


The Valency Structure of Clauses and Noun Phrases

Similarities and Differences between French and Danish



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The Valency Structure of Clauses and Noun Phrases

Similarities and Differences between French and Danish

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The Valency Structure of Clauses and Noun Phrases

Similarities and Differences between French and Danish

This presentation heavily depends on the research [project on French Grammar](#) financed by the Danish Research Council. The project was directed by Michael Herslund, and the parts on Valency Grammar presented here draws on his work.

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Fundamentals

(1) *Peter eats the cake*

Composition: Peter(eats the cake) - "syntactic analysis"

Valency: Eats (Peter, the cake) - "valency analysis"

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Fundamentals

Dependency relations

- Predicate → Arguments (*eats* → *the cake*)
- Modifiers (*eats (the cake) ← slowly*)
- Bound constituents ('complements')
- Free constituents ('non arguments')

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Fundamentals

The four clause constituent types

(2) *Unfortunately Mary often behaves badly*

Verb (behaves)	Bound	Free
Argument	Mary	often
Modifier	badly	unfortunately

Valency complements

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Valency

As lexical categories, verbs and nouns carry valency structure from the lexicon which they expand in their actualizations in clauses and noun phrases respectively.



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Valency

As lexical categories, verbs and nouns carry valency structure from the lexicon which they expand in their actualizations in clauses and noun phrases respectively.

According to the Danish Valency model developed by Michael Herslund and his colleagues, all verbs bring information from lexicon about:

- How many **arguments** (valency complements) they take
- The **semantic roles** attached to these arguments
- The **grammatical relations** the arguments have when actualized in "standard active" clauses
- The **form** (constituent type) in which they actualize



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Valency

Thus, the verb *eat* carries the following information:

- Two arguments: *Eat* (a_1, a_2)
(The verb is **divalent**)
- a_1 is **Agent**, a_2 is **Patient**
- a_1 is **Subject**, a_2 is **Object**
- Both arguments actualize as nominals



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Valency

The **Grammatical Relations (GR)**
combine the **Semantic Roles**
with **Morphosyntactic Forms**

Three basic Grammatical Relations

- Subject**: Prototypically a **nominal** – role: **Agent** (/experienter)
- Object**: Prototypically a **nominal** – role: **Patient**
- Adjunct**: Prototypically a **prepositional phrase** – role: **Location**



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Valency

The adject relation has **five realizations** in French:

- Dative Object A_{DO}
- Indirect Object A_{IO}
- Locative Object A_{LO}
- Subjective Complement A_{SC}
- Objective Complement A_{OC}

In Danish probably: A_{IO} A_{PO} A_{LO} A_{SC} A_{OC}

RULE: Never more than one instance of each GR

More specifically this means for instance that a **Dative Object** blocks for an Indirect Object in French.



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Valency: Examples

- (3) Peter er intelligent. (A_{SC})
'Peter is intelligent'
- (4) Peter er i Paris. (A_{LO})
'Peter is in Paris.'
- (5) Peter er intelligent i Paris. (A_{SC}) + "Free argument"
'Peter is intelligent in Paris' = 'Peter is intelligent when he is in Paris')
- (6) Peter sender Marie et brev. (A_{IO})
'Peter sends Mary a letter'
- (7) Peter sender et brev til Paris. (A_{LO})
'Peter sends a letter to Mary'



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Valency: Examples

- (8) Il **a mis** ses chaussures **sur la table** (A_{LOK}).
'He has put his shoes on the table'
(9) Il **lui** (A_{DAT}) a mis ses chaussures.
'He has put his shoes on (him)'
(10) Il l'**a mis de mauvaise humeur** (A_{OC}).
'He has put him in a bad mood'

From Herslund (1988).



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Valency

Four basic clause structures

Intransitive

S_i (Peter sleeps)
 S_i A (Peter is in Paris)

Transitive

S_i O (Peter eats a cake)
 S_i O A (Peter sends a letter to Paris)



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Valency

In principle, the **same information** is attached
to **nouns**.

However, due to structural differences
between clauses and noun phrases the
actualization conditions are different.

This means that, **conceptually**, the valence
structure is **the same**, but there are **different
semantic and syntactic constraints**.



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS CLAUSES

Both languages

S = nominal phrase (pronoun)

O = nominal phrase (pronoun)

A: French ≠ Danish

- (11) F: Pierre donne un livre **à Marie** [A]
Dk: Peter giver **Marie**[A] en bog
'Peter gives Mary a book'



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Noun Phrases

More compact structure → fewer possibilities

All the arguments have to be realized as complements
within the **complex noun phrase**.

