

Alessandra R. Caviglia

## FLUID MARKING SYSTEM IN INDO-ARYAN LANGUAGES

Following traditional Indo-Aryan scholarship (Grierson 1904, Beames 1872, Masica 1991) the Indo-Aryan languages are characterized by three different morphological alignments: the languages spoken in the western part of India are described as split-ergative, while languages of the eastern part are considered purely accusative. Hindi, in the middle, is supposed to display a tripartite system and it is regarded as a typological gold dust (rarity) among the languages of the world (Comrie 1983).

I suggest that the distinction between the Ergative-type and the Accusative-type languages is not absolute and that the typological difference between these two major alignment types is less strict than usually thought.

The comparison between synchronic data of some Indian languages (Hindi, Panjabi, Gujarati, Marwari, Bengali and Nepali) shows more complex but more functional case-marking patterns than traditionally described. They share a fluid marking system based on the interaction of several factors: both verb features and lexical semantics play a role in determining which arguments bear overt case marking.

Examining the split-ergative languages it's evident that there is a difference between the perfective domain and the imperfective domain with respect to case marking on transitive subjects. The association of ergativity with perfect morphology is well-established and the western subgroup of languages shows the classical split along the lines of tense/aspect: the ergative case marker on the Agent is required only by perfect verbs.

Furthermore in Gujarati and Panjabi the usual characterization of split conditioned solely by tense/aspect is not sufficient, because they also show a split conditioned by the semantic nature of the Agent: the first and second person pronouns are not ergative marked, whereas third persons are (Drocco 2008). This split can be accounted for by the 'Nominal Hierarchy' originally proposed by Silverstein (1979) and later modified by Dixon (1994). According to Dixon, first and second pronouns are more likely to function as Agents rather than Patients, therefore they are unmarked since it is most economical and natural to mark a participant only when it is in an 'unaccustomed role'. This suggests that these languages show a 'differential Agent marking' semantically motivated.

The uniqueness of Hindi lays on the fact that every Agent, even the pronouns, get overtly marked in the perfective domain. In my opinion Hindi should be viewed in a diachronical perspective, in which the ergative mark has lost its functional and semantic motivation causing the saturation of the whole Agent category.

With regards to accusative languages, I examined Bengali and Nepali. Both of them do not show a tense/aspect split but in Bengali there is an opposition between canonically and non-canonically marked Agents constructions, and control is usually the main semantic factor distinguishing them. Nepali in terms of case marking can be classified as morphologically ergative with inanimate Agents, whereas neither ergative nor accusative is appropriately applicable in other circumstances: its marking system can be described only in terms of interaction of semantic factors.

Moreover a split intransitivity has been observed in all of these languages.

In conclusion I claim that the morphological alignments used to describe the Indo-Aryan languages shouldn't be considered rigid labels: the marking criteria are sensitive to a complex interplay of a number of syntactic properties, predicate types and semantic variables.

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## Macro-roles and the semantic role of Manner

Jesús de la Villa

In spite of their semantic differences, first and second arguments of sentences such as (1), (2), and (3) display also, respectively, clear common syntactic features:

- (1) The boy broke the toy
- (2) The storm pulled down the tower
- (3) My cousin received the bad news

The most obvious similarity comes from the fact that all the objects of these sentences become subjects in the passive version of the sentences, whereas the subject of the active receive an agentive expression in passive. Nevertheless, 'the boy', 'the storm', and 'my cousin' could be semantically analysed, respectively, as an Agent, a Force, and a Recipient.

The notion of macro-role has been proposed as a grammatical mean to capture the kind of syntactic generalizations that can be formulated for semantically different arguments. This notion has been proposed, among others and with different labels, by Jackendoff 1990, and Dowty 1991, and incorporated as a central notion in the analysis of the structure of sentences by Role and Reference Grammar (Van Valin-LaPolla 1997).

In my paper, I will discuss two aspects of macro-roles: first, the discrete or fuzzy limits among the different semantic notions that can be recognized within a macro-role. Second, the possibility of extending the concept of macro-role to non argumental positions of the sentence. In this second issue, I will concentrate in the wide semantic notions of Manner and Circumstance.

I will discuss data from English, Spanish, Latin and Ancient Greek.

