Support Verb Constructions
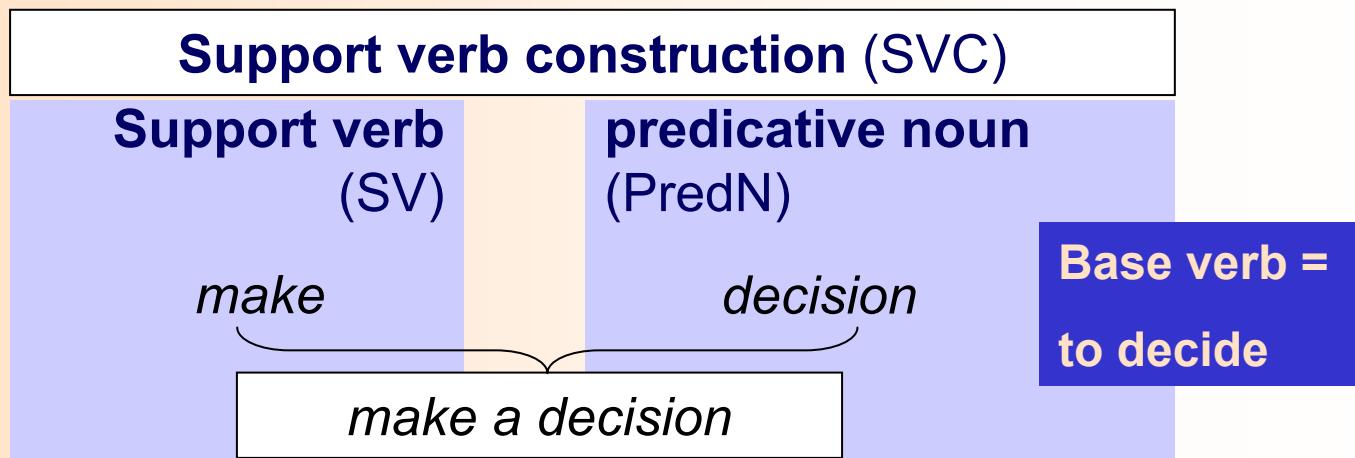
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1) Types and Properties of support verb constructions

2) Support verb constructions vs. base verbs in discourse

Terminology and Components

Support verb construction (SVC)

Support verb (SV)	**predicative noun** (PredN)
make	*decision*

make a decision

Base verb = to decide

Properties and types: Collocational SVCs

main verb „treffen"

> **Peter trifft die Zielscheibe.**
> *Peter hits the target*

support verb „treffen"

> **Peter trifft eine Entscheidung.**
> *Peter makes a decision*

Das Verfahren findet Anwendung.
The procedure finds application.

Das Verfahren wird angewandt.

Peter bringt das Haus in Brand.
Peter sets the house on fire.

Peter bewirkt, dass das Haus brennt.

Peter setzt das Haus zum Einsturz.
Peter brings the house to collapse.

Peter bewirkt, dass das Haus einstürzt.

Semi-compositional = the choice of the support verb is not fully predictable from its semantics.

Similar to verb-noun collocations like *„Zähne putzen" (brush one's teeth*)

The predicative nouns in SVCs retain their „regular" meaning.

Properties and types: Idiomatic SVCs

Idiomatic support verb construction =

the support verb has its "regular" support verb meaning

but: the meaning the predicative noun is construction-specific

Subtypes:

➢ The meaning of the PredN differs from its meaning in other contexts: **Folge** leisten (to obey)

➢ The PredN always occurs together with support verbs:

 in **Abrede** stellen (to deny sth);

 Abbitte leisten (to make apologies to s.o.)

➢ Idiomatic noun components combine with support verbs (borderline cases):

einen **Bärendienst** leisten / erweisen (to do a disservice)

in die **Bredouille** geraten / bringen (to get into trouble)

Morphosyntactic variation in collocational vs. idiomatic SVCs

	instance	Plural	definite article	indefinite article	negation *kein-*	adjective modifier	relative clause	anaphoric pronoun
Anerkennung finden	249	-	37 (14,9%)	9 (3,6%)	11 (4,4%)	114 (45%)	14 (5,6%)	1 (0,4%)
Kontakt halten	59	7 (11,9%)	10 (16,9%)	3 (5%)	1 (1,7%)	25 (42,4%)	0	1 (1,7%)
Verbindung halten	55	4 (7,3%)	21 (45,5%)	2 (3,6%)	0	10 (18,8%)	0	2 (3,6%)
in Verbindung treten	186	0	0	2 (1%)	1 (0,5%)	29 (15,6%)	1 (0,5%)	0
Folge leisten	297	0	0	1 (0,34%)	12 (4,04%)	2 (0,67%)	0	0
Abbitte leisten	23	0	1 (4.4%)	0	0	2 (8,7%)	0	0
in Abrede stellen	217	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
in Verzug kommen	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Morphosyntactic variation within collocational subtypes

