On the semantics of restructuring: The case of Italian volere (‘want’)

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In this talk I discuss a puzzling interaction between Italian volere (want) and viewpoint aspect. With perfective aspect (but not with imperfective), volere acts like an implicative predicate (such as manage): the proposition expressed by its complement clause has to hold in the actual world, and not merely, as expected from a standard semantics for desire predicates (cf. Hintikka 1962, Heim 1992), in the subject’s desire worlds. I show that this peculiar effect can be explained by invoking the restructuring properties of volere. In particular, I take Italian restructuring constructions to be monoclausal (Wurmbrand 2001) and involve a single Tense and Aspect projection, resulting in a single event quantification. This single event quantification yields a single event, which has to occur both in the actual world and in all of the subject’s desire worlds. I show that volere’s lack of implicative behavior with imperfective aspect arises independently from an additional layer of modality associated with the imperfective.