Syntax without Syntax
Dated: November 28, 2016
Review: December 3, 2016

In this paper, the author suggests that traditional formulations of Syntax as a generative system tries too hard to account for phenomena that might instead be shunted to its interfaces (specifically, the phonological/sensory-motor interface). This results in look-ahead problems, over-generation, and the stipulation of arbitrary syntactic constraints that might instead be profitably analyzed as emergent from independently motivated constraints.

In particular, the author suggests that syntactic phenomena may fall out from "phonological and prosodic principles that underlie how the actual vocal tract is constructed" – i.e., have some independent physical basis. In keeping with this line of argumentation, it would have been nice to see a discussion of how exactly the specific prosodic principles that the author uses are motivated by specific physical properties of the human speech system. Also, it would be nice to see a discussion of how much syntactic machinery we might still want to keep around. The author's examples make reference to syntactic phrases (e.g., CP, AP) and the (possibly) syntactic notions of subjects/objects, so *some* vestiges of traditional syntax must still be in play – Where might one draw the line between the 'narrow syntax' and the parts that are emergent from extrinsic constraints?

In terms of overall organization, I agree with Heidi's suggestion that English extraposition might make a more compelling first example than the data from German, since the category of the extraposed constituents is the same as that of the non-extraposed ones in English (both APs). Also, it might be helpful to make explicit the claim that the non-extraposed structure is the 'base form' of sorts, and that the extraposition is completely a reflex of externalization, and should not be reflected in the underlying structure at all.

Two suggestions for further consideration:

[Section 3.1] – Does this say anything about the prosody of questions vs. declaratives in *wh*-in-situ languages? We might expect the surface forms of the two to be the same (at least in terms of the words used), so perhaps some difference in prosody might surface to help speakers disambiguate the two? The *wh*-in-situ language that comes to mind is Mandarin Chinese; I wonder if the paper at http://bobbyruijgrok.com/gulibu/lidocs_files/MA_thesis_Ruijgrok_Oct-2012.pdf might be useful.

On a related note, does the proposed theory say anything about syntactic ambiguity? If the words are exactly the same, might we expect that differences in syntax (in the traditional sense) could cause differences in prosody? (Since the theory predicts that different syntactic constituents might be mapped onto prosodic constituents in different ways.) Can speakers actually pick up on these differences? If so, this would suggest that syntactically ambiguous sentences are in some sense going to be less ambiguous when spoken than when produced in some other mode.

Traditional example: The girl [saw the boy] with the telescope vs. The girl saw [the boy with the telescope]

As a whole, the paper presents some nice analyses, and the general principles proposed seem defensible – If the work is expanded in the future, it would be very interesting to see how the big-picture ideas discussed could apply across more examples of 'problematic' grammatical phenomena, and how they might work with other 'traditional' syntactic frameworks/programs (apart from Minimalism, and to some extent, OT).

There were, however, a number of incomplete parts in the paper, and the flow of argumentation between certain sections was not always clear. In addition, there were a number of typographical/stylistic errors in the manuscript. Of course, this is not a problem per se given that this was a draft, but I have listed some of the more obvious ones I noticed below, together with a number of more specific comments and suggestions.

[Section 1.3] – Might be worth making explicit why it is "evolutionarily necessary" that the language faculty be simple; given that evolution is essentially stochastic in nature, very large changes could, at least in theory, emerge within a relatively small timeframe/number of generations.

[2nd line of page 4, and elsewhere] – Merge is generally understood to produce hierarchical structures, not "strings"; one might imagine that some might take issue with the terminology used here.
[Right before Section 2] – Needs to be completed.

[Page 6, 2nd para from bottom] – This para seems to imply that prosodic constraints *always*, in some sense, trump "logical" ones. Is this the claim that is being made here? Also, might be worth making explicit what "logical constituency" means here: Is it some notion of semantic structure? Is it with reference to traditional formulations of syntactic constituency? If so then perhaps a discussion of where this syntactic information comes from.

[Page 8, 1st para] – This para seems to imply that CPs *universally* want to be matched with IPs cross-linguistically. Is this the claim here?

[Page 9, 2nd para from bottom] – Needs to be completed.

[Page 10, 1st para] – There seems to be some kind of a gap between the end of page 9 and the start of page 10 in terms of argumentation.

[Page 10, 1st para after example (5)] – Is the traditional *that*-trace filter a stipulation on surface linear order? It might be good to make it explicit, so that it can be contrasted with Salzmann's

observations about adjacency to the verb rather than the trace. Also, “pustule” might not be an appropriate word to use here.

[Page 11, 1st para before example (8)] – Perhaps “… where verb heads *do* happen to serve as objects …”?

[Page 12, 1st para after example (9)] – “compared to the above example …”: Forcing things to fit acceptable English prosody wasn’t explicitly discussed in the earlier analysis.

[Page 12, example (10)] – Could there be a story here to be told about the difference between *who* and *that*? *Who* is acceptable in the place of *that* in both examples, but *who that* and *that who* are of course ungrammatical: Could this ungrammaticality somehow receive an explanation from the fact that *that* projects an IP?

[Page 13, 1st para] – Are there any clear examples of word orders that are never observed in human languages? Would it be possible to give a quick analysis of one such order on the basis of the principles proposed?