

Arguments in nominalisations: a unified approach to postnominal PPs and genitives in German

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Nominalizations across languages
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Outline of the talk

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Data and main claims
- 3 The analysis
- 4 Summary and future work

Main objectives of the talk I

- semantic and syntactic aspects of adnominal genitives and PPs in nominalisations
- two kinds of genitives?
 - syntactic genitive – internal argument

(1) die Zerstörung der Stadt
 the destruction the_{gen} city_{gen}
 'the destruction of the city'

- semantic genitive – modifier

(2) der Garten des Nachbarn
 the garden the_{gen} neighbour_{gen}
 'the neighbour's garden'

Main objectives of the talk II

The following claims are made:

- no **syntactic** argument position for genitives
- all postnominal genitives should be treated the same way
- the analysis should preferably also cover postnominal PPs associated with arguments: *von* and *durch*

Assumptions:

- syntax of the modifier case
- underspecified semantics

Data and claims I

- postnominal genitives, *von* and *durch* phrases in German
- prenominal genitives excluded: restricted to proper names?
- event nominalisations derived by means of *-ung* suffix

Data and claims II

- (3)
- a. die Beschreibung der Bürgermeisterin
the description GEN Mayoress
'the description of the Mayoress' or 'the Mayoress' description'
 - b. die Beschreibung durch die Bürgermeisterin
the description through the mayoress
'the description by the Mayoress'
 - c. die Beschreibung von Bürgermeisterin Müller
the description of Mayoress Müller
'the description of Mayoress Müller' or 'Mayoress Müller's description'
 - d. die Lagebeschreibung der Bürgermeisterin
the situation-description GEN mayoress
'the description of the situation by the mayoress'

Data and claims III

- All postnominal PPs and genitives occupy the same syntactic position, i.e. they are adjoined to the level of nP.
- All postnominal PPs and genitives are assigned the same semantic value: they are represented by the underspecified two-place semantic relation $\rho(x,z)$.

Data and claims IV

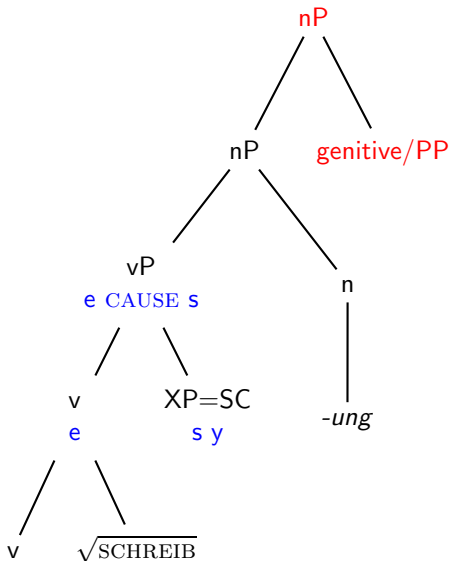
Two views:

- Semantics/argument structure: as genitives relate differently to the head noun, they must occupy different syntactic positions
- Surface syntax: as there is no syntactic difference, we should assume an underspecified semantics

The framework

- inspired by distributed morphology: constructing words from roots
- semantics: discourse representation theory including store–content differentiation

Word-syntactic structure of *Beschreibung* (simplified)

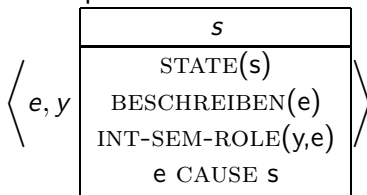


Word-syntactic (and semantic) assumptions

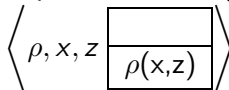
- Assuming the Voice hypothesis, i.e. external arguments are introduced by Voice and not contained in vP.
- The suffix *-ung* operates on the level of vP, but has no semantic effect apart from providing a noun.
- The *-ung* nominalisation does not include a Voice projection.
- The variable introducing what may be termed the internal argument semantically, y , is not bound before the level at which nominalisation occurs.
- The vP level includes semantic information on the relation between the y argument and the event in which it is included.

Semantic construction with genitives and *von* phrases I

- (4) The representation of vP and nP:

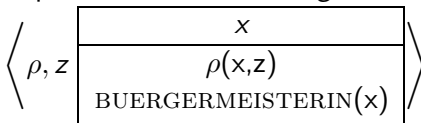


- (5) Representation of ρ :



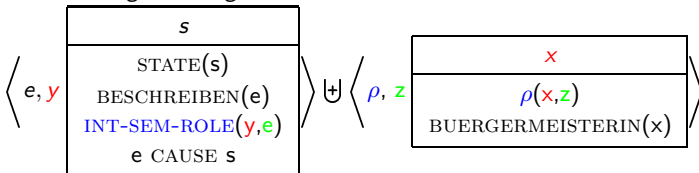
Semantic construction with genitives and *von* phrases II

- (6) die Beschreibung der Bürgermeisterin
 the description GEN Mayoress
 'the description of the Mayoress' or 'the Mayoress's
 description'
- (7) Representation of *der Bürgermeisterin*:

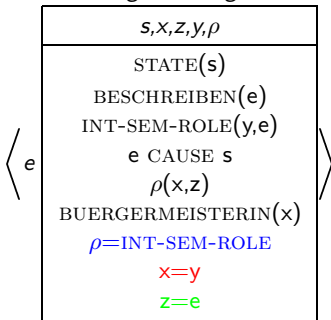


Semantic construction with genitives and *von* phrases III

- (8) *Beschreibung der Bürgermeisterin* before unification:



- (9) *Beschreibung der Bürgermeisterin*:



