

## Yearbook of Morphology

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# YEARBOOK OF MORPHOLOGY 2005

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### Book information

- Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Morphology Meeting, Catania,  
21–23 September 2004 315

## Book reviews

**Paul Boucher (ed.), *Many Morphologies*.** Sommerville: Cascadilla Press, 2002, xvi + 267 p. ISBN 1-57473-025-8

*Reviewed by Peter Arkadiev*

The book reviewed here is a collection of nine papers dealing with various aspects of current morphological research. The ambitious title *Many Morphologies* suggests a wide coverage of topics from diverse theoretical perspectives. However, although many different conceptions are indeed present in the articles comprising the book, one cannot regard it as an adequate survey of the field. I believe, though, that this volume's goal was not to represent all major (formal) theories of morphology, but instead to show a variety of (not always purely morphological) approaches to morphological problems. Indeed, most of the papers are to a large extent 'inter-modular' and interdisciplinary, dealing with relationships between morphology and syntax, semantics, and lexicon.

The book begins with an introduction (pp. vii–xv) by Paul Boucher and Marc Plénat, where they give a short characteristic of the volume as a whole, followed by a very useful 'guide' to the book, which consists of informative summaries of the articles. Although there is no division of articles by topic, a natural grouping suggests itself: 'theoretical' papers, 'morphology and lexical semantics', morphological patterns from 'exotic' languages, and 'computational morphology'. I will deal with these groups in the reversed order.

Nabil Harthout, Fiammetta Namer and Georgette Dal's article 'An experimental constructional database: The MorTAL project' (pp. 178–209) presents a detailed description and comparison of two systems of morphological databases for French, DéCor and DériF, whose aim is to extract morphological information from annotated corpora. The second paper dealing with computational morphology is Béatrice Daille, Cécile Fabre, and Pascale Sébillot's general outline of the field, 'Applications of computational morphology' (pp. 210–234). They survey different kinds of morphological information used in natural language processing, as well as a large variety of applications using this information, and give brief descriptions of certain systems, primarily of those designed in France. Although both articles are informative and instructive they give an impression that almost all what is done in current 'theoretical' approaches to morphological phenomena is to a large extent orthogonal to problems which arise in the field of natural language processing. It is not so simple to decide whose fault this situation is.

Christian Bassac and Pierrette Bouillon's paper 'Middle transitive alternations in English: A generative lexicon approach' (pp. 29–47) presents a nice and convincing account of various semantic and syntactic restrictions on middle formation in English, such as its argument structure and aspectual properties, in the

framework of *Generative Lexicon* (Pustejovsky 1995), which aims at representing both lexical and constructional aspects of syntax and semantics in a unified way.

In her paper 'Unaccusativity mismatches and unaccusativity diagnostics from derivational morphology' (pp. 48–81) Bożena Cetnarowska addresses the problem of using morphological derivatives as diagnostic tests for unaccusativity/unergativity. Carefully investigating data from English and Polish, she reaches the following conclusion: the occurrence of a derivative proves that its base is an unaccusative or unergative verb, whereas the non-occurrence is non-conclusive in this respect. Also, Cetnarowska shows that existence or non-existence of a certain derived form are usually subject to fine-grained semantic and pragmatic constraints.

Susan Steele in her article 'Many plurals: Inflection, informational additivity, and morphological processes' (pp. 82–108) presents an account of plural formation in the Uto-Aztecan language Luiseño in the framework of the so called 'information-based morphology' (cf. Steele 1995), whose main theoretical postulate is that all morphological operations add information (where information may be phonological, semantic, or syntactic). Conceptual ideas of Steele's proposal are of certain interest, but the overall impression of the article is unsatisfactory. The author develops a very sophisticated system of rules and principles in order to account for the facts which, I believe, if not rather trivial, certainly do not demand such a complex description and so many stipulations. The main problem which Steele addresses is the fact that it is words and not stems which serve as bases for plural formation in Luiseño. If to account for a property of the overwhelming majority of the world's languages one needs formal devices so sophisticated as Steele's, then, in my opinion, one, instead of proving the superiority of one's theory, shows that its basic assumptions require thorough revision.

