

**ARGUMENT STRUCTURE AND THE LEXICON/SYNTAX INTERFACE**

A Dissertation Presented

by

EVA JUARROS DAUSSA

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Approved as to style and content by:

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Margaret Speas, Chair

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Ellen Woolford, Member

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Chisato Kitagawa, Member

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John Kingston, Department Head  
Department of Linguistics

## **DEDICATION**

To my parents María José and Víctor

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing of these last pages of my dissertation is something I have been looking forward for many years. I have rehearsed this section in my head a hundred times since I started the self-inflicted obligation to write a dissertation –in so many bus trips while caught in traffic, after so many meetings with professors, colleagues and occasional interlocutors, during so many conferences in which I would meet yet another linguist who took his or her work seriously, after so many nice evenings with my friends, or while victim of a fit of melancholy in which memories of people, places and events from the past would plague my mind and heart... Yet now that the moment has finally come to write the real thing, I'm just blank with what to say, short of that I am thankful to all of those whose help, guidance, support, ideas, patience and interest I have received all these years, without which I would not have been able to complete my PhD.

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Universtity of Massachusetts Amherst

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ARGUMENT STRUCTURE AND THE LEXICON/SYNTAX INTERFACE**

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EVA JUARROS, B.A., UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

M.A., THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Margaret Speas

This dissertation addresses two questions: (a) how do we explain the limited set of argument structure types?; and b) how do lexical structures relate to syntactic structures? My work is situated within the approach of Hale and Keyser (2002, henceforth H&K), whose purpose is to ascertain the role that structural factors play in the behavior of lexical items.

As for the first question, H&K argue that argument structures are restricted by the combination of primitive lexical categories defined solely by structural properties. I point out that the restrictive power of this theory is undermined by allowing unrestricted recursive combination of such primitive units. By restricting this type of lexical recursion, this problem disappears.

As for the second question, I argue that two adicity-changing processes, transitivization and detransitivization, are key to understanding the relation between lexical and syntactic structures. I investigate these processes in Catalan and Spanish. I argue that there are two types of verbal affixes: one plays no role in the argument structure of the verb (but refers instead to its aspectual properties), while the other is

responsible for the aforementioned processes. I argue that the affixes of the second type correspond to a functional category that bridges over from lexical to syntactic structures. After identifying these two types of affixes, I re-analyze some data (from O’odham, Navajo, Miskitu, Ulwa, and Yaqui) that H&K find problematic.

Finally, I address an important extension of H&K’s theory, the “manner index”. Such index is either proximate (bound by the internal argument), or obviative (bound by other than the internal argument.) In H&K’s theory, the type of index associated with the root determines a particular structure, which in turn determines the behavior of the corresponding verb. By breaking the determination relation between index and structure, I derive two typologies. First, I obtain a four-way paradigm by combining the structural type (“put”/“get”) and the index type (obviative/proximate). Spanish prepositional verbs present the predicted patterns. Second, I account for two alternations: unergative-unaccusative in Italian, and unergative-transitive in English. Given the explanatory power of the obviative/proximate index, I conclude that it is a welcome addition.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	xi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Abstract .....	1
1.2. Introduction .....	1
1.3. Studies About the Lexicon: Questions and Theories .....	3
1.3.1. Subcategorization Frames and Thematic Roles .....	6
1.3.2. Linking Lexical and Syntactic Representations .....	11
1.3.3. Aspectual Properties of Predicates .....	18
1.3.4. Problems with the Standard Solution to the Questions of this Dissertation .....	25
1.4. Hale and Keyser's Alternative .....	28
1.5. My Work within the Framework of H&K's Theory .....	33
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND .....	39
2.1. Abstract .....	39
2.2. Hale and Keyser's Theory of Argument Structure .....	39
2.2.1. Achievements and Shortcomings of H&K: Adicity Alternations ..	44
2.2.2. A Closer Look at Certain Important Points of H&K .....	61
2.2.2.1. Category-Neutral Structures .....	61
2.2.2.2. Transitivity and Recursive Selection .....	63

