

ANNA DĄBROWSKA

UNACCUSATIVE OR UNERGATIVE: THE CASE OF THE ENGLISH VERB *TO DIE*

Abstract. The study examines the class status of the verb *TO DIE* in English. The verb under scrutiny (treated as a member of a semantically coherent class of disappearance verbs, together with *disappear, expire, lapse, perish, vanish*) is tested against the six syntactic unaccusativity diagnostics valid for English. It is shown that three diagnostics do not work for the verb *TO DIE*, i.e., (1) auxiliary selection (inapplicable to all verbs in Modern English), (2) causative alternation, e.g., *Philip died./ *The soldier died Philip*, since the verb *TO DIE* belongs to a non-caused disappearance verb class, as argued by Levin (1993) and Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 281–283), and (3) resultative constructions (although some collocations would be theoretically permissible, e.g., **He died stiff*, no such sentences appear in the language corpus). On the other hand, the remaining three diagnostics yield positive results, i.e., (4) the occurrence of the adjectival participle, but with a reservation that it must be placed in a post-nominal position (**a DIED uncle / an uncle DIED in an accident*), (5) *there*-insertion (the only existing example from the COCA Corpus: *There DIED a myriad*), and (6) the locative inversion diagnostics (the only instance found in the literature by Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 303): (...) *this year also DIED the possibility of turning the cup races (...)*). Since only three unaccusativity tests out of the six mentioned above seem to work for the verb *TO DIE*, it might be problematic to treat it as a member of the unaccusative class. Additionally, the instances provided to illustrate the three diagnostics valid for the verb *TO DIE* rarely occur in the literature and the available corpora, and therefore they should rather be viewed as exceptions, which would cast serious doubt on the unaccusative status of the verb *TO DIE*. This would lead us to the conclusion that the verb *TO DIE* should be regarded as a real example of an *Unaccusative Mismatch* (Levin 1986), i.e., a clash between the results of two or more unaccusative diagnostics (discussed in Grimshaw 1987; Zaenen 1993; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995).

Key words: unaccusative verbs; unergative verbs; unaccusativity diagnostics; unaccusative mismatch; syntax-lexicon interface; English.

ANNA DĄBROWSKA—PhD student in the Department of Theoretical Linguistics, Institute of English Studies, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; address for correspondence: Al. Raclawickie 14, PL 20–950 Lublin; E-mail: anna.dabrowska2@kul.lublin.pl

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the encyclopaedic definition (*Online World Heritage Encyclopedia*), an unaccusative verb in linguistics is an intransitive verb whose (syntactic) argument is not a (semantic) agent, since it does not actively initiate the action of the verb. The subject of an unaccusative verb is semantically similar to the direct object of a transitive verb, or to the subject of a verb in the passive voice. It is commonly assumed that English unaccusative verbs include *die* and *fall*. They are called unaccusative because, although the subject has the semantic role of a patient, it is not assigned the accusative case.

Complex syntactic and semantic properties of verbs have resulted in the difficulty to distinguish clear-cut verb classes. As assumed by some theories (cf. Pesetsky 1982; Chomsky 1986), the syntax of a particular sentence depends on the meaning of the verb in that sentence. The class of unaccusative verbs has served as a starting point in the discussion concerning the diagnostics that may help to establish the class membership of a given verb. Besides, unaccusativity proves to be of a great significance within the debate upon the dual nature of verbs, their syntactic and lexical semantic characteristics, and the mutual relationship between these two areas (B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, 2).

The main goal of this study is to check what class of intransitive verbs the English verb *TO DIE* represents, whether it is unaccusative or unergative. In order to answer this question, the verb will be tested against the unaccusativity diagnostics present in the literature since Burzio (1986), and adopted by B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) and Alexiadou *et al.* (2004), among others. In section 2, the key syntactic characteristics of unaccusative verbs are briefly outlined. Next, in section 3, the verb under scrutiny is tested against the generally recognised six diagnostics of unaccusativity, i.e., (1) auxiliary selection, (2) causative alteration, (3) resultative constructions, (4) adjectival participles, (5) *there*-insertion, and (6) locative inversion. In section 4, the issue of *Unaccusative Mismatches* is presented, and it is pointed out that the verb *TO DIE* can be subsumed under this notion. Finally, section 5 provides conclusions related to the debate concerning the unaccusative vs. unergative status of the English verb *TO DIE*.

