

**So many events, so few verbs:  
The variable verbalization of three-participant events in two languages**

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This paper looks at what happens when the human experience of wordless events is transformed through the cognitive and linguistic processes of verbalization (Chafe 1977, 1979, 1980, 1994, 1998). The process of verbalization is not deterministic: its outcome cannot be fully predicted on the basis of events in the world. Events do not go gently into words; variability in verbalization is the result. Event verbalization can be shown to vary from one language to the next, from one speaker to the next within the same language, and even within the same speaker's utterances on different occasions of verbalization. This variability extends to all aspects of linguistic expression, including choice of verb, argument structure, and arguments; the division of complex, continuous experience into describable event units; and even the number, type, and relation between the events to be overtly expressed. A given grammar offers multiple ways to solve the verbalization problem, allowing speakers to exercise a degree of creativity in constructing not only their verbalization, but even their conceptualization and construal, of the experienced events.

The focus of the paper is on identifying and elucidating the reasons for variability in the verbalization of events, and exploring their implications for cognitive and linguistic aspects of the verbalization process (Chafe 1979, 1994, 1998). The linguistic focus is on the verbalization of three-participant events, expressed by verbs such as *give*, *put*, and their competitors (Margetts and Austin 2007, Newman 2005). For data, the paper looks at narrative verbalizations of a short, wordless film, the Pear Film (Chafe 1980), in English and Sakapultek Maya (Du Bois 2006). For example, speakers verbalize giving events sometimes with the verb *give* (*he gave him the hat*), but sometimes with a competitor such as *bring* (*he brings him his hat*). All instances of verbalizations of acts of giving and putting in the Pear narrations are examined, considering the choice of arguments and argument structure constructions as a reflection of the profiling of participants in the events. A set of general issues for cognitive-functional linguistics, including cognitive processing, construal, profiling, and inference, are considered in relation to the more specific processes of event segmentation (carving out a series of distinct verbalizable events from the phenomenological continuum of human experience) and event binding (linking together the multiple aspects of an event, including its arguments and adjunct components and its temporal/aspectual/causal stages).

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