

# The Syntax of Givenness

by

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## Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to account for distributional patterns of given and new items in Czech, especially their word order. The system proposed here has four basic components: (i) syntax, (ii) economy, (iii) interpretation, and (iv) reference set computation. The approach belongs to the family of interface driven approaches.

The syntactic part of the thesis introduces a free syntactic movement (G-movement). The movement causes very local reordering of given elements with respect to new elements in the structure. G-movement is licensed only if it creates a syntactic structure which leads to a semantic interpretation that would not otherwise be available. The economy condition interacts with the way givenness is interpreted. I introduce a recursive operator that adds a presupposition to given elements. The distribution of the operator is regulated by the Maximize presupposition maxim of Heim (1991). The reference set for purposes of this evaluation is defined as the set of derivations that have the same numeration and the same assertion.

Finally, I argue that the licensing semantic conditions on givenness in Czech are not identical to the licensing conditions on deaccenting in English. The givenness licensing conditions are stronger in that they require that for an element to be given it must not only have a salient antecedent but also satisfy an existential presupposition.

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