snippets

Issue 13   **June 2006**

Contents

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

1. Purpose.

The aim of *Snippets* is to publish specific remarks that motivate research or that make theoretical points germane to current work. The ideal contribution is the ideal footnote: a side remark that taken on its own is not worth lengthy development but that needs to be said. One encounters many short comments of this kind in the literature of the seventies. We feel that there no longer is a forum for them. We want *Snippets* to help fill that gap.

2. Content.

We will publish notes that contribute to the study of syntax and semantics in generative grammar. The notes are to be brief, self-contained and explicit. They may do any of the following things:

- point out an empirical phenomenon that goes against accepted generalizations or that shows that some aspect of a theory is problematic;
- point out unnoticed minimal pairs that fall outside the scope of any existing theory;
- point out an empirical phenomenon that confirms the predictions of a theory in an area where the theory has not been tested;
- explicitly describe technical inconsistencies in a theory or in a set of frequently adopted assumptions;
- explicitly describe unnoticed assumptions that underlie a theory or assumptions that a theory needs to be supplemented with in order to make desired predictions;
- call attention to little-known or forgotten literature in which issues of immediate relevance are discussed.

We also encourage submissions that connect psycholinguistic data to theoretical issues. A proposal for a pilot experiment in language acquisition or language processing could make for an excellent snippet.

The earliest Linguistic Inquiry squibs exemplify the kind of note we would like to publish. Some of them posed unobserved puzzles. For instance, a squib by Postal and Ross in LI 1:1 ("A Problem of Adverb Preposing") noted that whether or not we can construe a sentence-initial temporal adverb with an embedded verb depends on the tense of the matrix verb. A squib by Perlmutter and Ross in LI 1:3 ("Relative Clauses with Split Antecedents"), challenging the prevailing analyses of coordination and extraposition, noted that conjoined clauses neither of which contain a plural noun phrase can appear next to an "extraposed" relative that can only describe groups. Other squibs drew attention to particular theoretical assumptions. For instance, a squib by Bresnan in LI 1:2 ("A Grammatical Fiction") outlined an alternative account of the derivation of sentences containing believe and force, and asked whether there were principled reasons for dismissing any of the underlying assumptions (among them that semantic interpretation is sensitive to details of a syntactic derivation). A squib by Zwicky in LI 1:2 ("Class Complements in Phonology") asked to what extent phonological rules refer to complements of classes. None of these squibs was more than a couple of paragraphs; all of them limited themselves to a precise question or observation.

3. Submission details.

Snippets is an electronic journal. We will solicit submissions twice a year: the submission deadlines are April 1 and October 1. The submissions that we accept will be posted on the journal website approximately 3 months after each deadline, and all accepted submissions will remain permanently on the website.

Snippets is intended as a service to the linguistics community. Consequently, authors are advised that, when they submit to *Snippets*, we understand them as allowing their submission to be reproduced if published. At the same time, the rights for the notes themselves will remain with the authors. As a result, citation of *Snippets* material will have to indicate the author's name and the specific source of the material.

We will accept electronic submissions at the address snippets@unimi.it. Electronic submissions may take the form of (a) the text of an e-mail message, or (b) an attached file. The attached file should be a simple text file, a Word file (Mac or Windows), or a Rich Text Format (RTF) file. All submissions must state the name and affiliation of the author(s), and a (postal or electronic) return address.

Submissions are to be a maximum of 500 words (including examples), with an additional half page allowed for diagrams, tables and references. Given that we envision the submissions themselves as footnotes, the submissions may not contain footnotes of their own. The ideal submission is one paragraph; a submission of five lines is perfectly acceptable. We will not consider abstracts.

4. Editorial policy.

Submissions will be reviewed by our editorial board, and review will be name-blind both ways. While we guarantee a response within 3 months of the submission deadline, we will only provide a yes/no response to the submitter. We will not request revisions (barring exceptional cases). We allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

1.

Valentina Bianchi – *University of Siena*
An asymmetry between personal pronouns and other Dps

bianchi10@unisi.it

Italian shows an asymmetry in partitive wh-phrases with the preposition *di*: when the partitive phrase contains a personal pronoun, the wh-pronoun *chi* 'who' is used, and the wh-determiner *quale* 'which' is disallowed:

(1) Chi /*quale di noi (voi, loro) dovrà farlo?
     Who/*which of us (you, them) will-have-to do-it

Conversely, when the partitive phrase contains a DP which is not a personal pronoun, the wh-determiner *quale* is used and *chi* is deviant:

(2) Quale/*chi dei tuoi studenti dovrà farlo?
     Which/*who of your students will-have-to do-it

This asymmetry sets apart personal pronouns (including third person) from other DPs, and suggests some form of agreement with respect to (pro)nominality between the wh-word and the DP in the partitive phrase. The interesting question is which feature(s) cause this asymmetry.

