

Valency theory in the description of English: D.J. Allerton / R. Emons

R. Emons

- Student audience, didactic approach, aims at fairly complete coverage
- The sentence as the *minimal unit of communication*.
- No “selection restrictions” for sentences as in TG.
(cf. *He goes the house vs. The tree drives his car)
- Hierarchical segmentation of sentences by commutation.
- No differentiation between obligatory and optional complements, only complements and adjuncts.

Elements of valency description

- Quantitative valency: *number* of obligatory or optional complements. English verbs considered either mono- di- or trivalent, zero-valent as a special case of monovalent.
- Qualitative valency: the *kind* of complements a predicate requires (→ case grammar!).
- Subcategories: different *requirements on element structure* to fill a predicate’s valencies.

Complement categories

Five complement categories, solely determined through commutation tests:

- E1** commutes with *he, she*, etc. (∼ subject)
- E2** commutes with *him, her*, etc. (∼ direct object)
- E3** prepositional phrases; if the preposition is semantically significant, the semantic variants are considered different lexemes with equal valency, → phrasal verbs.
- E4** commuting prepositional and non-prepositional elements
- E5** complements with certain restrictions in passive formation, often commute w/adjectives.

Subcategories

Subcategories NOM (“Nominal”), IK (“Infinitivkonstruktion”) and ES (“Ergänzungssatz”) for each of the above categories.

- NOM** pronouns, proper nouns, demonstrative pronouns, constructions with prepositional attributes or “genitive”-s etc., unless characteristics for other subcategories are present.
- IK** only IK1 marked by *-ing* or *to*
e.g. “Peter likes *driving a car*”; “He heard him *shout*”
- ES** subclauses, show sentence structure, can have own adjuncts
e.g. “*Who(ever) arrives* is my friend”; “Things are *as they should be*”

D.J. Allerton

- Linguistic audience, more in-depth treatment of a somewhat smaller fragment of English syntax
- Valency as a “deep structure” phenomenon
- joint omission / joint permutation tests only as an additional criterion

Foundations

- Division of constructions into subordinative/endocentric, coordinative/endocentric, exocentric; extension: semi-subordinative → **specifiers**; irreducible → **cornerstones**.
- Elements in grammatical constructions: pure markers, contrastive grammatical items, lexical items.
- Covariation: grammatical agreement, locutional and semantic restrictions.
- Semantic categorization implied in classes like “head” or “modifier”, but syntactic description should be kept as free from it as possible.

Verb valency

- Valency frames: semi-subordinative constructions of lexical core (verb) + lexical specifier (→ **verb elaborators**).
- Semantic roles of elaborators: determined by the verb, preserved in passive transformation
- *By*-phrases in passive constructions have special status as irreducible “counter-subjects” → **perjects**

Elaborator categories

- Subject vs. object adjuncts
- Object reserved for passivizable elaborators, others called **objoids** or **predicatives** (cf. *damage/resemble/remain*).
- Subcategories **Match objoid** (e.g. with “resemble”), **Measure objoid** (“weigh”), **Possession objoid** (some uses of “have”)
- Various tests for elaborator categories: elaborator fronting, insertion between V and NP, NP replacement w/AdjP, clefting of NP, passivization, NP exchange, synonymy of “how much” and “what”-questions.
- Categories may be filled by NP, AdjP, PP or ADV
- Possible quantitative valencies: aivalent to tetravalent (the latter dubious cases like “pay” or “transfer”)
- Categories loosely related to semantic roles of elaborators, though involves an “element of the arbitrary”