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## Experiences and Experiencers in Indo-European: evidence from a 'parasitic' role at the syntax-semantics interface

Chiara Fedriani - Università di Pavia

In the relevant literature on semantic roles, it has long been noted that semantic overlapping and functional congruence between clusters of semantic roles are cross-linguistically common: arguably, a semantic role can be expressed via several morphosyntactic means and therefore be encoded like other roles. The idea of gradual boundaries already appears in Dowty 1991: he places thematic roles along natural boundaries, to describe and account for nonarbitrary divisions along them, because “role types are simply not discrete categories at all, but rather are cluster of concepts” (Dowty 1991: 571). Speakers may pick up and perceive semantic details shared by two different roles and hence encode them with the same strategy. In this respect, the Experiencer role is particularly intriguing: in view of its semantic broad characterization (Experiencers are sentient beings experiencing mental and bodily states and processes), it covers multiple and multifaceted conceptualizations; hence, it tends to be associated to other roles' constructional patterns, thus revealing itself as being highly parasitic from a morphosyntactic perspective (Haig 2009). More crucially to our concern, Indo-European languages tend to map the Experiencer role onto one or more construction types which are also used to encode other semantic roles (cf. Croft 1993, Bossong 1998, Haspelmath 2001, Manzelli, Ramat and Roma 2002 among others). In this talk, I will focus on two alternative conceptualizations which are most frequently exploited in some ancient Indo-European languages in order to encode the Experiencer role, which create a window of opportunity for different construals even for one and the same experience. I will be developing the view that these two privileged patternings are those of “Experiencer-as-Recipient/Goal” (examples for Goals: Lat. *mihi venit in mentem*; Skr. *mā kā\_ma ā\_gan*, 'over me love has come'; and for Recipients: Gr. ἀρέσκει μοι, lit. '(it) likes to me', Lat. *mihi nocet* '(it) hurts me'), and “Experiencer-as-Patient”, in which the Experiencer is syntactically coded as an object. More precisely, I will show that this pattern is double-faceted: it is employed both with monovalent verbs (Lat. *me pudet*, Got. *mih iucchit*), where the Accusative is likely to be semantically-motivated, i.e. expresses affectedness, and with bivalent verbs, where the Experiencer represents the 'real' Patient of a causative transitive verb whose subject is embodied by the Stimulus. I will show that this latter pattern is mostly exploited to convey a wide range of metaphorical schemas (cf. Lat. *Odium eum cepit* “Hate took/seized him”, where the accusative object *eum* encodes the Experiencer). To conclude, the basic intuition that I will pursue is that the Experiencer could accommodate naturally these multiple possibilities, and I will attempt to show how and why.

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## Mapping between semantic roles and grammatical relations: the case of DOM in Northern Italian and beyond

Giorgio Iemmolo (Università di Pavia)

[giorgio.iemmolo@unipv.it](mailto:giorgio.iemmolo@unipv.it)

Differential Object Marking (henceforth, DOM), i.e. the variation in the realisation of direct objects correlated with certain properties of the direct object referent, such as animacy, definiteness, etc, has been the object of growing interest to linguists over the past decades (cf. Bossong 1985, 1991, 1998, Comrie 1979, 1981, *inter alia*).

Some approaches argue that DOM is fundamentally motivated by the need for distinguishing subjects from direct objects in transitive clauses (cf. Bossong 1985, Comrie 1981 and Aissen 2003, de Swart 2007 for an *Optimality-theoretical* approach).

On the other hand, other approaches consider DOM as a means to highlight either the semantic role that the object holds in the situation described by a transitive event, or properties of inherently salient NPs, namely individuation and affectedness (Siewierska & Bakker 2008: 292). Among the ten parameters of transitivity listed by Hopper & Thompson (1980), a crucial role is played by both the individuation and the affectedness of the object participant. These two features are regarded as typical of objects in prototypical transitive clauses. In this view, only “genuine” objects are case-marked, whereas indefinite and inanimate objects are not overtly marked or expressed in formally intransitive constructions or incorporated. The marking of animate and definite objects would thus serve to distinguish between prototypical and less prototypical members of the class of transitive events. The crucial point of this analysis has been developed and rearranged by Næss (2004, 2007), who argues that DOM is a marker of high affectedness. As is well known, a high degree of individuation, typical of marked objects, is a prerequisite for high affectedness.

In this paper, I will try to demonstrate that this view fails to account for cases in which the marked direct object does not have the semantic role of patient and the clause exhibits a low degree of transitivity. For instance, DOM in Northern Italian, as well as some Northern Italian dialects (most notably Lombard, Venetian and Emiliano-Romagnolo varieties), is found only with personal pronouns in dislocated contexts governed by a variety of transitive predicates, as in (1), (2) and (3):

(1) A            *me, non (mi) convince questo*  
ACC            me    NEG    CLIT.1SG    convince:PRS.1SG    this  
“This does not convince me” (overheard)

(2) A            *me non mi fregano!*  
ACC me    NEG    CLIT.1SG            cheat:PRS.1SG  
“They do not screw me over!”