	instance	Plural	definite article	indefinite article	negation *kein-*	adjective modifier	relative clause	anaphoric pronoun
Anerkennung finden	249	-	37 (14,9%)	9 (3,6%)	11 (4,4%)	114 (45%)	14 (5,6%)	1 (0,4%)
Kontakt halten	59	7 (11,9%)	10 (16,9%)	3 (5%)	1 (1,7%)	25 (42,4%)	0	1 (1,7%)
Verbindung halten	55	4 (7,3%)	21 (45,5%)	2 (3,6%)	0	10 (18,8%)	0	2 (3,6%)
in Verbindung treten	186	0	0	2 (1%)	1 (0,5%)	29 (15,6%)	1 (0,5%)	0
in Kontakt treten	18	0	0	0	0	5 (27,8%)	0	0
zur Anerkennung gelangen	14	-	-	1 (7,1%)	0	7 (50%)	0	0

WDG-Online zu „unterrichten":

(1) jmdn. u. jmdm. Unterricht geben [Engl. to teach] **-> Unterricht**

(2) sich, jmdn. über, von etw. u. sich, jmdn. über, von etw. in Kenntnis setzen, sich, jmdn. über etw. informieren, orientieren [Engl. to inform] **→ Unterrichtung**

Base verb construction	manually inspected sample sentences	instances (noisy hits excluded)	instances in which substitution by SVC is feasible
absagen	225	210	63 (= 30%)
unterrichten	250	247	113 (= 46%)
helfen	250	214	77 (= 36%)
wirken	250	247	108 (= 43%)

Factors that inhibit replacement of SVCs with base verbs

Lexicalization:

Typical collocations: „**erste Hilfe** leisten" (-> first aid)

Für die Kippe am Reck ist eine Hilfeleistung an Beinen und Rücken zweckmäßig. Wie aber wird an sprunghohen Geräten, bei schwierigen Übungen und Abgängen **Hilfe geleistet**?

Engl. When doing the roll on the horizontal bar, it is advisable to use an aid for the legs and the back. But how can assistance be provided for difficult exercises and landings form high parallel bars?

Cohesion

Den Kindern soll nur **Hilfe geleistet werden**, wenn sie **sie** benötigen. **Sie** erfolgt durch Fragen, die die Jungen und Mädchen anregen, in der Richtung des Handlungsablaufes weiterzudenken.

Engl.: *One should only **provide assistance** to the children when they need **it**. **It** can take the form of questions that encourage the boys and girls to think ahead in the chain of action.*

Mary makes **frequent** mistakes.

semantically equivalent to

Mary makes mistakes **frequently**.

--> external modification

Wir **halten** mit ihnen **brieflich Kontakt**, bis es soweit ist.

Doch außer Röntgen selbst, der **brieflichen Kontakt** mit seinem Musterschüler **hielt** (…)

Peter macht **dumme** Vorschläge. (Peter makes **stupid** suggestions).

semantically **not** equivalent to

Peter macht **dumm** Vorschläge. (Peter **stupidly** makes suggestions.)

--> internal modification

adjective vs. adverb modifier

	instances	Instances with adjective modifier	equivalent with adverb modifier (external)	not equivalent (internal)
Anerkennung finden	249	114	77 (67,5%)	37 (32,5%)
in Verbindung treten	186	29	16 (55,2%)	13 (44,8%)
Hilfe leisten	310	85	29 (34.1%)	56 (65.9%)
Unterricht erteilen	122	34	8 (23.5%)	26 (76.5%)
Absage erteilen	82	42	37 (88.1%)	5 (11.9%)
Kontakt halten	59	25	17 (68%)	8 (32%)

Factors that inhibit replacement of SVCs with base verbs

(…) auf der Kriegsschule in Lemberg hatten wir einen alten Feldkurat, der einerseits ein etwas wunderliches Deutsch sprach, andererseits aber **tschechischen Unterricht erteilte**.

Engl: (...) who, on the one hand, spoke somewhat whimsical German but then **gave Czech lessons** .

(…) andererseits aber **tschechisch unterrichtete**.

(…) taught in Czech.

(…) andererseits aber **Tschechisch unterrichtete.**

(…) taught Czech.

Conclusion

Types of SVCs:

- **Collocational SVCs**: the predicative noun has the same meaning as in other contexts and only the selection of the appropriate support verb is not fully predictable. (*Hilfe leisten*).

- **Idiomatic SVCs**: the predicative noun has a construction-specific meaning or only occurs together with support verbs, while the support verb retains its regular support verb meaning (*Folge leisten*).

Support verb constructions are not arbitrary stylistic alternatives to their corresponding base verbs. Both constructions have their characteristic benefits and functions in discourse

- SVCs are semantically more specific

- SVCs may be further modified: internal adjective modification, relative clauses, noun compounds