

Cours 2: The MPI Valency Classes Project

Contribution to the project:

- (i) fill in the **database questionnaire**, which asks for valency information on a set of 70 verbs (taken as representative of the verbal lexicon) for each project language; individual databases will be published as part of an online database (Hartmann & Haspelmath eds)
- (ii) give a presentation on language-particular patterns at the Leipzig Valency Classes Conference (2011 April 14-17)
- (iii) contribute a paper to an edited volume on valency classes crosslinguistically (Malchukov & Comrie eds)

1. Defining valency

In the project terminology, the valency of a verb is the list of its arguments with:

- their coding properties: **coding frame** (Haspelmath 2005; Malchukov et al. 2010):
 - * **flagging** (case or adposition marking)
 - * **indexing** (agreement, cross-referencing)
 - * **word order** (in the absence of other kinds of marking)
- their behavioural properties: **syntactic function frame**, with respect to patterns like reflexivization, passivization, causativization, argument omission, etc.
- and with the relationship of the arguments to the roles in the verb's **role frame**.

English verb *remind*:

coding frame: **A > V.subj[A] > R > of+T**

syntactic-function frame: **subject, direct object oblique, object**

role frame: **A reminds R of T** (or: *agent_r, addressee_r, theme_r* or: *A CAUSE (REMEMBER R T)*)

An **argument** of a verb is a phrase whose occurrence is made possible by a specific verb, and which therefore cannot occur with a generic verb:

- 1a. *I wrote a letter.* > **I wrote, and I did a letter.*
- 1b. *I wrote with a pen.* > *I wrote, and I did it with a pen.*
- 1c. *I put the book on the table.* >
**I put the book, and this happened on the table.*
- 1d. *I wrote the letter on the table.* >
I wrote the letter, and this happened on the table.

2. Representing coding frames

German

2a. **A-nom X-da** (*helfen* 'A helps X', *folgen* 'A follows X', *dienen* 'A serves X', etc.)

Karl hilft seiner Mutter. "Karl is helping his mother."

2b. **S-nom an+X** (*denken* 'S thinks of X', *liegen* 'S is due to X', etc.)

Karl denkt an seine Freundin. "Karl is thinking of his girlfriend."

2c. **A-nom R-acc an+T** (*erinnern* 'A reminds R of T', etc.)

Maria erinnert Karl an seine Mutter. "Maria reminds Karl of his mother."

Conventions used for coding frames:

- * case labels are attached to an argument by a hyphen, e.g. **A-nom R-dat, P-abs**
- * adpositions are attached to an argument variable by a plus sign, e.g. **for+X, à+R**
- * index labels are attached to the verb variable by a period, e.g. **V.subj[A]** (for German subject agreement), **subj[A].obj[P].V** (for Bantu subject and object agreement); the role information is given in brackets
- * noun incorporation is marked by angle brackets, e.g. **A P <I>V**

*word order: if the order of elements is fairly fixed and potentially distinctive, an greater-than character (>) is used between elements in the given order (e.g. English **A > V.subj[A] > P**)

* optionality element in parentheses.

3. Valency alternations

3.1. Defining alternations

A **valency alternation** is defined as a set of two different coding frames that are productively (or at least regularly) associated with both members of a set of verb pairs sharing the same verb stem. Two types of alternations

- **uncoded alternations** (such as the English Dative Shift alternation)

A > V > R > T <> A > V > T > to+R (*give, sell, lend, í*)

- **coded alternations** (such as the English Passive alternation).

Russian: Anticausative alternation (coded)

A-nom V X-acc <> X-nom V-sja (*lomat' 'break', otkryt' 'open', ...*)

German: Passive Voice (coded)

A-nom X-acc V <> X-nom von+A V-t+werden (*nehmen, bringen, schicken, lachen*)

Alternations are relevant to the project to the extent they are sensitive to verb classification (e.g., some varieties of differential object marking apply to any transitive verb, which does not yield an interesting clustering of verb types).

3.2. Examples of uncoded alternations

English (Levin 1993):

a) the Ambitransitive Alternation (*John broke the stick ~ The stick broke*)

b) the Middle Alternation (*John cut the bread ~ The bread cuts easily*)

c) the Reflexive Omission Alternation (*John washed himself ~ John washed*)

d) the Reciprocal Alternation (*John married Mary ~ John and Mary married*)

e) the Dative Alternation (*Mary gave the book to John ~ gave John the book*)

f) the Locative Alternation (*John loaded the truck with hay ~ the hay onto the truck*)

g) the Conative Alternation (*John cut the bread ~ cut at the bread*)

h) the Object Omission Alternation (*John ate the bread ~ John ate*).

3.3. Examples of coded alternations

ó Valency-reducing alternations, coming in several subtypes:

a) Subject-demoting/deleting alternations: anticausative, middle, reflexive, reciprocal

b) Object-demoting/deleting alternations: antipassive, object incorporation

c) Subject-Object rearranging alternations: passive

ó Valency-increasing and valency-rearranging alternations, especially causatives and applicatives.

