

## COMPLEX PREDICATES ACROSS LANGUAGES: VARIATION AND ACQUISITION

### Workshop description

Ever since Plato and Aristotle, the notion of predication has been one of the central issues in philosophy (Cocchiarella 1989; Angelelli 2004). In linguistics, predication has been one of the most prominent research areas since the 19th century (Bloomfield 1916; Williams 1980; among many others), including today's modern theories of argument structure (Hale & Keyser 2002; Marantz 2013; among many others). The main challenge in linguistic research focused on predication has been to adequately represent the crucial relation between a predicate and its arguments, which forms a core construct at all major levels of linguistic analysis. In this, and in many other respects, *complex predicates* have attracted a lot of attention because they differ considerably from canonical predication in their internal composition, syntactic and semantic properties.

Loosely defined, complex predicates are composed by several grammatical elements acting together as a single predicate (Kayne 1975; Larson 2014; Snyder 2001). This definition in and by itself admits a lot of constructions, starting from complex tenses (Muller 2006) to serial verb constructions (Haspelmath 2016) and resultative predicates (Beavers 2012; Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004), among others. One of the main problems that has been raised in complex predicate literature (Butt 1995, Alsina et al. 1997) is how to define the empirical domain covered by the term complex predicate. In this workshop, we will be interested in syntactic configurations that involve complex predicates such as:

- Complex V-V heads.
- Double object constructions.
- Light verb constructions (e.g. *make*-causatives, English causative *have*, Spanish *tener+que*+infinitive construction, etc.).
- Perceptual reports.
- *Put*-locatives.
- Resultatives.
- Verb-particle constructions.

Since complex predicates form such a heterogeneous class of constructions, the inevitable question that emerges concerns the grammatical mechanisms behind their composition (i.e. their syntax and semantics). Snyder (2001) assumed that complex predicates consist of a main verb combined with a secondary predicate and both constituents form a new expression that is semantically akin to a simple verb. Other approaches that account for the combination of a main verb and a secondary predicate, forming a syntactic complex predicate (Larson 2014, 1988), resort to the verbal subcategorization for a small clause that contains the internal arguments of the complex predicate constructions (Aoun and Li 1989; Den Dikken 1995; Kayne 1975; Koizumi 1994; among others).

Apart from being theoretically challenging, complex predicates also represent a rich source of cross-linguistic variation. The examples are numerous and include well-studied verb-particle constructions (Dehé et al. 2002; McIntyre 2012; Snyder 2001) or resultative constructions (Levin & Rappaport 1988; Nedjalkov 1988; Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004; Beavers 2012), which are widespread in Germanic languages but highly restricted (if at all present) in Romance languages (Cuervo 2007; Demonte 1995). Both verb-particle

constructions and resultatives have been shown to present interesting challenges for the syntax-semantics interface and many analyses directly link their syntactic structure to their semantic properties. Diverse data from different languages raise the question of what the source of cross-linguistic variation could be, what kind of analysis could capture this variation and what the repercussions of the suggested analysis are for other phenomena related to complex predicate formation and their properties across languages.

Besides, language acquisition data can provide important underpinnings for theoretical analyses. Indeed, a great bulk of empirical studies has reported that complex predicates begin to be produced at around the same age, as analysed in L1 English children's acquisition data (Snyder & Stromswold 1997) and in simultaneous English-Spanish bilingual children's data (Sánchez Calderón 2018). These findings suggest that the constructions listed above are acquired as a package of complex predicate constructions and, thus, share common grammatical properties. In the case of second language acquisition, a challenge has been found to arise in adults' learning of complex predicates as a result of L1 influence (Slabakova 2001; Cuervo 2007) or adult input factors (Perpiñán & Montrul 2006).

This workshop aims at bringing together theoretical and empirical research raising challenging questions concerning composition, syntax, semantics and acquisition of complex predicates from a variety of languages with the goal to improve our knowledge of complex predicates and thus, of the process of predication itself. Main research questions to be addressed in this workshop include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Why do complex predicates exist in natural language and what can they tell us about the nature and design of language as well as other cognitive systems?
2. How can we account for a great variety of constructions that are characterized as complex predicates?
3. What are the common syntactic and semantic properties shared by various complex predicate constructions?
4. How are complex predicates acquired in first and second languages?

More specific questions also include:

1. What is the role and/or status of light verbs such as the English causative *have* in the formation of complex predicates?
2. What is the relation, if any, between complex predicates and other related constructions such as reflexive-like clitics?
3. What are the shared underlying grammatical properties, if any, between complex predicates and applicative heads?
4. What kind of semantic mechanisms are involved in complex predicate formation?
5. What is the age of onset of complex predicates across languages, as examined in child first language acquisition?
6. What is the role played by adult input/language exposure in the acquisition of complex predicates, as analysed in simultaneous bilinguals, sequential bilinguals and second language learners?
7. Does the other L1 interfere in the acquisition of complex predicates in the case of simultaneous bilinguals, sequential bilinguals and second language learners?

