

Introduction

The topic of this essay can be approached by considering the following list of technical terms:

valency
orientation
transitivization
case marking
verb serialization
causativization
AUX predication
second verb paraphrasis

Not all of these terms are equally familiar. For instance, "orientation" only goes back to Comrie 1981a and is related inter alia to passivization. Another unfamiliar term is probably "AUX predication" (shorthand for "predication by means of an auxiliary verb").

The above terms, however, are commonly considered as somehow hanging together. Hence the temptation of reductionism: do they all boil down to one of them? to "valency"? or perhaps to "transitivity"? or to "case"? or to "actants"?¹ Two problems result:

¹ See Halliday 1970; Fillmore 1968, 1971, 1977; Tesnière 1959.

Problem 1. The above terms obviously denote different things, but the phenomena are nonetheless interconnected. What is missing is a guiding hypothesis. We need a common denominator from which the differences might be illuminated.

Problem 2. The above terms are related to different levels of analysis, as case marking should make clear. Beside obvious morphosyntactic aspects, the very concept of "case roles" (Agens, Patiens, etc.) involves semantic and pragmatic aspects. How do the different levels share in any given phenomenon?

It is convenient to speak of "perspectives" instead of "levels" here. The same linguistic phenomenon can be studied from a morphologico-syntactic, a semantic and a pragmatic viewpoint. But the difference among these viewpoints should not distract us from looking at the interconnected whole. To use a musical analogy, it is like having one piece with many different voices. In fact, we find ourselves before what is called a dimension, the dimension of PARTICIPATION, where the above terms are its subdimensions or "techniques". To speak of participation I propose the following terminological convention: the nucleus (of an event), i.e. the verb, shall be called the PARTICIPEE; and the PARTICIPANTS shall be the NPs that take part in that event.

Part I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TECHNIQUES