

The bipartite structure of verbs cross-linguistically

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In recent years, morphological, syntactic, and semantic evidence has converged to suggest that verbs, previously analyzed as single syntactic terminals which relate in a straightforward way to a verb phrase, are actually composed of several parts which make separate syntactic and semantic contributions to a complex structure which is the true underlying shape of the verb phrase. Many separate strands of evidence have led to this conclusion. In this talk, several arguments in favor of a complex verb structure will be reviewed, and the approach will be shown to allow some analytic progress with respect to several problems, including the famous 'manner-of-motion' restriction on verb meaning in Romance languages (and within the Romance vocabulary of English), and the problem of the morphological constraints on verbs in resultatives, double object constructions and verb-particle constructions in the English vocabulary.

Some kinds of evidence for a bipartite structure include the classic causative/inchoative alternations, with or without morphological correlations. I will argue that for Japanese, at least, the morphological evidence suggests that neither the causative nor the inchoative form of a verb is derived from the other, since in different classes of alternating verbs, different forms are morphologically more or less marked than the alternant. I suggest that this is true cross-linguistically, and the frustrating and persistent debate in the literature about whether inchoatives are derived from underlyingly causative verbs or vice versa has been somewhat counterproductive.

Other kinds of evidence for a bipartite structure include the verb-particle constructions of Germanic, the syntactic behavior of applicative constructions in (among others) Hiaki (Yaqui), the morphologically complex structure of many Romance verbs, and the theory-internal arguments that syntactic structure is binary branching and that phrase-structure bar-levels are not syntactic primitives derived from iterations of Merge. I will exhibit these and show, for each in turn, how and why they converge on a syntactically complex picture of the verb phrase and argument structure.

In this view, the semantic and thematic properties of external arguments depend on the top portion of the verbal projection, called the vP (headed by 'little v'), and alternations that affect those properties, such as voice marking, agent vs. stimulus readings, and of course the causative/inchoative alternation, depend on the properties of v^o. The semantic and thematic properties associated with the direct object are more directly dependent on the verb root, and on additional secondary predicates that may supplant or alter the verb root in the lower projection, such as particles or resultatives.

I will conclude by presenting a morphosyntactic analysis of the famous problem within English syntax, namely the ban on double object constructions with ditransitive verbs borrowed from Latin or one of its daughter Romance languages. *Mary showed her paintings to John* alternates with *Mary showed John her paintings*, just fine, but *Mary displayed her paintings to John* does not have a variant **Mary displayed John her paintings*. A bipartite analysis of these Romance verbs, which dissects them into an incorporated particle such as *dis-* and a verb root such as *-play*, each heading its own syntactic projection, will be shown to allow an

independently motivated account of this otherwise puzzling restriction, which otherwise does not admit of a non-stipulative linguistic description. I will show that this analysis extends to the ban on Romance verbs in verb-particle constructions—*I showed the paintings off*, but **I exhibited the paintings off*—and in resultative constructions—*I hammered the metal flat* but **I depressed the metal flat*.