(3) A            *me a m scocia tot cal lavor*  
*che*  
ACC me    CLIT.SUBJ    CLIT.1SG    call:PRS.3SG    always this    work there  
“As for this work, it bothers me” (Modena, Emilia Romagna)

In most cases, marked direct objects have the semantic roles of experiencer or stimulus, thus showing a low degree of affectedness and no change of state. Moreover, as far as Northern Italian dialects are concerned, speakers feel more acceptable the use of the object marker when the direct object is governed by a psychological predicate. Similarly, DOM seems to be governed mainly by information structure in a number of languages scattered around the world: for example, only dislocated direct objects are marked in Kanuri (Nilo-Saharan; Hutchinson 1981: 211), and topicality is the main trigger for object marking in a number of Semitic (Khan 1984) and Amazonian languages (Zúñiga 2007).

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## **Semantic role assignment: between verb and context.**

Elisabetta Jezek

University of Pavia

In my talk I will explore the interplay between lexical and compositional factors in the assignment of Agency to complex linguistic expressions. Next to verbs that select a lexical agent I will discuss examples of predicate-argument constructions where Agency is assigned at compositional level, as a result of compositional variables such as purpose clauses and adverbials (cf. van Valin and Wilkins 1996). I will claim that many verbs that are traditionally interpreted as lexically agentive, are lexically underspecified for agency. In order to model how agency is construed in complex linguistic expression, I will use the notions of co-composition and coercion as formulated in Pustejovsky 2007. Finally, I will argue that in many cases semantic type is a better notion than semantic role in order to capture the selectional properties of verbs (cf. Ravin 1990).

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## Semantic roles, animacy and markedness

Seppo Kittilä

University of Helsinki

kittila@mappi.helsinki.fi

As has been noted by many authors (e.g. Bosson 1985, Aristar 1997 Aissen 2003, Kittilä 2008), animacy affects the coding of arguments in many languages. For example, animate direct objects usually bear more explicit coding than inanimate objects, and animate causers of events are coded differently from inanimate causers (forces). These formal differences can (among other things) be claimed to follow from markedness. For example, inanimate entities are marked causers of events, since they are not capable of initiating events volitionally, which also makes them rather expected patients.

In my talk, I will discuss the markedness of semantic roles from the viewpoint of animacy. Differently from many previous studies (such as those noted above and Naess 2003), I will approach the problem from a broader perspective considering more roles than has been the case in previous studies. The scrutinized roles comprise agent, patient, recipient/beneficiary, instrument, location and causee. These roles are clearly distinguishable based on their expected degree of animacy. The roles along with their expected animacy value are given below:

	Expected	Non-expected
Agent	[+ANIM]	[-ANIM]
Patient	[-ANIM]	[+ANIM]
Recipient/Beneficiary	[+ANIM]	[-ANIM]
Instrument	[-ANIM]	[+ANIM]
Location	[-ANIM]	[+ANIM]
Causee	[+ANIM]	[-ANIM]

In my talk, I will show that animacy has formal consequences for the coding of the roles listed above. Typically, expected bearers of the roles, such as inanimate locations, bear more explicit coding than the non-expected bearers of the same semantic role. It is also possible that the meaning of a marker changes or that the result is an ungrammatical construction (e.g. a locative affix cannot be attached to an animate argument). In addition to illustrating the formal markedness of the discussed roles, I will also discuss the underlying rationale in light of the semantics of the discussed roles.

## Singling out semantic roles: Instrument and related categories

Silvia Luraghi – Università di Pavia

[silvia.luraghi@unipv.it](mailto:silvia.luraghi@unipv.it)

