

Introductory remarks

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**Valence, Semantic Case, and Grammatical Relations:
Workshop studies prepared for the 12th International
Congress of Linguists, Vienna, August 29th to September
3rd, 1977**

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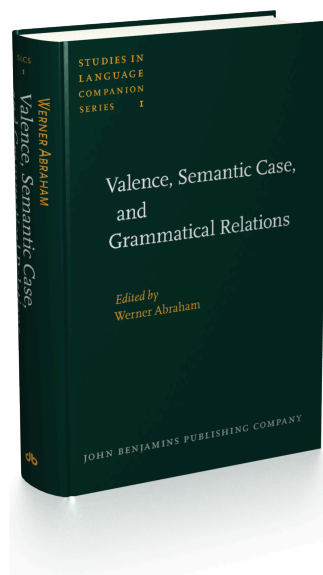
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Most of the contributions contained in this volume are versions, partly revised and extended, of papers prepared for the Working Group on *CASE GRAMMAR and VALENCE THEORY* held during the 12th International Congress for Linguists in Vienna, August 29 to September 3, 1977.

The Working Group was organised and lead by the editor of this volume. All papers were circulated before the sessions in a shorter, informative, version as well as in full length to all Working Group participants. During the two sessions at the University of Vienna, each contributor summarized briefly his main issues. The major part of the time was devoted to discussion.

Of the active participants in the Workshop only Bluhm did not present his summary at the session. His paper, however, is contained in this volume. Franz Plank and Magdalena Ziep Fritz did present their papers¹, but withheld them from publication.

The present volume thus renders an almost hundred percent faithfully true picture of the Proceedings of this Working Group. Jerry Edmondson, Timothy Potts, and John Anderson submitted their articles later upon invitation.

The papers presented in this volume have been grouped in three thematic chapters, as the title of the volume indicates. Among them, valence, it seems, plays a key role in so far as it is an innegligible, albeit much

1) See the Report in the Proceedings of the Congress: "Working Group -- Case Grammar and Valence Theory".

neglected, concept for the syntact classification of verbs and adjectives, a necessary link to morphological markings necessary for decoding and encoding grammatical relations, and, finally, an important requisite for the evaluation of formal languages for the purpose of describing and explaining phenomena of natural language. A number of papers in this first chapter is addressed to descriptive problems, mainly of German, French, and English. The last three papers, however, suggest formal definitions of valence-boundness for verbs, adjectives, and nouns, based on categorial syntax. Beyond that, it is demonstrated that the traditional course of thinking in valence theory (ever since Tesnière's) is being revised with good reason. Whereas valence theory has purposely neglected to distinguish subject and object, the newly defined notion of valence-boundness succeeds in making this distinction, much needed for the semantic interpretation of sentences, emerge in a very natural way.

The second series of papers concerns the notion of semantic (deep) case and the implications of tracing a grammatical theory on semantic case. The not so long history of the literature on semantic case is replete with efforts, certainly not highly successful, at identifying cases in terms of descriptions of those situational, extra-linguistic, properties that must be experienced in order to allow them to be designated by specific case types. These attempts are carried on by the series of the papers in this chapter, which are, however, based, in general, on sounder linguistic motivation: in a number of papers the link is sought between experiential definitions and the more formal properties of valence-boundness; in other papers, the *iunctim* of case types is followed up with classes of verbs and adjectives defined on the basis of their inherent

semantic properties. Much effort is devoted to sharpening, and motivating empirically, the original Fillmorean idea of facilitating the selection of cases not only by the force of their definitions, but also by an extrinsic hierarchical order specifying the relations among the cases. Last, but not least, the evaluation of universal as well as language specific features is carried out on the basis of abundant data from a large number of unrelated languages.

The third group of papers is distinguished from the last not in a categorical sense, but in the degree of accent it puts on the link between linguistic surface phenomena, including semantic case, and grammatical relations, in the sense that has been postulated by Universal Grammar. One can justly say, I believe, that language typology, by tradition predominantly a field of European scientists' efforts, has gained a new élan as well as new dimensions of research through the writings of two American scholars: through Montague's notion of *Universal Grammar*, espoused primarily in Montague's article of 1974, and through the program promoted by Keenan and others that sharpens and relativizes Montague's claims by relating them to solid empirical observations in natural languages. Typological description of the modern stricture relies mainly on two methodological notions: first, that of formally defining logical structures for natural languages, and, second, that of associating grammatical sentential relations, which are indispensable for the semantic interpretation of sentences, with surface (coding) and transformational (syntactic control) properties of linguistic structures. Coding properties are not only morphological features, but also, in a wider sense, semantic case types which, relatable to inherent verb meanings, are easily decodable in a vast number of

(though not all) elementary structures.

These are the main aspects of the general theme upon which the third series of this collection of essays focuses. While the general goals depicted above are identical in the different essays, some of the basic assumptions held in these essays vary considerably. This is, for example, the case where control properties of sentence structures as a means to relate formally different structures to each other is given up altogether, thereby permitting only surface structures to be operated on by selectional restrictions (LEXICASE). This is also the case in another paper in which a categorial language, using both topographical features as well as deep case assignment, is employed as the basis for the interpretation of sentences.

In order to facilitate an orientation for the reader, every single essay contained in this volume is preceded by a summary of its contents.

Reference:

Montague, R. (1974a), "Universal grammar", in: R. Thomason (ed.), *Formal Philosophy*, Yale University Press, 247-270.