Animacy and affectedness (in Germanic languages)

Most Germanic languages (English is an exception in this regard) show an animacy-dependent marking alternation of the second argument of contact verbs such as *hit, kick* or *pinch*. This is illustrated by the German examples in (1). If the referent of the second argument is inanimate, it is marked by a preposition (1b).

(1) a. *Das   Mädchen   schlug   den   Jungen.*
         the   girl   hit   the   boy
         'The girl hit the boy.'
     b. *Das   Mädchen   schlug   *(gegen/auf)   den   Tisch.*
         the   girl   hit   against/on   the   table
         'The girl hit against/on the table.'

The alternation shown in (1) is not solely dependent on animacy but also on affectedness. If the referent of the inanimate is definitely affected by the contact – for example in case of a resultative construction - , it is not marked by a preposition (2).

(2) *Das   Mädchen   schlug   (*gegen/auf)   den   Tisch   in Stücke.*
     the   girl   hit   against/on   the   table   in pieces
     'The girl hit the table in pieces.'

Lundquist & Ramchand (2012) argue that inanimate entities are conceived as less affected by processes such as hitting or kicking than animate entities are. de Swart (2014), on the other hand, argues that the alternation marks a difference in sentience. As sentience presupposes animacy, the animacy contrast is merely epiphenomenal. Both analyses have shortcomings: de Swart's analysis does not rely on affectedness and therefore cannot explain the contrast between (1b) and (2). Lundquist & Ramchand's analysis is couched in the generative framework and they define affectedness as a binary feature. Their analysis does not give a principal explanation of why it is only a subset of contact verbs that gives rise to the alternation illustrated in (1).

   An explanation of them phenomenon requires two things: First, a graded concept of affectedness, like the one proposed by Beavers (2011). Beavers notion of affectedness provides an explanation of why contact verbs show an alternation dependent on affectedness. According to him, these verbs entail potential results and the alternation can be seen as a resolution of this potentiality. If the referent of the second argument is animate, it is conceived as affected. If it is inanimate, it is taken to be non-affected. Second, an explication of the relationship between affectedness and animacy is needed. Lundquist & Ramchand argue that inanimate entities are only affected, if they are physically damaged. Beside physical affectedness, animate beings can also be emotionally/psychologically affected. This allows combining the basis insights of Lundquist & Ramchand's analysis with the one of de Swart's.

   The aim of the talk is to present a unified analysis of the phenomenon, which combines a gradual notion of affectedness with the notion of sentience. It will be shown that such an approach allows explaining why the alternation arises with this particular set of verbs. Furthermore, the analysis will shed light on the relationship between affectedness and animacy.

Beavers, J. 2011. On Affectedness. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 29: 335-370.

Lundquist, B. & G. Ramchand. 2012. Contact, animacy, and affectedness in Germanic. In P. Ackema, et al. (Eds.), *Comparative Germanic Syntax*, 223-248. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

de Swart, P. 2014. Prepositional inanimates in Dutch: A paradigmatic case of Differential Object Marking. *Linguistics* 52 (2): 445-468.