
Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The hypothesis that the syntactic properties of verbs are determined by their meaning has long intrigued researchers in linguistics and related fields. The most striking illustration of the role of meaning in the determination of syntax is the tendency for arguments bearing certain semantic roles to be associated with particular syntactic expressions. These tendencies were noted by traditional grammarians dating at least as far back as Pāṇini, and they are encoded, for example, in the “subjectivalization” rule proposed by Fillmore (1968), stated in terms of deep case relations. Following Carter (1988), we call the regularities in the association of arguments bearing certain semantic roles to particular syntactic expressions *linking regularities*, and the rules that effect such associations *linking rules*. To the extent that the semantic role of an argument is determined by the meaning of the verb selecting it, the existence of linking regularities supports the idea that verb meaning is a factor in determining the syntactic structure of sentences. The striking similarities in the linking regularities across languages strongly suggest that they are part of the architecture of language.

Although linking regularities are widely acknowledged to exist, many unresolved issues must be confronted in order to develop a full theory of the mapping between lexical semantics and syntax. Not least among them is the determination of the extent to which the syntactic expression of arguments is predictable and cross-linguistically regular. Another, equally important issue concerns the nature of the lexical semantic representation, since the linking rules are formulated in terms of elements in this representation. A theory of linking, therefore, must be built on a fully articulated theory of lexical semantic representation, yet there is little consensus regarding the nature of this representation.