2. UNACCUSATIVE AND UNERGATIVE VERBS: THE BASICS

The *Unaccusative Hypothesis*, originally introduced by Perlmutter (1978) on the ground of the Relational Grammar, but later adopted by Burzio (1986) within the Government-and-Binding (GB) framework (Chomsky 1981), divides the class of intransitive verbs into two syntactically different but semantically similar subclasses, i.e., unaccusative and unergative verbs. From the GB perspective, an unergative verb receives a theta-marked deep-structure subject and no object, while an unaccusative verb takes a theta-marked deep-structure object (cf. Alexiadou *et al.* 2004, 2), as schematized in (1):

- (1) a. NP [_{VP} V] *unergative* Kate dances.
 b. [_{VP} V NP] *unaccusative* Kate fell.

The notion of VP-shells, introduced by Larson (1988), and the VP-internal subject hypothesis, proposed by Koopman and Sportiche (1991), Kitagawa (1986), Kuroda (1988), have brought a change in the very nature of A-movement. Within some theories in the ‘light-v’ framework, the difference between unaccusative and unergative verbs lies in that the subject of an unergative verb is introduced by a semi-functional head *v*, whereas the unaccusative argument belongs to the lexical verb (Chomsky 1995), as illustrated in (2), after Alexiadou *et al.* (2004, 14 (32)).

- (2) a. vP (Unaccusative)
- ```

 vP
 |
 v'
 / \
 v VP
 / \
 V NP

```
- b. vP (Unergative)
- ```

  vP
  / \
  NP  v'
     / \
     v  VP
        |
        V
  
```

Taking an argument structure of a given verb into consideration (cf. Perlmutter 1978), an unergative verb has an external argument but no direct internal argument. An unaccusative verb, in turn, is defined as the one that takes an internal argument but no external one; and this definition of unaccusative verbs is adopted for the sake of this paper.

In this paper, B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav’s (1995, 281–283) typology of intransitive verbs, based on Levin’s (1993) taxonomy, is adopted. In this typology, the verb *TO DIE* is treated as a member of a semantically coherent class of disappearance verbs, together with *disappear*, *expire*, *lapse*, *perish*, *vanish*.

3. THE VERB *TO DIE* VS. THE UNACCUSATIVITY DIAGNOSTICS

Assuming that unaccusativity is a syntactic property, even though it is semantically predictable, B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 16) underline the necessity for any unaccusative diagnostics to be legitimate and valid. Therefore, a valid unaccusative diagnostics should test for a syntactic property whose explanation is related to the unaccusative syntactic configuration. Besides, taking unaccusativity to explore the mapping between lexical semantics and syntax, syntactic means of identifying unaccusative verbs should have an independent check on the hypotheses about the semantic determination of unaccusativity.

The aim of this section is to provide a brief analysis of the most frequently applied diagnostics of unaccusativity that have been used, inter alia, by Burzio (1986), B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995), Alexiadou *et al.* (2004), i.e., (1) auxiliary selection, (2) causative alteration, (3) resultative constructions, (4) adjectival participles, (5) *there*-insertion, and (6) locative inversion. The main goal of this study is to check if the English verb *TO DIE* meets the expectations of these unaccusativity tests, and what class of intransitive verbs it represents after all.

3.1. UNAVAILABILITY OF THE AUXILIARY SELECTION DIAGNOSTICS FOR MODERN ENGLISH

Although the auxiliary selection diagnostics is widely adopted and valid for many Romance and Germanic languages,¹ it cannot be applied to English. In languages that use two different auxiliaries (*have* and *be*) for analytic past/perfect verb forms (e.g., German, Dutch, French, Italian, Early Modern English), unaccusative verbs combine with *be*, while unergative verbs with *have*. Nonetheless, Modern English only uses one perfect auxiliary (*have*). As a result, the English verb *TO DIE* cannot be tested by means of the auxiliary selection test.

