

The Meaning of Functional Categories in the Verbal / Sentential Domain

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Reflexive and reflexive-like verbalizers

Deponency

- Deponent verbs:

- verbs with the 'wrong' voice morphology: they are morphologically nonactive, but syntactically active (hence instantiating a form – function mismatch)

(1) Latin:

| | Pres.act. | Pres.pass. |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. alternating | am- ō 'I love' | am- or 'I am loved' |
| b. deponent | | hort- or 'I encourage' |

- Two main lines of analysis in modern theorizing:

1. In terms of lexical idiosyncrasy
2. No mismatch

Deponent verbs

| (2) Albanian: | <u>Non-active</u> | <u>Active</u> |
|---------------|--|-----------------------|
| a. | <i>dergj-em</i> 'I linger' | a'. * <i>dergj</i> |
| b. | <i>përgjigj-em</i> 'I answer' | b'. * <i>përgjigj</i> |
| c. | <i>kreno-h-em</i> 'I take pride in' | c'. * <i>kreno-j</i> |
| d. | <i>lig-em</i> 'I weaken' | d'. * <i>lig</i> |
| e. | <i>pendo-h-em</i> 'I regret' | e'. * <i>pendo-j</i> |
| | ... | |

Embick (1997 et seq.)

- Embick's (2004) u-syncretism:

(3) $v \leftrightarrow v - X/_$ no external argument

Problem:

- Where do (transitive) deponents e.g. *sequor* 'I follow' fall in (3)?

Embick's solution:

- Deponents come with a diacritic (i.e., a class feature) *passive*
- This feature does not show up on a functional head (i.e. v^0) but rather on a root, where subcategorization information and interpretation are not affected

Kiparsky (2005)

- Kiparsky (2005:121-122): “passive inflection in Latin is a conjugational feature – we’ll call it [\pm Passive] – which can be lexically specified, for verb stems as well as for inflectional endings, or left unspecified”
- “[+Passive] inflections trigger one or more of the operations on the verb’s argument structure [...] forming passives, as well as possibly reflexives, reciprocals, and inchoatives, depending on further, partly idiosyncratic, properties of the verb” (ibid.)

Problem with the *class* feature

- What, if anything, enables the appearance of this class feature on roots?
- Pressing, given Xu et al. (2007), Kallulli (2013), Zombolou and Alexiadou (2014) → no mismatch:
 - the morphological exponent faithfully realizes a certain abstract semantic property, i.e. deponents form a semantically defined natural class with other, more obvious instances of non-active morphology after all
 - E.g., the fact that cross-linguistically deponents are overwhelmingly denominal crucially evidences the canonicity of the non-active form for this class of verbs, since nouns typically lack external arguments (Kallulli 2013, 2021)

Grestenberger (2014, 2018)

(4) Definition of deponency:

In an active/non-active voice system, a deponent is a verb with an agent subject that appears in a syntactically active context and is morphologically non-active

- Thus, deponent verbs, as a lexical property, project an agent DP within the VP (as opposed to vP which in her notation equals VoiceP); i.e. there is an agent, the clause is transitive, but the context for morphological realization of active exponence (see (5)) is not present

