

## Basic valency orientation in PIE

Silvia Luraghi, University of Pavia

The notion of basic valency has been introduced in recent typological research to capture language variation as regards the tendency for verbal roots to refer more readily to spontaneous or to induced events (see Nichols et al. 2004). Following this approach, languages can be divided into transitivity, if simple roots are mostly intransitive while derived, i.e. morphologically more complex, verbs are transitive, or detransitivizing, when simple roots mostly tend to be transitive, with intransitive verbs being morphologically more complex. The ancient IE languages are rich of verb pairs that show transitivity derivation, brought about by the addition of so-called causative suffixes, as for example Hittite *-nu-* in *ze-* ‘boil’ (intr.) / *zanu-* ‘boil’ (tr.); *war-* ‘burn’ (intr.) / *warnu-* ‘burn’ (tr.). Notably, Nichols et al. do not clearly distinguish between intransitive change-of-state verb roots, and intransitive stative ones. In the case of the latter, equipollent strategies of valency orientation are often available, with basic stative verb roots or adjectives paired by derived forms both for intransitive change-of-state and for transitive verbs, as Hittite *-es-* (change-of-state) / *-nu-* or Gothic *-na-* (change-of-state) / *-ja-* as in *fulls* ‘full’ / *fulljan* ‘fill’ / *fullnan* ‘become full’; *manags* ‘many’ / *managjan* ‘increase (tr.)’ / *managnan* ‘be plentiful, increase (intr.)’. Another strategy of valency alternation available in the ancient IE languages is voice variation, whereby the middle voice often encodes spontaneous change-of-state events, while the active encodes induced event, as in Greek: *kaíomai* ‘burn’ (intr.) / *kaíō* ‘burn’ (tr.); *rhégnomai* ‘break’ (intr.) / *rhégnumi* ‘break’ (tr.); *oígnomai* ‘open’ (intr.) / *oígō* ‘open’ (tr.). IE languages vary as to the extent to which they rely on transitivity or detransitivizing (including equipollent) strategies (Luraghi 2012, Plank & Lahiri 2015, Sausa forthc.) hence the basic valency orientation of the proto-language remains a matter that deserves to be better investigated. In my paper I plan to do so by reviewing cross-linguistic tendencies for basic roots to be transitive or intransitive, and the extent to which voice alternation plays a role in different languages, also in connection with the role played by different types of *media tantum*, including ancient stative roots, and in semantic considerations related to event types encoded by the verbal root and their higher or lesser likelihood to occur spontaneously or be induced (cf. Haspelmath 1993).

## References

- Haspelmath, Martin 1993. Change-of-state/causative verb alternations. In B. Comrie, M. Polinsky (eds.) *Causatives and Transitivity*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, pp. 87-120.
- Luraghi, Silvia. 2012. Basic valency orientation and the middle voice in Hittite. *Studies in Language* 36.1. 1-32.
- Nichols, Johanna, David Peterson and Jonathan Barnes. 2004. Transitivity and detransitivizing languages. *Linguistic Typology* 8.2: 149-211.
- Plank, Frans and Aditi Lahiri. 2015. Macroscopic and microscopic typology: Basic Valence Orientation, more pertinacious than meets the naked eye *Linguistic Typology* 19.1: 1-54.
- Sausa, Eleonora. Forthc. Basic valency orientation in Homeric Greek. *Folia Linguistica Historica*.