Linking

The Geometry of Argument Structure
LINKING
In memory of Roslyn Seigel Randall
1925–2003
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# List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>APF</td>
<td>Adjectival Passive Formation</td>
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<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Argument Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Conceptual Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>D-Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>Extended Projection Principle</td>
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<td>ILH</td>
<td>Isomorphic Linking Hypothesis</td>
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<td>LCS</td>
<td>Lexical Conceptual Structure</td>
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<td>MF</td>
<td>Middle Formation</td>
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<td>VPF</td>
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Introduction

1 A Phenomenon and a Principle: The Isomorphic Linking Hypothesis

This book proposes a theory of “linking”, the mapping between the meanings of words and the syntactic forms that they take. Its aim is to uncover the principles that relate a word’s lexical-semantic representation to the syntactic structures that it appears in. Consider the verb *shelve*, in (1).

(1) [The librarian] shelved [the dictionaries].

This sentence means something like “the librarian put the dictionaries on a shelf (or shelves),” with three lexical-semantic arguments – an agent (the librarian), a theme (the dictionaries) and a location (on shelves). Yet only two of these arguments are syntactically realized: the agent and the theme. And the positions to which these arguments link are tightly constrained: the agent argument links to subject position and the theme, to object. Reversing the linkings results in ungrammaticality:

(2) *[The dictionaries] shelved [the librarian].

The main claim in this book, set forth and defended in Part I, is that the syntactic arrangement of the arguments of a predicate is determined by the geometry of its lexical entry. Specifically, the syntactic positions of a predicate’s arguments must reflect their structural relationships in lexical semantics, the representation that we call lexical Conceptual Structure, or CS.¹ We express this as the *Isomorphic Linking Hypothesis* (ILH), stated in preliminary form in (3).

(3) **Isomorphic Linking Hypothesis** (informal version)

The linking nodes at CS map isomorphically into the terminal nodes in the syntax.

For *shelve* in (1), the Conceptual Structure (CS) representation – like the CS for many other causative verbs – has two linking CS arguments, shown schematically using circles in (4a). These arguments must link to the syntax isomorphically, that

1 This representation is commonly called Lexical Conceptual Structure, LCS.