Surprisingly, the verb *TO DIE* originates etymologically from Old English *dīgan*, *dīegan* ('to die'), Old Norse *deyja* ('to die, pass away'), and from Middle English (1150–1200) verbs *dien*, *deien*, *deZen*, which derive from Proto-Germanic **dawjaną* ('to die'), as noted in *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* (1997, 150). Therefore, it may be assumed that the verb *TO DIE* was

¹ Cf. Burzio 1986; Grewendorf 1989; Perlmutter 1978; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; Everaert 1996.

used with the auxiliary 'be' in the past.² Indeed, as exemplified by the *Google Books Corpus*, the forms of 'is/was died' may be found in the literature, e.g., *Then I knew that the Messenger of God is died.*³; *His elder brother was died.*⁴

Interestingly, Everaert (1996, 27) argues that the choice of auxiliary depends mostly on the semantic properties of the verb, but more precisely the telic/atelic or perfective/imperfective distinction would be the determining factor. Telic monadic verbs, as illustrated by the German verbs in (3a) take *sein*, while atelic monadic verbs, as in (3b), require *haben* (for a more detailed analysis cf. Everaert 1996):

- (3) a. *ankommen, fallen, sterben, aufgehen*, etc.
'to arrive, fall, die, go up, etc.'
b. *stehen, wohnen, schlafen, warten*, etc.
'to stay, live, sleep, wait, etc.'

The unaccusative/unergative distinction in the case of intransitive verbs can be also related to the fact that unaccusative verbs are more likely to express a telic and dynamic change of state or location, while unergative verbs tend to express an agentive activity (without directed movement).⁵

² For early Modern English (*Online World Heritage Encyclopedia*):

unaccusative: *But which of you ... will say unto him ... when he is come from the field, Go and sit down...* (King James Bible, Luke XVII:7, cited in *Online World Heritage Encyclopedia*) unergative: *The grease solidifies - The grease has solidified.*

³ I. M. N. Al-Jubouri (2010). *Islamic Thought: From Mohammed to September 11, 2001*. London: Xlibris Corporation, 54.

⁴ *The Dublin Review*, XLII (1857). London: Thomas Richardson and Son. Accessed online at: <https://books.google.pl/books?id=fvgEAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA387&dq=%22was+died%22&hl=pl&sa=X&ei=cBZmVZaLG8ScsAGXvYNI&ved=0CO4BE0gBMBs#v=onepage&q=%22was%20died%22&f=false> (page 387).

⁵ In addition, more recently, as a wider range of data on auxiliary splits has entered the discussion, some scholars have argued that a more descriptive framework than a simple two-way split is needed to explain the variation in auxiliary selection. The best known among these is Antonella Sorace's (2000) *Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy* (ASH). On the basis of languages from the Romance and Germanic families, she formulated the ASH, in which verbs are ranked, with the use of semantic factors, as regards the probability of their taking *be* or *have* auxiliary in the perfect tense. The ASH (Sorace, 2000, 863) is shown in (i), with examples from each class of verbs included.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (i) BE Change of location | <i>come, arrive, leave, fall ...</i> |
| Change of state | <i>rise, become, decay, die, be born, happen, grow ...</i> |
| Continuation of a pre-existing state | <i>stay, remain, last, survive, persist ...</i> |
| Existence of state | <i>be, belong, sit, seem, be useful, depend on ...</i> |
| Uncontrolled process | <i>tremble, catch on, skid, cough, rumble, rain ...</i> |
| Controlled process (motional) | <i>swim, run, walk ...</i> |
| HAVE Controlled process (non-motional) | <i>work, play, talk ...</i> |

All in all, the auxiliary selection, is a widely adopted and valid diagnostics for most Romance and Germanic languages, but unfortunately it cannot be applied to English.

3.2. FAILURE OF THE CAUSATION ALTERATION DIAGNOSTICS FOR THE VERB *TO DIE*

B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) propose that the causative alternation is one of the most important syntactic tests for unaccusativity in English. They claim (*ibid.*, 79–80) that unaccusative verbs participate in the causative-inchoative alternation, while unergatives do not, as shown in (4). The unaccusatives that do causatively alternate are anticausative verbs (like *break*, as in (4a)) which make up a subclass of unaccusative verbs called alternating unaccusatives. The other subclass of unaccusative verbs, pure unaccusatives, consists of unaccusatives (like *fall*) that do not take part in the causative alternation. However, the causative alternation is never attested for unergatives (like *laugh*), as illustrated in (4b) after Schäfer (2009, 641).

