GIST (Ghent) and CRISSP are proud to present the fifth installment of the Brussels Conference on Generative Linguistics:

BCGL5: Case at the interfaces
Brussels, December 2-3, 2010

Call for papers

Theme description

Ever since Vergnaud's famous letter to Chomsky and Lasnik in 1976 (recently published as Vergnaud 2006), C/case has been at the center of attention of generative theorizing. In the early GB-days, the focus on case was mostly due to the fact that the Case Filter led to a number of significant theoretical advances and to a much higher degree of unification (see Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2008). In particular, not only did it result in the abandonment of the non-explanatory, descriptive *NP-to-VP-filter (Chomsky & Lasnik 1977), it also—in conjunction with Burzio's generalization—made possible a unified, construction-neutral analysis of passives, unaccusatives and raising constructions (Burzio 1986), and led to a deeper understanding of word order differences between nominal and clausal complements (Stowell 1981). Moreover, the relation between a case-assigning verb and its accusative object or between a preposition and its complement, termed government, was soon to become one of the most crucial theoretical primitives in the then developing framework, its effects extending well beyond case theory proper.

With the advent of the Minimalist Program came a radical reduction of the number of theoretical primitives—including the abandonment of government—as well as a heightened focus on the interaction between the syntactic module on the one hand and the articulatory-perceptual (A-P) and conceptual-intentional (C-I) interfaces on the other. Once again, case took center stage, but this time mainly because it refused to be straightforwardly assimilated into the new theoretical perspective. On the C-I-side, case seems to be a feature that is uninterpretable both on the Probe and on the Goal, and as such it differs from other formal features such as [phi] or [wh]. This has prompted Chomsky (1995ff) to propose that case valuation is a side effect of the [phi]-Agree-relation between T/v on the one hand and the subject/object on the other. Bošković (2005) on the other hand takes the radical uninterpretability of case to be the driving force behind the word order alternations traditionally ascribed to the EPP. Others have taken a different perspective and have argued that case morphology is the spell-out of syntactic features that have an interpretable counterpart. The precise identification of these features differs and ranges from Tense (Pesetsky & Torrego 2001, 2004), to Aspect (Kratzer 2004, Svenonius 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007), to categorial features (Pesetsky 2009).

At the A-P-interface case is the topic of a division-of-labor-debate between morphology and syntax. Based on Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson's (1985) seminal paper on Icelandic, Marantz (1991) concluded that the distribution of case affixes was determined entirely in a post-syntactic morphological module, and that the syntactic effects of case might be reducible to independent, non-case related principles such as the EPP. Marantz's work has been further developed by among others Bobaljik & Wurmbrand (2008), Bobaljik (2008), Schütze (1997), McFadden (2004), and Sigurðsson (2006, 2009). At the same time, however, there is a substantial body of work arguing that case checking/valuation forms part and parcel of syntax proper (see a.o. Pesetsky 2009, Pesetsky & Torrego 2001, 2004, Bošković 2005), while others argue for a more mixed approach (Legate 2008, Baker & Vinokurova 2008, Caha 2009).

For the fifth Brussels Conference on Generative Linguistics we welcome papers on any topic related to the issues raised above. In particular, questions that the conference seeks to address include—but are not limited to—the following:

- Is case a strictly formal licensing mechanism ("the formal feature par excellence" Chomsky 1995:278-9) or is it connected to semantic content?
- Is structural case the (uninterpretable) manifestation on a DP of features which are semantically interpretable only on verbal projections?
- How closely connected are (the conditions on) case assignment and the assignment of theta-roles?
- How closely connected are (the conditions on) case assignment and the characterization of event structure?
- Do PPs bear case? Is case assignment associated with argument-hood or DP-hood?
- Which level of the (decomposed) verbal structure is relevant for the determination of case?
- What is the relation between finiteness and nominative?
- Is genitive case a reflection of an underlying predication structure?
- Is case assigned by one head or is it made available by the combination of two/several heads?
- Should (inherent and/or structural) case be represented as a head, e.g. a K-head? Does case morphology project? What is the empirical evidence for this/these head(s)? What is its/their semantic/syntactic function/contribution?
- Should structural case and inherent (idiosyncratic/lexical and semantic) case be distinguished from each other, or can these notions be collapsed?
- Should morphological case be distinguished from syntactic or abstract case? If so, how should syntactic/abstract case be defined? What is its relation to overt case manifestations? Does variation in morphological case endings have syntactic relevance?
- What is the evidence in favor of assuming case features in the syntax? If such features exist, can/must they be further decomposed into more basic syntactic features?
- Can dependent/non-dependent case systems exist side by side with Agree(ment)-based systems or are they mutually exclusive?
- Do we need a notion of default case? If so, how does it come about and what determines which case is default in which language?

INVITED SPEAKERS

We are pleased to announce that the following invited speakers have agreed to give a talk at BCGL5:

David Pesetsky (MIT)
Mark Baker (Rutgers University)
Halldór Sigurðsson (Lund University)

ABSTRACT GUIDELINES

Abstracts should not exceed two pages, including data, references and diagrams. Abstracts should be typed in at least 11-point font, with one-inch margins (letter-size; 8" ½ by 11" or A4) and a maximum of 50 lines of text per page. Abstracts must be anonymous and submissions are limited to 2 per author, at least one of which is co-authored.

Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Please submit your abstract using the EasyAbs link for BCGL5: http://linguistlist.org/confcustom/bcgl5

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