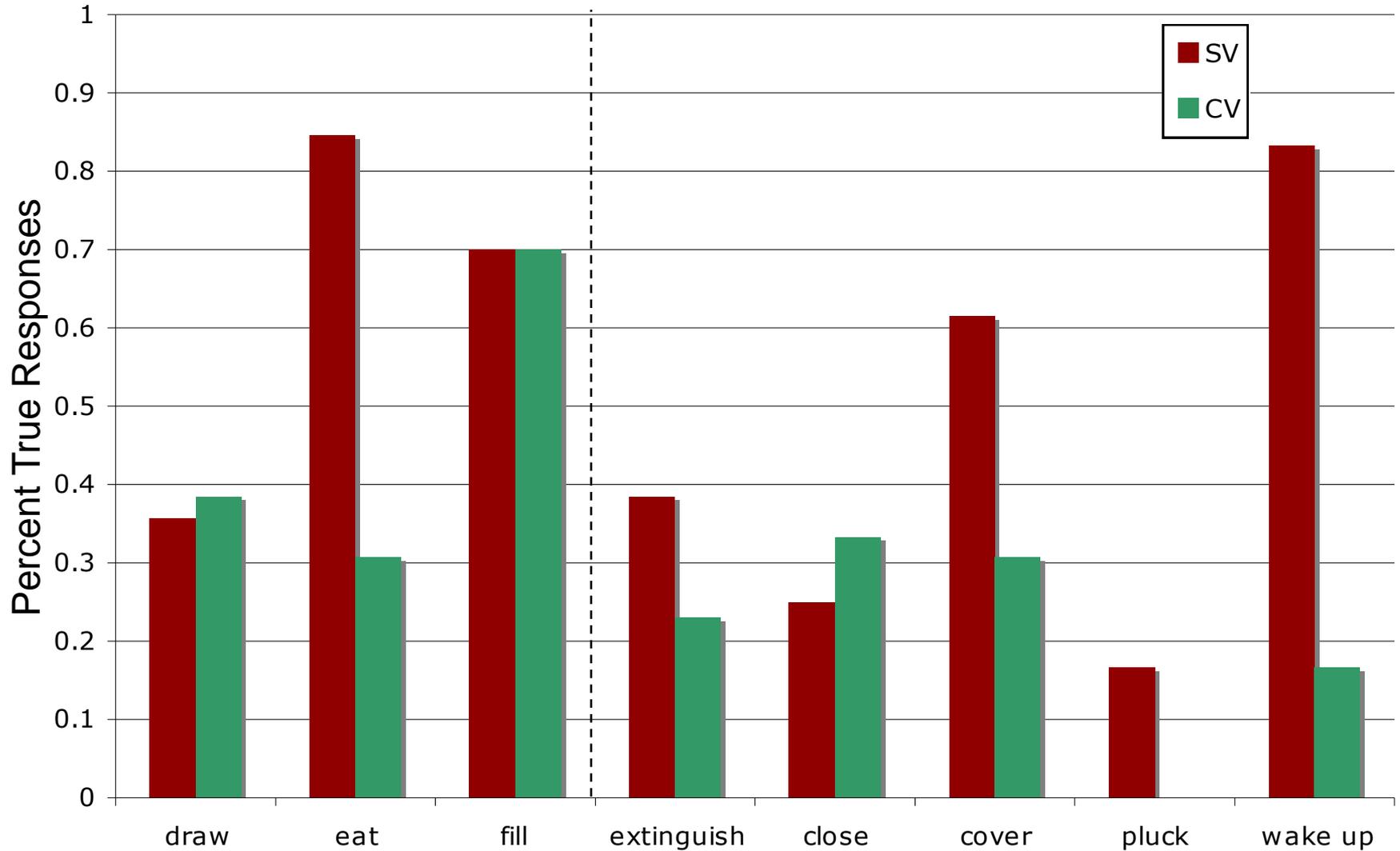
Partially-completed events: only SV sentences accepted

No systematic differences between incremental theme and other predicate types

Results



Results: Partially-Completed



Summary of Results

Fully-completed events: both SV and CV sentences accepted

Partially-completed events: SV sentences accepted more often than CV sentences

Lot of variation between predicates

Incremental theme predicates do not behave systematically differently from other predicates

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Pragmatics and Gradience

- Gradience between SV-CV, and between predicates, falls out naturally from a pragmatic treatment:
 - What counts as a “successful” event varies greatly across events, leading to predicate-by-predicate differences
 - The ending point for any one event depends on what *the individual* believes is the intended culmination

Related Experimental Work

- Pederson (2007) on Tamil
 - Only SV sentences: baseline?
 - Finds SVs can be compatible with non-realization
 - Also a pragmatic account: The verbal semantics of Tamil SV predicates is identical to that of their English counterparts, but because Tamil does not have other means of expressing partial realization, SVs are adapted for that purpose.
 - Relates degrees of realization within a particular lexico-semantic framework (DO, CAUSE, EFFECT) which may be too rigid for a fully context-dependent and graded approach.

Conclusions

- The SV-CV perfective distinction in Hindi is a pragmatic one, having to do with whether or not the particular conditions for “event success” are implicated or entailed
- This distinction is not limited by the internal temporal structure of the event
 - Applies to accomplishments (with/without an incremental theme) and achievements
- Variation and gradience are expected in the interpretation of Hindi perfectives when applied to partially-realized events

Thank you!

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