- (4) a. Causative alternation for unaccusatives:
The vase broke. / He broke a vase.
b. Lack of alternation for unergatives:
*The crowd laughed. /*The comedian laughed the crowd.*
(Intended meaning: ‘The comedian made the crowd laugh.’)

Testing the English verb *TO DIE* against the causative alternation diagnostics in order to prove its unaccusative/unergative status would lead to the conclusion that this verb does not alternate, as shown in (5):

- (5) a. *Philip died.*
b. **The soldier died Philip.* (Intended meaning: ‘The soldier made Philip die.’)

Apparently, sentences (5a-b) differ from (4a) and are similar to (4b).

As illustrated in (i), the higher a verb is in the hierarchy, the more strongly it prefers auxiliary *be*, the lower it is, the more strongly the verb uses *have*. Undoubtedly, languages differ as to where they draw a line between *have*- and *be*-selecting verbs. Used with intransitives, auxiliary *be* is generally taken to be a diagnostics of unaccusativity in these languages, while auxiliary *have* marks unergativity. Finally, cross-linguistically synonymous verbs do not always choose the same auxiliary, and even within one language, a single verb may combine with either *have* or *be*. This may either depend on the meaning/context (either telic or atelic), or be connected with no observable semantic motivation, or it sometimes depends on a regional variety of the language.

Nevertheless, in this case I would opt for the existence of arbitrary exceptions to the causative alteration, following the claim, made by Bowerman and Croft (2008, 284), that “there are verbs that satisfy the restrictions [of being unaccusative] and yet do not alternate.” The verbs that Bowerman and Croft (*ibid.*) mention are: *go*, *disappear*, *cling*, *glow*, *DIE*, *knock (down)*, and *lose*. Similarly, Braine and Brooks (1995) treat the verb *TO DIE* as a member of non-caused class verbs, classifying it with the verbs of disappearance, like Levin (1993) and B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 281–283). Since the causative alternation does not yield any conclusive results, a different diagnostics is necessary to test the status of the verb *TO DIE*.

3.3. INAPPLICABILITY OF RESULTATIVE PHRASES DIAGNOSTICS TO THE VERB *TO DIE*

Resultative constructions are set syntactic patterns applied to express a change in a state as a result of the completion of an event (Levin 1993). In other words, “A hallmark of the English resultative construction is the presence of a result XP—an XP denoting a state or location that holds of the referent of an NP in the construction as a result of the action denoted by its verb.” (Rappaport Hovav and Levin 2001, 766)

As far as intransitive verbs are concerned, B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 35–39) assert that they are divided into two groups: unaccusatives (6a-b), which appear with resultative phrases, and unergatives (6c), which resist this construction unless they insert a ‘fake’ reflexive, as in (6d).

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------|
| (6) | a. The river froze <i>solid</i> . | Unaccusative |
| | b. The bottle broke <i>open / into pieces</i> . | Unaccusative |
| | c. *Dora shouted <i>hoarse</i> . | Unergative |
| | d. Dora shouted herself <i>hoarse</i> . | Unergative |
| | e. The dog barked [_{sc} <i>him awake</i>] | Unergative |

B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 2005) adopt the so-called *Direct Object Restriction (DOR)*, based on Simpson’s (1983, 142) and Hoekstra’s (1988, 119) generalization made for English. According to the *DOR*, the controller of a resultative attribute has always the function of an object, regardless of whether it is a surface object, as in transitives, or an underlying object as in the case of unaccusatives in (6a) and (6b), or a fake reflexive, as in the case of unergative verbs, as in (6d). In addition, B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) argue that *him* in (6e) functions as a subject of a small

clause, rather than a direct object of the verb *bark*. Therefore, to account for (6e), they propose a reformulation of the *DOR*, and adopt *The Change-of-State Linking Rule*. According to the rule, it does not matter whether the postverbal NP in unergative resultative constructions is a direct object or the subject of a small clause, unless it is governed by the verb (B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, 51; cf. Landau 2003; Matushansky *et al.* 2012).