The first possibility is the feature [+human], which is typical of strong pronouns and of impersonal pronouns. However, this feature is plausibly shared by lexical nouns like *student*, at least at the level where selectional restrictions apply. So, either we stipulate that the feature [+human] is *syntactically* visible on strong/im-personal pronouns only, or we have to assume two different features encoding humanness (cf. Hanson's (2003) [sentient] feature).

Another possible source of asymmetry is the number feature. According to Kayne (2000) and Wechsler (2002), "plural" first/second person pronouns are not specified for number; Di Domenico (2004) and Sigurdhsson (2004) argue that the same holds of third person pronouns. The wh-pronoun *chi* too might be underspecified for number: although it triggers singular agreement on the verb, this can be a default inflection -- in fact, an answer to (1) may involve either a singular or a plural DP. The wh-determiner *quale/quali* is instead inflected for number. Thus, a principle of number compatibility would rule in *chi* in (1) – since both *chi* and the personal pronoun in the partitive phrase are underspecified for number – and rule out *quale*, which is specified for number; the converse would hold in (2), since the non-pronominal DP is specified for number. This account, however, only holds if third person pronouns too are underspecified for number (see Kayne 2000 and Wechsler 2002 for the opposite view).

The third possible source of asymmetry is the person feature, but here we run

into serious troubles. Kayne (2000), Harley and Ritter (2002) and Wechsler (2002) argue that first and second person pronouns are specified for person, but "third person" pronouns – as well as non-pronominal DPs – are not. This would predict an asymmetry between first and second person pronouns, on the one hand, and all "third person" DPs (either pronominal or not), on the other. But this is not the split we observe in (1)-(2). Furthermore, if "third person" is simply person underspecification, there is no obvious way to express a difference between the wh-forms *chi* and *quale*.

Finally, according to Harley and Ritter (2002), personal pronouns are characterized by a feature geometry which is not shared by non-pronominal DPs. However, at least some features under their Individuation node (GROUP, encoding number, and CLASS, encoding gender) seem to be shared by non-pronominal DPs as well.

Thus, it appears that all the recently proposed featural analyses of personal pronouns fail to capture the unitary behaviour of first, second and third person pronouns as a coherent set, opposed to non-pronominal DPs, in (1)-(2).

References

Di Domenico, E. (2004) "Placed, non placed, and anaphorically placed expressions." *Italian Journal of Linguistics*: 16.1 (*The syntax and interpretation of person features*, ed. V. Bianchi and K. Safir), 63-105.

Hanson, R. (2003) Masters thesis, University of Calgary.

Harley, H. and E. Ritter. (2002) "Person and number in pronouns: a feature-geometric analysis." *Language* 78: 482-526.

Kayne, R.S. (2000) "Person morphemes and reflexives in Italian, French, and related languages." In *Parameters and universals*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 131-162.

Wechsler, S. (2002) "Number as person." Ms., University of Texas at Austin. [To appear in the *Proceedings of the Fifth Paris Syntax and Semantics Conference*.]

Sigurdhsson, H.Á. (2004) "The syntax of person, tense, and speech features." *Italian Journal of Linguistics*: 16.1 (*The syntax and interpretation of person features*, ed. V. Bianchi and K. Safir), 219-251.

2.

Amy Rose Deal – *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*
Does English have a genitive case?

amyrose@linguist.umass.edu

In written English, possessive pronouns appear without *'s* in the same environments where non-pronominal DPs require *'s*.

(1) a.   your/*you's/*your's book
     b.   Moore's/*Moore book

What explains this complementarity? Various analyses suggest themselves.

> A. Possessive pronouns are contractions of a pronoun and 's. (Hudson 2003: 603)
> B. Possessive pronouns are inflected genitives (Huddleston and Pullum 2002);
>   a morphological deletion rule removes clitic 's after a genitive pronoun.

Analysis A consists of a single rule of a familiar type: Morphological Merger (Halle and Marantz 1993), familiar from forms like *wanna* and *won't*. (*His* and *its* contract especially nicely.) No special lexical/vocabulary items need be postulated. Analysis B, on the other hand, requires a set of vocabulary items to spell out genitive case, as well as a rule to delete the *'s* clitic following such forms, assuming *'s* is a DP-level head distinct from the inflecting noun.

   These two accounts make divergent predictions for dialects with complex pronominals such as *you all* or *you guys* (and *us/them all*, depending on the speaker). Since Merger operates under adjacency, Analysis A predicts that intervention by *all* or *guys* should bleed the formation of *your*: only *you all's* and *you guys'* are predicted. There do seem to be dialects with this property, as witnessed by the American Heritage Dictionary (4th edition, entry for *you-all*). Call these English 1. Here, we may claim that pronouns inflect for only two cases, and Merger operations account for the rest.

