

**External arguments in transitivity alternations:** A layering approach. By ARTEMIS ALEXIADOU, ELENA ANAGNOSTOPOULOU, and FLORIAN SCHÄFER. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 320. ISBN 9780199571949. \$115 (Hb).

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This monograph presents a comprehensive account of transitivity alternations involving the (non)expression of the external argument. It focuses on the causative alternation and both verbal and adjectival passives, drawing principally on data from English, Greek, and German, with reference to literature on other languages where available. Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Schäfer (AA&S) have been responsible for many leading ideas in current analyses of transitivity alternations, and the present volume, couched in the distributive morphology and bare phrase structure frameworks, integrates a wealth of empirical generalizations from decades of literature on these alternations with the authors' ideas on the syntactic construction of verb meaning. The integration of the cumulative insights from previous literature into a specific theory raises many questions of implementation that are directly addressed in the volume. Other ancillary issues are explored in depth without conclusive answers.

The transitivity alternations under discussion are of particular theoretical relevance since they provide fertile ground for fleshing out ideas having to do with the decomposition of verb meaning. Two strands of research have given rise to ideas relating to the syntactic encoding of verb meaning; these merge in the analysis of the transitivity alternations in this book.

The first motivation for lexical decomposition developed from observations about systematic relationships between morphologically related classes of words, which share a basic lexical form. The triplet in 1 is illustrative: English and other languages abound in such triplets, though in many languages the forms are distinct and morphologically related.

- (1) a. The soup is cool.  
 b. The soup cooled.  
 c. The chef cooled the soup.

The event descriptions encoded in the sentences in 1 show systematic entailment relations among them and shared selectional restrictions on one of the arguments. These relations are captured by giving the sentences representations with a shared root and common substructures of structurally represented meaning involving primitive predicates such as CAUSE and BECOME. The representation associated with 1c contains that associated with 1b, which also contains that associated with 1a. These ideas can be traced back to the generative semantics literature (McCawley 1968, Lakoff 1970).

The second conceptual source for verbal decomposition derives from purported asymmetries between the subject and object of verbs. The verb is claimed to be semantically closer to its internal arguments than its external argument, with the ability to dictate special meanings for its composition with the former but not the latter. These observations give rise to the idea that the subject is not an argument of the verb (later, root) but receives its theta-role from a functional category. This idea dates back at least to Marantz 1984 and was made particularly prominent and given a formal implementation in Kratzer 1996. The two strands of research have merged in approaches that take arguments to be introduced by functional categories which are assigned interpretations similar to those proposed for structures with the primitive predicates (Borer 2005, Pyllkkänen 2008, Ramchand 2008, and others). What is traditionally taken to be verb meaning is then portioned out to meaning attributed to the root, sometimes contextually determined, and meaning attributed to the functional categories. Causatives, anticausatives, and adjectival and verbal passives are the perfect testing ground for such theories since they have been argued to be distinguished from one another in terms of the numbers of functional categories and the presence or absence of the external argument and the syntactic nature of its realization.

\* This review was written when I was a fellow at the Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities and Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Ch. 1 introduces the range of data and the basic theoretical issues discussed in the book: the causative alternation, severing the external argument from the verb, the ontological categorization of roots, and the compositional construction of verb meaning.

Ch. 2 lays out AA&S's view that causatives and their anticausative counterparts do not differ in event complexity. This position contrasts with positions that suggest that there are two layers of *v* in a causative verb corresponding to CAUSE and BECOME and one in the anticausative. AA&S argue against this view, primarily from well-known data regarding the lack of expected scope readings for certain adverbials (e.g. *John woke Bill grumpily* can only describe the grumpiness of John, not of Bill). Causatives and anticausatives (whatever their morphological form) share a root and a *v* that introduces the notion of eventivity,<sup>1</sup> associated with causal semantics. There is also discussion of well-known scope ambiguities involving elements such as *again*, *almost*, and time adverbials, as illustrated in 2.

- (2) a. Max opened the door again.  
 b. = The door had been open, and Max returned it to that state.  
 c. = The door had opened and Max caused it to open again.

The question of whether there is a 'middle-scope' reading, whereby *again* scopes over a BECOME operator and the state but not the CAUSE operator, is discussed. AA&S argue that such a middle-scope reading does indeed exist, but does not warrant the introduction of another layer of structure.

The external argument in causatives is introduced by a voice head (not CAUSE). The causative semantics of anticausatives can be probed by a variety of cause-denoting PPs (and also by certain dative subjects in some languages). These phrases directly modify *v* and do not receive a cause role by Voice. AA&S ultimately suggest that *v* does not directly encode causation, which is an interpretation given to a structure of *v* embedding a structure containing a (result) state. The evidence for this comes from data purporting to show that atelic predications are not compatible with cause subjects, while telic predications are (cf. Folli & Harley 2004). While I am sympathetic to the idea that causation is not directly encoded in *v*, the facts do not seem to support the claim about the dependence between the nature of the external argument and the (a)telicity of the predication. There are suggestive data indicating some predilection of telic predications to appear with causer subjects, but it is not difficult to find cause subjects in atelic predications, as in 3 and 4 below.

- (3) A stiff wind bounced the chopper. (Beth Levin, p.c.)  
 (4) Dangerous stretches were created along the jetties after storm waters rolled the boulders.

Finally, the question of which verbs participate in the alternation is discussed, and the conclusion is that participation in the alternation is determined by the root and its arguments, along with a variety of other factors, and that the classification of roots as internally or externally caused (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995) does not play a direct role.