When the verb *TO DIE* is tested against the resultative construction diagnostics, the structures in (7a) are found to be acceptable, as documented by the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*,

- (7) a. Mark died *young / penniless / alone / happy / childless / unmarried*, etc.
 b. *Sheila died *stiff*.

As can be seen in (7), the verb *TO DIE* should not be treated here as (i) a transitive verb, since obviously there is no post-verbal direct object; (ii) a representative of unergative verbs, which do not appear in resultative structures unless they form fake resultatives with the use of reflexives, as in (6d); or the postverbal NP is the subject of a small class, as in (6e); (iii) it is not an agentive manner-of-motion verb since there is no motion in *dying*. Nonetheless, assuming that the verb *TO DIE* has an unaccusative status, the question to find an answer for is whether the post-verbal adjective phrases given in (7a) are the true resultative phrases, or just adjunct adjective phrases / depictive constructions added to the sentence to modify the surface subject.

To be precise, the very definition of the resultative phrase implies a strict connection between the verb and the resultative, and the latter must be the result of the action denoted by the verb. Thus, analysing the examples from (7a), the question is whether Mark's death has brought the result of him being (a) *young*, (b) *penniless*, (c) *alone*, (d) *happy*, (e) *childless*, (f) *unmarried*, etc. The answer seems to be obvious, and it would be logical to assume that these 'states' expressed by the adjectives in (7a) are not the direct results of Mark's death. Instead, the adjective phrases in (7a) are depictive predicates that characterize the state of an NP at the time of the initiation of the main predicate's action (Lee 1995, 55). In fact, just before and at the time of his death, Mark must have been *penniless* or *unmarried*, etc. On the other hand, the example in (7b) would be a perfect instance of resultative, since being 'stiff' is the direct result of one's (Sheila's) death. Unfortunately, there are no such sentence patterns available in the COCA Corpus.

In a nutshell, the verb *TO DIE*, as a representative of verbs of disappearance class, belongs to the change of state verbs in its very nature, and the change of state is somehow assigned to these verbs. Even though the members of this verb class, as unaccusatives, are supposed to form resultative phrases, the verb *TO DIE* fails this diagnostics.

3.4. POST-NOMINAL ADJECTIVAL PAST PARTICIPLES VS. THE VERB *TO DIE*

Transitive verbs form participles that can be used attributively to modify nouns (cf. (8a)). In the case of intransitive verbs, the participles formed from unergatives cannot appear in the prenominal position (Shardl 2010, 17), in contradistinction to participles derived from unaccusative verbs, as illustrated in (8b) and (8c), respectively (cf. Williams 1981; Hoekstra 1984; Grewendorf 1989; Grimshaw 1990; Zaenen 1993; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995):

- (8) a. a *bought* pen (transitive verb)
 b. *the *phoned* girl (unergative verb)
 c. a *fallen* angel (unaccusative telic)
 d. *an *appeared* actor (unaccusative atelic verb) but: a recently *appeared* book.⁶

Prenominal perfect participles typically modify S-Structure subjects of unaccusative verbs, as in (8c), but not S-structure subjects of unergative verbs, as in (8b) (Zaenen 1993, 140). However, B. Levin and Rappaport (1995, 151) note that such participles are formed only from telic intransitive verbs. Therefore, due to the telicity restriction, this test is inapplicable to verbs of existence, as can be seen in (8d).

While most verbs of disappearance (e.g., *to disappear*, *to expire*, *to lapse*, *to perish*, *to vanish*) give rise to adjectival perfect / passive participles, some instances of disappearance verbs are ungrammatical in this context, as exemplified in (9) from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*.

⁶ As claimed by Borgonovo and Cummins (1998, 107), some past participle constructions of telic unaccusatives are quite restrictive with respect to the type of arguments and the type of modifiers they can take. Therefore, some collocations are grammatical, while others are ungrammatical, as in (i)-(ii).

- (i) a recently *appeared* book / *a recently *appeared* explorer / *a recently *appeared* planet
 (ii) recently *arrived* guests / *tardily *arrived* guests / *early *arrived* guests /
 *already *arrived* guests / *hurriedly *arrived* guests / *subsequently *arrived* guests.

