

Grammatical categories – a distributed anti-lexicalist minimal(ist) view

A standard assumption in generative grammar is that morphemes (Distributed Morphology, e.g. Embick & Noyer 2007) or even inflected words (Chomsky 1995, etc.) are building blocks in syntax (in addition to sub-lexical elements like C, v, n, etc.).¹ Following Sigurðsson (2004, 2006, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016), I argue against this view, claiming that both words and morphemes are nonexistent in syntax (i.e., prior to spell-out), instead being created in the externalization process (morphology/“broad PF”) – expressing but not copying syntactic relations. Grammatical categories, such as Tense, Person, Case, Gender, express *cyclic* computational relations between distinct phases or domains, and the elements that enter these syntactic computations are neither words nor morphemes but universal atomic primitives, such as the Tense primitives T_S , T_R , T_E (Reichenbachian Speech Time, Reference Time, Event Time): T_S in the C-domain, T_R in the T-domain, T_E in the v-domain. Morphological entities, such as [past], do not lexicalize these primitives separately, instead expressing the outcome of their computation in relation to each other, and in relation to the clause-external context (T_S , for example, by default relating the T_S - T_R - T_E computation to the SPEAKER NOW, with Sequences of Tenses/Tense Agreement contexts as a highly telling exception). The context-clause correlation is mediated by *Edge Linkers* in the C-edge, including the Speech Time feature (T_S), the Speech Location feature (L_S), and the Logophoric Agent/Patient features (“speaker”, “hearer”, Λ_A , Λ_P). These features are themselves silent by necessity, but they enter *Edge Computation* in relation to abstract clause-internal elements, such as T_R and T_E , the outcome of the computation commonly having clause-internal Agree reflexes in PF. It follows that context *has* (cyclic) access to clause-internal syntax, via the Edge Linkers, hence affecting clause-internal morphology (such as Tense, Person, Gender markings).

Contra Chomsky (1957:17), sixty years later, we are *not* “forced to conclude that grammar is autonomous and independent of meaning”, at least not if “meaning” includes *grammatical* contextual relations, such as the relations between event participants and speech act participants (commonly expressed by Person), between Event Time and Speech Time (commonly expressed by Tense), or between event participants and discourse participants (commonly expressed by Gender).

Grammatical categories externalize computational processes/relations, not syntactic words or morphemes. **There are no words or morphemes in syntax.**

To be continued ... hopefully.

¹ Any Icelandic adjective has 144 different feature combinations (of case, number, gender, “definiteness”, degree), expressed by 30 distinct forms. Assuming a full-fledged inflected pre-syntactic lexicon suggests 144 different syntactic computations (inescapable on any account), *plus* 144 different lexical formations (yielding “only” 30 forms), *plus* 144 or 30 different lexical searches (depending on how the mechanism works), *plus* feature access in the lexicon, *plus* feature access in syntax. I discard this without discussion.