Much of the same is true of Jacqueline Lecarne's paper 'Gender "polarity": Theoretical aspects of Somali nominal morphology' (109–141), which presents a Distributed Morphology account of the gender 'reversal' common in the Cushitic languages, when some nouns change gender (from masculine to feminine and vice versa) in the plural. Lecarne gives a detailed description of the facts and evaluates some previous proposals, and then gives her own account, whose main idea is that plural morphemes in Somali belong to a special functional category intermediate between  $N^0$  and DP. This conception allows the author to neatly describe all the necessary facts, but considered from the theoretical perspective, it leaves an impression (honestly speaking, similar to that left by other DM proposals) of a purely ad hoc solution.

Anna Maria Di Sciullo's article 'The asymmetry of morphology' (pp. 1–28) aims at showing that in morphology, as well as in syntax, asymmetrical relations between items play major part. She argues that although both syntactic and morphological processes and rules are sensitive to the same relations (i.e., Spec-Head and Head-Complement asymmetries), and although both components require

similar representations (binary branching trees) and operations (SHIFT, which derives complex categories from more elementary ones, and LINK which is analogous to chain formation), morphology and syntax are nevertheless not the same. The crucial difference, as Di Sciullo shows, lies in that morphological heads, e.g. nominalising affixes, are sensitive to the asymmetrical argument structure of their bases, whereas syntactic heads are not. Di Sciullo analyses English suffixes *-er*, *-able*, *-ify*, *-ize*, and *-ee* and shows that their application depends on the argument structure of the base. She also deals with English compounding, and shows how her framework can account for special behaviour of compounds containing *wh*-expressions (such as *everywhere*). I cannot but appreciate the way Di Sciullo presents her framework and argues for it. Its main advantage lies, I think, in that it avoids ad hoc stipulations and counter-intuitive solutions.

Luigi Burzio in his article 'Surface-to-surface morphology: When your representations turn into constraints' (pp. 142–177) develops an Optimality-theoretic implementation of insights by Bybee (1985), who proposed that morphology should be regarded as a network of relations between surface forms. The main principle of Burzio's conception is Gradient Attraction (GA), which states that 'the overall structure of a word *w* (in both its phonological and semantic components) is influenced by that of other words in the lexicon to which *w* is independently similar'. GA itself is explained as a result of summation of entailments generated by lexical items, predicted by the Representational Entailments Hypothesis (REH), which says that a mental representation of a lexical item with a structure AB generates the entailments  $A \rightarrow B$  and  $B \rightarrow A$ . The more entailments a given lexical item violates, the less similar it is to its 'relatives'. Burzio shows that GA and REH effects account for various phenomena, such as stress patterns in English and morphophonological alternations in English, Polish, Italian and French.

In his article 'A common basis for syntax and morphology: Tri-Level lexical insertion' (pp. 235–262), Joseph Emonds pursues the goal of completely reducing morphology to syntax, the view advocated in particular by Lieber (1992). Emonds states that morphology cannot be 'entirely explained in terms of current theories of phrasal syntax', and that there is need to develop a theory of word-internal syntax, which, however, would not differ substantially from the syntax per se. He addresses two problems which he believes to be 'the most relevant for morphology': 'productive processes of syntactic compounding' and 'conditions which relate the permanently stored lexicon to syntax'. The main tenet of his approach is the Domain Size Restriction, which precludes syntactic phrases to occur within words. Emonds claims that principles of syntax always treat bound morphology and syntactic compounds in the same way, therefore there is no need for any 'autonomous' morphology (as proposed, e.g., by Anderson (1992) or Stump (2001)). The evidence Emonds invokes for his claim is of several kinds. First, he shows that in English and French rules determining the position of heads in phrases, compounds and derivatives cut across the boundary between 'phrasal'