3.4. Intra-domain implications

(1) If a language lacks overt coding for transitive arguments, it will also lack overt coding for the intransitive subject (Greenberg 1963, Universal 38).

(2) Animacy Scale: **human > nonhuman animate > inanimate**

Definiteness Scale: **definite > indefinite specific > nonspecific**

If a language has overt case marking for an object on a position on one of these scales, it also has overt object case marking for all higher positions (Silverstein 1976, Comrie 1981, Bossong 1985, Aissen 2003).

(3) Spontaneity Scale:

transitive > unergative > unaccusative costly > unaccusative automatic

If a language has overt causative marking for noncausative bases in one position of the scale, it also has overt causative marking for all higher positions (Haspelmath 2007b).

4. Argument indexing

Following Lazard's terminology (1994; and earlier, Tesnière 1959), Haspelmath (2013: 197-226) proposes the concept of (argument) indexing, "more useful in typology (and typically also in language description) than the commonly used concepts of pronoun and agreement for situations where we find bound person-marking forms on the verb"

Toqabaqita (Malaita, Solomon islands) (Lichtenberk 2008)

1. *Fanua e rodo naqa.*
place 3SG.NFUT be.dark PRF
"It is dark now."
2. *Nau ku fanga sui naqa.*
1SG 1SG.NFUT eat COMPL PRF
"I have finished eating."
3. *Nau ku rongo-a kini qeri.*
1SG 1SG.NFUT hear-3OBJ woman that
"I heard the woman."
4. *Doketa qe sore-a kini kai kuqu-fi-a meresina.*
doctor 3SG.NFUT tell-3OBJ woman 3SG.FUT drink-tr-3OBJ medicine
"The doctor told the woman to drink medicine."
5. *Kai lole qoe.*
3SG.IPFV tell.lie.to 2SG
"He is lying to you."

5. Argument coding and alignment

Languages may be classified according to the number of arguments which are referenced by indexes added to the verb form (Lazard):

- no argument indexes : Mongolian, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Philippines languages, some Australian languages and Polynesian languages
- only one argument index: in accusative languages (Sanskrit, Classical Greek, Latin, Russian), the index refers to the subject; in ergative languages (Avar), it refers to the object.
- two argument indexes: Eskimo, Nahuatl, Mayan languages, where the two indexes vary in person and number; Ob-Ugrian languages (Ostiak, Vogul): one of them varies in person and number (subject), the other only in number (object)í ; Algonquian languages, with 'inverse' forms, as in Menomini *ne-nan-aw* "I bring him" and *ne-nan-ek* "he brings me"
- three argument indexes: one refers to the subject, another to the object (or to the absolutive argument), the third to the addressee (dative) as in Basque, north-west Caucasianí or French with three series of argument prefixes: *je le lui dirai* "I shall tell it to him".

Haspelmath: "How to talk about role coding: cases and index-sets, nominative/accusative, subject/object, agent/patient" (Diversity Linguistics Comment 2012/05/08).

"Personally I would prefer the case-derived labels, because such labels exist not only for S/A vs. P alignment (accusative alignment), but also for S/P vs. A alignment (ergative alignment), and also because the terms sound more technical and precise. But this is also a matter of taste."

5.1. Some examples of argument marking by flagging and indexing (Haspelmath 2012)

Russian

- 6a. *Devu-k-a uvidela dedu-k-u.*
girl-NOM saw granddad-ACC
¬The girl saw granddad.∅

Lezgian

- 6b. *Ru-a gada-diz cük-Ø ga-na.*
girl-ERG boy-DAT flower give-PST
‘The girl gave a flower to the boy.Ø’

Creek

- 6c. *ifá-t pó:si lást-i:-n á:ssi:c-ís*
dog-NOM cat black-DUR-OBL chase-IND
‘The dog is chasing the black cat.Ø’ (Haspelmath 2011: 22)

- indexing of S- and A-arguments of verbs:

Mauwake (Trans-New Guinea) (Berghäll 2015: 150)

- 7a. *umi-nen* ‘I will dieØ
umi-nan ‘you will dieØ
umi-non ‘s/he will dieØ’

Pite Saami (Uralic) (Wilbur 2014: 162)

- 7b. *buold-av* ‘I burnØ
buold-a ‘you burnØ
bualld-a ‘s/he burnsØ’

- indexing of P arguments:

French

- 8a. *je te vois* ‘I see youØ
je le vois ‘I see himØ
je les vois ‘I see themØ’

Kham (Tibeto-Burman) (Watters 2002: 79)

- 8b. *s res-na-ke-o* ‘he recognized me (-na)Ø
s res-ni-ke-o ‘he recognized you (-ni)Ø
ya-s res-ke-o ‘he recognized them (ya-)Ø’

5.2. flag: Case-markers and/or adpositions

A flag is a bound marker that occurs on a nominal and that indicates the semantic or syntactic role of the nominal with respect to a verb (in a clause) or with respect to a possessed noun (in a complex nominal).