- (9) a. *vanished* civilisations / *expired* credit cards / two *disappeared* people
departed guests / **guests departed* in a huff;
 b. a repairman *come* to check the pipes / *a recently *come* repairman
 c. the newly/recently *arrived* immigrant / *an *arrived* refugee / *a *DIED* uncle.

The unacceptability of the prenominal past participle form of the disappearance verb *TO DIE* in (9c), similarly to other classes of unaccusatives which denote telic situations, has been already accounted for by Borgonovo and Cummins (1998, 107). They propose a constraint that past participles of certain verbs occur either only in the prenominal position, or only in the post-nominal position, as in (10) below.

- (10) a. *departed* guests / **guests departed* in a huff
 b. *a *DIED* uncle / an uncle *DIED* in an accident

To conclude, the verb *TO DIE* seems to satisfy the past participle diagnostics for unaccusativity, but with a restriction that the past participle of this verb must appear in the post-nominal position.

3.5. *THERE*-INSERTION AND LOCATIVE INVERSION

In both the *there*-insertion construction in (11) and the locative inversion structure in (12), the single argument of the intransitive verb appears to be in the syntactic position of the object of a transitive verb. These structures are claimed to be possible with unaccusative but not with unergative verbs (Shardl 2010, 21–23).

- (11) *There*-insertion
 a. *There appeared* a lady on the scene. (unaccusative verb)
 b. **There laughed* a girl in the room. (unergative verb)
- (12) Locative inversion
 a. *Into the room came* a man. (unaccusative verb)
 b. **In the room laughed* a girl. (unergative verb)

For B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 151), the strongest piece of evidence for an unaccusative status of the simple position verbs in English comes from their behaviour in the *there*-insertion construction, in the pattern ‘*there* V NP PP,’ that is, with the NP inside the PP. However, it is worth noting that some unaccusative verbs fail this test, as illustrated in (13), unless a proper context is given, or the verb has an agentive reading (Shardl 2010, 152).

- (13) **There fell* a man on the street. / *There fell* the autumn leaves in their garden.

As far as locative inversion constructions in English are concerned, they are clearly distinguishable from PP fronting via topicalization, although the two constructions share the discourse constraint that the fronted PP represent relatively more familiar information in the discourse (cf. Birner 1994). Besides the difference in the position of the subject, locative inversion also differs from PP topicalization in that it is subject to a number of syntactic constraints: the verb must be intransitive (but not necessarily unaccusative, cf. Levin and Rappaport (1995)), and the fronted PP must be an argument, not an adjunct. Moreover, according to B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 265), the major difference between locative inversion constructions with unaccusative and unergative verbs involves the D-structure location of the post-verbal NP. This is demonstrated by the data in (14).

- (14) a. *In the room was* a man. (unaccusative verb)
 b. *In the room came / worked / *talked* a man.⁷ (unergative verb)

When it comes to the verb *TO DIE*, it satisfies the *there*-insertion diagnostics, as shown in (15a), and the locative inversion, as confirmed by (15b).

- (15) a. *There DIED* a myriad. (*there*-insertion)
 b. this year also *DIED* the possibility of turning the cup races (...).
 the only instance found in the literature by B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav
 (1995, 303) (locative inversion)

Even though these constructions with the verb *TO DIE* are rarely used, and are mostly found in literature (as specified by the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*), the verb *TO DIE* does pass these two diagnostics.

4. UNACCUSATIVE MISMATCHES

Some verbs predicted to be unaccusative or unergative on the basis of semantic or syntactic diagnostics, do not satisfy those diagnostic requirements. These imperfect matches, called **Unaccusative Mismatches**, *display*

⁷ The examples are taken from Baker (2013), who judges their grammaticality on the basis of his own intuitions, and notes, after Shardl (2010, 21), that there are a lot of “mixed” grammaticality judgements with regard to this construction.

a clash between the results of two or more unaccusative diagnostics (L. Levin 1986; Grimshaw 1987; Zaenen 1993).

