

On the OT-status of "Unambiguous Encoding"

Functionalist views of language often consider grammars as "harnessed" or "frozen" pragmatics (cf. Hyman 1984). The issue of how grammars and pragmatics hang together reemerges within the project of external "grounding" of OT-constraints (cf. Kager 1999). The current presentation explores a number of disambiguation phenomena, suggesting that a family of OT-constraints called "Unambiguous Encoding" can be understood as a correlate of Gricean "Avoid Ambiguity."

Thus, Icelandic expresses the difference between weak and strong readings of indefinite objects by the (non-)application of object-shift. Tagalog expresses (in-)definiteness of theme arguments in simple transitive constructions by *ng-* vs. *ang-*marking. These patterns can be seen as arising from a tendency toward disambiguation. Descriptively, they can be taken to follow from language specific instantiations of a family of OT constraints called "Unambiguous Encoding" (UE), as formulated in (1).

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| (1) a. UE [Icelandic] | b. UE [Tagalog] |
| (α) Weak indefinites stay in situ | (α) Definite theme is <i>ang</i> -marked |
| (β) Strong indefinites shift | (β) Indefinite theme is <i>ng</i> -marked |

Importantly, what UE explicitly states is an automatic consequence of "superoptimality" as defined within Blutner's (2000) bi-directional OT on the assumption that the following rankings of forms and meanings hold (\leq = "is less costly than").

- (2) Icelandic
- a. f_1 = in situ (object) [IS] < f_2 = object-shift [OS]
- b. m_1 = weak [W] < m_2 = strong [S]
- (3) Tagalog
- a. f_1 = *ng* [NG] < f_2 = *ang* [ANG]
- b. m_1 = indefinite [I] < m_2 = definite [D]
- (4) A form-meaning pair $\langle f, m \rangle$ is called *super-optimal* iff $\langle f, m \rangle \in \text{Gen}_\sigma$ and
- (Q) there is no other super-optimal pair $\langle f', m' \rangle$: $\langle f', m' \rangle < \langle f, m \rangle$
- (I) there is no other super-optimal pair $\langle f', m' \rangle$: $\langle f', m' \rangle < \langle f, m \rangle$
- (5) a.

f_1	IS-W ^s	←	IS-S	b.	f_1	NG-I ^s	←	NG-D	
	↑		↑			↑		↑	
	f_2	OS-W	←	OS-S ^s		f_2	ANG-I	←	ANG-D ^s
		m_1		m_2			m_1		m_2

However, the two systems differ in their predictions concerning "conditional ambiguity." Thus, due to certain grammar-internal constraints, object-shift and *ang*-marking aren't always available. In this case, the resulting form takes on both readings. While this can be dealt with in standard OT-fashion if UE is a(n out-)rankable constraint, Blutner's bidirectional OT would require some revision in order not to predict unambiguous forms here as well.

The remainder of this presentation will be devoted to sketching four ways of rendering UE, the conjunctive nature of which must be considered highly problematic, epiphenomenal. These are (i) a return to individual standard OT-analyses of Icelandic (cf. Vikner 2001) and Tagalog (cf. Schäfer in prep.), (ii) a markedness approach along the lines of Anttila&Fong (2000), (iii) an harmonic alignment approach in the sense of Aissen (2000), and (iv) a dynamic reinterpretation of Blutner's bidirectional OT. The result of this discussion, it is hoped, will provide a firmer theoretical basis wrt to which to formulate the grounding relationship between pragmatics and grammar.

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