(i) the ways in which core argument noun phrases are marked ó by means of morphological case or adpositions ó to indicate which particular core argument position they occupy (Comrie 2005: 398)

(ii.) There are three basic ways of marking the function of a core argument, by choice from a system of case affixes or clitics, or by an adposition (Dixon 2010.1: 125)

5.3. Person index

A person index is a bound marker denoting a speech role or a highly accessible third person referent that occurs on a verb (or in second position) to indicate a verbØ argument, or on a noun to indicate its possessor.

6. New Caledonian languages: an example of typological diversity in the word-order, indexation and flagging of arguments.

[Such diversity is not unusual crosslinguistically. The argument-encoding systems in Amazonian Bolivia languages offer a striking variety, found in languages spoken in close proximity (Guillaume & Rose, 2011:463):

- argument encoding / flagging : Verbal cross-referencing (via affixes or clitics); Second-position clitics; Case marking
 - alignment: Nominative-accusative; Ergative-absolutive; Split intransitive (active/inactive)
- Besides, these languages display a number of phenomena rarely attested elsewhere (id. 464)]

Four major groups among the NC and Loyalty islands languages, according to word order:

1. VOA unmarked word order with an embedded subject person-marker in the verb phrase (languages of the North, of the Centre, and of the South as far as (and including) Ajië; and Iaaï (Uvea). The subject index is retained in topicalized AVO sentences.
2. A small transitional group in the South (Xârâcùù, Tîrî, Xârâgurè) where two orders are found: VOA as in the first group, or AVO without indexing in the verb phrase.
3. AVO word order languages without indexing (languages of the Extreme-South)
4. Mixed-order languages with tense-dependent case marking and no indexing in the verb phrase.

Examples of NC languages with a VOA word order (but no passive voice: according to Keenan 1978, said to be exceptional in VOA languages).

Ajië: Accusative alignment, subject indexation

1. *céré kuru na pârà oya i rô wêê-mwâ sV smS*
3PL sleep SM ART.PL child LOC place-house
 "The children are sleeping in the house."
2. *na kâi varawa na kâmö aV O smA*
3SG eat bread SM man
 "The man is eating bread."
3. *gö nââ yè Jean rha pwêê-kêê aV BENR O*
1SG give BEN Jean one fruit-tree
 "I am giving a fruit to Jean."

Paicî (Rivierre 1983): Accusative alignment with a strict word order; subject indexation

4. *í èpó sV S*
3SG cry ART.N. child
 "The child is crying."
5. *pá nêkébwö èpó aV O A*
3SG take ART.N. basket ART.N. child
 "The child is taking a/the basket."
- 6a. *úti miimì akenâ aV O A*
3SG bite ART.N. cat ART.N. dog
 "The dog is biting the cat."
- 6b. *úti akénâ miimi aV O A*
3SG bite ART.N. dog ART.N. cat
 "The cat is biting the dog."

Nemi (North of the Mainland) (Ozanne-Rivierre 1979)

The flagging of S depends on the animacy: \emptyset (S inanimate in 7a), *ru* (S animate in 7b)

7a. *ye ta-me vi davec sV S*

3SG climb-come ART flood

"The flood mounts."

7b. *ye ta-me ru vi hnook sV smS*

3SG climb-come- SM ART woman

"The woman is coming climbing up."

"A" always case-marked with *ru*, whatever the degree of animacy (8a and 8b):

8a. *ye teve-ek ru vi davec aV-o smA*

3SG carry-3SGO SM ART flood

"The flood carries her away."

8b. *yelu fe vi hyaok ru maali hnook aV O smA*

3DU take ART child SM ART.DU woman

"The two women take the child."

Nêlêmwa (North of the mainland) (Bril 2002)

Clitic pronouns reflect an accusative structure, while nominal agent arguments are marked by (*e*)*a* if human beings or *ru* before other animate and collective inanimate. The ergative markers only appear with the VOA word order, that is before A arguments which are postposed to the predicate, as in (10a, b, and c).

9. *i u â aroo-n sV S*

3SG PFV leave husband-3SGPOSS

"Her husband left."

10a. *i thege ve pwe ru nok aV O ruA*

3SG run DIR net SM fish

"The fish took the fishing line away."

10b. *i diya keer-ena ea-n ye aV O eaA*

3SG make basket-DEIC SM-3SGPOSS 3SGINDEP

"She made this basket (by herself)."

10c. *i tuâi Pwâ-Hivic ea Pwâ-Kebö aV O eaA*

3SG lie Pwâ-Hivic SM Pwâ-Kebö

"Pwâ-Kebö lied to Pwâ-Hivic." (Bril, 2002:142)