

## Workshop Proposal

### “Changes in Argument Structure”

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Traditionally, argument structure is an integral part of a lexical item's representation encoding the number of arguments the lexical item takes, how the arguments are syntactically realized (e.g. DP, PP, CP) and which semantic roles they instantiate (e.g. Agent, Experiencer, Theme). However, these properties or features are neither synchronically invariable nor diachronically immune to change, especially if a language is affected by large-scale typological shifts (Comrie 2006). A showcase example in this respect is English with its development from syntheticity to analyticity. As a consequence, a drastic increase of labile verbs can be witnessed, i.e. single double-functional verbs whose argument structure varies considerably in that they can be used both with an intransitive and a transitive meaning without any overt formal marking, which makes a classification of English verbs as either transitive or intransitive notoriously difficult (van Gelderen 2011). Also, English has enhanced syntactic means for functions formerly expressed morphologically (e.g. causativity: whereas *jan*-verbs ceased to be productive, periphrastic markers of causativity have taken their place (van Gelderen 2014, García García 2012; Haspelmath 1993), with the most recent addition being constituted by the *V NP into V-ing* construction).

This workshop aims at exploring argument structure from a diachronic (and comparative) perspective focusing on the extent and limitation of variation in the lexical representation and/or the (morpho)syntactic realization of a lexical item's arguments. Two types of processes are of prime interest: those that affect a lexical item's argument structure (transitivization and detransitivization) and those that affect the mapping of a lexical item's arguments onto syntax.

1. Augmentation processes, for example, involve strategies in which the verbal territory of a verb is more or less systematically extended, as is the case with cognate objects that are etymologically and semantically related to the verb they co-occur with, thus occupying the internal argument position of a verb otherwise not taking direct objects (cf. English *to smile a smile* or Greek *ekhárēsan kharàn megálēn sphódra* 'they were exceedingly glad with big joy' (cf. Hoeche 2009; Lavidas 2012)), or with 'reaction' objects (cf. English *to grunt one's gratitude, to wave an adieu* (cf. Felser & Wanner 2001; Levin 1993))

2. Argument reduction processes, for example, affect typically the highest argument of a lexical item, which will either be absent from the lexical item's argument structure, as in anticausatives (cf. German *Eis schmilzt schnell* 'ice melts fast') and middles (cf. English *bananas peel easily*), or morphologically 'saturated', as is the case in canonical passives (cf. French *il était tué* 'he was killed' or Norwegian *alt for mye kastes* 'too much is thrown away' (cf. Schäfer 2008, Julien 2007, Klingvall 2007, Steinbach 2002, Lødrup 2000)).

3. Argument mapping and remapping becomes evident in syntactic variation, cases in point being complementation patterns (e.g. nominal vs. sentential complements, double object constructions, complements of adjectives), (non)canonical subjects (e.g. quirky subjects, expletive and locative constructions), etc. These phenomena often result from the interplay of changing phonological and

morphological conditions, semantic change as well as pragmatic considerations (cf. Rudanko 1999, 2011, Hudson 1992, Coleman & De Clerck 2008, Fanego 2007, Hazout 2008, Barðdal 2006).

Against this backdrop, the major questions that this workshop seeks to address are

- ◆ which factors, diachronically, have impacted the argument structure of lexical items and induced what types of changes
- ◆ what strategies, if any, are employed to formally mark changes in a lexical item's argument structure and/or the mapping of a lexical item's arguments?
- ◆ which strategies, if any, compensate for the absence of overt morphosyntactic and morphological cues/markings?
- ◆ to what extent are cross-linguistically generalizations possible?
- ◆ what are more general implications for linguistic variation and change?

On a larger scale, we are interested in the following issues and questions

- ◆ are there processes that are more (a)typical than others?
- ◆ are there preferred argument structures? Is there preferred mapping?
- ◆ argument structure changes in categories other than V and N
- ◆ why is it that certain types of changes yield (non)uniform results (e.g. argument demotion results in periphrastic passives, morphological passives or middles, whereas argument reduction results in impersonals and anticausatives; reflexivization in both augmentation and reduction processes)
- ◆ are certain types of adjuncts more prone to reanalysis than others (augmentation of argument structure)?
- ◆ do labile verbs have labile argument structures?
- ◆ which types of change affect individual lexical items and which affect classes of lexical items and constructions?
- ◆ what is the exact interplay of argument structure and event structure (aspect)?
- ◆ chicken-and-egg questions, e.g. do all changes begin in the lexicon, or can syntax (morphology, semantics, pragmatics) feed argument structure?
- ◆ descriptions of transitivization, detransitivization, and changes in the mapping

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