GENERAL OVERVIEW ON LINGUISTIC VALENCY

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ABSTARCT

The article focuses on different theories of valency, types of valence, its origin and characteristic features. The author tries to differentiate views of linguists on the theory of valency as well as presents her own attitude towards them. Syntactic, semantic, lexical, morphological valencies are studied while paying main attention to valency patterns, valency reducing, increasing and changing with some examples.

Keywords: subcategorization, syntactic placeholder, valency reduction or expansion, changing valency, valency-increasing.

INTRODUCTION

In linguistics, valence is the number and type of arguments controlled by a predicate expressed by substantive verbs. Valency, though not the same, is related to subcategories that only consider object arguments, and transitivity valency considers all arguments, including the subject. The linguistic meaning of valence comes from the definition of valence in chemistry. The valence metaphor first appeared in linguistics in Charles Sanders Peirce's 1897 essay The Logic of Kin [6], and then appeared in the works of several linguists in the late 1940s and 1950s [7]. Lucien Tessner is best credited for introducing the concept of valence in linguistics [8]. A major reference on verb valence in English is Allerton (1982), who made an important distinction between semantic and syntactic valence. In linguistics, verb valence or valency refers to the number of arguments governed by a verbal predicate. Although it is not the same, it is only related to the transitive verb, which counts the object arguments of the verbal predicate. Verb valence includes all arguments, including the subject of the verb. The term valency has a corresponding technical meaning in lexical semantics, which defines the role of argument structure – it refers to the ability of other lexical units to combine with a given word. For example, valence is one of the construction-defining elements in some construction grammars. This meaning of the term is sometimes called lexical valence.

In our country some linguists also researched valency one of whom is R.M.Asadov established different approach to syntactic valency claiming that any syntactic unit whether it be verb, noun, adjective or other notional word, holds a valence which is defined by its syntactic relations with other components of the sentence [1][2].

Valency Patterns for Verbs

The main verb in a clause determines the other elements that are required in that clause. The pattern of the clause elements is called the valency pattern for the verb. The patterns are differentiated by the required clause elements that follow the verb within the clause (e.g. direct object, indirect object, subject predicative). All valency patterns include a subject, and optional adverbials can always be added.
There are five major valency patterns:

A. Intransitive Pattern: subject + verb (S + V). Intransitive verbs occur with no obligatory element following the verb. For example: "He smiled". In this sentence, the verb "smiled" is intransitive because it does not require a direct object. "She ran quickly". In this sentence, the verb "ran" is intransitive because it does not require a direct object, but the adverb "quickly" adds more information about how the subject is performing the action.

B. Monotransitive Pattern: subject + verb + direct object (S + V + DO). Simple sentences with just one verb and one direct object are monotransitive. For example, in the sentence "I prefer cats" "prefer" is the transitive verb, and "cats" is the direct object.

C. Ditransitive Pattern: subject + verb + indirect object + direct object (S + V + IO + DO). Ditransitive verbs occur with two object phrases – an indirect object and a direct object. For example, a sentence might read: "Jeannine gave Marco a book". In this sentence, the book is the direct object because it's the item being given.

D. Complex Transitive Patterns: subject + verb + direct object + object predicative (S + V + DO + OP) or subject + verb + direct object + obligatory adverbial (S + V + DO + A). Complex transitive verbs occur with a direct object (a noun phrase) which is followed by either (1) an object predicative (a noun phrase or adjective), or (2) an obligatory adverbial. In a complex-transitive construction, the object complement identifies quality or attribute pertaining to the direct object. Complex-transitive verbs in English include believe, consider, declare, elect, find, judge, keep, know, label, make, name, presume, pronounce, prove, rate, regard, and think. Note that verbs often belong to more than one category. For example, made can function as a complex transitive (as in "Her thoughtless remarks made him unhappy") and also as an ordinary transitive verb ("She made a promise") [5].

E. Copular. Copulas, linking verbs or copulative verbs, are a special type of verb that joins a subject complement to the subject of the sentence. The most common copular verbs are: be, seem, appear, feel, sound, get, become, taste, look. For example, in the sentence: "The lady seemed nice".

Patterns: subject + verb + subject predicative (S + V + SP) or subject + verb + obligatory adverbial (S + V + A). Copular verbs are followed by (1) a subject predicative (a noun, adjective, adverb, or prepositional phrase) or (2) by an obligatory adverbial … [4].

Valency changing. Most languages provide a means to change the valency of verbs [6]. There are two ways to change the valency of a verb: reducing and increasing [3].

Note that the labels S, A, and P will be used. These are commonly used names (taken from morphosyntactic alignment theory) given to arguments of a verb. S refers to the subject of an intransitive verb, A refers to the agent of a transitive verb, and P refers to the patient of a transitive verb. (The patient is sometimes also called undergoer or theme.)

These are core arguments of a verb:
- Lydia (S) is sleeping.
- Don (A) is cooking dinner (P).

Non-core (or peripheral) arguments are called obliques and are typically optional:
- Lydia is sleeping on the couch.
- Don is cooking dinner for his mom.

Valency-reducing

Reducing valency involves moving an argument from the core to oblique status. This kind of derivation applies most to transitive clauses. Since there are two arguments in a transitive clause, A and P, there are two possibilities for reducing the valency: passive voice and antipassive voice are prototypical valency reducing devices [3].

1. A is removed from the core and becomes an optional oblique. The clause becomes intransitive since there is only one core argument, the original P, which has become S. This is exactly what the passive voice does . The semantics of this construction emphasize the original P, downgrade the original A and are used to avoid mentioning A or to draw attention to P or the result of the activity [3].

(a) Don (A) is cooking dinner (P).

(b) Dinner (S) is being cooked (by Don).

2. P is removed from the core and becomes an optional oblique. Similarly, the clause becomes intransitive but the original A becomes S . The semantics of this construction emphasize the original A, downgrade the original P and are used when the action includes a patient that is given little or no attention [3]. These are difficult to convey in English.

(a) Don (A) is crushing a soda can (P).

(b) Don (S) is crushing [with the implication that a soda can is being crushed].

Note that this is not the same as an ambitransitive verb, which can be either intransitive or transitive.

There are some problems, however, with the terms passive and antipassive because they have been used to describe a wide range of behaviors across the world's languages. For example, when compared to a canonical European passive, the passive construction in other languages is justified in its name. However, when comparing passives across the world's languages, they do not share a single common feature. [8]

Valency-increasing

This involves moving an argument from the periphery into the core. Applicatives and causatives are prototypical valency increasing devices [3].

Valence plays an important role in a number of the syntactic frameworks that have been developed in the last few decades. In generalized phrase structure grammar , many of the phrase structure rules generate the class of verbs with a particular valence.

One of the most widely known versions of construction grammar also treats the subject like other complements, but this may be because the emphasis is more on semantic roles and compatibility with work in cognitive science than on syntax.

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