

Verb Valency Changes

Theoretical and typological
perspectives

edited by

Albert Álvarez González and Ía Navarro

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This volume surveys a variety of verb valency change phenomena among diverse languages and from diverse theoretical viewpoints. It offers typological studies comparing languages in topics like applicative polysemy, complex predicate formation and locative alternation, but also works describing the different valency-changing operations in specific languages including West Circassian, Huasteca Nahuatl, Tlachichilco Tepehua and Seri, and works dealing with specific valency change constructions, such as *tla-* constructions in Nahuatl, resultatives in Yaqui, antipassives in Mocoví, and labile verbs in Arabic. This book aims to put this variety of backdrops in perspective and to clarify the notion and mechanisms of verb valency change. Both scholars and expert readers will get in these works a better understanding of the different verb valency changing operations and of the typological aspects involved in this phenomenon, together with a better grasp of how argument realization and verb morphology are connected in some languages.

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Volume 120

Verb Valency Changes. Theoretical and typological perspectives
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Preface

The notion of verb valency deals with the question of how many participants a certain verb presupposes in order for the event denoted by the verb to be realizable, in this sense it refers to the capacity of a verb to take a specific number and type of arguments. A single verbal meaning canonically corresponds to a single valency setting. However, in many cases, semantically close uses of verbs can be syntactically structured in different ways. Moreover, verb valency may be affected by different semantic and syntactic processes, and the type of such processes commonly depends on the type of language in question. Hence knowing the nature of these valency-changing processes together with the typological description of the valency change are topics of great interest for the linguistic sciences and a necessary task for the general understanding of valency change.

This book was born from the papers presented at the Workshop on Verb Valency Change held at the University of Sonora in Hermosillo (Sonora, Mexico) on March 21–22, 2013. The main objective of this workshop was to bring together linguists working on morphosyntactic, lexico-syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects of verb valency changes, in order to study this phenomenon in a diversity of languages and from a diversity of theoretical perspectives. This workshop and now the book presented here represent a clear indication of the growing interest in understanding how languages deal with argument realization in the context of verb valency changes, and in knowing what types of languages use what kind of constructions involving the valency change.

This two-day workshop allowed for the discussion of several questions about different phenomena related to the increase or decrease in verb valency from different sub-fields in linguistics and from different theoretical perspectives. The different topics covered in this event included argument structure and verb alternations, morphosyntactic derivations implying a valency increase (such as applicative and causative constructions) as well as a valency decrease (such as passive, antipassive, middle constructions, syntactic incorporation, syntactic pseudo incorporation), semantic valency-changing operations (such as restriction, thematic unification, semantic incorporation, semantic pseudo incorporation, etc.) and the discourse functions of valency changes (such as topicalization and detopicalization).

Derived from this event, we are pleased to present now the papers collected in this volume, which all focus on the valency change phenomena and investigate

issues that are related to the verb valency changes from both, the theoretical and the typological perspectives. This book thus addresses a variety of questions on valency changes from different backgrounds and viewpoints, and based on the study of different languages. Among the works here collected, the reader will find proposals that aim at covering the different valency-changing operations existing in a particular language; in these cases, the papers propose a general description of the valency changes in languages such as West Circassian (also known as Adyghe, Northwest Caucasian, Lander & Letuchiy), Tlachichilco Tepehua (Totonac-Tepehua, Watters), Seri (isolated, Marlett), and Huasteca Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan, Peregrina et al.). Further, this volume includes studies that deal with a specific valency-changing operation in one language; these proposals analyze the semantic and morphosyntactic mechanisms operating in certain constructions, this is the case of *tla*- constructions in Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan, Navarro), resultatives in Yaqui (Uto-Aztecan, Álvarez), antipassives in Mocoví (Guaycuru, Juárez & Álvarez) or lability in Arabic (Semitic, Letuchiy). Apart from these studies on verb valency changes in individual languages, this book also contains works assuming a typological approach to particular valency-changing operations; that is, works that provide a comparative and cross-linguistic perspective on some valency change mechanisms, such as noun incorporation (Espinal), applicative polysemy (Malchukov), and locative alternation (Mateu).