Ch. 3 shows that in a range of languages anticausative verbs fall into three morphological types: those that are morphologically marked, those that are unmarked (and bear active morphology), and those that are optionally marked. This morphological distribution is found in both languages that mark anticausatives with reflexive morphology and those that mark them with nonactive morphology. AA&S argue that, despite many claims otherwise, in no language investigated is the distribution of the morphological marking consistently associated with any variation in meaning, such as type of causation or telicity. This leads naturally to the main issues discussed in Ch. 4.

Ch. 4 is the core of the book and lays out AA&S's theory of Voice, the functional category that is responsible for the semantic and syntactic properties of the external argument. The chief inno-

<sup>1</sup> I think the *v* actually introduces the notion of change, not eventivity, since, as is well documented, some change-of-state verbs have stative (noneventive) readings that still involve change (e.g. Koontz-Garboden 2010).

vation is the introduction of ‘expletive’ (that is, nonthematic) voice, which is said to appear on morphologically marked anticausatives. Semantically, then, voice may be thematic or expletive and syntactically it may have a specifier, in which case it is transitive, or not. Marked anticausatives, with ‘expletive’ voice, differ from unmarked anticausatives in having an extra layer of structure, but the two types of anticausatives do not differ truth-conditionally. This is the formal implementation of the idea that anticausatives do not project, bind, or absorb an external argument. It is meant to explain the widespread syncretism between anticausative morphology and middle morphology (expressing reflexives, reciprocals, and dispositional middles), all of which mark the nonprojection of the external argument to the specifier position. Voice is taken to be active when it projects a specifier and nonactive when it does not. German and Romance reflexive morphology on anticausatives are instances of active expletive voice.

The postulation of expletive voice raises the question of its function and its distribution on verbs. Here AA&S rely on the results of recent typological and statistical studies that show a correlation between the tendency of a verb to be marked with anticausative morphology and its tendency to appear in transitive clauses, which (following Haspelmath 1993) they take to be a measure of the spontaneity of the event denoted by the verb. Anticausative morphology is a way of indicating the unexpectedness of the nonexpression of an external argument. Crucially, these patterns emerge only from the analyses of large corpora and broad typological surveys, and the anticausative morphology does not directly encode the notion of spontaneity in specific structures. Most interesting in this regard are the verbs that can appear with or without the anticausative morphology. Given the principled availability of both variants, there are expected to be pragmatic considerations for the choice of variant in a given utterance. AA&S hint at these pragmatic factors in the analysis of the alternation but do not flesh them out.

The chapter also deals with a fundamental difference between the passives in languages like English and languages like Greek. The passive in the former is taken to be built on an active structure, accounting for its predictable semantics and its availability for all transitive verbs. The passive in Greek is taken to be an expression of Middle Voice, which attaches directly to vP. The Greek-type passive (really, middle) thus has less structure than its English counterpart and has a range of restrictions attributed to its being structurally close enough to be influenced by the root + v combination.

Ch. 5 is devoted to adjectival passives in English, Greek, and German. The distinction between adjectival and verbal passives has figured prominently in literature on the basic architecture of grammar, for example, in discussions of distinctions between lexical rules and syntactic rules (Wasow 1977) or distinctions between passives with and without a Voice projection (Kratzer 2000). Distinctions have been drawn between different subtypes of adjectival passives, with terminology that has at times made the understanding of different types of structures confusing (e.g. the nonequivalence of Kratzer’s (2000) resultant-state participles and Embick’s (2004) resultative participles). AA&S provide a helpful discussion of the different types of adjectival passives, putting aside those with no functional structure (Embick’s (2004) lexical participles). They argue that target-state adjectival passives do indeed contain a Voice projection, which explains the compatibility of adjectival passives with the range of expressions that probe the existence of an external argument. They distinguish between target-state adjectival passives, which denote the outcomes of scalar changes and combine with Voice only after being stativized, and resultant-state passives, which are freely formed from all types of predicates. The latter are much more widely available in Greek than in English or German, and they are argued to describe states resulting from actual events in Greek, while in English and German they are subject to a ‘nonactual event’ restriction, which in effect restricts the range of modifiers these adjectival passives can appear with, despite the inclusion of Voice.

This volume represents an important contribution to the literature on structures that probe the (non)existence of Voice. It offers a systematic typology of voice heads and the resulting structures, including passive, anticausative, middle, and adjectival passive and their realizations in different languages. The review of the extensive literature on the constructions and the range of positions on crucial questions provides the appropriate context for the discussion. The choice of

languages does not of course provide a typologically balanced picture, but the authors are aware of this. Much of the analysis presented depends on subtle judgments of available readings of various structures, and accounts such as these can only be based on in-depth analyses of languages for which these judgments can be elicited. The book provides a baseline and tools for the comparison of similar structures in typologically diverse languages and will be very useful to researchers studying these structures in all languages.

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**English:** The language of the Vikings. By JOSEPH EMBLEY EMONDS and JAN TERJE FAARLUND. (Olomouc modern language monographs 3.) Olomouc: Palacký University, 2014. Pp. 180. ISBN 9788024443829.

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English has horrendous orthography, an extremely complicated inventory of vowels, a few hundred irregular verbs, a huge vocabulary, and other features that make it ill-equipped to be a global language used by millions of people who must learn it in adulthood (Pullum 2015).

This results to some degree from the fact that English is a global language in a different sense, one that has been shaped in part by much population movement, both of different populations moving into England in ancient times and, more recently, of English speakers taking their language into many parts of the world in what is referred to euphemistically as ‘language contact’, often a brutal process serving to suppress and replace the indigenous languages of the colonized. At different stages of history England was dominated by invaders: British, migrants from all over the Roman Empire, Celts, Anglo-Saxons in the sixth century, Scandinavians in the ninth and tenth