

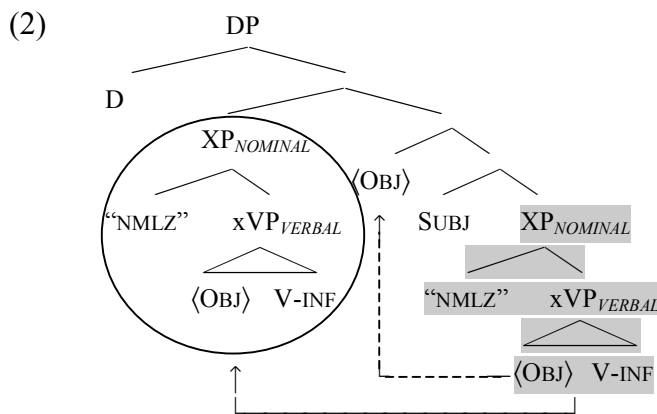
A Different View on Ergativity in German Nominalizations

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In this talk I propose a novel analysis of German verbal nominalizations, which accounts for ergative-absolutive patterns found in such nominalizations (i.e. morphological alignment that groups together the transitive object and the intransitive subject, and marks them differently from the transitive subject, cf. Comrie 1978, Dixon 1994). Such patterns can be found when both subject and direct object occur in post-nominal position, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) a. das Zerstören [vom Staat]_O [durch den Kaiser]_S
 the destroy.INF VON.the state DURCH the emperor
 ‘the emperor’s destroying the state’
- b. das Fallen [vom Kaiser]_S
 the fall.INF VON.the emperor
 ‘the emperor’s falling’

I propose an analysis which assumes that such constructions involve the obligatory fronting of a nominalized extended projection of the verb with optional movement of the direct object out of this projection, as sketched in (2). Evidence for such an analysis stems from resultatives, Condition C effects and freezing effects.



In my talk, I show that this new analysis, in combination with a dependent case assignment mechanism based on Marantz (1991) and Katzir (2007) yields the core morphological alignment patterns found in German nominalizations. This allows us to unify our treatment of nominalizations in nominative-accusative languages with dependent case analyses of ergative-absolutive languages.

References

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