3. TRANSITIVIZATION AND DETRANSITIVIZATION .....	68
3.1. Abstract .....	68
3.2. Introduction .....	68
3.3. Crosslinguistic Evidence for Transitivity .....	71
3.3.1. O’Odham .....	71
3.3.2. Navajo .....	72
3.3.3. Misumalpan Languages and Yaqui .....	73
3.4. Detransitivization .....	76
3.5. Summary .....	80
3.6. The Case of Spanish and Catalan .....	81
3.6.1. Affixes of the First Type: Proposal .....	82
3.6.1.1. Spanish Suffixes of the First Type .....	84
3.6.1.2. Catalan Prefixes of the First Type .....	89
3.6.2. Affixes of the Second Type .....	97
3.6.2.1. Bridging Categories: Overview of the Proposal .....	98
3.6.2.2. Japanese: Transitivity, or Category $v_{trans}$ .....	104
3.6.2.3. Catalan 1: Transitivity, or Category $v_{trans}$ .....	105
3.6.2.4. Catalan 2: Detransitivization, or Category $v_{unacc}$ .....	109
3.6.3. Conclusions from Romance .....	118
3.6.4. Back to the Problematic Data .....	119
3.6.5. Crosslinguistic Typology of Bridging Categories .....	124
3.7. Conclusion .....	125

3.8. Appendix: Addicitional Functional Categoies above the VP Proposed in the Literature.....	126
3.8.1. Marantz (1984).....	127
3.8.2. Fukui and Speas (1986), Pollock (1989) and Chomsky (1995).....	128
3.8.3. Kratzer (1993) and Kratzer (2000).....	130
3.8.4. Borer (1994) et al. ....	132
3.8.5. Travis (2000).....	134
3.8.6. Summary.....	136
3.8.7. Distrubuted Morphology .....	137
4. OPTIONAL ARGUMENTS AND THE THEORY OF RESTRICTED ARGUMENT STRUCTURE TYPES .....	147
4.1. Abstract .....	147
4.2. Introduction .....	147
4.3. Variable Argument Realizations.....	149
4.4. The Case of <i>spit</i> : the Problem.....	153
4.4.1. The Theme Argument of <i>spit</i> .....	155
4.4.2. The PP Argument of <i>spit</i> .....	158
4.4.3. Taking Both a Theme and a Goal.....	161
4.4.4. Summary: The Problem with the Argument Structure of <i>spit</i> .....	164
4.5. A Proposed Solution to the Recursivity Problem .....	168
4.5.1. The Theme Argument of <i>spit</i> is Always Present .....	169
4.5.1.1. Anaphora.....	170

4.5.1.2.Resultative Construction.....	172
4.5.2. The PP Argument of <i>spit</i> : Resultative Construction.....	174
4.5.2.1.Notes on the Semantics of Resultative Constructions.....	175
4.5.2.2.Secondary Predication over Empty Elements in English.....	176
4.5.3. <i>Spit</i> as a Composite Dyadic Verb.....	178
4.5.4. Addendum: the Source Role of the Subject, and the Lack of Inchoative.....	187
4.5.5. Summary: Lexical Projection Structure of <i>spit</i> -Verbs.....	188
4.6. Conclusions.....	189
4.7. Appendix: Cyclic Merge and the Uniqueness of Selection Hypothesis....	190
4.7.1. Consequences of the USH: the Number of Possible Argument Structures.....	192
4.7.1.1.Structures Based on the Atomic Category.....	192
4.7.1.2.Structures Based on the Monadic Category.....	192
4.7.1.3.Structures Based on the Basic Dyadic Category.....	194
4.7.1.4.Structures Based on the Composite Dyadic Category.....	198
4.7.2. Conclusion.....	199
5. PARAMETERIZATION OF THE OBVIATIVE/PROXIMATE INDEX.....	207
5.1. Abstract.....	207
5.2. Introduction.....	207
5.3. H&K's Obviative and Proximate Structures.....	208
5.3.1. Modified Analysis.....	212



5.3.2. Locatio/Locatum Verbs .....	218
5.4. Prepositional Verbs in Spanish.....	222
5.4.1. Locative Alternation in Spanish.....	223
5.4.2. Alternative Analysis .....	227
5.4.3. The Fourth Case: V PP Verbs in Spanish.....	233
5.4.4. Summary.....	238
5.5. Expanding Unergatives: Crosslinguistic Parameterization of {i} .....	239
5.6. Summary .....	243
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	248