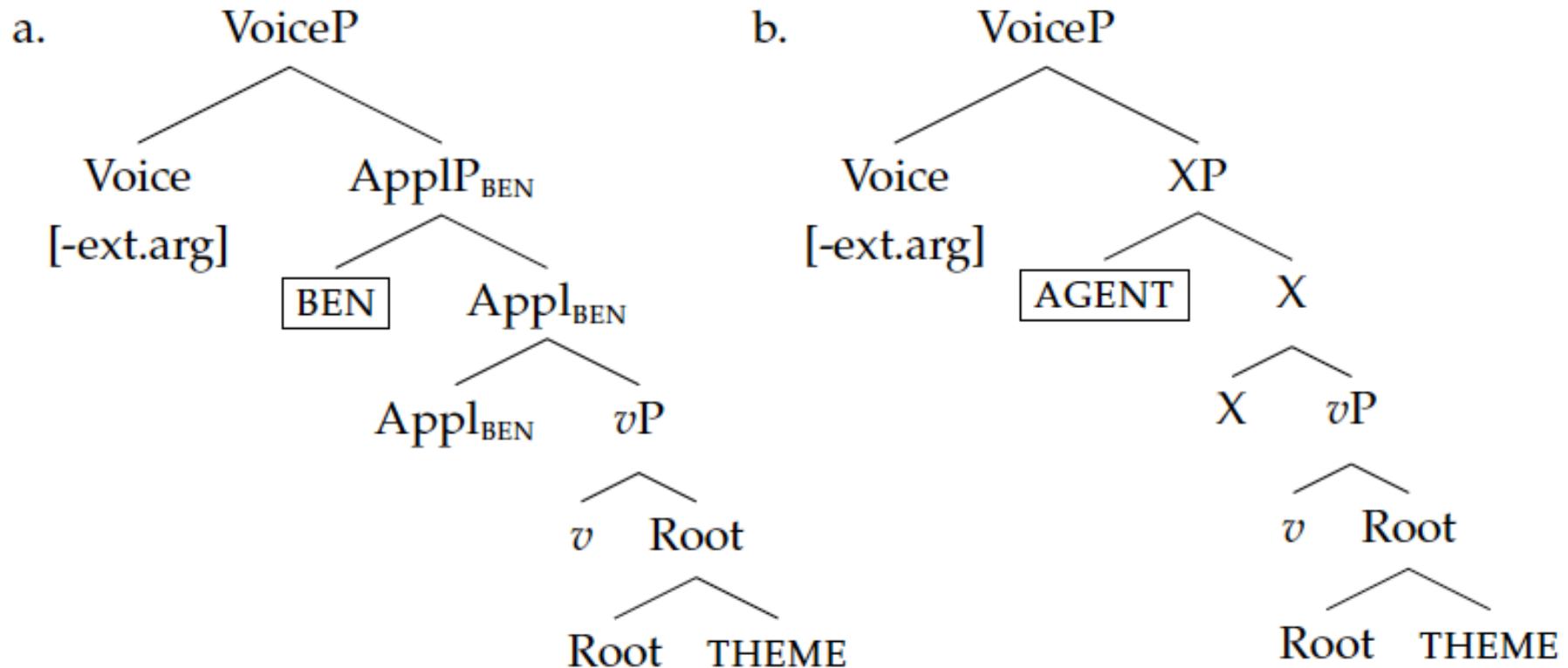
(5) Post-syntactic rules of morphological exponence:

- a. Voice triggers non-active morphology if it does not have an agentive DP as its specifier
- b. Voice triggers active morphology if it has an agentive DP as its specifier

Grestenberger (2014, 2018): further detail

- The low agent of deponents is the outcome of a diachronic reanalysis process by which a self-BENefactive argument merged below VoiceP (see (6a)) is reanalyzed as an AGENT (see (6b)), where the boxed DP undergoes reanalysis:

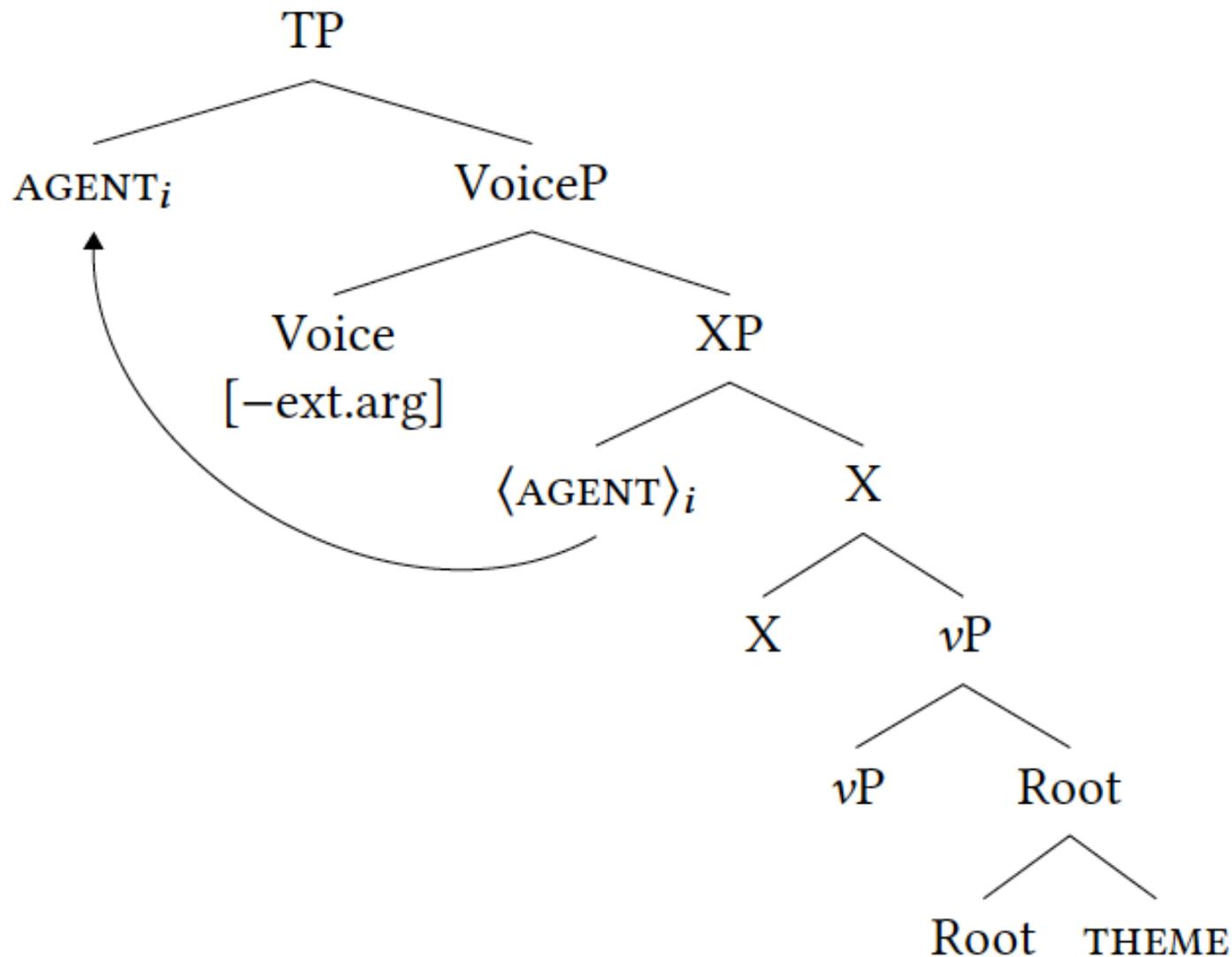
(6)



Grestenberger (2014, 2018): Analysis

- The resulting deponent structure:

(7)



Support for Grestenberger (2018)

- Data as in (8) lend support to Grestenberger (2018); in (8a), with **nact**, *Eva* (NOM) is the beggar and *Ben* (DAT) the one being begged, and in **act** (8b), again (NOM) *Eva* is the beggar and *Ben* (**ACC**) the one being begged
- (8a,b) feel synonymous, but there is a sense in which *Eva* in **nact** (8a) feels more 'affected' than in **act** (8b), i.e. like pleading with *Ben*, thus reflecting a sense of self-beneficial implication
- This 'affectedness' effect could be said to have been lost over time (at least with certain verbs), resulting in the same unmarked agent reading as in (8b), but with **nact** as a diachronic remnant, as per Grestenberger:

- (8) a. *Eva* **iu** *lut* *Benit* (për muaj me rradhë).
 *Eva*_{NOM} cl,3s,dat. **nact** begged *Ben*_{DAT} for months on end
 `Eva begged Ben (for months on end).
- b. *Eva* *e* *luti* *Benin* (për muaj me rradhë).
 *Eva*_{NOM} cl,3s,acc begged.act,3s *Ben*_{ACC} for months on end
 `Eva begged Ben (for months on end).

Problem?

- Grestenberger: “the non-active morphology of deponents cannot be motivated in terms of the *synchronic* canonical functions of non-active morphology. That is, synchronically they do not fall into any of the categories listed [...] (reflexive, self-benefactive, anticausative, etc).”
- At least in Albanian, deponents (which are incompatible with objects bearing accusative) do fall into some such category associated with the synchronic canonical functions of non-active morphology (namely: self-benefactive); i.e., the pattern in (8a) vs. (8b) seems productive:

- (9) a. Mendohem *(për)të ardhmen.
ponder.1s,pr,nact for future.the_{ACC}
'I ponder/think about the future.'
- b. Mendoj (për)të ardhmen.
think.1s,pr,act about future.the_{ACC}
'I think about the future.'

Solution to tension...

