

Construction-Theoretic Morphology: Words and Paradigms in Kordofanian

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The past few years have seen an increase in the number of grammar proposals in which the notion *construction* plays both a descriptive and explanatory role (Fillmore *et al.* 1988; Michaelis & Lambrecht 1996; Ackerman & Webelhuth 1998; Fillmore 1999; Kay & Fillmore 1999; Goldberg 1995, 2006; Croft 2001; Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004; Culicover & Jackendoff 2005; Sag in press, among others). For the most part, this trend has focused on syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Generally, within this tradition there is a recognition that the classic conception of the Saussurean *sign* as a form-meaning mapping is an appropriate characterization for both complex lexical/morphological constructions (words) and syntactic constructions: both the complex word and phrasal constructions are construed as realizations of meanings. What is crucial is that each word and phrase as a whole corresponds to a meaning irrespective of whether every aspect of that meaning is attributable to an isolable element within the word or phrase. In this sense, both words and phrases are regarded as basic and primary objects of descriptive and theoretical concern.

Despite claims in this tradition that complex words are signs, there is comparatively little explicit exploration of what this means for morphological theory (but, see Booij 2002, 2007, 2009, In Press; Gurevich 2006, among others). Independent of specific implementations, however, the connection is obvious: Construction-Theoretic Morphology is, conceptually, a type of Word and Paradigm morphology (see Robins 1959; Bochner 1993; P. H. Matthews 1991; J. P. Blevins To Appear for overviews).

I begin this talk with a discussion of competing morpheme, i.e., piece-based, versus word, i.e., pattern-based, approaches to morphology and suggest how the latter is participating in a fertile reconceptualization of research in the complexity sciences. The majority of the talk focuses on data from the underdocumented Korodofanian language family in order to illustrate the descriptive utility and explanatory force of words as primary objects of theoretical analysis and paradigms as the ways that whole words are systemically organized, with the effects of mitigating learnability problems and promoting the use and comprehension of previously unencountered words in languages with complex inflectional systems.