

Resolving selectional puzzles with multidominant representations

This talk addresses a range of recalcitrant puzzles for the theory of selection, in particular concerning the status of determiners, adpositions and conjunctions. It is widely and often tacitly assumed that selection is strictly local, yet there are a wide range of cases which seem not to fit in. To give an example, the appearance of a preposition *of* in complex event nominalizations has the appearance of a selectional violation, since there's plenty of reasons to believe the nominalization is built from merging a nominalizing *n* with a chunk of verbal structure at least as big as *vP*, most likely also including *AspP* (see e.g. Borer 2020). Clearly the verb which introduces the internal argument selects a nominal, yet *of* appears with the nominal by virtue of the addition of *n* much higher up.

- (1) a. The destruction *(of) the Brazilian defense by *Die Mannschaft* in 20 minutes upset Neymar.
- b. *Die Mannschaft* destroyed *(of) the Brazilian defense in 20 mins, upsetting Neymar.

What we seem to have here is what Gereon Müller calls *conflicting representations*, where a base structure and derived structure seem to require quite distinct representations with respect to core syntactic notions such as selection.

A common way to bat away examples like (1a) is to say they're just an instance of "preposition insertion", or perhaps as a postsyntactically inserted case marker, but this is more a placeholder for an analysis than a real analysis. Moreover there are cases where insertion seems much harder to handle with the brute-force mechanisms of the postsyntax, such as cases like the following, where the preposition which is "inserted" is lexically specific (cf. Merchant 2019).

- (2) a. The attack *(on) Glasgow by the aliens lasted three days.
- b. The aliens attacked *(on) Glasgow for three days.
- (3) a. The investigation *(into) the UFO sighting lasted months.
- b. We investigated *(into) the UFO sighting for months.

Merchant (2019) submits that cases such as these require some sort of *joint selection* of the adposition by the nominalizer and the root, which seems descriptively correct, but it still seems to require nonlocal selection of a sort. There are many more syntactic arguments against relegating facts such as the foregoing to the postsyntax wastebasket, some of which I'll mention briefly.

I show that the nominalization issue is one reflex of a much larger problem, where syntactic expressions seem to enter into selectional relations with more than one head. This, I argue, is one of the signatures of a "multiple mother" scenario of the sort which multidominant representations are well-equipped to deal with. I argue that we can arrive at a principled understanding of these apparently conflicting representations by allowing phrases to be built up by steps of parallel merge (sideward merge/external remerge), where the phrase's lexical "core" can be selected by two different functional sequences. Other situations where functional material seems to be "inserted" low in reaction to a higher head being merged can be recast in similar terms.