Linking of sentential arguments

Barbara Stiebels & Tonjes Veenstra (ZAS Berlin)

Whereas there exists a rich and abundant literature on how DP-arguments are licensed and linked, the licensing of sentential arguments (i.e. arguments of predicates such as *say, promise, threaten, ask* etc.) has never been on the top of the research agenda, one of the reasons being that sentential arguments normally do not show their Case-marking on their sleeves. This seems to depend in part on what type of subordination is involved. Thus, finite sentential arguments can sometimes be accompanied by a pronominal correlate (e.g. *dar-auf hoffen* (there-on hope)), whereas nominalized sentential complements normally receive Case-marking. When Case does show up in these contexts, we seem to find a similar range of possible Case-markings as with DP-arguments (canonical vs. non-canonical case, e.g. ACC vs GEN in the position of the direct object). This leads to the following questions:

Q1   To what extent is the licensing and linking of sentential arguments similar to the linking of DP-arguments? Are the same mechanisms at work?;

Q2   How are sentential arguments licensed in other linking systems (e.g. active systems, inverse systems, etc.)?

In languages with subject and object agreement, sentential arguments can also be indexed by a pronominal affix. There seem to be some additional restrictions, however. For instance, sentential arguments can only be indexed by a pronominal affix as long as they receive canonical Case (no oblique Case):

Q3   What constraints on the indexing of sentential arguments are there cross-linguistically?

Since sentential arguments solely refer to inanimate entities, we do not expect to find effects of differential object marking (DOM) that are correlated to sortal features (e.g. accusative marking linked to animacy). Nevertheless, it is conceivable to find DOM effects linked to referential features (e.g. specificity in the case of desiderative predicates such as *wish/want*); likewise, the polarity of the matrix clause (as in the genitive of negation in Slavic languages) may influence the linking of the sentential argument.

Q4   Do we find DOM-like phenomena with sentential arguments?

In addition, virtually nothing is discussed in the literature about the role of diathetic operations in the introduction and elimination of sentential arguments. For instance, applicatives have only be discussed regarding the introduction of NP/DP arguments.

Q5   Do we find special diathetic operations in the introduction or elimination of sentential arguments? Can voice markers that target NP/DP arguments affect the realization of sentential arguments indirectly?

Finally, the concrete realisation of sentential arguments is highly relevant for restructuring processes in the syntax, because, as argued by Sabel (1996), clause union only seems to be possible when the embedded complement is canonically realised:

Q6   To what extent are syntactic processes affected by the structural realisation of sentential arguments?

We invite papers addressing the issues mentioned above. We are interested in different theoretical approaches to these issues, in descriptions of linking patterns in particular languages, as well as a discussion of the linking of sentential arguments in typologically distinct linking systems.

Deadline: August 17, 2008
Notification of acceptance: September 15

Please submit your abstract as pdf file (named '<surname>_dgfs2009_ag12.pdf').

Email: dgfs.2009_ag12@zas.gwz-berlin.de

Sabel, Joachim (1996). *Restrukturierung und Lokalität. Universelle Beschränkungen für Wortstellungs- varianten*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.