Argument Realization

The relationship between verbs and their arguments is a widely debated topic in linguistics. This comprehensive survey provides an up-to-date overview of this important area of research, exploring current theories of how a verb’s semantics can determine the morphosyntactic realization of its arguments. Assuming a close connection between verb meaning and syntactic structure, it provides a bridge between lexical semantic and syntactic research, synthesizing the results of work from a range of linguistic subdisciplines and in a variety of theoretical frameworks.

The first four chapters survey leading theories about event structure and conceptualization. The fifth and sixth chapters focus on the mapping from lexical semantics to morphosyntax, and include a detailed discussion of the thematic hierarchy. The seventh chapter reviews treatments of multiple argument realization. With useful bibliographic references and clear definitions of relevant terms, this book will be invaluable to students and researchers in syntax and semantics, as well as those in related fields.

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In large domains of theoretical and empirical linguistics, scholarly communication needs are directly comparable to those in analytical and natural sciences. Conspicuously lacking in the inventory of publications for linguists, compared to those in the sciences, are concise, single-authored, non-textbook reviews of rapidly evolving areas of inquiry. Research Surveys in Linguistics is intended to fill this gap. It consists of well-indexed volumes that survey topics of significant theoretical interest on which there has been a proliferation of research in the last two decades. The goal is to provide an efficient overview of, and entry into, the primary literature for linguists – both advanced students and researchers – who wish to move into, or stay literate in, the areas covered. Series authors are recognized authorities on the subject matter, as well as clear, highly organized writers. Each book offers the reader relatively tight structuring in sections and subsections and a detailed index for ease of orientation.

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Argument Realization

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This book had its origins in an unpublished manuscript entitled “From Lexical Semanticsto Argument Structure.” We thank Hagit Borer for providing us with the impetus to write this paper. Christine Bartels suggested that with some work this paper might find a home in the Research Surveys in Linguistics series at Cambridge University Press. We agreed that this seemed like a good match and set about expanding the paper into this book. We did not anticipate that this process would take so long, in part because the rewriting process turned out to be an intellectual odyssey. We hope that we manage to convey the richness of the phenomena we deal with and their centrality to linguistic theory to those who read and use this book.

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Beth Levin and Malka Rappaport Hovav