

Workshop1: Models and methods in morphology

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Topic description:

The past decade has witnessed a substantial expansion of the role played by models in linguistic research and a significant shift in the relation between models and theories. Reflecting the influence of the generative tradition, earlier generations of models tended to serve as ‘implementations’ of antecedently-defined linguistic theories. These implementations were also largely interpreted as characterizing aspects of speaker ‘performance’ rather than underlying linguistic ‘competence’. One consequence was a fundamentally asymmetrical relation between theories and models: theoretical innovations could directly influence the design of models, but any results obtained by models could only indirectly bear on theory construction.

As modelling strategies have increased in scope and sophistication, models have outgrown this limited role and begun to encroach on areas formerly regarded as the domain of linguistic theory. It has become clear that highly successful models of language comprehension, production, acquisition and even language change can be formulated without reference to richly-articulated, domain-specific linguistic theories. Instead, it is theory that plays a circumscribed role in this family of approaches. For the most part, a theory just defines a hypothesis space for a class of models.

The overarching goal of this workshop would be to complement the more theoretical presentations of the general session with an overview of emerging modelling paradigms that address a number of common traditional analytical tasks from a radically different perspective. The workshop would provide a summary of the most influential morphological models, highlighting some of the central features that distinguish these models, including variation in architectures, empirical coverage, training data, and cognitive plausibility. The models covered would include ‘deep learning’ neural networks, ‘wide learning’ and other types of discriminative learning networks, neurally-motivated models of lexical and morphological knowledge, developmental and psycholinguistic models, and statistical diachronic models.

Workshop 2: The learnability of complex constructions from a cross-linguistic perspective

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Topic description:

It is well known that languages significantly differ with respect to the types of complex constructions they use or favor. Focusing on inflection, for instance, one observes that Finnish has an agglutinative morphology, Russian a fusional morphology, and Thai an isolating morphology. In the domain of word-formation, cross-linguistic variation is also attested. So, for example, while Germanic languages make abundant usage of compounds in order to express complex lexical concepts, Romance languages often favor syntactic phrases instead for the same purpose (see, e.g., Kastovsky 2009; Zwanenburg 1992). The aforementioned differences between languages have been described and discussed at length in the literature (see, e.g., Booij 2010; Spencer & Zwicky 2001; Stump & Finkel 2013). An issue that has been analyzed much less, however, is whether and how various grammatical systems or construction types differ in their learnability. Looking at Germanic and Romance languages, we found, for example, that compounds are overall learned more efficiently than phrases (see Kotowski, Böer & Härtl 2014; Schlechtweg 2018; Schlechtweg & Härtl 2016). Furthermore, it has been suggested on a theoretical basis, for instance, that agglutinative morphology might be easier to learn than fusional morphology because the former is more transparent (see, e.g., Pinker 1996). The evidence shows, however, that things are not as easy as they seem and that several factors play a role in this context (see Dimitriadis, Boll-Avetisyan & Fritzsche 2017).

The aim of this workshop is to bring together researchers with a theoretical and/or empirical background who are interested in investigating the effects of crosslinguistic morphological/grammatical variation on the learnability of complex constructions. Contributions might address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- What do we know about the learnability, mental representation, and processing of inflected forms, derivatives, compounds, phrases, or other kinds of complex constructions from a cross-linguistic perspective? Do the learnability, representation, and processing of these constructions differ across languages and, if so, what are possible explanations for these observations?
- Which factors play a role for the learnability of complex constructions? For instance, the compounds in some languages, e.g., in German, are typically characterized by a specific prosodic prominence pattern, while those found in languages such as French are not. Does that have an influence on how these constructions are learned, stored, and processed?
- What happens if a language user's native and foreign language differ with respect to the availability of or preference for specific complex constructions? How are these constructions learned, stored, and processed in a foreign language?

References:

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Workshop 3: Morphological aspects of Uralic and Turkic languages

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Topic description:

The workshop targets the agglutinating Uralic and Turkic languages, which have a long history of contacts with each other as well as other languages in the region, such as Russian.

These languages exhibit verbal and nominal paradigms of varying complexity that present a challenge for theoretical approaches (e.g., within phonology, syntax, and language acquisition) and applications in second language learning and teaching as well as computational linguistics.

We encourage submission of papers in all theoretical frameworks and methods of study as we aim at bringing together scholars who are interested in sharing data and problems to get a broader coverage of the morphological phenomena of these languages.

We welcome papers dealing with various aspects of Uralic and Turkic morphology. However, since the main theme of this Morphology Meeting is related to paradigms, papers that focus on paradigms are likely to attract more general public in addition to the workshop audience.