

Preface and acknowledgements

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Extraction Asymmetries: Experimental evidence from German

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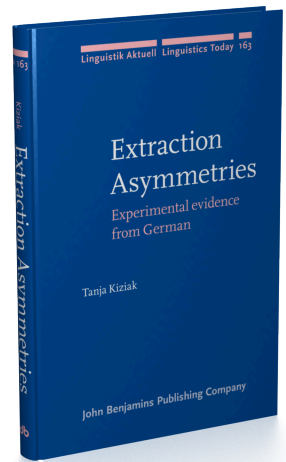
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Preface and acknowledgements

In recent years, linguistics has taken a strong empirical turn, i.e. experimental and frequency-based approaches to language have been on the rise due to technological developments and academic paradigm shifts. This book is an attempt to show that one can now fruitfully reopen fundamental questions of generative grammar which previously had to be left unanswered as empirical methodologies were not yet sophisticated enough.

In the late eighties and early nineties of the past century, many linguists working on German took a great interest in subject/object asymmetries in long extractions, as it was hoped that new insights into German sentence structure could be gained from this language data. By and by, it however became apparent that judgements concerning the basic data pattern itself were highly controversial, and as a consequence, the issue of extraction asymmetries was abandoned in German linguistics. Since those days, new rigorous empirical methods have become available, and it thus seemed worthwhile to readdress the conflicting data. Disentangling the different factors that contribute to the assessment of the subject/object asymmetries turned out to be an intricate challenge, and in the end, a whole study programme arose from this goal.

My experiments were supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft as part of the former collaborative research centre 'Linguistic Data Structures' at the University of Tübingen, and they rest on the research centre's pioneering work on empirical linguistics.

I benefited from the helpfulness and experience of many of my colleagues, but for reasons of space I can only mention the ones most directly involved with this monograph.

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