Preference for object reading

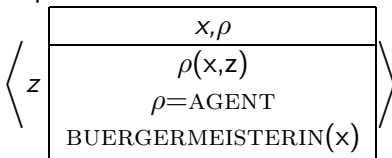
- for variables, entering binding relations is preferred to existential binding
- preference for object/internal argument reading
- if variable is not bound by genitive, a binding has been overlooked, ρ relation has to be accommodated

Semantic construction with *durch* phrase I

(10) die Beschreibung durch die Bürgermeisterin
 the description through the mayoress
 'the description by the Mayoress'

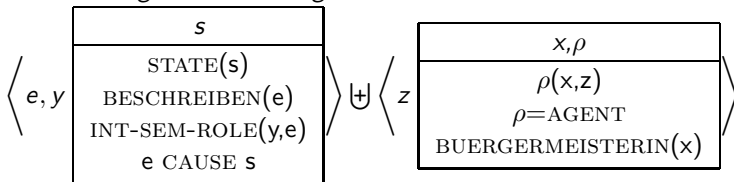
(11) $\rho = \text{AGENT}$

(12) Representation of *durch die Bürgermeisterin*:

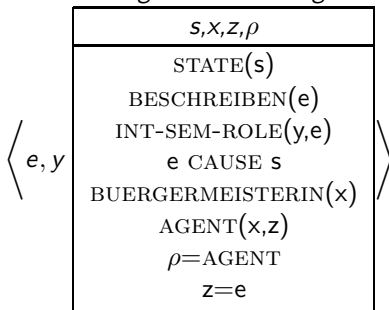


Semantic construction with *durch* phrase II

(13) *Beschreibung durch die Bürgermeisterin* before unification:



(14) *Beschreibung durch die Bürgermeisterin*:



Agentive reading of genitives I

No internal argument reading available:

- (15) die Lagebeschreibung der Bürgermeisterin
 the situation-description GEN mayoress
 ‘the description of the situation by the mayoress’

- Does the noun *Lage* bind *y*?

Agentive reading of genitives II

Binding of *y* analysis too simple:

- (16)
- a. die Personenbeschreibung der Täter
the person-description the delinquent
'the personal description of the delinquent'
 - b. die Strukturbeschreibung des einfachen
the structure-description the simple
Arraymodells
array-model
'the structural description of the simple array model'

- genitive identified with first noun in the compound (16a)
- genitive modifies the first noun in the compound (bracketing paradox) (16b)

Conceptualising arguments?

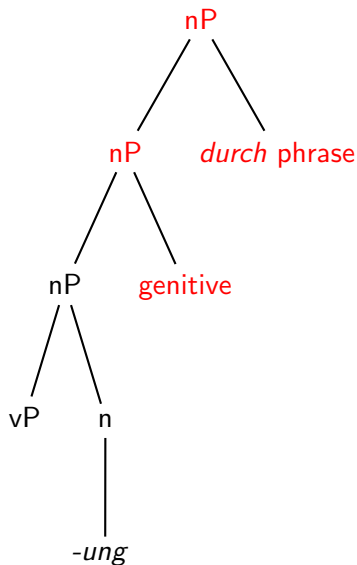
- *durch*: ensures AGENT interpretation
- how does the agentive interpretation of genitives emerge?
- associative relation conceptualised as agent?

Modification involving genitive and *durch* phrase I

- (17) a. die Beschreibung der Lage durch die
the description GEN situation through the
Bürgermeisterin
mayor
'the mayoress' description of the situation'
- b. *die Beschreibung durch die Bürgermeisterin der
the description through the mayoress the
Lage
situation
intended: 'the mayoress' description of the situation'

■ additional constraint on genitives and *von* phrases: adjacency

Modification involving genitive and *durch* phrase II



Obligatory internal argument interpretation of genitives? I

There seem to be some cases where the genitive is obligatorily interpreted as the internal argument:

- (18) die Absetzung des Kanzlers
 the unseating the chancellor
 'The unseating of the chancellor'

- Potentially problematic to the analysis presented here
- Ehrich & Rapp: always internal argument interpretation when change-of-state is present

Obligatory internal argument interpretation of genitives? II

Possible counterevidence to Ehrich & Rapp:

- (19) a. Die Gruppe “Revolutionärer Kampf” protestierte
 the group “revolutionary struggle” protested
 gegen die todbringende **Umweltzerstörung**
 against the deathly environment-destruction
 des kapitalistischen Systems.
 the capitalistic system
 ‘The group “revolutionary struggle” protested against
 the deathly destruction of the environment by the
 capitalistic system’

Obligatory internal argument interpretation of genitives? III

- b. Eine Woche nach der **Leitzinserhöhung** der
one week after the key-interest-rate-raising the
Deutschen Bundesbank ...
German Bundesbank
'One week after the raising of the key interest rate by
the German Bundesbank ...

- Alternative explanation: particle *ab-* involved?

General questions

- At which level are semantic entities available for modification?
Compositionality.
- Are there differences between the semantic roles in the verbal and nominal domain?

a unified analysis of postnominal genitives and PPs as modifiers of *-ung* nominalisations in German

- All postnominal genitives and PPs occupy the same syntactic position. They are adjuncts of nP.
- All postnominal genitives and PPs are assigned a underspecified semantic representation which may be specified as being an agent in the case of *durch*, unified with the semantic role of the internal argument in the case of genitives or *von* phrases or specified otherwise according to the selectional and sortal restrictions of the nominalisation.

Future work:

- all of the above
- compounds consisting of noun--*ung*-nominalisation combinations
- the distribution of *von* and *durch* in passives and nominalisations