

# The Original Mismatch Revisited: Deponency between Morphology, Syntax, and the Lexicon

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Deponents - verbs with nonactive or passive morphology but active syntax – have long occupied a central position in the debate around form-meaning mismatches and may even be considered the “original mismatch” in Western linguistics. However, the assessment of the cause of the perceived mismatch varies wildly, depending on one’s theoretical assumptions concerning the morphology-syntax interface. In this talk, I build on Grestenberger (2018, 2023) to argue for a “narrow” definition of deponency in the verbal system of a particular type of languages, namely those with a “Greek-type” voice system in which syncretic nonactive voice morphology is found in anticausatives, reflexives, (medio)passives, self-benefactives, etc. (Oikonomou & Alexiadou 2022).

This type of post syntactic voice marking is essentially blind to valency and thematic roles: non-active morphology surfaces whenever Voice does not introduce an external argument (Embick 2004, Alexiadou et al. 2015, etc.). Deponency in the narrow sense arises only in verbs with noncanonical “low agents”, in which the surface subject is base-generated in the “wrong” structural position (below Voice, the canonical position of the agent argument) due to diachronic reanalysis. While this account is descriptively adequate, it raises questions as to the nature of the selectional relationship between (external) arguments and (deponent) roots that have not been satisfactorily resolved so far. In the last part of the talk, I will discuss the properties of “low agents” and sketch out an analysis of deponents that is compatible with accounts in which argument selection is syntactic (e.g., Zeijlstra 2020) and the semantic interpretation of arguments is strictly local (Wood & Marantz 2017). From a Minimalist/DM perspective, the goal is thus to reduce the role of root-specific idiosyncrasy in verb meaning as much as possible, even in a domain that is generally considered prototypically exceptional.

## References

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