
Today I learned: English ‘coming-to-know’ predicates

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This paper is a focused investigation of English ‘coming-to-know’ verbs, e.g., *discover*, *find out*, *figure out*, *learn*, *notice* and *realize*. Much has been said about their factivity (Karttunen 1971). Drawing on the literature on aspect and evidentiality, we argue that these verbs are culmination achievements that denote a change in doxastic state (from agnosticism to belief) and lexicalize the type of evidence that triggered that change.

A. Our verbs exhibit the imminency reading of the progressive (1), which only occurs with a sub-class of achievements (Gyarmathy 2015) and signals that the process is in final stages. B. Our verbs specify how the knowledge was gained; e.g., *discover*, *learn* and *find out* are grounded in knowledge obtained via abduction, while *notice* tracks knowledge grounded in perceptual experience and is incompatible with inference (2).

- (1) Murdoch is realizing that he’s stuck with the monster he created.
- (2) **Reasoning from effect to cause** *Seeing a rat scurrying away:*
I discovered / found out / learned / # noticed that we have rats.

We propose that ‘coming-to-know’ verbs presuppose a complex eventuality of knowledge acquisition that is comprised of (i) an initial state of agnosticism, followed by (ii) the event of evidence acquisition that triggers (iii) the process of deliberation that culminates in (iv) the punctual event of belief-change leading to (v) a new belief state. Note that, at least in English, there is no vanilla verb that would just mean ‘come-to-know’. This fact shows that a subset of factives belongs to a large group of semantically and syntactically heterogeneous expressions that are sensitive to evidential restrictions (Bary and Korotkova 2023), and allows us to connect the growing body of work on fine-grained semantics for attitudes with research on evidence in language.

References: • Bary, C. and N. Korotkova (2023). Expressing evidence. *Journal of Pragmatics* 218, 1–5. • Gyarmathy, Z. (2015). *Achievements, Durativity and Scales*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Düsseldorf. • Karttunen, L. (1971). Some observations on factivity. *Papers in Linguistics* 4, 55–69.