

Lectures by Professor Steve Harlow on HPSG

Date: May 25 – 26, 2009

Venue: LT3, Lady Shaw Building, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Language Acquisition Lab, Dept. of Linguistics & Modern Languages, CUHK

A Tutorial on Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG)

Course book: <http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~sjh1/>

May 25, 2009 2:30-5:30pm

- Background and evolution of HPSG
- The ontology of HPSG: feature structures, feature structure descriptions (Attribute Value Matrices - AVMs), constraints
- HPSG grammar of English:
The structure of signs, valence, complements and subjects, nouns and noun phrases, clauses, subject-auxiliary inversion, prepositional phrases, structure of the lexicon, passives, unbounded dependency constructions (wh-movement), basic semantics, quantifiers, adjuncts: adjectival, prepositional and relative clauses, raising and control constructions

Two Talks on Welsh Phonology and Morpho-syntax

May 26, 2009 2:30-6:00pm

2:30-4:00pm

The Proper Treatment of Initial Consonant Mutation
in Celtic - A Constraint-based Account

4:00-4:30pm

Coffee break

4:30-6:00pm

Syntactic Soft Mutation in Welsh - A Constraint-based
Alternative to the XP Trigger Hypothesis



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The Proper Treatment of Initial Consonant Mutation in Celtic – A Constraint-based Account

All the Celtic languages exhibit the phenomenon of Initial Consonant Mutation (ICM), which leads to words exhibiting alternations like the following from Welsh in which the lexeme for 'cat' can appear in one of four different orthographic and phonological forms: *cath* (/kɑθ/), *gath* (/gɑt/), *chath* (/xɑθ/), *nghath* (/ŋhɑθ/).

The phenomenon has attracted significant attention from linguists over the past 50 years, but analyses typically fail to account for the full range of data. With a small number of exceptions, analyses have assumed that ICM is to be handled in the phonology (e.g. Lieber (1983), Willis (1986), Ball & Muller (1992), Asudeh & Klein (2002), Pyatt (2007)), although it is riddled with exceptions and non-phonological conditioning, such as the following (from Welsh):

- some words (such as foreign loans) are exempt from ICM: compare *i Fangor* (to Bangor) and *i Bonn* (to Bonn)
- the definite determiner *y* triggers ICM only on the lexeme *dau* (two)
- prenominal adjectives trigger ICM on the following word, but their comparative and superlative forms do not
- the masculine numeral *tri* triggers ICM, but the feminine counterpart *tair* does not.

In this talk I will address data from Welsh and will argue (with Green (2007)) that, although its realisation is clearly phonological, ICM is best analysed in morpho-syntactic terms. I will present an explicit analysis in Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar in which ICM is modelled by a default inheritance hierarchy, and will show how this allows a straightforward treatment of both the productive patterns of ICM and the idiosyncratic ones mentioned above.

Syntactic Soft Mutation in Welsh - A Constraint-based Alternative to the XP Trigger Hypothesis

One instance of Soft Mutation not discussed in the previous talk is so-called *Syntactic Soft Mutation*, exemplified in (1)-(2),

(1) *Gwelodd cath SM²ddraig*

saw cat dragon
'A cat saw a dragon'

(2) *Gwelodd draig SM²gath*

saw dragon cat
'A dragon saw a cat'

In these examples the post-subject phrase has undergone Soft Mutation. The phenomenon is not restricted to direct objects, as illustrated here, but also affects a range of constituent types, including verbs, adverbials and adjectives. Zwicky (1984) and Roberts (1997, 2005) proposed that these instances of Soft Mutation are realisations of case, but this position was effectively rebutted by Tallerman (2006).

An alternative analysis developed by Harlow (1989), Borsley (1998) and Borsley & Tallerman (1998) dubbed the XP Trigger Hypothesis (XPTH) asserts: *A complement bears soft mutation if it is immediately preceded by a phrasal category.*

While apparently providing an accurate characterisation of the domain of the phenomenon, none of the works cited provides an actual analysis; this will be remedied in the current talk which, building on the analysis of Initial Consonant Mutation presented in the earlier talk, will reinterpret the XPTH in terms of word order domains (Reape 1994, 1996, Kathol 2000) and provide an explicit account of the phenomenon.

A second aspect of Syntactic Soft Mutation is its preservation under wh-movement, illustrated in (3).

(3) *Pwy welodd SM²ddraig?*

who saw dragon
'Who saw a dragon?'

Here, the direct object *ddraig* undergoes Soft Mutation, despite the fact that it is not preceded by a phrasal category. Examples like this lead Borsley (2003) to claim: "Theories differ in what they understand by a superficial level and a more abstract level. However, in any theory, the data I consider here is likely to suggest that missing NPs must be represented at a superficial level and not just at some more abstract level. On the face of it, then, it is problematic for some HPSG proposals and for Lexical Functional Grammar, Categorical Grammar and Word Grammar."

I will show that this contention is false, as far as HPSG is concerned, and that the data in (3) follow from my analysis of Syntactic Soft Mutation without further stipulation.