   Given the simplicity of Analysis A, it would be nice if English 1 were the one and only English. It is in this sense unfortunate that dialects also exist with possessive forms *your all's* and *your guys'* — a fact totally unaccounted for if Analysis A holds universally.

(2) I think that works with your all's schedules. (White House press secretary Scott McClellan,
     March 22, 2005)

(3) We've had a proposal that's been out, subject to your all's review …
     (White House press secretary Joe Lockhart, June 12, 2000)

Such dialects (English 2) are clearly incompatible with Analysis A's basis in contraction; rather, the data suggest that possessive pronouns are being analyzed as inflected genitives, in line with Analysis B. In fact, English 2 forms like *your all's* neatly showcase both halves of Analysis B: a genitive case feature is spelled out on *your*, and separately, the presence of *all* bleeds the rule deleting *'s*. The doubly marked possessive of English 2 is reminiscent of the pattern of definiteness marking in Swedish DPs, where we find a doubled expression of definiteness: DET ADJ N-DET. English 1, for its part, mimics the definiteness pattern of Danish, where we find DET ADJ N(*-DET). Thus, dialectal variation within English mirrors wider crosslinguistic variation in Germanic. See Hankamer and Mikkelsen (2005).

Since Analysis A is simpler than Analysis B — both require one rule, but A requires no special vocabulary entries — the existence of English 2 is puzzling. Why are some learners positing an unnecessarily complex grammar? One possible line of attack: is there a sense in which the Merger rule found in English 1 is more complex than the Deletion rule found in English 2?

References
Halle, M. and A. Marantz. (1993) "Distributed morphology and the pieces of inflection." In *The view from building 20: essays in linguistics in honor of Sylvain Bromberger*, ed. K. Hale and S.J. Geyser. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 111-176.
Hankamer, J. and L. Mikkelsen. (2005) "When movement must be blocked: a reply to Embick and Noyer." *Linguistic Inquiry* 36: 85-125.
Huddleston, R. and G. Pullum. (2002) *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hudson, R. (2003) "Gerunds without phrase structure." *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 21: 579-615.

3.

Bernhard Schwarz – *McGill University*
Covert reciprocity and Strawson-symmetry

bernhard.schwarz@mcgill.ca

Von Fintel (1999) defines the notion of *Strawson-entailment* and argues that it plays a central role in the analysis of negative polarity items. This squib proposes that so-called covert reciprocity is another phenomenon where Strawson-entailment is at work.

Covert reciprocal nouns are relational nouns whose bare plural forms in predicative position can be interpreted as though they combined with overt reciprocal complements. The equivalence of (1a) and (1b), for example, makes *classmate* a covert reciprocal.

(1) a. They are classmates.
 b. They are classmates of each other.

Other examples of covert reciprocals are *colleague*, *neighbour* and *cousin*. All of these nouns are symmetric: *X is a N of Y* entails *Y is a N of X*. Note that a non-symmetric noun like *fan* is not a covert reciprocal: *They are fans* is not equivalent to *They are fans of each other*. The obvious generalization, then, would seem to be that a relational noun is a covert reciprocal if and only if it is symmetric.

This generalization does not seem to have been questioned in the literature. However, while it may be true that all symmetric relational nouns are covert reciprocals, the reverse is not the case. The sentences in (2) are equivalent, and so the noun *sister* is a covert reciprocal. But sister is clearly not symmetric. *X is a sister of Y* does not entail *Y is a sister of X,* since only the latter sentence conveys that Y is female.

(2) a. They are sisters.
 b. They are sisters of each other.

A revised generalization can be based on von Fintel's (1999) notion of Strawson-entailment. ϕ Strawson-entails φ if and only if the conjunction of ϕ and the presupposition of φ entails φ. Extending the terminology, we can define a relational noun N to be *Strawson-symmetric* just in case *X is a N of Y* Strawson-entails *Y is a N of X*. The revised generalization, then, is that a relational noun is a covert reciprocal if and only if it is Strawson-symmetric.

The definition of Strawson-symmetry guarantees that every symmetric predicate is also Strawson-symmetric, so the revised generalization still applies correctly to symmetric predicates like *classmate*. Moreover, assuming that the gender information carried by *sister* is presupposed, *sister* is Strawson-symmetric: in conjunction with the assumption that Y is female, *X is a sister of Y* indeed entails *Y is a*

sister of X. Therefore, assuming that *sister* presupposes its gender information, the revised generalization accommodates all the relevant cases.

