

## **A verb classes model in a cross-linguistic perspective**

**Introduction.** The talk compares the behavior of (anti-)causatives, in particular of change of state verbs (CoS) (*open, close*) (Fillmore, 1970, Levin, 2013) and degree achievements (DAs) (*dim, dry*) (Kennedy, 2001, Kennedy and Levin, 2008), reflexives and middles (Abraham, 2005, Schäfer, 2008, inter alia) in German, English and Greek. Verbs expressing a change-of-state take agents and/or causers as external arguments; they have a use that lacks an external argument syntactically and semantically (Levin & Rappaport Hovav, 1998, Reinhart, 2002). In German, verbs undergoing the causative alternation, can appear: (a) as morphologically unmarked i.e., unmarked anticausatives (1a,b), and (b) as (reflexively) marked anticausatives, in case they appear with the reflexive pronoun 'sich' (Schäfer 2008, Alexiadou et al. 2015, Haspelmath 2019, inter alia) (2a,b). DAs can be either morphologically marked (with the reflexive pronoun 'sich') or unmarked (3), while middles (4a) and reflexives (4b) show up with the reflexive pronoun 'sich'. (Anti-)causative CoS verbs in Greek can appear: (i) with a morphological marking (5a) (s. Alexiadou et al., 2015, inter alia), (ii) without a morphological marking (5b), (iii) with an optional marking that correlates with a difference in interpretation (Alexiadou et al., 2015: 88) (see 5c), while middles (6a) and reflexives (6b) remain always morphologically marked (Schäfer, 2008, Alexiadou et al., 2015: 64).

**Aim:** The aim of this talk is to propose a model that introduces an analysis of comparative concepts of the verbs under investigation relating morpho-syntactic and semantic information to each other (author, 2019, 2021, 2022).

**Methodology:** The proposed model views valence alternation (Herbst, 1992, 2011, Herbst & Schüller, 2008) and argument structure as a primary means identifying verb class alternations (author, 2019, 2021, 2022, author, 2022). The analysis is built on different levels: (a) the argument structure (argument variables) level, (b) the valency patterns level, (c) the semantic (theta-) roles level, (d) the syntactic level assuming the distinction between structural and lexical cases, (e) the grammatical functions level (subject, object, direct object etc.), (f) the semantic decomposition level; it provides details about verb-formation that help us explain the different patterns found in these three languages (see author, 2019, 2021, 2022, author, in preparation).

**Results:** The model is expected to have both theoretical and typological implications. It contributes to the typological research and updates the theory of verb classes in all three languages — resulting in better models for language learning.

- (1) a. Die Sonne schmilzt die Kerze.  
the sun melts the candle  
'The candle melts'. (causative)
- b. Die Kerze schmilzt.  
the candle melts  
'The candle melts'. (unmarked anticausative)
- (2) a. Ana schließt die Tür.  
Ana closes the door  
'Anna closes the door'. (causative)
- b. Die Tür schließt sich.  
the door closes  
'the door closes'. (marked anticausative)
- (3) Das Wasser kühlte (sich) eine Stunde lang ab.  
the water cools (REFL) one hour long down  
'The water cooled down for an hour.' (DA) (from Alexiadou et al. 2015: 94, ex. 58a,b)
- (4) a. Das Buch liest sich gut.  
the book.NOM reads.NAct REFL well  
'The book reads well'. (middle)
- b. Er wäscht sich.  
he washes REFL  
'He washes. (reflexive)
- (5) a. I supa kegete.  
the soup.NOM burns.NAct<sup>1</sup>  
'The soup burns'. (anticausative)
- b. I porta eklise.  
the door.NOM closed.Act  
'The door closed'. (anticausative)
- c. To ktirio gremise /gremistike.  
the building collapsed.Act/NAct  
'The building collapsed in one spot'. (anticausative)  
(s. Alexiadou et al. 2015: 88)
- (6) a. To vivlio diavazete efarista.  
the book.NOM reads.NAct pleasantly  
'The book reads pleasantly'. (middle)
- b. I Ana plenete.  
the Ana.NOM washes.NAct  
'Anna washes'. (reflexive)

## References

- Alexiadou, A., Anagnostopoulou E. & Schäfer, F. (2015). *External arguments in transitivity alternations. A layering approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2019. Comparing reflexive constructions in the world's languages. Max Plank Institute for the Science of Human History and Universität Leipzig: Leipzig.

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations: Act=active, NAct=non-active, NOM= nominative case.