- The synchronic analysis of data such as (8a) and (9a) might be different from the languages Grestenberger scrutinizes, especially in view of the 'affectedness' ingredient in these examples as opposed to (8b) and (9b), respectively
- Coupled with the productivity of the pattern (i.e. the alternation), and the fact that deponents in Albanian are incompatible with accusative objects, it seems reasonable to assume that Grestenberger wouldn't have to analyze cases like (8a) and (9a) as deponents at all, because they are not agentive; recall her definition of deponency

Deponents are unaccusatives (Kallulli 2013 et seq)

- Deponents (and their FR counterparts - e.g. *sich schämen* - in languages with no full-fledged voice paradigms) are truly unaccusative predications, i.e., they lack an external argument

Evidence:

- (i) Though 'transitive' deponents (i.e., deponents that combine with objects bearing accusative case) exist both in Latin, Greek and other languages with voice paradigms (see Grestenberger), which is the main if not sole argument motivating the view that syntactically they are not unaccusative, not all languages that have deponent verbs have transitive deponents; e.g. Albanian: **no** transitive deponents
- (ii) Most of the **oldest** deponents in Latin are **intransitive** (Flobert 1975: 590), a fact that is in need of explanation (and might be construed to reveal the true (unaccusative) nature of these verbs); also argued for Modern Greek (Zombolou 2012): only 18% out of 100% take an accusative object

Deponents are truly unaccusative (2)

(iii) The fact that deponents (just like their FR counterparts in modern Romance and Germanic) are largely **denominal** also speaks for their unaccusative nature, given that **nouns lack external arguments**

(iv) Though deponents cannot always combine with PPs indicating the presence of an agent or external cause of an event, some verbs that are clearly derived from such deponents with no causative semantics (compare (10a) to (11a)) can however transitivize, see (11b) vs. (11c):

(10) a. *Dielli u duk (*nga Zoti / qielli).*
sun nact appeared from/by God /sky
'The Sun appeared (*by/from God / the sky).'

b. *Krenohem (*nga djali) / për / me djalin.*
am proud.pr.nact from/by son / for / with son.the.acc
'I am proud of my son.'

Deponents are truly unaccusative (3)

- (11) a. *Në rregull, po **zhdukem** atëhere.*
in order prog disappear-nact then
'OK, I (will) disappear then.'
- b. *I **zhduka** gjurmët.*
cl,3pl,acc disappear traces
'I made the traces / evidence disappear.'
(I.e. 'I destroyed the evidence'.)
- c. **Duk diellin / gjurmët.*
appear(act) sun.the/traces.the
'I make the sun/the traces (i.e. evidence) appear.'

FRs as counterparts of deponents

- Same transitivization process as in (11b) also attested with FRs in Romance and Germanic:

- (12) a. *quando Dio *(si) vergogna degli uomini e gli uomini*
when God REFL shamed. of-the men and the men
**(si) vergognano di Dio* (Italian)
REFL shamed of God
'when God is ashamed of men and men are ashamed of God'
- b. **Gli uomini hanno vergognato il Dio.* → cf. (12c)
the men have shamed the God
(Intended reading) 'Men have put God to shame.'
- c. *Gli uomini hanno **s**vergognato il Dio.*
the men have shamed the God
'Men have put God to shame.'

FRs as counterparts of deponents (2)

- (13) a. *Ich schäme mich.* (German)
I shame me/myself
'I am ashamed of myself.'
- b. **Ich schäme dich.*
I shame you/yourself
(Intended) 'I put shame on you.' / 'I put you to shame.'
- c. *Ich **beschäme** dich.*
I ashamed you/yourself
'I put shame on you.' / 'I put you to shame.'

FRs as counterparts of deponents (3)

- (14) a. The sun appeared.
b. *The police appeared the culprit.
c. The sun disappeared.
d. ?The police disappeared the mob on Capitol Hill.
- More generally, we may say that in English (and other languages) there often is a null/zero transitivizing morpheme -- i.e., if FRs had an external argument, then we might expect them to take some other nominal as an internal argument; as this is not possible, then this must be because FRs lack external arguments altogether and can take only one internal nominal argument which appears as the surface subject
 - The reflexive here is not actually an argument of the verb, whose only nominal argument is the subject.