B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 4–5) described **Unaccusative Mismatches** as “cases in which there seems to be an imperfect match between the verbs expected to be selected on semantic or syntactic grounds as unaccusative or unergative by various diagnostics and the verb actually selected by those diagnostics.” In short, they meant a situation in which different unaccusative diagnostics single out different classes of intransitive verbs within and across languages. Therefore, these *imperfect matches* have given rise to two standpoints on unaccusativity: (i) the **syntactic approach** (represented by C. Rosen (1984)), refuting unaccusativity as fully semantically predictable, and (ii) the **semantic approach** (represented by Van Valin (1990)), rejecting the view that unaccusativity is syntactically encoded. Taking into consideration the unaccusativity versus unergativity distinction, B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 14) developed an alternative approach, which recognises the syntactic classification of verbs as semantically determined, confirming Perlmutter’s (1978) original hypothesis about unaccusativity as both syntactically encoded and semantically foreseeable.

In section 3, the English verb *TO DIE* has been tested against six unaccusativity tests. It has been shown that the first three diagnostics do not work for the verb *TO DIE*, i.e., auxiliary selection (not applicable to all verbs of Modern English), causative alteration (since the verb *TO DIE* represents non-caused disappearance verb class, as argued by Levin (1993) and B. Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995, 281–283)), and resultative constructions. The failure to satisfy all or at least most diagnostic tests offered in the literature has led us to the conclusion that the English verb *TO DIE* cannot be classed as unaccusative, neither can it be associated with the status of an unergative verb. Instead, it should be treated as an instance of *Unaccusative Mismatches*.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To conclude, as already pointed out, the English verb, *TO DIE*, a representative of disappearance verbs, fails to satisfy the first three unaccusativity diagnostics, i.e., (i) auxiliary selection (ii) causative alternation, and (iii) resultative constructions. On the other hand, the last three diagnostics appear to have been satisfied, i.e., (iv) the occurrence of the adjectival participle,

but with a reservation that it must be located in a post-nominal position; (v) *there*-insertion; and (vi) the locative inversion diagnostics.

Therefore, since only three unaccusativity tests out of the six mentioned above seem to work for the verb *TO DIE*, it might be problematic to treat it as a member of the unaccusative class. Additionally, the instances provided to illustrate the three diagnostics valid for the verb *TO DIE* rarely occur in the available corpora, and consequently they should rather be viewed as exceptions, which would cast serious doubt on the unaccusative status of the verb *TO DIE*. This would lead us to the conclusion that the English verb *TO DIE*, commonly recognised as unaccusative, should be regarded as a real example of *Unaccusative Mismatch* (L. Levin 1986), since it satisfies only some, but not all the unaccusative diagnostics (cf. Grimshaw 1987; Zaenen 1993; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995).

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NIEAKUZATYWNY CZY NIEERGATYWNY –
ANALIZA ANGIELSKIEGO CZASOWNIKA *TO DIE* 'UMRZEĆ'

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie, do jakiej klasy czasowników nieprzechodnich należy czasownik *TO DIE* 'umrzeć' w języku angielskim, który jest zaliczany do semantycznie spójnej grupy tzw. czasowników znikania (obok czasowników takich jak: *disappear, expire, lapse, perish, vanish*). Aby określić czy badany czasownik jest nieakuzatywny czy nieergatywny, został on poddany powszechnie uznanym testom na nieakuzatywność (Perlmutter 1978; Burzio 1986; Levin i Rappaport Hovav 1995). Na podstawie wyników sześciu przeprowadzonych testów diagnostycznych pokazane jest, że badany czasownik w języku angielskim nie spełnia większości kryteriów na nieakuzatywność, a raczej reprezentuje grupę czasowników o niejasnym statusie syntaktycznym. Może być on zatem przykładem tzw. *Unaccusative Mismatch* 'Rozdźwięku w nieakuzatywności' (Levin 1986), tj. zjawiska, w którym dwa lub więcej testów diagnostycznych potwierdzających nieakuzatywność nie jest spełnionych przez dany czasownik (por. Grimshaw 1987; Zaenen 1993; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995).

Streszcila Anna Dąbrowska

Słowa kluczowe: czasowniki nieakuzatywne; czasowniki nieergatywne; testy na nieakuzatywność; rozdźwięk w nieakuzatywności; interfejs między składnią a leksykonem; język angielski.