## Call for papers

We invite submissions of preliminary abstracts of 300 words maximum (for 20-minute presentations with 10 minutes for discussion) that address any of the topics in the meeting description or related questions. Abstracts in PDF format should be sent to the following address:

[olga.borik@gmail.com](mailto:olga.borik@gmail.com) (Olga Borik)

We kindly ask you to submit your abstract by 1 October 2020.

If the workshop proposal is accepted, all preliminary workshop participants will be invited to submit the full versions of their abstracts to the general call for papers. Final abstracts of max 500 words (excluding references) should be resubmitted to the SLE organizing committee before 15 January 2021.

Important dates:

1 October 2020:	Deadline for submission of 300-word abstracts (excluding references) to the workshop organizers.
20 November 2020:	Notification of acceptance by the workshop organizers and submission of the workshop proposal to SLE
15 December 2020:	Notification of acceptance of workshop proposals from SLE organizers to workshop organizers
15 January 2021:	Submission of full abstracts (500 words, excluding references), taking into account any feedback from the reviewing procedure, for review by SLE
31 March 2021:	Notification of acceptance of individual workshop contributions.
31 August - 3 September 2021:	SLE 2021 conference in Athens (Greece)

## Organizers

Olga Borik (UNED)  
Silvia Sánchez Calderón (UNED)  
Ismael Teomiro (UNED)

## References

- Alsina, Alex & Bresnan, Joan & Sells, Peter (eds). 1997. *Complex Predicates*. University of Chicago Press.
- Aoun, Joseph & Li, Yen-hui. 1989. Scope and Constituency. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20 (2). 141-172.
- Angelelli, Ignacio. 2004. Predication Theory: Classical vs Modern. In Hochberg, H. & Mulligan, K. (eds.). *Relations and Predicates*, 55–80. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag.
- Beavers, John. 2012. *Resultative Constructions*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Bloomfield, Leonard. 1916. Subject and Predicate. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 47. 13–22.
- Butt, Miriam. 1995. *The Structure of Complex Predicates*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

- Cocchiarella, N. 1989. Philosophical perspectives on formal theories of predication. In Gabbay, D. & Guenther, F. (eds.). *Handbook of Philosophical Logic IV*, 253–326. Reidel.
- Cuervo, Maria Cristina. 2007. Double Objects in Spanish as Second Language: Acquisition of Morphosyntax and Semantics. *SSLA* 29. 583–615.
- Demonte, Violeta. 1995. Dative alternation in Spanish. *Probus* 7. 5–30.
- Dehé, Nicole, Jackendoff, Ray, McIntyre, Andrew & Urban, Silke (eds., 2002). *Verb Particle Explorations*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Den Dikken, Marcel. 1995. Particles: On the Syntax of Verb-Particle, Triadic and Causative Constructions. In Koktová, E. (ed.). *Functions of Language* 4 (2), 294–299. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Goldberg, Adele E. & Jackendoff, Ray. 2004. The English Resultative as a Family of Constructions. *Language* 80 (3). 532–568.
- Hale, Ken & Keyser, Jay. 2002. *Prolegomenon to a Theory of Argument Structure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2016. The Serial Verb Construction. Comparative Concept and Cross-Linguistic Generalizations. *Language and Linguistics* 17 (3). 291–319.
- Kayne, Richard S. 1975. *French Syntax: The Transformational Cycle*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Koizumi, Masatoshi. 1994. Nominative Objects: The Role of TP in Japanese. In Koizumi, M. & Ura, H. (eds.). *Formal Approaches to Japanese Linguistics* 1, 211–230. MIT Working Papers in Linguistics.
- Levin, Beth & Rappaport Hovav, Malka. 2001. *What Alternates in the Dative Alternation?* Ms., Colloquium Series, Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, MIT.
- Larson, Richard K. 2014. *On Shell Structure*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Larson, Richard K. 1988. On the Double Object Construction. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19. 335–391.
- Marantz, Alec. 2013. Verbal argument structure: Events and participants. *Lingua* 130. 152–168.
- McIntyre, Andrew. 2012. English Particle Verbs as Complex Heads: Evidence from Nominalization. In Härtl, H. (ed.). *Interfaces of Morphology*, 41–57. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Müller, Stefan. 2006. Complex Predicates. In Brown, Keith (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics (2nd edition)*, 697–704. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Nedjalkov, Vladimir. 1988. *Typology of Resultative Constructions*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Perpiñan, Silvia & Montrul, Silvina. 2006. On Binding Asymmetris in Dative Alternation and Constructions in L2 Spanish. *Proceedings of the 7th Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages* 135–148.
- Sánchez Calderón, Silvia. 2018. *The Acquisition of English and Spanish Dative Alternation Structures in the Longitudinal Spontaneous Production of Monolingual and Bilingual Children*. University of Valladolid. (Doctoral dissertation.)
- Slabakova, Roumyana. 2001. *Telicity in the Second Language*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Snyder, William. 2001. On the Nature of Syntactic Variation: Evidence from Complex Predicates and Complex Word-Formation. *Language* 77 (2). 324–342.
- Snyder, William & Stromswold, Karin. 1997. The structure and acquisition of English dative constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry* 28 (2). 281–317.
- Williams, Edwin. 1980. Predication. *Linguistic Inquiry* 11 (1). 203–238.