Data and Evidence in Linguistics

The question of what types of data and evidence can be used is one of the most important topics in linguistics. This book is the first to present comprehensively the methodological problems associated with linguistic data and evidence. Its originality is twofold. First, the authors' approach accounts for a series of unexplained characteristics of linguistic theorising: the uncertainty and diversity of data, the role of evidence in the evaluation of hypotheses, the problem-solving strategies as well as the emergence and resolution of inconsistencies. Second, the findings are obtained by the application of a new model of plausible argumentation which is also of relevance from a general argumentation-theoretical point of view. All concepts and theses are systematically introduced and illustrated by a number of examples from different linguistic theories, and a detailed case-study section shows how the proposed model can be applied to specific linguistic problems.

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KERTÉSZ AND RÁKOSI Data and Evidence in Linguistics

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A Plausible Argumentation Model

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Preface

This book is the latest product of a long-term metalinguistic research programme whose earlier stages have been hallmarked by a series of monographs (cf. e.g., Kertész 1991, 1993, 2004a, b, Rákosi 2005). The idea that linguistic theorising is built on plausible argumentation was put forward in Kertész (1993) and was integrated with other components of the programme in Kertész (2004a). The elaboration of the p-model of plausible argumentation, around which the present book centres, is the accomplishment of the task set out in Part V of Kertész (2004a); thus, it is the direct continuation of this line of the programme.

The implementation of the plan was prepared at two levels in parallel, which have been conjoined in the present book. On the one hand, we elaborated different aspects of the p-model with the help of detailed case studies (cf. Kertész & Rákosi 2005a, b, 2006, 2009a, b). On the other hand, on the basis of thorough and multifaceted analyses of the current literature on linguistic data and evidence, we arrived at conclusions that – besides the findings of Kertész (1993) and (2004a) – clearly motivate the application of the p-model of plausible argumentation to linguistic theorising (Kertész & Rákosi 2008a,b,c, 2009c).

The present book is a research monograph written primarily for linguists. However, it also raises problems of current research in argumentation theory and the philosophy of science. Therefore, as a secondary target group, it also addresses philosophers of science and argumentation theorists. Moreover, since it includes a series of examples which are intended to be simple and illuminating, and which illustrate the methodology of linguistic problem solving, it can also be used as a textbook recommended for students in these fields.

Accordingly, the chapters have been organised in a way which facilitates different readings. The main text should be read by all target groups. The subsections entitled *Motivation and background* may be skipped by linguists (but consulted if they are interested in the details of the theoretical considerations behind the concepts) and should be read by philosophers of science and argumentation theorists. The examples may be skipped by the latter, but should be read by linguists. Nevertheless, all readers are advised to go through the detailed case study in Part IV which exemplifies how our approach works in practice.

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