Syntactic Analyticity and Parametric Theory

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Diversity in a biolinguistic model

- Nature + Nurture = Grammar_L
- UG, Experience, PG
- Language diversity
- Explaining diversity: parametric theory
- Mac- and micro-parametrics
- Parameters and acquisition
- Origins, change, and acquisition
- Consequences in other domains
Diversity: some examples

(1) E.T. phoned home.  (English)
(2) E.T. da dianhua hui jia.  (Mandarin)
   E.T. hit telephone back-to home
(3) John-was Bill-ni denwa shita.  (Japanese)
(4) Washakoty’tawitsherahetkvhta’se’  (Mohawk)
   He made the thing that one puts on
   one’s body ugly for her.
• Analyticity and synthesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isolating</th>
<th>Analytic</th>
<th>Synthetic</th>
<th>Polysynthetic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Italian/Latin</td>
<td>Mohawk</td>
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<td>. . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Austronesian</td>
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<td>. . .</td>
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</table>
More variations: Simple vs. compound verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthetic</th>
<th>Analytic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English:</strong></td>
<td><strong>English:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enter, exit, etc.</em></td>
<td><em>come in, go out, etc.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Classical Chinese</strong></td>
<td><strong>Modern Chinese</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ru, chu</em></td>
<td><em>jin lai, chu qu</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
More Variations: classifiers, plural morphology, etc.

Chinese, Japanese, etc.

yi-ben shu, liang-ge ren, san-zhang zhuoz
one-CL book, 2-CL person, 3-CL table

English, French, etc.

one book, two persons, three tables
More Variations: word order

Japanese:  Last year John often Bill visited.
Chinese:    Last year John often visited Bill.
English:    Last year John often visited Bill.
French:     Last year John visited often Bill.
German:     Last year visited John often Bill.
Irish:      Visited John last year often Bill.
The clustering of distinctive properties (I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin Chinese, etc.</th>
<th>English, Romance, etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extensive use of light verbs</td>
<td>Limited light verb constructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compounds and phrasal expressions</td>
<td>Simplex expressions or compounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominal classifiers</td>
<td>No nominal classifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head-final word order</td>
<td>Head-initial tendencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have expressions like <em>nobody, each other</em>, or ‘bi-nominal <em>each</em>’</td>
<td>Have negative quantifiers, reciprocals and ‘bi-nominal <em>each</em>’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not have <em>wh</em>-movement</td>
<td>Have <em>wh</em>-movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have <em>gapping</em> constructions</td>
<td>Have gapping constructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The clustering of distinctive properties (II)

- No agreement, tense, case, or plural morphology
  - “I have drunk three hours of water”
  - “I criticized 3 years of Bush”
  - “Bash your Bush, …”
  - Resultatives violate DOR
  - Etc.

- Have agreement, tense, case, and/or plural morphology
  - I have been drinking water for 3 hours
  - I criticized Bush for 3 years
  - Go on Bush-bashing…
  - Resultatives show DOR effects
  - Etc.
The clustering reflects the analyticity-synthesis difference at three levels:

- Lexical categories (light verbs, classifiers, sem mismatches, etc.)
- Functional categories (n-words, reciprocals, tense, agreement, wh-movement, etc.)
- Argument structure as grammatical features (‘eat restaurant, cut knife, etc.; DOR in resultatives, etc.)
Explaining the variations (II)

- Chinese as a Davidsonian language par excellence
  - Decomposition at the verbal level (light verbs [i.e. verbal classifiers], etc.)
  - Decomposition at the nominal level (classifiers = [light nouns, auxiliary nouns if you like], etc.)
  - Decomposition at the functional level (wh-movement, n-words, reciprocals, etc.)
Explaining the variations (III)

- **Chinese as a Healthy (“Virus”-free) language**
  - No virus (no relevant uninterpretable grammatical features that drive syntactic operations), hence
  - No wh-movement, no “EPP”-movement, no case-driven checking movement, no n-words, etc.
  - No (or limited) argument structure requirement, hence some syn-sem mismatches, lack of some DOR effects, etc.
Explaining the variations (IV)

- The lexical parameterization hypothesis
  - Cross-linguistic variations in syntax reduce to (are the results of) morphological differences in lexical and functional items among languages
  - A theory of syntactic computation based on the notion that syntactic operations are driven by grammatical features
Other important issues

- Macro- and micro-parametric theories
- Variation and language acquisition
- Origins, change, and acquisition
- Parameters in other domains: processing, pathology, etc.