The assumption that *sister* presupposes its gender information is not implausible. The sentences in (3) seem to convey that Kim is a female, suggesting that the gender information carried by *sister* projects much like typical presuppositions do.

(3)   a. Kim isn't his sister.
      b. Perhaps Kim is his sister.
      c. Is Kim his sister?

In English, *sister* and its companion *brother* (and perhaps *husband* and *wife*) may be the only relational nouns that only a presupposition stops from being symmetric. But the amended generalization proposed here is likely to apply more widely in languages where gender information is routinely encoded through morphological means.

References
von Fintel, K. (1999) "NPI-licensing, Strawson-Entailment, and context dependency." *Journal of Semantics* 16: 97-148
.

4.

Kazuko Yatsushiro – *Humboldt Universität Berlin*
Uli Sauerland (ZAS)

[Feminine] in a high position

kazuko@mac.com   uli@alum.mit.edu

In German, the names of many professions have both a masculine and a feminine form. The feminine form is often derived from the masculine by the suffix /-in/ (sometimes accompanied by a vowel change in the stem as in (1c)). (1) shows examples of this derivation:

(1) a. Lehrer ('male teacher') --> Lehrerin ('female teacher')
    b. Politiker ('male politician') --> Politikerin ('female politician')
    c. Arzt ('male medical doctor') --> Ärztin ('female medical doctor')
    d. Friseur ('male hairdresser') --> Friseurin ('female hairdresser')

       When combined with a superlative, the gender-marked forms allow two distinct readings. We focus here on the feminine forms. Consider the newspaper headline in (2): It could be used to describe a situation where Merkel is now the most popular of the female politicians but there may be male politicians that are even more popular than her ((2a)). It can also be used in a situation where Merkel is the most popular of all politicians ((2b)).

(2) Merkel jetzt   beliebteste Politiker-in   Deutschlands.
    Merkel now   most popular politician-FEM Germany
    a. 'Merkel now most popular female politician in Germany.'
    b. 'Merkel now most popular politician in Germany.'

(3) Merkel ist die beliebteste Kanzler-in   aller Zeiten.
    Merkel is the most popular chancellor-FEM of all times
    a. 'Merkel is the most popular female chancellor of all times.'
    b. 'Merkel is the most popular chancellor of all times.'

Reading (2b) must be considered distinct from reading (2a) for two reasons. For one, the occurrence of *jetzt* ('now') (2) implicates that the assertion of (2) is false for past times. But (2b) can be used at a time when Merkel has already been the most popular female politician for a while, but has only just edged out her male rivals. In this situation, the implicature of paraphrase (2a) would not be satisfied. The second reason (2b) is distinct from (2a) is that (2) could be used in a situation where Merkel is the only female politician. Reading (2a) would amount to a presupposition failure in such a situation because the superlative presupposes that there are items for comparison. This

is corroborated by that fact that (3) is acceptable in the current situation where Merkel is the only female German chancellor ever. Paraphrase (3a) would be a presupposition failure in the current situation, while reading (3b) must be available.

Example (4) shows that the ambiguity arises also in non-copular sentences. This rules out the possibility that gender agreement between Merkel and the superlative DP is responsible for the ambiguity.

(4) Selbst die beliebteste   Kanzler-in   aller Zeiten macht Fehler.
    even   the most popular chancellor-FEM of all times   makes mistakes
    a. 'Even the most popular female chancellor of all times can make a mistake.'
    b. 'Even the most popular chancellor of all times can make a mistake.'

While the male and female forms of the professions exhibit the ambiguity just described, the adjective *female* in (5a) and the non-profession noun *sister* in (5b) only allow the interpretation corresponding to (2a) and (3a).

(5) a. die beliebteste weibliche Politiker-in
       the most popular female   politician
    b. meine jüngste Schwester
       my   youngest sister

Some other languages, such as Spanish and Bulgarian, seem to show the same pattern of data. We provide here Bulgarian data. (6) displays the same ambiguity as (2).

(6) naj-populjarnata pianist-ka
     most-popular-the pianist-FEM
    'the most popular female pianist'
    'the most popular pianist'

In English, however, we could not find nouns that display the ambiguity. Noun phrases like *the best waitress*, *my youngest sister*, and *the tallest policewoman* are unambiguous just like the German examples in (5).

To explain the ambiguity illustrated in (2), we propose that gender marked profession names are ambiguous between two kinds of lexical entries: 1) a lexical entry where gender is part of the lexical item such that *Politikerin* means the same as female politician; 2) a lexical entry where gender is a grammatical feature of the noun which is licensed by a agreement with a gender feature in a higher position that is interpreted outside the scope of the superlative.