

Workshop

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# **New Approaches to the Syntax/Semantics Interface**

# Programme

<b>Date</b>	12 December 2013	
<b>Location</b>	Library of the Courant Research Center “Text Structures” (2 <sup>nd</sup> floor) Nikolausberger Weg 23	
<b>Wednesday 11 Dec</b>	19:00	<i>Pre-conference get-together</i> Café Z.a.K. (Am Wochenmarkt 22)
<b>Thursday 12 Dec</b>	09:00 – 09:15	Welcome & Introduction
	09:15 – 10:00	Jan-Wouter Zwart (Groningen) <i>Ellipsis in layered derivations</i>
	10:00 – 10:45	Mark de Vries (Groningen) <i>How to interpret parentheses</i>
	10:45 – 11:00	<i>Coffee break</i>
	11:00 – 11:45	Hedde Zeijlstra (Göttingen) <i>Formal vs. Semantic Features</i>
	11:45 – 12:30	Emar Maier (Groningen) <i>Pure Quotation: A challenge for the Fregean Program</i>
	12:30 – 14:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
	14:30 – 15:15	Joost Kremers (Göttingen) <i>How to avoid the semantics of head movement</i>
	15:15 – 16:00	Edgar Onea & Anke Holler (Göttingen) <i>Time in Discourse</i>
	16:00 – 16:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
	16:15 – 17:00	Pavel Rudnev (Groningen) <i>Towards a non-cartographic approach to Avar focus movement</i>
	18:30	<i>Workshop dinner</i> Vietnamese Restaurant «Thiên Kim» (Kurze Geismar Str. 43)

# Abstracts

## Ellipsis in layered derivations

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It has always been clear that the sound and meaning interfaces play a crucial role in the analysis of ellipsis, involving either deletion (at the sound interface) or reconstruction (at the meaning interface). In a layered derivation architecture (Zwart, 2009), where the generative system involves the interaction of subderivations separated by interface components, relevant questions resurface in a slightly different guise. Importantly, key considerations giving shape to current views on ellipsis (going back to Williams, 1977) take syntactic derivations to involve just a single cycle, where syntax and discourse grammar are strictly ordered. In the cyclic architecture of the layered derivation framework, this strict ordering can no longer be taken for granted. In this talk, I sketch the role of the interfaces in layered derivations in general, and discuss the consequences for the formal analysis of ellipsis in particular.

Williams, Edwin (1977). “Discourse and logical form”. In: *Linguistic Inquiry* 8.1, pp. 101–139.

Zwart, Jan-Wouter (2009). “Structure and Order: Asymmetric Merge”. In: *Handbook of Linguistic Minimalism*. Ed. by Cedric Boeckx. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## How to interpret parentheses

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This talk addresses the issue how parentheses are related to their host clauses. As we will see, this raises difficult questions concerning the division of labor between syntax, semantics, phonology and pragmatics. Although c-command-based relations do not seem to cross parenthetical boundaries, there can be anaphoric and other pragmatic links between a parenthetical and its host. Also, there are indications that a sentence-final positioning (hence right-dislocation) of a parenthetical influences its (non)-at-isse status, which leads to semantic behavior that is different from presuppositions. This might be taken as an indirect argument to represent parentheses in syntax. But it is far from clear how to do this in a way that does not fundamentally complicate syntax.

## Formal vs. Semantic Features

Hedde Zeijlstra — University of Göttingen  
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In this talk I present several arguments that argue against the assumption in current generative syntactic theory that certain formal features are semantically active as well (so-called interpretable formal features). Instead, I propose that the set of formal features and the set of semantic features (to the extent that they are featural in the first place) are fully independent. An acquisitional and diachronic theory further constrains the possible combinations of syntactic and semantic features that can be lexically stored, which results in the apparent overlap in the distribution of particular syntactic and semantic features (which has originally been the cause of taking them on a par).

## Pure Quotation: A challenge for the Fregean Program

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Semanticists typically assume that language is compositional, that is, that the meaning of a complex linguistic expression depends only on the meanings of its constituents. The idea (commonly attributed to Gottlob Frege) is that this will make it possible to derive all infinitely many, knowable sentence meanings (say in terms of sets of possible worlds) from a finite, and therefore in some sense cognitively plausible, system consisting of (i) a number of syntactic/semantic composition rules, and (ii) a finite lexicon.

Quotation poses a significant threat to this so-called Fregean program in semantics. I restrict attention to so-called pure quotation, as in *'cat' is a three-letter word*. The quotation *'cat'* does not denote a regular semantic object, say a set of cats, but rather a linguistic object, viz., the word *cat*. Intuitively, putting quotation marks around a word turns it into a referential expression that refers to that word. However, conceived of as a composition rule, this would render the language noncompositional, i.e. the meaning of *'cat'* is not determined by the meaning of the constituent *cat* (rather, it *is* the constituent).

In this talk I compare various responses to this central puzzle of quotation from the philosophical literature. In particular, the classical proper name theories and Davidson's demonstrative theory, which try to save compositionality by denying that *'cat'* contains *cat* as a syntactic constituent. I will show that these theories fail with respect to various other general desiderata for quotation and/or the syntax-semantics interface more generally. In the end, I defend the naïve, noncompositional theory originally sketched above, primarily on the grounds that it captures the autonomous nature of quotation, as well as its productivity and recursivity. I briefly consider how to extend this analysis of pure quotation to other varieties such as mixed quotation and direct discourse.

