

Events and their Participants in Verb Semantics

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- What elements of the eventuality becomes part of the verb semantics?
- Focus on participants and their syntactic realization.

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- Argumenthood.
- Inherent Meaning.

Time and Time Structure

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- The event receives a specific **aspectual encoding** when it becomes the denotation of a verb.

- The Aristotle-Ryle-Kenny-Vendler-Dowty taxonomy, Smith 1991.

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- Causal, temporal relations between event parts (subevents).

Participants and Arguments

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- There is no verb without at least one argument (controversial case of natural events described by verbs called impersonal: *to snow, to rain, to thunder*).

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- Levin Rappaport 2005, Argument Realization.

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- “Il fratello di Giulia abita a Milano.”

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- It denotes a **change of position** (Levin 2003, Jezek 2011).
- *Arrive* presupposes a movement but describes its outcome (the person who arrived is in a different place than where he was before the event of arriving took place).
- It is therefore legitimate to ask whether *to arrive* is a verb of **change of place** rather than a verb of movement, and which is the most suitable criterion to distinguish between the two classes.

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- “The old man rested, drank, and was haunted by a strange thought.”

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Jezek 2018, revised from Pustejovsky 1995

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- They do not express inherent properties of the event itself, such as presence or absence of change and semantic type (motion, perception, communication), which are instead expressed by what - following Levin - we shall call the verbal *root*.
- They are **informative** with respect to these properties, i.e. they add information besides the aspectual and semantic information provided by the verbal *root*.

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Incorporated Objects and Shadow Arguments

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- “An example of a verb with an incorporated Object is DINE, which is conceptually the same as EAT DINNER but which does not tolerate a direct object.

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- “She phoned the office on the mobile phone” .

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- brush your teeth (clean Obj with S-arg)
- bike to the lake shore (move by S-arg)
- glue two pieces of wood together (put together using S-arg)

- dress the kids before breakfast (put **S-arg** on the kids)

Shadows with Theme role

- dress the kids before breakfast (put **S-arg** on the kids)
- butter the toast (put **S-arg** on toast, cover toast with **S-arg**)

- “The girl danced every dance”.

Shadows and Cognate Objects

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- “bollire le patate in acqua salata”

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Not only denominal verbs, cf. Jezek 2016,2018

- Verbs with shadow body parts *kick* (leg), *walk* (leg), *knock* (hand, finger), perception verbs *smell*, (nose); *see*, *watch* and *look* (eyes); *listen*, *hear* (ears), *sneeze* (nose), *nod* (head).

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- *I smelt gas with my nose.

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- (=created object → fotografia).

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- ‘After painting the landscape with broad brushstrokes, he left it in the sun to dry’

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- Cf. Definite and Indefinite Null Instantiation in Fillmore 1986.

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- Pragmatically defaulted true arguments are omissions of an instance salient in the situational context.
- Objectless verbs of this kind still denote a two-place relation, even though the second argument is not realized in surface syntax.
- With true arguments, the need of completion is not a contextual matter, but a context-independent property of the verb type.

- “John ate at 5pm”.

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- “John listened in the car”.

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- The unexpressed object is to be generically understood as the **class** of entities (*food*, *information*, *vehicle*) selected by the predicate.

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- If a specific **instance** of the class needs to be mentioned (a pizza, a letter, the BMW etc.), lexical defaulting cannot apply, unless the specific instance can be reconstructed pragmatically, in which case, however, the correct interpretation of the omission is pragmatically and not lexically defaulted argument.

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- $[[[V_{root} \text{ shadow-arg}] \text{ lex-def-arg}] \text{ true-arg}]V_{predicate}$

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Concluding Observations

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- There is **no one-to-one mapping** between participants and arguments.
- Arguments may be absent in the syntax but unless shadowed or defaulted, they must always be “saturated” at the level of **interpretation**.
- Arguments may undergo change **as the event unfolds**. Hidden arguments encode this information.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

The Lexicon

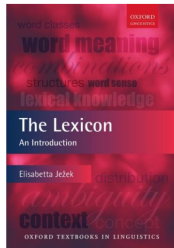
An Introduction

By **Elisabetta Ježek**, Associate Professor of Linguistics,
University of Pavia

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- “il dolore parte dal braccio/a livello del collo” (2 arg)
'avere origine da qsa'