A more or less homogeneous number of semantic roles is usually assumed, often with no further discussion as to the way in which they are set up, and how it is decided that those specific roles, and not others, should be assumed (Radden 1989, Croft 1991: 178-179). Indeed, semantic roles are necessarily based on broad generalizations; however, limited attention to the choice of relevant roles results in frequent discrepancies between sets of roles assumed by different authors, especially regarding the number of roles assumed. A reason for this lies in partial overlap of some roles, which may lead to the reduction of their number; on the contrary, non-uniformity of instantiations of a role may suggest finer distinctions. Usually, the choice of semantic roles reflects the frequency by which they are grammaticalized across languages (Haspelmath 1997: 10-11). This common practice raises the further question whether a certain set of semantic roles must be considered relevant for any language. In my paper I would like to discuss the semantic role instrument, and its relation with neighboring roles, such as means, cause, and intermediary. I will start by considering some prototypical features of instruments, that is, inanimacy and manipulation. In addition, situations in which instruments occur are prototypically controlled by and intentionally acting agent. A variety of participants may be conceived of as only partly sharing such features: for examples, some inanimate entities can hardly be manipulated or controlled by an agent (natural forces, emotions). On the other hand, human beings are animate, but they can be controlled by other human beings. Degrees of manipulation also vary between instrument and means, partly in connection with different types of referent, and overlap of semantic roles may make usual tests (de la Villa 1994) difficult to use. I will use data from Ancient Greek and Latin (de la Villa 2001, Luraghi 2003 and forthcoming), and address the following questions:

- a) how can the above mentioned semantic roles be coded?
- b) how may coding overlap may reflect semantic overlap?
- c) are all and the same semantic roles relevant for both languages?

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## **The indirect object: a family of roles or a grammatical relation?**

Michele Prandi (Genova)

According to Goldberg (1995), a construction has a meaning, or a family of interconnected meanings, which implies that a construction is immediately defined as a hierarchy of conceptual relations – of roles. My idea is that a construction is a mixed structure, part a hierarchy of void grammatical relations, and part a hierarchy of roles. Examples of grammatical relations are subject, direct object and prepositional object. Examples of conceptual relations are instrument, cause and purpose, but also such arguments as location or goal.

Owing to both its synchronic behaviour and diachronic development, the indirect object looks as a borderline case, if not decidedly the encoding form of a definite role, that is, the recipient. The idea defended in my talk is that the indirect object is a grammatical relation. The indirect object is ready to express roles that cannot be considered extensions of the recipient, which proves that its synchronic value does not reduce itself the prototypical function that has motivated its diachronic development. Moreover, when it is transferred onto two-places verbs, the construction with indirect object is transferred as a void framework.

## **Existential (thetic) clauses as sources of impersonal and passive constructions: A neglected diachronic path**

Andrea Sansò – Università dell’Insubria

This paper deals with a neglected diachronic path leading to the emergence of impersonal, and eventually passive constructions. The path at issue is the one connecting event-central thetic clauses with an existential/presentational function of the form “there is X” (X = action noun) to event-central impersonal constructions, which may then evolve into passive constructions. This path is quite widespread across different language families in the Americas, and is also attested in some South-East Asian languages. Based on the available diachronic data, and on the comparison among genetically related languages, the stages of this path will be reconstructed on the basis of the different coding properties of patients and agents in the constructions derived from such a source:

- (i) as the diachronic path proceeds from impersonal to passive, the overt expression of the agent (by means of oblique phrases) becomes less frequent and eventually is banned; in other words, if the construction does not become a passive (i.e. if the patient does not acquire the behavioural and coding properties of subjects) there is much more likelihood of overt agent expression;
- (ii) a limited set of patients is possible in the earliest stages of this process; these include mainly indefinite and non-referential nouns. As the construction evolves from a nominal construction revolving around an action noun towards a fully-fledged impersonal and passive construction, the patient, which may originally be incorporated, coded as a possessor or as a direct object, may acquire first the behavioural and secondly the coding properties of subjects in a given language.

## **Modeling beneficiaries, instruments, and locations: Towards a theory of peripheral semantic roles**

Fernando Zúñiga (University of Zurich)

Whereas the distinction between peripheral and core *syntactic* roles has received considerable attention in both synchronic theory and crosslinguistic studies, the line dividing peripheral from core *semantic* roles has been less thoroughly, and especially less systematically, addressed in the literature. One of the few notable exceptions is work by Lehmann (2006a, 2006b), which the present paper follows in postulating that peripheral semantic roles be can meaningfully modeled as core semantic roles of typically underspecified secondary predicates subordinated to the primary predicates in several possible ways. Also drawing on work on event composition by Talmy (2000), I would like to argue that a number of crosslinguistically well-attested morphosyntactic properties of beneficiaries and instruments (as well as, to some extent, of locations) are explained by such a model in a natural and adequate way. I will present data from a wide variety of languages, concentrating on indigenous languages of the Americas, and will discuss some of the paramount theoretical implications of such an analytic move.

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