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INTRODUCTION: ARGUMENT REALIZATION AND CHANGE

By Michela Cennamo
University of Naples Federico II

1. Introductory Remarks

Research on the nature of argument structure, its encoding and representation has highlighted the complex interaction among the parameters determining argument realization, whether lexical – reflecting inherent, i.e., the root, and structural aspects of a verb’s meaning, i.e., event structures, regarded as non-lexical in some frameworks – or non-lexical, pertaining to the syntactic configurations in which verbs may occur and the properties of arguments.

Different dimensions appear to affect the encoding of a verb’s argument(s): (i) semantic, including the aspectual characteristics of events (e.g., telicity), control (e.g., agentivity), and the inherent semantics of argument fillers (e.g., animacy), (ii) syntactic, involving the syntactic constructions in which a given verb may occur with the corresponding meaning variations, if any, and the syntactic heaviness of the pattern realizing the verbal argument(s), (iii) semantic-pragmatic (e.g., definiteness), and (iv) pragmatic, reflecting the encoding of given – new information (Cennamo 2003; 2009; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005; Barðdal 2006; 2008; Bentley 2006; Barðdal & Chelliah 2009, among others).

In recent years studies on the lexical semantics-syntax interface have also underlined the role played by the idiosyncratic aspect of a verb’s meaning – i.e., the ‘root’ (Rappaport Hovav & Levin 1998; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005, among others) and its roughly equivalent notions, according to the framework adopted, e.g., qualia (Pustejovsky 1995; 2011) – in determining argument realization, and the need to investigate the constraints on its interplay and integration with the structural facets of verb meaning (Rappaport Hovav & Levin 1998; Sorace 2000; 2004; 2011; Levin 2004; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005, among others).

The issue of the interaction among these different factors is strongly intertwined with the type of generalizations and models of the lexicon-semantics interface – whether projectionist (Rappaport Hovav & Levin 1998; Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005; Van Valin 2005; in press), constructional (Goldberg 1995; 2006; Jackendoff 1997; Michaelis & Ruppenhofer 2001), neo-constructional (Borer 2004; Erteschik-Shir & Rappoport 2004) or co-compositional (Pustejovsky 1995; 2011), which appear to account more insightfully for the wealth of typological variation encountered, as well as for recurrent patterns of regularities, i.e., invariance, emerging from cross-linguistic, psycholinguistic and acquisitions studies (Sorace 2000; 2004; 2011; forthcoming; Randall et al. 2004).

The selection of papers we are presenting – partly from the Workshop on Variation and Change in Argument Realization, organized by Jóhanna Barðdal and Michela Cennamo in Naples and Capri, 28–30 May 2010, and partly especially invited – aims to explore these issues from a diachronic perspective, bringing together different lines of research on argument structure. It focuses on case-marking, grammatical relations and their reconstructability, voice and (in)transitive alternations, as well as the significance or implications of changes in

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