The current project investigates grammatical voice from a functional-typological perspective to understand the relationship between linguistic form and meaning in this domain. In particular, it focuses on the class of voice alternations, which can be exemplified by (1) from English: *Paula hit the fence* (1a) vs. *Paula hit at the fence* (1b). The hallmark of such alternations is that A (subject) of transitive constructions is coded like a subject, while the P (object) is syntactically demoted, which means that this argument loses the properties of a core argument. This loss can be signaled by a change in the form of the verb and/or in the form of the P. In (1b), the form of the A 'Paula' thus remains the same, while the one of the P is modified by the preposition 'at'. The P demotion constructions are also argument-structure preserving – that is the semantic roles of agent and patient assigned to the A (subject) and P (object) respectively remain the same. Consequently, (1a) and (1b) are in a semantic affinity conventionally signaled in the world's languages by identical or similar translations.

Given the above, grammatical voice refers to the linking of the semantic roles (agent, patient) of a verb onto its grammatical functions (subject, object). In other words, the meaning and form of a verb are closely related. This led many scholars to delve deeper into the form-meaning relationship to check whether regularities and correspondences can be detected. Previous research has shown little agreement on this topic, and the results are rather inconclusive. Scholars disagree on whether the relationship between form and meaning is organized ('iconic') or simply arbitrary. Even if recent studies have proven that the syntactic structure of human language is iconically motivated (e.g. Givón 1994), the overall tension between the iconic vs. arbitrary approach to language organization is still pronounced and provokes many debates in the field. For instance, structuralists continue viewing form-meaning connections as arbitrary (e.g. Lee 2001). We aim to add to an increasing body of functional-typologist work showing that syntactic structure is iconically motivated. By adopting a modern crosslinguistic perspective, we will provide further support for the role of iconicity in grammar.

Voice operation of P demotion results in various constructions in the world's languages, labeled in the present study as 'P demotion constructions'. These may include but are not limited to the conative, (1b), antipassive, transitivity discord, noun stripping, and object incorporation construction. These constructions use different strategies to demote P, which means they differ in how the look at the surfac level. Typological studies, which seek to understand the universal aspects of language, have never approached P demotion constructions together as the same phenomenon resulting from the same P demotion mechanism. This is because the P demotion mechanism is grammaticalized across the globe, and this change can be observed by different constructions in languages. Instead, crosslinguistically comparative studies treated P demotion constructions individually in language descriptions. Hence, they provided only a fragmentary account of the P demotion operation.

We will address two main research questions in the project: (i) How is the form and meaning related in the P demotion domain? If they correlate, what is the governing principle motivating this correlation? (ii) What is the linguistic diversity of P demotion constructions in the world's languages based on their formal and functional characteristics? These two will be followed by the secondary research questions: (iii) Is it possible to discern any areal, genealogical, or typological patterns in the distribution of P demotion? What generalizations do they yield? (iv) What is the historical link between the functional varieties of P demotion constructions? To answer these research questions, we aim in the project (i) to define the properties related to the form and meaning of the P argument to see whether they correlate; (ii) to establish the linguistic diversity of P demotion constructions, their scope, and limits in the world's languages; (iii) to explain the distribution of P demotion constructions across the globe and check whether they are genealogically or areally restricted and whether there are any universal preferences or biases towards the same grammatical structure or a set of structures; and finally (iv) to explain the historical relatedness between P demotion constructions.

We will bridge the quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the form-meaning link in the P demotion domain. To obtain statistically significant results, we will look at the P demotion constructions in 60 languages from Africa, Papunesia, North America, South America, Eurasia, and Australia. We will adopt multivariate typology (Bickel 2010), an approach that ensures crosslinguistic comparability and exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon. We hypothesize that even if some P demotion constructions have a broader use, different functional varieties of P demotion constructions (where the P lacks some of the functional properties of a prototypical object) are encoded by different P demotion constructions. The form-function connection will be evaluated in a tool, designed specifically for this purpose, i.e. a semantic map.

The results will deepen our knowledge of the universality and variability of human language. Defining formal and functional properties of P demotion crosslinguistically will result in a better understanding of voice, in general, and the form-meaning link, in particular. The expected results will also provide new insights into how P demotion constructions evolved and are related. Finally, defining the principle motivating the form-function relationship within the P demotion domain will advance our understanding of the cognitive aspects of iconicity.