The value of this volume is due, among other aspects, to the fact that different perspectives and different languages are proposed in order to explore the phenomenon under analysis. Although most of the papers are more or less explicitly functionalist, three papers are subscribed within the generative framework (Espinal, Mateu, and Navarro).¹ Regarding the languages studied in this book, although the Americas are the highest represented with studies on Nahuatl (Navarro, and Peregrina et al.), on Yaqui (Álvarez), on Seri (Marlett), and on Tlachichilco Tepehua (Watters) from Mexico, and on Mocoví (Juárez & Álvarez) from Argentina, two other papers are focused on Arabic (Letuchiy) and on West Circassian (Lander & Letuchiy) from Russia, aside from having three comparative typological studies in Germanic and Romance languages (Mateu), in Uto-Aztecan and Romance languages (Espinal), and in a variety of world's languages (Malchukov). In this way, this

1. Regarding the differences in theoretical frameworks, we prevent the reader about the existence of terminological differences in some concepts such as *incorporation* or *resultatives*. For instance, Mateu deals with *lexical incorporation* as an operation given at the lexical interface, which is not visible in the syntax, meanwhile Espinal and Navarro refer both to *incorporation* as an operation at the semantic-syntactic interface. Also, the *resultative* constructions considered by Mateu are cases of syntactic resultative constructions in secondary predication, while the *resultative* constructions studied by Álvarez are morphological resultative constructions in which the single predicate denotes a state resulting from the event denoted by the base verb.

book represents a good opportunity for the readers to expand their own typological and theoretical knowledge on verb valency changes.

The notion of verb valency has been involved in the understanding of different phenomena related to the argument structure, which is itself a complex notion interpreted variably with regard to semantic, morphological or syntactic backdrops, and with regard to formal or functional frameworks. An important part of the verb valency change theory and a task that this book challenges to achieve is to put this variety of backdrops and frameworks in perspective and to clarify the notion of verb valency change through the study of typological perspectives and within the analysis of its particular cases. Hopefully, with the works here gathered, the reader could improve his/her understanding on how languages deal with argument realization, the different strategies of verb valency change, and the typological aspects of the languages and the constructions involving the change in valency. We think that this book will be of great interest to graduate and post-graduate researchers focused on the topics of valency change, argument realization, complex predicate formation and language typology.

Overview of the papers

In the opening paper *Markedness effects in applicative formation*, Andrej Malchukov proposes an interesting survey of different types of applicative polysemy existing in world's languages, that is, cases of voice ambivalence in which the applicative marker also performs other functions than applicativization, depending on the semantic and syntactic properties of the verb stem to which it applies (in particular whether the verb is intransitive, transitive or ditransitive). This study explains the cross-linguistically attested patterns of polysemy (applicative-causative, applicative-antipassive, as well as polysemies involving different kinds of applicatives) in terms of the shared syntactic components and proposes a semantic map in order to capture the manifestation of local markedness in the domain of voice categories. Besides a discussion of the markedness patterns in applicative formation, the author also outlines the ways how these patterns can be constrained cross-linguistically.

The article *Morphosyntactic defectiveness in complex predicate formation* presented by M. Teresa Espinal focuses on verb valency change in complex predicates formed by noun incorporation. The author argues that incorporated nouns and clitics in both Uto-Aztecan and Romance languages are morphosyntactically defective, and that morphosyntactic defectiveness, but not semantic prototypicality, is a necessary condition in many natural languages in order to identify formally those nominal expressions that are to be interpreted as property-denoting expressions and event predicate modifiers, rather than as canonical syntactic and semantic

arguments. This article also provides the opportunity to compare and understand the semantics behind different types of incorporation, and offers a more refined analysis of the argument incorporation phenomena.

Jaume Mateu, in its article *Two types of locative alternation*, takes into account Talmy's (1991, 2000) typological distinction between satellite-framed languages and verb-framed languages in order to show the differences between two types of locative alternation. In particular, the author deals with the typological variation in the light of a formal distinction between incorporation and conflation. As predicted by the Talmian typology, verb-framed languages lack the satellite-framed pattern of locative alternation variants that involve Manner conflation (e.g., *Sue sewed up the entire dress with buttons*; cf. *Sue sewed buttons on the dress*). In contrast, locative alternation variants that only involve Result incorporation (e.g., *The children loaded the stones on the cart* / *The children loaded the cart with stones*) are expected to be found in verb-framed languages. This article explores the consequences of having some specific types of argument constructions available in a linguistic system, and shows that the comprehension of the argument structure is an important topic in the discussion of verb valency change.