and 'word-internal' domains. Second, he shows that English derivational affixes such as *-able*, *-age*, *-en*, *-er* etc. are 'lexical categories which lack properties of simple words', and behave in all respects like 'normal' words except that they cannot go all by themselves. With regards to semantics of bound morphological items Emonds proposes to distinguish between what he calls *cognitive syntactic features* such as HUMAN or AGENT, and *purely semantic features* of higher specificity (such as those borne by items like *-holic* in *workaholic*). Emonds claims that bound morphological affixes cannot bear purely semantic features, differing in this respect from pieces of compounds. Thus the difference between bound morphology and syntactic compounding is reduced to semantics and has little to do with 'syntax proper'. Further, Emonds observes the variable behavior of morphological items and proposes that they may be inserted on three different levels of derivation: items bearing purely semantic features are inserted at the first level with 'ordinary' lexical items; those whose cognitive syntactic features contribute to interpretation, are inserted 'during syntactic derivation leading to LF', while those which do not bear any (non-predictable) semantic features, 'are inserted in the part of a derivation inaccessible to LF' and thus contribute to PF only. Emonds illustrates this by analyzing the variable behavior of English nominalizing affixes.

Emonds' approach has some weak points which undermine it considerably. First, I wonder how Emonds is going to tackle with such 'classical' morphological problems as non-affixal inflection (which is quite widespread in English, although he even does not mention it), extended exponence, surface-to-surface relationships investigated in Burzio's article etc. Second, the claim that only 'cognitive syntactic features' may serve as content for morphological affixes, seems to me untenable; see Talmy (1985) for an abundance of counterexamples. At last but not least, I cannot think of the natural way Emonds' theory can naturally account for different *syntactic* properties of morphology and syntax, such as limited vs. unlimited recursion of embedding or differences in argument structure sensitivity explored by Di Sciullo. Thus, I think that Emonds' arguments for his theory are not convincing and the evidence he brings about is not sufficient to prove it.

Now, what is one to say about the value of the book as a whole? It is, undoubtedly, a useful book; all articles, though differing profoundly in topic, data, framework, and persuasiveness of the argumentation, present interesting ideas worthy of discussion. However, I must confess that I am somewhat disappointed, because I waited more from a book with such a title and such authors. One of the main weak points is, I think, a certain degree of self-containment: sometimes it seems that authors are simply not aware of the problems and data discussed by their fellow-contributors, and this ignorance seriously affects the weight and value of their own argumentation.

Closing my review, I have to say that the book is well designed, edited, and printed, but there is a number of misprints, some of them in crucial points.

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**Danielle Corbin, Pierre Corbin, and Martine Temple (eds.)**, *Lexique 16 (2004) La formation des mots: horizons actuels*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion. EUR 23.00. ISBN 2-85939-844-9

*Reviewed by Claudio Iacobini*

This is the last volume of the *Lexique* series conceived by Danielle Corbin (hereinafter D.C.). Its publication—originally scheduled in 1999—was delayed due to the illness and death of D.C. in August 2000. It is mainly thanks to the painstaking editorial work of Pierre Corbin that this publication has now appeared.

There are two main reasons for paying special attention to *Lexique 16*: it can be read both for the high scientific value of the individual contributions, and as a *state of the art* of morphological studies in France.

This second reason of interest is made evident by Pierre Corbin's introductory paper. It mainly consists in a sort of intellectual biography of D.C. presenting her role as a promoter of morphological studies in France. At the same time readers are acquainted with the developments of morphology in France over the last twenty years; the seven other papers of this issue are critically presented within the context of current research lines of the small but active and organised group of French morphologists.

Although the work of D.C. has not been given due consideration in English-speaking countries (perhaps owing to the fact that most publications have appeared in the French language; amongst the few exceptions is an article by D.C., Corbin 1989, in the *Yearbook of Morphology 1989* translated from French into English by Geert Booij) it has attracted the attention of many European scholars and was crucial to the development of morphological studies in France from the late 1980s onwards (some have compared it to the influential morphological work