

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the traditional evidence for the Argument/Adjunct Distinction (A/AD). I begin by drawing a distinction between the *semantic* sense of the A/AD and the *syntactic* sense of the A/AD. The semantic A/AD concerns lexical encoding of thematic information; arguments are taken to be semantically encoded in the lexical representation of predicates, while adjuncts are not. I argue instead that lexical encoding of thematic information is a property in its own right; the standard evidence does motivate an understanding of the A/AD in these terms. The syntactic A/AD has to do with the external syntax of constituents. I consider nine canonical syntactic diagnostics for argumenthood (e.g. omissibility, VP-anaphora, islandhood, etc.), using prepositional phrases in the verbal domain in English as a test case, and I find that these diagnostics do not provide adequate evidence for the syntactic A/AD. Instead, the properties identified by the canonical argumenthood diagnostics are independent of one another; they should not be taken to as properties of a single larger distinction.

After carefully examining the evidence for the A/AD, I consider certain consequences of eliminating the distinction. I focus specifically on consequences for the syntax of prepositional phrases, including (i) the configuration of PPs in the verbal domain, (ii) licensing of pronouns within PPs, and (iii) pseudopassives (p-passives). The A/AD has been argued to play an important role in each of these domains, and so if the distinction is to be eliminated, it is important to explore how analyses in these domains are affected. On the structure of VP-internal PPs, I pursue the hypothesis that PPs could be attached as sisters to functional heads in the verbal domain, potentially forming multiple *n*-ary-branching layers. On pronoun-licensing in PP, I defend the hypothesis that PP is split into two layers, and I argue that the lower of the two layers is a phase; assuming that Condition B is sensitive to phase domains, this enables an account of a range of relevant data. Finally, on p-passives, I consider the conditions under which p-passivization is blocked, arguing that argumenthood is not a relevant factor.