Discussion of the lexical problem

Dunstan Brown (Surrey)

'From competing theories to fieldwork',

Introductory Seminar, June 1, 2012

Lexical Problem

- Issue of division of labour between syntax and morphology

- Empirical ramifications

Morphology-Syntax Tradeoffs

Zaliznjak on Case

Таким образом, одно и то же грамматическое явление может быть описано либо как наличие в языке особого морфологически несамостоятельного падежа, либо как чисто синтаксическая особенность (наличие расчлененных правил управления для некоторых ситуаций). Зализняк (1973/2002: 629)

"So one and the same grammatical phenomenon can be described either as the presence in the language of a special morphologically non-autonomous case, or as a purely syntactic peculiarity (the presence of structured rules of government for certain contexts)." Zaliznjak (1973/2002: 629)

See Corbett (forthcoming) for discussion of this problem in general.

Morphology-Syntax Tradeoffs

Similar issues arise for agreement

Bob's HPSG treatment

Bob notes that Archi is not particularly odd in having word classes where some items fail to show agreement.

Bob's HPSG treatment

Borsley proposes three possibilities:

1. All members of the class have agreement features, but some fail to realize them.
(complexity in the morphology)

2. Some members of the class have agreement features, but others do not.
(complexity in the syntax)

3. All members of the class have agreement features, but certain members have special values for those features, such as the value *none*
(complexity in the syntax)

Bob's HPSG treatment

"It is not easy to choose between these approaches."

Louisa's LFG treatment

Louisa points out that:

- – the definition of word classes is a matter for the morphological component

- – agreement properties will depend on the inheritance structure within the lexicon

- – feature co-occurrence restrictions for particular word classes (e.g. no gender in the plural for adjectives)

Louisa on non-agreeing forms

"… an alternative (from a syntactic point of view) would be make those members of a given word class which do **not** realize agreement features to be treated as syntactically ambiguous (i.e. associating them with a disjunction of agreement constraints), but it is not clear what would motivate such an analysis."

Discussion of Motivation

Bob notes that the approach where a word class has special values for a feature can be justified where the are special circumstances for the agreement, as in Welsh prepositions:

1.	**(a)**	ar	y	dyn
		on	the	man
	(b)	arno	fo	
		on-3.SG.M	he	
	(c)	arni	hi	
		on-3.SG.F	she	
2.	**(a)**	gyda	Gareth	
		with	Gareth	
	(b)/(c)	gyda	fo	/hi
		with	he	/she

Discussion of Motivation

- Motivation for Syntax: status as agreeing vs. non-agreeing is external to the agreement target (must be Bob's type 3, because the target is sensitive to all values of the feature under certain circumstances)

- Motivation for Syntax: belonging to type 2 (failing to have the feature) correlates with other constructional properties (does not appear to be the case for Archi)

Discussion of Motivation

Three related notions in Baerman, Brown and Corbett (2005):

•*Neutralization*

i. In the presence of a particular combination of values of one or more other features (the context), there is a general loss of all values of a particular feature F found elsewhere in the language.

ii. No syntactic objects distinguish any values of feature F in the given context, and feature F is therefore syntactically irrelevant in that context.

Discussion of Motivation

	knig-i	*interesn-y*
mor:	books	interesting-pl
syn:	books	interesting-pl

'the books are interesting' (*kniga* is fem.)

	rasskaz-y	*interesn-y*
mor:	tales	interesting-pl
syn:	tales	interesting-pl

'the tales are interesting' (*rasskaz* is masc.)

Discussion of Motivation

	predloženi-ja	*interesn-y*
mor:	proposals	interesting-pl
syn:	proposals	interesting-pl

'the proposals are interesting'

(*predloženie* is neuter)

" … the lack of formal distinction merely reflects the irrelevance of the feature in question for syntax."
Baerman et al. (2005)

Discussion of Motivation

- *Uninflectedness*

i. There is, in certain lexemes only, a loss of all values of a particular feature F found elsewhere in the language. This loss may depend on the presence of a particular combination of values of one or more other features (the context).

ii. Other syntactic objects distinguish values of feature F, either generally or in the given context, and feature F is therefore syntactically relevant.

Discussion of Motivation

	now-ego	*muzeum*
mor:	new-M.SG.GEN	museum(M)[SG]
syn:	new-M.SG.GEN	museum(M)[SG.GEN]

'of (the/a) new museum'

	now-ych	*muze-ów*
mor:	new-PL.GEN	museum(M)-PL.GEN
syn:	new-PL.GEN	museum(M)-PL.GEN

'of (the) new museums'

Discussion of Motivation

" … whereas neutralization is about syntactic irrelevance as reflected in morphology, uninflectedness is about morphology being unresponsive to a feature that is syntactically relevant."

Baerman et al. (2005)

Discussion of Motivation

Canonical Syncretism

i. There is, in certain contexts, a loss of distinctions between some but not all values of a particular feature F. This loss may depend on the presence of a particular combination of values of one or more other features (the context).

ii. Other syntactic objects distinguish those values of feature F, and they are therefore syntactically relevant.

(Baerman et al (2005)

Possible classification of Examples

Examples	Possible Nature	Comment
(1) and (2)	Uninflectedness	Conditioned by word class/ Type 2 or Type 3
(3) and (4)	Uninflectedness	Morphology internal / Type 1
(5) and (6)	Uninflectedness	Morphology internal / Type 1
(8) and (9)	Uninfl. or Syntactic?	Masha's earlier suggestion that the distinction related to high vs. low adverbs
(10) and (11)	Uninflectedness	On the basis that *e<b>q'en* slots into the same structures as any other postposition, but consider the attachment properties of the *road up to X.*

Further Questions

- Neutralization
  - Issue of absence of a feature versus presence of a special value (i.e. *none*)
  - Does type 3 fit with emergency values (such as neutral genders?)

- Zeros