

Semantics in Distributed Morphology  
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15 **Outline Only!**

"Semantics in Distributed Morphology" for HSK *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, edited by Claudia von Stechow, Klaus von Stechow, and Paul Portner. Mouton de Gruyter.

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**Distributed Morphology**

Distributed Morphology (DM) is a framework for morphological analysis in which word-formation is primarily a syntactic operation, in the usual sense of 'syntactic'. That is, the same mechanism that generates complex phrasal structure also generates complex morphological structure. There is only one 'generative engine' in the theory. In that sense, the theory does without a conventional lexicon. There is no separate generative component in which word-

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forms are first created or operated on and then fed into the syntax.

Halle and Marantz 1993

→ Exhibit Y-model as employed in DM, indicating the respective derivational positions of morphosemantic primitives and late insertion of vocabulary items, and the relationship of LF and PF.

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**Morphosemantics**

In DM, whatever interpretive mechanisms are employed to compute the meaning of complex syntactic phrases also computes the meaning of complex word-forms. Since morphology is a type of syntax (or vice versa), the semantics of morphology just is the semantics of the syntax. DM analyses (should) participate in, & contribute to, the broader community of approaches problems of the syntax-semantics interface.

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→ Overall framework mostly integrated with modern generative syntax, particularly

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Minimalism, and with model-theoretic, truth-conditional semantic analyses consistent with such syntactic approaches.

→ e.g. identical semantics of real incorporation (baker) vs. Massam's pseudo-incorporation? Comparative 'more' vs. comparative '-er'. (Embick)

→ Complex morphology motivates lexical decomposition in a real sense

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→ Principles-and-Parameters methodology entails the relevance of the analysis of language X to the analysis of language Y. Morphological, syntactic and semantic data all have consequences for cross-linguistic theorizing about semantics, syntax and morphology.

50 **Differences between DM and Lexicalist approaches**

In DM, unlike in lexicalist theories, there are not two generative engines. All composition is syntactic. There is no generative LCS component, and no pre-syntactic operations on argument structure. Such effects are the result of differences in the syntactic computations that produce the contrasting forms.

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→ No morphophonologically motivated dividing line between noncompositional and compositional semantics (although there probably is a morphosemantically motivated such dividing line). Marantz 1997

→ Piece-based, not a process-based approach, role of zero morphemes in the theory and their contribution to semantics.

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→ Realizational, not projectionist, approach: the semantic contribution of a particular terminal node or piece of structure can be considerably more complex than the (underspecified) content of the phonological material that spells it out. (No unification?)

- 65 → Semantically motivated morphological analyses ( $v^\circ$  with causative semantics, e.g.; Rice's approach to Athapaskan, e.g.); morphologically motivated syntactic or semantic analyses (?thoughts? participle formation? causatives?)

### Specific DM proposals with semantic ramifications

- 70 → The acategorical  $\checkmark$  claim: key division between encyclopedic and functional semantics, interaction of the two (mandatorily interpreted functional material: McGinnis 2001; mandatory compositional/noncompositional dividing line: Arad 2004). Relation to 'lexical semantics' vs. 'formal/sentential semantics'.
- 75 → The effect of late insertion on semantic theorizing, esp. underspecification of VIs. This both frees up semantic analysis (e.g. theories of pronominal meaning (Sauerland 2004, Rullman? Kratzer?)) and constrains it (e.g. characterizing what the common abstract content is of clearly distinct terminal nodes which are realized by the same affix (Pylkkanen, Embick?))
- relationship between features conditioning VI insertion and 'interpretable features'
- irrelevance of post-syntactic morphological operations to interpretation

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Some random thoughts not included above:

Tomioka on resultative semantics? morphology and event structure? Hale and Keyser?

Pfau on DM as a psychologically real production model (esp. distinguishing 'semantic' and 'phonological' speech errors)?

- 85 Bobaljik & Sauerland's pronoun&agreement project?  
Others?

### References

- 90 Arad 2004  
Baker 1988, also ?  
Folli, Harley and Karimi 2005  
Halle and Marantz 1993  
Kratzer  
Massam 2001  
95 McGinnis 2001  
Pfau 2002  
Pylkkanen 2002  
Rice 2000  
Rullman  
100 Sauerland 2004  
Tomioka 2006