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Abstracts:

THE NONUNITY OF VP-PREPOSING

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This article shows that a VP in English is only a VP at the outset of a derivation, and that VP-preposing in English is in fact preposing of the internal arguments of the verb, followed by remnant movement of the original VP, making English and German (Müller 1998) more similar than they might appear at first glance. The evidence for the nonconstituency of the verb and its original arguments in preposed position comes from its solution to what has been termed Pesetsky's paradox, in that an object of a preposed VP can bind into an adverbial at the end of a sentence, creating an apparent conflict between the assumptions that binding requires c-command and that only constituents move. This article also provides evidence for c-command as the prominence constraint on binding, rather than o-command (Pollard & Sag 1994) or f-command (Dalrymple 1999).

FROM USAGE TO GRAMMAR: THE MIND'S RESPONSE TO REPETITION

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A usage-based view takes grammar to be the cognitive organization of one's experience with language. Aspects of that experience, for instance, the frequency of use of certain constructions or particular instances of constructions, have an impact on representation that are evidenced in speaker knowledge of conventionalized phrases, and in language variation and change. It is shown that particular instances of constructions can acquire their own pragmatic, semantic, and phonological characteristics. In addition, it is argued that high frequency instances of constructions undergo grammaticization processes (which produce further change), function as the central members of categories formed by constructions, and retain their old forms longer under the pressure of newer formations. An exemplar model that accommodates both phonological and semantic representation is elaborated to describe the data considered.

SYNTAX OF NATURAL AND ACCIDENTAL COORDINATION: EVIDENCE FROM AGREEMENT

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Adjective agreement with coordinated nouns in Finnish presents a puzzling pattern: in some cases, a plural adjective is required with coordinated singular nouns, while in other cases that seem to be syntactically identical, a plural adjective is disallowed. The key to this puzzle lies at the syntax-semantics interface: plural adjectives are required in cases of NATURAL COORDINATION, where a salient close relation holds between the conjuncts, but disallowed in cases of ACCIDENTAL COORDINATION. The semantic distinction between natural and accidental coordination has a syntactic reflex in Finnish, where only the features of the natural-coordination structure are compatible with the agreement requirements of plural adjectives. We show that the distinction between natural and accidental coordination is syntactically reflected not only in Finnish, but in other languages as well, including Tundra Nenets, Russian, and Kurdish.

THE REAL-TIME STATUS OF ISLAND PHENOMENA

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In parasitic gap constructions an illicit gap inside a syntactic island becomes acceptable in combination with an additional licit gap, a result that has interesting implications for theories of grammar. Such constructions hold even greater interest for the question of the relation between grammatical knowledge and real-time language processing. This article presents results from two experiments on parasitic gap constructions in English in which the parasitic gap appears inside a subject island, before the licensing gap. An off-line study confirms that parasitic gaps are acceptable when they occur inside the infinitival complement of a subject NP, but not when they occur inside a finite relative clause. An on-line self-paced reading study using a plausibility manipulation technique shows that incremental positing of gaps inside islands occurs in just those environments where parasitic gaps are acceptable. The fact that parasitic gaps are constructed incrementally in language processing presents a challenge for attempts to explain subject islands as epiphenomena of constraints on language processing, and also helps to resolve apparent conflicts in previous studies of the role of island constraints in parsing.

ARGUMENT-HEAD DISTANCE AND PROCESSING COMPLEXITY: EXPLAINING BOTH LOCALITY AND ANTILOCALITY EFFECTS

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Although proximity between arguments and verbs (locality) is a relatively robust determinant of sentence-processing difficulty (Hawkins 1998, 2001, Gibson 2000), increasing argument-verb distance can also facilitate processing (Konieczny 2000). We present two self-paced reading (SPR) experiments involving Hindi that provide further evidence of antilocality, and a third SPR experiment which suggests that similarity-based interference can attenuate this distance-based facilitation. A unified explanation of interference, locality and antilocality effects is proposed via an independently motivated theory of activation decay and retrieval interference (Anderson et al. 2004).

DISCUSSION NOTE: PHRASAL OR LEXICAL CONSTRUCTIONS?

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Since the 1990s, more and more linguistic articles have been published in the framework of CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR. Although Kay and Fillmore (1999:19) make it clear that Constructions are not necessarily phrasal, most of the authors suggest phrasal Constructions. This is especially apparent in construction grammar-inspired studies in the framework of head-driven phrase structure grammar (HPSG). In what follows I show that the difference between phrasal approaches and lexical approaches is not as big as is sometimes claimed, although selecting one approach over the other may nevertheless have serious consequences. This discussion focuses on resultative constructions, a phenomenon for which both phrasal and lexical analyses have been suggested. I show that a considerable number of different Constructions must be postulated to account for all the patterns that may arise from the reordering of constituents or the realization of the resultative construction in connection with valence changing processes. It is shown that adjuncts, predicate complexes, and derivational morphology pose considerable problems for the phrasal approach, while they are unproblematic for lexical rule-based approaches.

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