## How to avoid the semantics of head movement

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In an ideal world, the mapping from syntax to semantics (or vice versa) would be perfect. Each syntactic head would have a single meaning and its position in the syntactic structure would unambiguously identify its semantic relation to other elements. In the real world, things are not always so straightforward. One particular case that has been argued to be problematic is head movement. The observation that head movement rarely appears to have semantic effects has, among other reasons, lead Chomsky (2001) to suggest that head movement may be phonological rather than syntactic. Although this does not appear to be true for every kind of head movement (cf. Zwart, 2001; Truckenbrodt, 2006), head movement operations that take place in order to combine a root with its affixes (or, in a lexicalist approach, to check the features that those affixes realise) seem especially suspect. In this paper I argue that these cases of head movement are in fact illusory.

Assume a head  $H$  that moves through a series of functional heads  $F_1 \dots F_n$ , finally landing in the highest one.  $H$  and  $F_1 \dots F_n$  all have a particular semantic contribution and each is located in the tree in the position that corresponds to its semantic contribution. In such a constellation, there is no reason to assume that  $H$  moves, either its features or the morpheme associated with it. The only reason to assume this is to be able to collect the morphemes into a single subtree and to move the word to the position that corresponds to its linear position in the utterance.

Syntactically and semantically, there is no need to collect the heads  $H$  and  $F_1 \dots F_n$  into a single subtree. Neither module needs to “know” that the morphemes form a unit, because semantically, they can make their contribution without moving to a higher head. Rather, it is the phonology that needs to know that the morphemes belong together: the morphemes themselves are chunks of phonological structure and are therefore only visible in the phonology. It follows that the phonology is the module that must combine the morphemes. Unlikely as this may seem at first, I will argue that, under certain conditions, this is indeed possible.

- Chomsky, Noam (2001). “Derivation by Phase”. In: *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*. Ed. by Michael Kenstowicz. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Truckenbrodt, Hubert (2006). “On the Semantic Motivation of Syntactic Verb Movement to C in German”. In: *Theoretical Linguistics* 32.3, pp. 257–306.
- Zwart, Jan-Wouter (2001). “Syntactic and Phonological Verb Movement”. In: *Syntax* 4.1, pp. 34–62.

## Towards a non-cartographic approach to Avar focus movement

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In this paper I examine the derivation and interpretation of Avar sentences involving morphosyntactic marking of focus, focused phrases being realised both *ex-* and *in-situ* (2a and 2b respectively). Avar is a discourse-configurational agglutinating North-East Caucasian language spoken mainly in the Republic of Daghestan (Russia).

- (1) *he- t aħmad aħ- ana*  
she-ERG Ahmed.ABS call-AOR  
'She invited Ahmed.'
- (2) a. *he- t aħmad= in aħ- un w-ug- e- w*  
she-ERG Ahmed.ABS=FOC call-CVB M-be.PRS-PTCP-M  
'It was Ahmed that she invited.'
- b. *aħmad= in he- t aħ- un w-ug- e- w*  
Ahmed.ABS=FOC she-ERG call-CVB M-be.PRS-PTCP-M  
'It was Ahmed that she invited.'

Some of the most important properties of Avar focus include exhaustivity, obligatory non-finite (participial) inflection on the verb, island sensitivity with respect to the placement of focus particles, which are represented by a contrastive focus particle *=(j)in* (also *=χa* in some dialects), a yes/no-question particle *=(j)iš*: and a constituent negation particle *guro*.

I will be making the following claims:

1. Avar focus sentences are clefts, “clefts” being understood somewhat narrowly as structures involving Avar analogues of the CLEFT operator in English proposed by Velleman et al. (2012). This accounts for the exhaustive character of the focus.
2. These clefts are built around a free relative clause, thus accounting for the difference in verbal morphology between sentences without focus (1) and those with focus (2).
3. The different “flavours” of CLEFT in Avar manifest themselves in the form of various focus particles.
4. Since Merge, both external and internal, is unrestricted (Chomsky, 2007, 2013), there is no feature-driven focus movement to SpecFocP, nor are there pairs of dedicated focus features that require checking/valuation. Focus particle movement is free in the same sense as *wh*-movement is free (Šimik, 2012).
5. It is the focus particle that undergoes free focus movement rather than focused constituents  $\bar{A}$ -moving to the left periphery.

Chomsky, Noam (2007). “Approaching UG from below”. In: *Interfaces + Recursion = Language?* Ed. by Uli Sauerland and Hans Martin Gärtner. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 1–29.

- Chomsky, Noam (2013). "Problems of Projection". In: *Lingua* 130, pp. 33–49. DOI: 10.1016/j.lingua.2012.12.003.
- Šimik, Radek (2012). "The elimination of formal wh-features and a theory of free wh-movement". ms. University of Potsdam. URL: <http://www.sfb632.uni-potsdam.de/~simik/pdf/simik-wh-features.pdf>.
- Velleman, Dan Bridges et al. (2012). "It-clefts are IT (inquiry terminating) constructions". In: *Proceedings of SALT 22*. Ed. by Anca Chereches, pp. 441–460. URL: <http://elanguage.net/journals/salt/article/view/22.441/3480>.