

Preface

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The present volume of *Linguistische Arbeits Berichte* brings together analyses of a number of seemingly diverse grammatical phenomena that have been developed at the *Institut für Linguistik* of Leipzig University over the last couple of months. Among the issues that are tackled are binomial formation in Chintang; pronominal declension in Kugu Nganhcara, German, and Italian; nominal declension in Czech and Russian; verbal agreement in Burushaski and Warembori; relative clause formation with pronominal head nouns in German, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese; verb placement in ergative languages; non-concatenative inflection in Aka, Fula, Nuer, and Texistepec Popoluca; and parametrization in syntax. Is there anything that these phenomena have in common? Indeed, there is. First, they all involve aspects of the grammar of verbal arguments (in fact, most of the contributions focus on the prototypical morpho-syntactic interface phenomenon of argument encoding by case or agreement). Second, a closer inspection of all these phenomena reveals patterns that support analyses in terms of a concept of *competition* of grammatical forms.

How exactly competition should be conceived of in the theory of grammar is an issue that has received quite a bit of attention in recent years. It seems safe to conclude that whereas the case for competition as an important concept of grammar as such can be viewed as strong, there is substantial disagreement as to what form such a concept should be taken to have. Options include transderivational economy constraints in versions of the minimalist program that select the most economical derivation from an appropriately defined set of competitors (see Chomsky (1993; 1995)); a constraint like the Specificity Condition that selects the most specific item from an appropriately defined set of competitors (this particular concept of competition is at the heart of many current theories of inflection, e.g., Distributed Morphology (see Halle & Marantz (1993)), Paradigm Function Morphology (see Stump (2001)), Minimalist Morphology (see Wunderlich (1996)), or the spell-out approach developed by Ackema & Neeleman (2004)

– but it has also figured prominently in syntax, as evidenced by work such as Fanselow (1990) and Williams (1997; 2003)); and the very concept of optimality in Optimality Theory according to which the candidate with the best constraint profile is selected from an appropriately defined set of competitors (cf. Prince & Smolensky (2004)). Furthermore, it is an open question to what extent complexity issues that invariably arise once a notion of competition is introduced into grammatical analyses should be taken to be relevant for the precise understanding of the concept of competition; see, e.g., Collins (1997) on global vs. local economy constraints in the minimalist program (cf. Chomsky (1995; 2001; 2005)), or Heck & Müller (2007) on global vs. local optimization procedures in Optimality Theory, and McCarthy (2008) on parallel vs. serial optimization.

Concepts of competition in grammar play a prominent role in all contributions to this volume. The papers collected here address a variety of grammatical domains (syntax, morphology, phonology), and they do so on the basis of different theoretical frameworks (among them Distributed Morphology, Paradigm Function Morphology, the Minimalist Program, and Optimality Theory), and by invoking different notions of competition. Here is a brief overview of the concepts of competition that figure in the individual analyses that follow:

Anja Bonitz’s analysis of pronouns in Kugu Nganhcara relies on the version of the Specificity Condition adopted in Paradigm Function Morphology (called “Panini’s Principle” there).

Fabian Heck & Juan Cuartero’s approach to long-distance agreement into relative clauses is couched in a minimalist setting. The approach relies on feature sharing, with a cyclic generation of feature structures which are not uniquely determined by agreement relations; this gives rise to competing feature structures. The competition is resolved by a transderivational principle that demands minimization of feature dissociation.

Johannes Hein addresses verbal inflection in Warembori on the basis of Distributed Morphology; an important part of the analysis in terms of underspecified exponents is a version of the Specificity Condition (more generally, the Subset Principle) that replaces the uniqueness requirement inherent to the standard definition by a weaker existential requirement in order to account for marker optionality.

Antje Lahne accounts for the well-known tendency of SVO order and ergativity to be mutually incompatible by assuming local optimization procedures in minimalist syntax that resolve conflicts between Merge and Agree (Value) operations in incremental structure-building at the TP level.

Gereon Müller and Jochen Trommer both rely on the standard way of resolving competition in Optimality Theory (viz., selecting the candidate with

the best constraint profile), in their respective analyses of (pro-)nominal inflection and mutation.

Marc Richards tackles the issue of parametrization in a minimalist approach to grammar; he argues that instances of competition between derivations do not have to be resolved in a unique way if universal interface and economy constraints have nothing to say about them – optionality arises if the grammar does not mind.

Tilman van der Wall’s approach to the intricate system of inflection that can be observed with the intransitive verb *bá* (‘to be’) in Burushaski is based on Distributed Morphology; accordingly, a version of the Specificity Condition is embraced that resolves the competition among underspecified exponents.

Annegrit Vorberg shows that a few general constraints fully predict which of the competing orders of the two basic parts (‘limbs’) of binomials in Chintang ritual language is chosen, given an optimality-theoretic approach in which these constraints can be assumed to be violable and ranked.

Finally, Philipp Weisser argues for subanalysis and underspecification in Czech nominal inflection; the principle that resolves the competition which necessarily arises as a result of underspecification is identified as the Specificity Condition (on the basis of a Distributed Morphology approach).

Thus, there is a good deal of variation with respect to the definition of competition in the contributions to the present volume. We believe that they adequately reflect the state of the art.

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