The paper by Manuel Peregrina Llanes, Albert Álvarez González and Zarina Estrada-Fernández focuses on *Transitivity and valency-changing operations in Huasteca Nahuatl*, based on the analysis of a narrative corpus. As valency-increasing operations, it is shown that the suffix *-lti/-ti/-tia* is used for causativization of intransitive verbs, and that the applicativization is marked by the suffix *-lia/-li/-l*. As valency-decreasing operations, the prefix *mo-* illustrates a wide syncretism between reflexive, reciprocal, middle, impersonal and passive meanings, while anti-passivization can be obtained through the replacement of the object participant by an unspecified object marker (prefix *te-* for human unspecified objects and prefix *tla-* for non human unspecified objects) or through the suppression of the object participant if the discourse context allows it. This paper also demonstrates that valency-changing operators in Huasteca Nahuatl can be used without changing the valency of the base verb, thus indicating that these markers are in fact transitivity-changing operators, not always valency-changing operators since they always affect the relation between participants/arguments (transitivity), but not always the number of participants/arguments (valency). The same can be said for the noun incorporation process that is usually associated with detransitivization and valency-decreasing operations but can also be in Huasteca Nahuatl a valency-rearranging device without valency reduction.

The semantics of Nahuatl tla- constructions by Ía Navarro deals with complex predicates formed by a verbal base and an unspecified object prefix that has weakened its formal status in favour of an abstract semantic contribution. This study illustrates how the interaction between the defective *tla-* and the lexical properties

of the verbal base results in different kinds of intransitive constructions. The author argues, on the one hand, that a specific verb valency change process is restricted to certain argument structure constructions, that is, the processes depend on the type of argument structure in order to take place. On the other hand, it is shown that the verb valency process results in different interpretations depending on the verbal base. This means that the same semantic operation, in this case *tla*- event modification, applied to different verbal bases outcomes in different complex constructions. The perspective assumed by the author allows simplifying the linguistic analysis of different *tla*- constructions, better than proposing that the different outcomes are given by different processes.

In his paper about *Valency-changing operations in Yaqui resultatives*, Albert Álvarez González presents a description and analysis of the resultative constructions in Yaqui (Uto-Aztecan, Mexico) in accordance with Nedjalkov's typological classification of resultatives. The study shows that Yaqui has five different syntactic types of resultatives: S-, A- and bivalent S-resultatives marked by the suffix *-(l)a*, and P- and R-resultatives marked by the suffix *-(r)i*. While *-(l)a* resultativization does not trigger a valency change, *-(r)i* resultativization always implies a valency decreasing operation associated with the deletion of the subject/agent of the base verb construction. Due to this detransitivization function, P-resultatives and personal passives exhibit a functional overlap. Other valency-changing operations are also involved in Yaqui resultatives, since although resultativization does not trigger an increase in verbal valency *per se*, R- and bivalent S-resultatives are associated in Yaqui with two valency-increasing operations (namely applicativization and possessor raising, respectively). Indeed, the base verb construction in R-resultative corresponds to an applicative construction, while the bivalent S-resultative is in fact an externally possessed S-resultative. Additionally, the study also proposes that the suffix *-la* used in A-resultatives exhibits some features indicating that it is in the process of being grammaticalized as a perfect/anterior marker in Yaqui.

The next article *Tlachichilco Tepehua: Semantics and function of verb valency change* is written by James K. Watters who proposes an overview of valency-changing categories in a Mesoamerican language, Tlachichilco Tepehua. The author shows that like other Tepehua and Totonacan languages, Tlachichilco Tepehua has a rich system of morphology that modifies verb valency, by presenting the different constructions that affect core arguments of the verb: the dative and causative and four valency-decreasing constructions – passive, antipassive, body-part incorporation, and the decausative (anticausative) construction. Regarding their functions, these morphological processes typically affect inherent aspect and lexical semantics or facilitate tracking referents in discourse. The three applicative prefixes, and, in some cases, the dative suffix, license non-core arguments which function as direct arguments of the verb. Syntactically, the applicative constructions allow non-core

arguments to be questioned or relativized. Semantically, their arguments manifest roles that are frame-internal – determined by the scene associated with the base verb – or frame-external, such as the benefactive.