FRs as counterparts of deponents (4)

- Nominal use of the lexical root but no combining with *of*:
(15) a. Paul's (gentlemanly) behavior (*of himself).
b. Yoko's (excessive) pride (*of herself on her work).
c. George's (long) absence (*of himself from work due to poor health).
- If FRs are arguments, we expect to see them combine with *of* in nominal environments (assuming that *of* is a preposition selecting nominals, or a case-marker appearing on nominals)
- If however FRs are merely verbalizers of lexical roots, the data in (15) are as expected: *of* can't combine with the reflexive here because they are verbalizers, not nominals
- Thus, the connection to deponents is that the deponent verbal morphology is also verbalizing morphology

FRs as counterparts of deponents (5)

- None can passivize (pace Schäfer 2012 for marginally possible impersonal passivization of some FRs in German)

(16) a. *George was absented (himself) from work.
b. *Paul was behaved (himself).

(17) a. *Himself was absented from work.
b. *Himself was behaved.

FRs as counterparts of deponents (6)

- No cognate objects possible:

- (18) a. *Yoko prides herself a silly pride on her work.
b. *Ringo contents himself (some) joyous contentment
with his possessions.
c. *George behaved himself (some) gracious behaviour.

Deponents and pseudo-reflexives

Conclusion:

- The function of non-active morphology in deponents and, accordingly, of reflexive morphology in languages that do not have full-fledged voice paradigms, is that of a verbalizer; i.e. verbalizing nominal roots, an idea that is theoretically appealing, since what we know about nouns is that just like unaccusative (and passive) verbs, they lack external arguments, thus making the appearance of non-active/reflexive morphology be the canonical and therefore expected rather than the non-canonical, unexpected form

Problem for this view:

- In DM roots are assumed to be acategorical...

What about 'transitive' deponents?

E.g., *sequor* 'to follow', which can combine with an accusative object?

Two main views:

1. These are truly agentive (Embick 1997, Grestenberger 2014, 2018)
2. These are dyadic unaccusative psych predicates (originally due to though eventually discarded in Embick 1997, but revived in Alexiadou 2013, Kallulli 2013, Alexiadou and Zombolou 2014)

Grestenberger's arguments for true agency of 'transitive' deponents

1. Reiterating Embick's observations which eventually led him to discard the idea that transitive deponents are psych verbs, she points out that with some psych-verbs, both an agentive and a psychological reading is possible in Modern Greek. Under what she refers to as "the agentive reading", as in (19a) which contains an animate subject, the object does not have to be clitic doubled, while under the psychological reading in (19b) (the subject is inanimate), the object needs to be clitic doubled:

(19) a. *I Maria enohli ton Petro.*
the Maria bothers the Petro
'Maria bothers Petro.'

b. *Ta epipla *?(ton) enohlun ton Petro.*
the furniture him_{CL,ACC} bothers the_{ACC} Petro
'The furniture bothers Petro.'

Grestenberger's arguments for true agency of 'transitive' deponents (2)

- Transitive agentive deponents like *hriazome* 'need' pattern with the so-called "agentive" reading and do not require clitic doubling, (20); Grestenberger takes this to indicate that the subject of *hriazome* is therefore an agent rather than a cause/theme

(20) *I Maria hriazete ton Petro.*
the Maria needs the Petro
'Maria needs Petros.'

Evaluation of Grestenberger's argument 1.

- While the judgments in (19) and (20) seem clearer for some Greek speakers than for others, all they show is that the distinction between animate and inanimate subjects has some bearing on object doubling
- Jumping from such data to the conclusion that the relevant contrast (in (19a) vs. (19b)) is due to the agentivity of the subject in (19a), is unwarranted, since *Maria* could equally well be an actor unintentionally causing bother to *Petro*, i.e. *Maria* could be an actor but not an agent
- Likewise, in (20) *Maria* might indeed need *Petro* without intending or even wanting to; i.e., what these examples show, is just that clitic doubling of the object is affected by the (in)animacy of the subject but they can certainly not be used as a test for agentivity, since participants capable of willful agency might always act unintentionally
- Similarly, Embick's observation reiterated in Grestenberger that transitive deponents pattern as non-psych verbs in triggering clitic left-dislocation is not any more conclusive of the agentivity of transitive deponents

Grestenberger's 2nd argument for true agency

- (21) and (22) contradict Grestenberger's claim that "agent-oriented" adverbs expressing intention or volition only modify agentive predicates, since unaccusative syntax is not incompatible with such adverbs:

(21) Italian: a. *Gianni **é*** ***caduto*** / ****ha caduto*** *apposta.*
Gianni is fallen fallen / has fallen on.purpose

 b. *Gianni **é rotolato*** / ****ha rotolato*** *giu* *apposta.*
Gianni is rolled / has rolled down on.purpose

(22) German: *Peter **ist*** / ****hat*** *absichtlich* *eingeschlafen.*
Peter is / has deliberately fallen.asleep
'Peter fell asleep on purpose.'

