

From existence to experience: Four verbs of occurring in Romanian

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This presentation discusses four Romanian verbs of occurring: *a avea loc*, *a se petrece*, *a se întâmpla* and *a (o) păți*, all roughly translatable as ‘happen.’ The talk will examine the relation between argument structure and verb meaning, the correlation between verb meaning and the syntactic and semantic properties of the arguments, and the consequences of these factors on use.

In terms of argument structure, the verbs range from intransitive to transitive. All the verbs have an obligatory argument referring to events. Additionally, some of the verbs admit or require an experiencer argument, as illustrated below.

- (1) *Evenimentul a avut loc în România.*
event-DEF AUX have place in Romania
The event happened in Romania.
- (2) *Accidental s-a petrecut în România.*
accident REFL=AUX occur in Romania
The accident happened in Romanian.
- (3) *Copilului i s-a întâmplat ceva.*
child-DAT cl-DAT cl-refl happen something
Something happened to the child.
- (4) a. *Copilul a pătit ceva.*
child-NOM happen something
Something happened to the child.
b. *Copilul a pătit-o cu balonul.*
child-NOM happen-cl-ACC with balloon
The child had trouble because of the balloon.

The following tendencies could be observed: an increase in the complexity of the argument structure correlates with a corresponding increase in the semantic complexity of the verb together with a decrease in the semantic contribution of the

arguments. An analysis of online data suggests that as the predicates become syntactically and semantically more complex they tend to acquire specific pragmatic functions.