Principles of Argument Structure: A Merge-Based Approach

Chris Collins

New York University

I argue for a Merge-based theory of argument structure based on the Argument Criterion/Theta-Criterion, a principle of UG. Using Principles A and B of the Binding Theory, the distribution of Helke expressions and secondary predicates, I show that the implicit argument of the short passive in English is syntactically projected. I situate these empirical results in a general theory of implicit arguments. Similarly, I argue that the *by*-phrase in the passive is externally merged in the same position as the external argument in the active. I show that my analysis is superior empirically to analyses which do not adopt the Argument Criterion/Theta-Criterion. Lastly, I discuss the consequences of the Merge-based theory for the dative alternation, for the conception of voice in syntactic theory, and for the role of formal semantics in a theory of argument structure.