

1. Introduction

MIA BATINIĆ ANGSTER, MARCO ANGSTER

Verbs are often considered a major word class and a central part of the sentence, while the distinction between verbs and nouns is considered to be «one of the few apparently universal parts-of-speech distinctions» (Schachter & Shopen 2007: 5). However, the perspectives on how to distinguish verbs and nouns, i.e. on how to define each of them, are numerous and diverge from one another depending on the formal and functional criteria taken into account. Privileging functional criteria, Hopper & Thompson (1984) advocate for a discourse basis in the distinction between verbs and nouns. In a functional-typological perspective, Croft (2001) identifies “UNMARKED VERBS” in his conceptual space model of parts of speech as the portion of the conceptual space at the crossing of the propositional act of predication and of the semantic class of actions. On the other hand, other approaches to the definition of verbs highlight their formal features, such as the fact of being the head of a predicate (Dixon 2010: 38) or of a verb phrase seen as «the core of the sentence» and a syntactic projection (D’Alessandro *et al.* 2017: xvii).

Verbs as heads of predicates typically display a series of categories such as tense, aspect, mood, modality and evidentiality (Dixon 2010: 52–53). These categories can be marked on the verb as inflectional exponents – along with the agreement features of person, gender, and number – or via complex grammatical constructions – e.g. periphrastic tenses, modal verb constructions, evidential markers. Verbal categories such as voice and actionality are on the boundary between lexicon and grammar and can have crucial consequences on syntactic structure and semantic interpretation. At the crossroads between syntax, semantics, and the lexicon a central role is played by argument structure, a property of verbs that is reflected in their syntactic behaviour. A single verb can display multiple argument structures which in turn can, but need not be linked to different senses and display different values of voice and actionality.

This short and incomplete survey of the possible perspectives on verbs, of their features and of the different domains relevant for their analysis showcases their multifaceted nature. In the same way as when we look into a kaleidoscope the complex patterns that we see change as soon as we rotate one extremity, the perspective on verbs and the interpretation of their behaviour changes if we adopt different approaches or methodologies. The contributions included in this book constitute a sample of approaches to verbs, their arguments, and the constructions in which they participate.

Overview of the volume

The study of verbs involves on the one hand accounting for how they interact with the syntactic level, especially as far as argument structure and valency changes are concerned. On the other hand, verbs make a crucial contribution to the meaning of sentences, constituting the core of predication.

The study of verbs at the syntax-semantics interface has thus been a prominent line of research which has been dominated by syntactically-oriented studies at least from the '90s, starting from Levin's (1993) seminal work on English verb alternations. Ježek in Chapter 2 surveys syntactically-oriented approaches to the study of verbs and highlights their limits. After this critical assessment she advocates a semantic-oriented approach that is more promising in clarifying the distinction between arguments and adjuncts by providing a semantically-grounded account for the optionality of the realization of arguments in syntax.

Marini's contribution (Chapter 3) continues on the lines of Ježek's semantically-grounded perspective on verbs to focus on the relationship between aspect and *Aktionsart* in the analysis of Croatian aspectual verb pairs. Starting from the asymmetrical verb pairs extracted from the CroaTPAS resource (Marini & Ježek 2019; Marini 2022a), she models the perfective/imperfective meaning (a)symmetries using the formalism of event structures (Pustejovsky 1991) showing that *Aktionsart* is relevant for explaining some of the observed meaning asymmetries.

In Chapter 4, Batinić Angster takes into consideration verbs embedding infinitives in Croatian. After presenting their classification into semantic classes, she groups the $V_{\text{finite}} + V_{\text{non-finite}}$ configurations in Croatian into mono- and biclausal structures grounding her analysis on Grano's (2015) and Cinque's (2004, 2006) account of restructuring. Applying a series of tests

to Croatian, she finds that modal, aspectual and implicative verbs behave monoclausally with their embedded infinitives, whereas other subject-oriented/subject-control verbs such as factives and desideratives participate in biclausal configurations.

In the following two chapters the issue of the interplay between syntax and semantics is considered in the domain of voice. Chapter 5 is focused on middle *se*-constructions in Croatian. Branimir Belaj offers a typology of the uses of *se*, the light form of the reflexive pronoun *sebe*, and advocates for the replacement of the term *reflexive verb* with *middle verb*. His survey of middle *se*-constructions covers single-participant as well as reciprocal multi-participant middle verbs which are discussed in the light of Cognitive Grammar. Middle verbs, which show a low degree of participant distinguishability and of event elaboration (Kemmer 1993), are recognized as occupying a position on the transitivity hierarchy between transitive reflexive constructions and prototypical one-participant intransitive constructions. Additionally, middle verbs also appear to be close to passives and impersonal constructions in that they show aspects of process topicalization.