→ Severe restrictions on the realizations:

In **French**: PP's, clitics, certain adjectives

In **Danish**: PP's, clitics, s-genetives, (nouns), certain
adjectives



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Noun Phrases

Clitics:

- (12) **Mine** forventninger til forhandlingerne
'My expectations ...'
(13) La raison **en** est
'The reason **of it** is'



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Noun Phrases

More compact structure → fewer possibilities:

The differentiation of **Semantic Roles** and **Grammatical Relations** can only be effected by **differentiation of forms** and is thus strongly restricted.



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Noun Phrases

From a valency point of view there are **three main types** of noun phrases:

- Deverbal noun phrases
- Relational noun phrases
- Other noun phrases



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Deverbal Noun Phrases

The deverbal noun phrases inherit their arguments from their verbal origins.

Three main types of nominalization:

1. **Root nominalization:** *Produce → Production*
2. **Objective nominalization:** *Produce → Product*
3. **Subjective nominalization:** *Produce → Producer*

Objective and Subjective nominalization block the realization of the Object argument and the Subject argument, respectively.



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Deverbal Noun Phrases

- (14) Dk: Normannernes [**S**] erobring af England [**O**].
F: La conquête de l'Angleterre [**O**] par les Normands [**S**].
'The Normans' conquest of England'
- (15) Dk: Englands erobring [**S** / **O**]
F: La conquête de l'Angleterre [**S** / **O**]
'The conquest of England / England's conquest'



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Deverbal Noun Phrases

- (14) Dk: Normannernes [**S**] erobring af England [**O**].
F: La conquête de l'Angleterre [**O**] **par** les Normands [**S**].
'The Normans' conquest of England'

The **Subject** is **Agent**

- (16) Dk: Peters [**S**] kærlighed til Marie [**O**].
F: L'amour de Pierre [**S**] **pour** Marie [**O**].
'Peter's love for Mary'

The **Subject** is **Experiencer**



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Relational Noun Phrases

We find **genuine nominal valency** with relational nouns (which have no verbal origin).

(At least) three types:

- Quantitative and partitive expressions
- Expressions for "organic parts", in particular body parts (the part/whole relation)
- Kinship expressions



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Relational Noun Phrases

Quantitative and partitive expressions

The argument is obligatory

- (17) Dk: Et **flertal** af kvinder
F: Une **majorité** de femmes
'A majority of women'
- (18) Dk: En **litter** vand **NBI!**
F: Un **litre** d'eau
'A litre of water'
- (19) Dk: En **skefuld** honning **NBI!**
F: Une **cuillerée** de miel
'A spoonful of honey'



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Relational Noun Phrases

Organic parts

The argument is **not** obligatory

- (20) Dk: Husets **tag**
F: Le **toit** de la maison
'The roof of the house'
- (21) Dk: Flaskens **hals**
F: Le **goulot** de la bouteille
'The neck of the bottle'
- (22) Dk: Peters **knæ**
F: Le **genou** de Pierre
'Peter's knee'



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Relational Noun Phrases

Kinship expressions

The argument is **sometimes** obligatory

- (23) ⊗ Dk: Jeg mødte en **bror**.
⊗ F: J'ai rencontré un **frère**.
'I met a brother'
- (24) Dk: Jeg mødte **broderen**.
F: J'ai rencontré le **frère**.
'I met the brother' (Contextual interpretation)
- (25) Dk: Hun drømmer om at blive **mor**.
F: Elle rêve d'être **mère**.
'She dreams about being mother' (Predicative use)



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Other Noun Phrases

No genuine valency

Some complements may however **look like** arguments

- (26) Dk: Peters **hus**
F: La **maison** de Pierre
'Peter's house'

Note that the interpretation of the genitive is strongly **context sensitive**:

- 'The house in which Peter is living'
'The house that Peter owns'
'The house that Peter has built'
'The house which Peter is always talking about'
'...'



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FORMAL REALIZATIONS Other Noun Phrases

No genuine valency

Some complements may however **look like** arguments

The **relational adjectives** can be analyzed as arguments in this case:

- (27) Dk: En **dansk** kirke
F: Une église **danoise**
'A Danish church'
- (28) Dk: En **katolsk** skole
F: Une école **catholique**
'A catholic school'



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Central references

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