Duality of patterning and syntactic patterns
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In this talk I would like to begin by showing how certain conditions mainly related to mathematical information theory and structural complexity favor the emergence of the duality of patterning (Hockett 1958, 1960, 1963/1977). The term 'duality of patterning' refers to the observation that morphemes (minimal meaningful units) are a combination of phonemes (minimal meaningless units). As we shall argue, the duality of patterning is a prerequisite for language to satisfy a general principle of data compression as well as to overcome transmission errors in data transmission. This will lead us to consider how, on the one hand, the duality of patterning and, on the other hand, the unbounded syntactic procedure and the respective compositional semantic rules cooperate in order to reduce both the structural complexity of syntactic objects and the size of the morphological storage. In brief, we will see that the duality of patterning provides language with certain efficiency properties that ensure its feasibility in making an 'infinite use of finite means' (Fortuny in press).

After discussing the very general morphophonological property of the duality of patterning, I will argue for the existence of three types of syntactic patterns that can be defined according to how grammatical features are assigned to syntactic projections. More precisely, we shall distinguish between discontinuous, analytic and syncretic patterns. That is, I will propose that a feature can be assigned to two projections, that there can be a one-to-one relation between features and positions, and that more than one feature can be assigned to one projection. Whereas analytic and discontinuous syntactic patterns may be derived from the idea tha the Conceptual-Intentional system requires in general articulated syntactic representations with semantically devoted positions, syncretic syntactic patterns are favored by the Maximize Matching Effects Principle, a principle of structural minimization: "Match as many features as possible using the smallest span of structure".

In sum, we will be concerned with a general morphophonological properties (the duality of patterning) and a particular analysis of certain syntactic phenomena in order to study how the semantic richness of natural languages is attained in an optimal way.

References

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