The domain of reflexive marking and its link to the transitive and the intransitive pole is considered from a diachronic point of view in Lidija Milković's contribution on Croatian *reflexiva tantum* verbs (Chapter 6). In her contribution the author focuses on psychological verbs and investigates their diachronic development drawing on their attestations in historical and etymological dictionaries of Croatian, but also of other Slavic languages. Considering a set of parameters relevant for valency changes, she observes that these parameters interact hierarchically. Beside this, *reflexiva tantum* psychological verbs seem to have emerged in Croatian only recently, while Croatian verbs in general appear to have been more transitive in the earlier history of the language than now.

In the remaining five chapters of the book the focus is directed to arguments, their encoding, alternations, and the argument-adjunct distinction. In Chapter 7 Giuliani considers the ditransitive Latin verb *mittō* 'send'. In her corpus-based analysis of the occurrences of this verb in Latin texts ranging from the 3rd century BCE to the 5th century CE she focuses her attention to the encoding of the third argument of this verb, i.e. a recipient-like argument, that can occur most prominently as a PP (*ad* + ACC: *ad me* 'to me') or as a bare dative (*mihi* 'to me'). The data are analysed taking into account three parameters: 1) the animacy of the theme

argument, 2) the semantic role, and 3) the affectedness of the recipient-like argument. The first results suggest that *ad* + ACC co-occurs with animate theme-arguments, marks (animate) directions and less affected recipients. The dative has a tendency to occur with inanimate theme arguments, true recipients which make use of the themes (usually gifts).

Mikelenić & Bezljaj in their paper (Chapter 8) take a closer look at the encoding of the manipulee in Spanish. They analyse the alternation between dative and accusative clitics, also known under the name of *leísmo*, in different Spanish-speaking areas. To do so, the authors compare corpus-extracted data on nine manipulation verbs that take a prepositional clitic object taking into consideration the number and the gender of the clitics and the type of complement clause. The use of clitics is found to be more conservative in Peninsular Spanish, favouring dative clitics, than in Latin American Spanish. Tendencies and area- and verb-specific variation observed in the competition between different strategies seem to favour García-Miguel's (2015) proposal of the absence of clear boundaries between direct and indirect object.

Birtić & Brač (Chapter 9) address the question of whether the locative phrases expressed as third complements in three-place verbs or as second complements in two-place verbs can be proven to be arguments or adjuncts. To this end, they apply a selection of tests for argumenthood issued from different frameworks (dependency and generative grammar) to a series of such verbs in Croatian. A thorough application of the selected tests leads the authors to conclude the following: only the third complements of *baciti* 'throw, cast' and *složiti* 'compose, put together, arrange, set' are confirmed as optional arguments; the results of the test for other verbs are inconsistent: different tests point to the optionality or the obligatoriness of their arguments; the replacement test supports the adjunct status of locative phrases; the *wh*-island test and the iterativity test when applied to locative phrases do not prove as useful diagnostic tools in determining their status.

Chapter 10 by Suozzi, Cardinaletti & Lebani investigates instruments in Italian. Instruments are characterized by a mismatch between the semantic and the syntactic level: they are often required by the verb, so they constitute a semantic argument, but are recognized as syntactically optional. The authors discuss three semantic and five syntactic criteria for argumenthood applied to instruments in Italian showing that they share more properties with arguments than adjuncts. Furthermore, in the vein

of Pustejovsky's (1995) proposal of a three-fold subdivision of arguments in Shadow, Default and Open arguments, they distinguish different types of instruments which can be omitted depending on features such as their semantic recoverability or their incorporation in the meaning of the verb. They claim that the syntactic omission of instruments is to be seen as a case of argument omission. The pattern of production/omission of instruments is confirmed in an analysis of spontaneous speech issued from three Italian spoken corpora.

Buttinelli (Chapter 11) advocates for a cognitive continuum underlying the argument-adjunct distinction. With the aim of proposing a reinterpretation of their relation in terms of a continuum of the representation of the sentence – of objective and subjective construal – rather than as a dichotomy, the author focuses on the behaviour of one Italian adverbial preposition of limitation – *riguardo (a)* NP 'regarding NP'. Considering its freedom of movement and optionality, this marginal adverbial behaves as adjunct, but it is found to cover three different linguistic metafunctions (Halliday 1970; Hengeveld 1989; Dik *et al.* 1990) characterized by different degrees of subjectivity: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. It is the closest to the argument domain when exhibiting the ideational metafunction as the most objective one. In that case it is in the scope of negation, affected by the question and is part of the focus.

The contributions to this volume cover a range of perspectives on the syntactic and semantic behaviour of verbs, pursuing different theoretical approaches and methods. They make up a composite view on the verb that can stimulate the readers to further deepen their knowledge in one of the directions delineated by the contributors. By collecting these papers, we hope to offer an encouragement to researchers to embark on the study of the verbal kaleidoscope.

Appendix

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