

Usage patterns of cognate Indo-Iranian “do, make” (and “transitivity prominence”)
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This talk compares the usage of cognate “do, make” verbs in eight Indo-Iranian languages. These verbs are found in a myriad of argument frames, differing in the number of syntactic arguments (two, three and four arguments) and in the coding of these arguments (indexing patterns, argument flagging and word order). Across the eight languages, these cognate “do, make” verbs are very common, and are used in twelve different frames with two arguments, in about 45 different frames with three arguments, and in three frames with four arguments.

The wide variation in argument coding and alignment patterns found in Indo-Iranian makes a direct comparison of these frames impossible. It is argued here, however, that this variation can be controlled by using the comparative concepts of S, A and P arguments, and what Lazard (2002) calls “close object”. Describing frames using these terms, we can identify some recurring usage patterns in frames with two and three arguments with “do, make”.

For example, in the eight languages, “do, make” verbs are most commonly used in frames with three arguments where two arguments are coded like A and P arguments, and the third is coded like a “close object”. Such frames are used to express a wide variety of event types, ranging from highly transitive events, such as breaking or creating, to the expression of motion or cognition events. Other frames are more limited in the type of events they are used to express, and code arguments analogically to “heavy” verbs with similar semantics.

This situation echoes “Transitivity Prominence” (Haspelmath 2015, Malchukov 2005, Tsunoda 1985): the tendency of argument frames used with highly transitive verbs such as *break*, to expand and be used also with verbs expressing less transitive events such as *see* or *need*. However, in the studies just mentioned the phenomenon was described for different “lexically heavy” verbs. Here, the phenomenon is identified in the usage of a single cognate verb with different argument frames.