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„Out of control“

In a variety of languages, it is possible to isolate verbal predicates that are characterized by a surprising juxtaposition of two properties: (a) The subject/external argument must denote an entity capable of volition, but (b) the predicate cannot be modified by things meaning "on purpose", that is, the event denoted by the predicate cannot be interpreted as controlled by the external argument. The languages most well-known for having "out of control" constructions are the Salish ones, where the out-of-control interpretation is signaled by special morphology on the verb. But other languages have out-of-control constructions as well, e.g. the agentive get-passives in Norwegian (Jeg fikk åpnet døren (*med vilje) - I got opened the door (*on purpose) = "I managed to open the door") or with a subclass of transitive verbs with the prefix u- in Czech (for example, Karel se upísknul = "Karel happened to whistle" and Karel to upískal = "Karel managed to referee the match"). Our aim is to isolate a common denominator, which will characterize out-of-control predicates across languages using a decompositional account of verbal predicates in which external arguments are introduced at different levels of structure.