The following paper *Panorama of valency changing operations in Seri* by Stephen A. Marlett, presents a comprehensive overview of valency-changing categories in Seri (isolated, Mexico) in a typological perspective, with a detailed description of their morphology, syntax and semantics, offering useful lists of cross-linguistic parallels. The author shows that along with valency-changing operations robustly attested and used in the language, such as passive, unspecified subject construction, antipassive (implicit argument type) and causative, Seri has other valency-changing operations, which are quite restricted in terms of the number of items to which they apply and in terms of their cross-linguistic counterparts. This is the case of the impersonal passive of transitive verbs, the age construction, the times construction, the assistive and the experiencer subject construction. Due to these cross-linguistically uncommon valency-changing operations, this article represents an interesting contribution to the typology of valency changes and helps to better understand the status of Seri language.

In their contribution titled *The antipassive marking in Mocoví: Forms and functions*, Cristian Juárez and Albert Álvarez González propose a survey and analysis of antipassive constructions in Mocoví (Guaycuruan, Argentina), with typological generalizations about this type of syntactic derivation. They identify two different antipassive markers (suffixes *-(a)gan* and *-(a>tagan*), and consider the morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic features that are synchronically involved in Mocoví antipassive constructions, as well as the functional overlaps between these two antipassive markings and causative, aspectual and agentive nominal meanings. Based on these characteristics, it is proposed that the primary functions of both suffixes are to highlight the predicate activity and to downgrade the object/patient participant and thereby, as a consequence, to focus on the participant that carries out this activity, that is, the subject/agent. For the authors, this is precisely this activity-centered function that helps to understand the uncommon antipassive/causative syncretism observed in Mocoví, which seems to be initially possible due to restrictions on the number of argument slots available for the Mocoví causative constructions. As Mocoví is a non-ergative language, this paper also contributes to the typological discussion about the relation between antipassives and ergativity, confirming that the marked antipassive construction is not exclusive of ergative languages.

In the article titled *Arabic ‘labile verbs’ in form III: lability or something else?*, Alexander Letuchiy discusses labile verbs in literary Arabic. The paper is focused on a subclass of Arabic verbs, namely, verbs of form III denoting symmetrical states such as ‘be equal’, ‘be close’, ‘be similar’, which exhibit lability, that is, they can be

used transitively or intransitively without a morphological change. However, these verbs represent interesting cases of lability from the typological point of view, since they do not conform to the traditional notion of lability in which labile verbs are recognized to have a transitive causative and an intransitive non-causative use. Indeed, the labile verbs under analysis present causative and non-causative uses, but each of them can be either transitive or intransitive. In the search of an explanation for this peculiarity, the author argues that although a derivational explanation is possible (labile verbs of form III are derived from adjectives and deadjectival verbs often show lability, because both patterns are derived from non-verbal stems, and the transitivity feature is thus neutralized), the reason has to be found in the semantic component of symmetry (symmetrical action).

The last contribution *Valency-decreasing operations in a valency-increasing language?* by Yuri Lander and Alexander Letuchiy offers a discussion and an analysis of the rich system of valency-changing categories in West Circassian (also known as Adyghe), a polysynthetic language of the Northwest Caucasian family. This language is considered a valency-increasing language since it presents many productive means to increase valency, such as causativization and different types of applicativization. After presenting these argument-adding operations, the authors assess the possibility of having valency-decreasing operations in West Circassian. Based on the ergative cross-reference morphology present only in transitive predicates, the authors argue that the operations associated with anticausative, resultative, facilitative, difcilitative, antipassive, potential and inadvertitive constructions in this language are not “true” valency-decreasing operations since they do not necessarily remove arguments, even though some of them change in transitivity. From this perspective, it is shown that West Circassian lacks derivations that could instantiate valency decrease and detransitivization at the same time, advocating the need for distinguishing between valency change and transitivity change.

The editors

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