

You are looking at 1-6 of 6 items for: **keywords : Argument structure**

## The Thematic Phase and the Architecture of Grammar

Julia Horvath and Tal Siloni

in Concepts, Syntax, and Their Interface: The Theta System

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: January 2017  
Publisher: The MIT Press  
DOI: 10.7551/  
ISBN: 9780262034135 eISBN: 9780262333177 mitpress/9780262034135.003.0003  
Item type: chapter

The chapter addresses the division of labor between the syntax and the lexicon, specifically, the controversy between two major alternative approaches to the derivation of the thematic (vP) phase: (a) the syntactocentric architecture, under which argument structure is attributed to the syntactic structure-building component via syntactic composition of events, the lexicon being merely lists of atomic building blocks; (b) the active-lexicon architecture, under which argument structure information is specified in lexical entries and the lexicon includes (certain) valence changing operations. After assessment of the underlying factors that had motivated the recent shift towards the syntactocentric architecture, the chapter argues that the transfer of argument structure information to the syntax is unwarranted. The authors propose a version of bare phrase structure, and definitions that derive argument mapping under an active lexicon that incorporates Reinhart's Theta System; they show these to provide an adequate resolution of the issues that had inspired the syntactocentric approach. The chapter evaluates and challenges the validity of the evidence from adverb interpretations commonly taken to support syntactic decomposition. It proposes and substantiates litmus tests for the operational role of the lexicon, determining whether a valence changing operation must apply before syntactic merger has taken place.

## Clitics and Reflexives: Reducing the Lexicon-Syntax Parameter1

Marijana Marelj and Eric Reuland

in Concepts, Syntax, and Their Interface: The Theta System

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: January 2017  
Publisher: The MIT Press

This chapter assesses the nature of the operations affecting the valence of verbal predicates in the lexicon and in the syntax. It starts out with a more general perspective on binding theory and on the relation between TS and DM. Building on Reinhart and Siloni (2005), it presents a detailed examination of reflexive clitics in Romance and Slavic and the way they differ from simplex reflexives in Germanic. It provides evidence that – though empirically correct – the Lexicon-Syntax parameter proposed by Reinhart and Siloni is not necessary as an independent parameter. Rather, its effects can be derived from low-level differences in the functional system among languages. Specifically, it can be reduced to whether or not a language has syntactic clitics, and to how valence reduction of a verb affects its Case properties.

## Building and Interpreting Possession Sentences

Neil Myler

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2017 Publisher: The MIT Press  
DOI: 10.7551/  
ISBN: 9780262034913 eISBN: 9780262336130 mitpress/9780262034913.001.0001  
Item type: book

A major question for linguistic theory concerns how the structure of sentences relates to their meaning. There is broad agreement in the field that there is some regularity in the way that lexical semantics and syntax are related, so that thematic roles are predictably associated with particular syntactic positions. This book examines the syntax and semantics of possession sentences, which are infamous for appearing to diverge dramatically from this broadly regular pattern. On the one hand, possession sentences have too many meanings: in a given language, the construction used to express archetypal possessive meanings (such as personal ownership) is also often used to express other apparently unrelated notions (body parts, kinship relations, and many others). On the other hand, possession sentences have too many surface structures: languages differ markedly in the argument structures used to convey the same possessive meanings, with some employing a transitive verb HAVE, and others using a variety of constructions based around an intransitive verb BE. Examining and synthesizing ideas from the literature and drawing on data from many languages (including some understudied Quechua dialects), this book presents a novel way to understand the apparent irregularity of possession sentences while preserving existing explanations for the general cross-linguistic regularities we observe in argument structure.

# Concepts, Syntax, and Their Interface

Tanya Reinhart

Martin Everaert and Marijana Marelj (eds)

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: January 2017  
Publisher: The MIT Press  
DOI: 10.7551/  
ISBN: 9780262034135 eISBN: 9780262333177 mitpress/9780262034135.001.0001  
Item type: book

The present book introduces one of Tanya Reinhart's major contributions to linguistic theory, namely the Theta System, a theory of the interface between the system of concepts and the linguistic computational system. The core of the book – part Ia – is her seminal paper *The Theta System: Syntactic Realization of Verbal Concepts*, pre-published as Reinhart (2000). It is enriched with extensive annotations relating it to subsequent developments, and a summary of the approach based on Reinhart (2002). In part Ib Marijana Marelj's contribution provides an in-depth analysis of the role of accusative Case in the system. Chapter II by Julia Horvath and Tal Sioni evaluates the role of the lexicon versus the syntax in building the 'thematic' (vP) phase. They challenge syntactocentric approaches to argument structure; develop an alternative, active-lexicon approach and diagnostics demonstrating that (certain) valence-changing operations apply before syntactic structure is available. Part III, by Marijana Marelj and Eric Reuland, addresses the nature of the Lexicon-Syntax parameter (Reinhart and Sioni 2005), which distinguishes two broad classes of languages. They show that this parameter can be reduced to whether or not a language has syntactic clitics, and to how valence reduction of a verb affects its Case properties.

## Introduction

Neil Myler

in *Building and Interpreting Possession Sentences*

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2017  
Publisher: The MIT Press  
DOI: 10.7551/  
ISBN: 9780262034913 eISBN: 9780262336130 mitpress/9780262034913.003.0001  
Item type: chapter

This chapter introduces the two major puzzles posed by possession sentences: the too-many-meanings puzzle and the too-many-(surface)-structures puzzle. The too-many-meanings puzzle is that languages often use the same construction to speak of having a car, having a sister, and having brown eyes, amongst other things, despite these relations being notionally distinct. The too-many-surface-structures puzzle is that languages differ radically in the argument structure used to convey the same possessive meanings. The chapter goes on to lay out the theory

of the architecture of the grammar assumed in the main body of the book, and sketches how that architecture gives rise to a solution to both puzzles. A particularly important facet of this solution is the idea that a head which introduces a thematic role in the semantics might fail to take a specifier in the syntax, causing the relevant role to be saturated higher in the structure (Wood 2015)—a circumstance this book refers to as delayed gratification, and which turns out to be commonly attested in the typology of possession sentences. The core predictions of the present approach are presented. A concluding section summarizes the structure of the rest of the book.

## The Logic of Evidence

Charles Yang

in *The Price of Linguistic Productivity: How Children Learn to Break the Rules of Language*

Published in print: 2016 Published Online: May 2017 Publisher: The MIT Press  
DOI: 10.7551/  
ISBN: 9780262035323 eISBN: 9780262336376 mitpress/9780262035323.003.0006  
Item type: chapter

A completely new conceptualization of the indirect negative evidence business in language acquisition, especially in syntax. Instead of thinking about retreating from over-generalization, a derivative application of the Tolerance Principle ensures that the child is much more careful before generalizing. Shows how the learner may acquire that adjectives such as “asleep” do not allow attributive in NPs (“\*the asleep cat”), and how to resolve Baker’s classic problem of dative construction acquisition (“\*I donated the museum a painting”). A critique of previous proposals, including Bayesian models of inference, is also included.