Grestenberger's 3rd argument for true agency

- Grestenberger's strongest argument for the agentive status of (transitive) deponents comes from languages like Vedic and in some cases Ancient Greek, which have a trivalent voice system, where one can distinguish among other things between deponents and passives on the basis of morphology; i.e., Grestenberger's strongest argument is that there are languages in which deponents may passivize
- While the data she provides from Vedic (and Ancient Greek) seem to indicate this, these data have the potential to bring down her whole system, since one would have to assume a Passive head on top of the voice head, which makes these languages similar to English, German or Hebrew (see Alexiadou 2013 and Alexiadou et al. 2015), but which in turn contradict her own observation that there are no deponents in English/German

Grestenberger's 3rd argument for true agency of 'transitive' deponents (2)

- In even more recent work, Grestenberger (2020) argues however that these languages do not have a higher Passive head, and that what looks like a passive suffix is between the root and the Voice head, in the position where we usually find *v*, which has recently been analyzed as verbalizing morphology (see Alexiadou et al.); i.e., the passive head in such trivalent systems selects roots rather than *v* or Voice, and seems to suppress the projection of higher arguments (that is, agents)
- While Grestenberger maintains that this holds as a diagnostic of agentivity in deponents because this passive suffix blocks the projection of both non-deponent and deponent agentive verbs alike, it should be noted that she thus directly provides independent evidence for my claim, namely **the existence of verbalizing voice morphology close to the root**, which moreover seems rather similar in function to non-active and/or reflexive morphology in deponents (and elsewhere) in that it blocks the projection of higher arguments

Voice typology: Schäfer (2012), AAS (2015)

- My claim that non-active and/or reflexive morphology can on top of other things also function as a verbalizer (specifically in the case of deponents and/or FRs), fills in a gap in the voice typology picture (Schäfer 2012):

- (23) a. [TP T [VoiceP DP_{AGENT} Voice [vP v SE_{PATIENT}]]]
b. [TP T [VoiceP SE_{EXPL} Voice [vP v DP_{THEME}]]]
c. Thematic passive Voice
d. Non-thematic (expletive) passive Voice

Voice typology and the linguistic cycle

Linguistic cycle (Elly's talk yesterday):

- Phrase > head > head to higher head
- Phrase to head: easier labelling!
- Transitive > passive, via object (reflexive pronoun) to v/Voice;
- Refl > v/voice

NB

- The fact that deponents are largely denominal does not entail that if a verb is denominal, it is deponent (i.e. there is an implication, but there is no equivalence)
- Indeed denominals have correctly been claimed to be the historical source for unergatives in languages like English and potentially universally
- Interestingly however, unlike (denominal) unergatives, denominal deponents in Albanian do not involve nominal morphology; i.e., the noun in the latter class of verbs is just the historical source

An argument from (lexical) semantics

- Crucially, as Xu, Aronoff and Anshen (2007:139) point out for Latin deponents but the point is more general (see Kallulli 2013), Latin denominal or deadjectival verbs differ in form depending on whether they have a causative sense:

“[t]hose with causative senses tend to be active, while those that fall into general non-causative semantic categories such as ‘to act or to be x’, ‘to act like y’, ‘to give or make (with a sense of creation) z’, ‘to use z’, and ‘to get z’ tend to assume deponent forms”.

An argument from (lexical) semantics (2)

- This is precisely why non-active rather than active morphology is used as a default verbalizer in these (non-causative) contexts, but this does not mean that active morphology cannot be used as a verbalizer in other contexts, such as causative ones, where indeed it is the default one
- Indeed, the very existence of the grammatical sentences (11b), (12c) and (13c) (*Gli uomini hanno **s**vergognato il Dio; Du **b**eschämst mich*, etc.) as opposed to the ungrammaticality of **to appear something* and its analogues across Albanian, Italian and German, respectively, is evidence for the correctness of my core contention here.

Selected references

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