

Grammar as logic, processing as deduction, actions as theorems, states as propositions

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In short

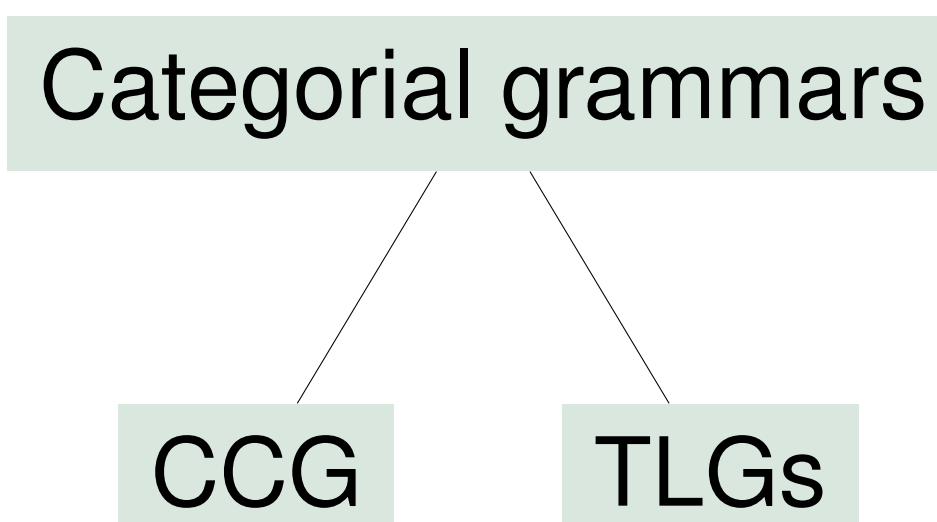
It's time to adopt the **categorial** approach as a **unifying** framework for analyzing competence and performance!

Background

- Formal grammar is still important in the era of LLM [1]
 - But Chomsky's approach has serious problems
 - Lack of formality [2]
 - Incompatibility with real-time processing [3]
 - Recent success of CCG [4] in psycholinguistic modeling [5,6,7]
- ⇒ Time for a more general theory of the categorial approach to sentence processing!

Going type-logical

- While CCG is implementation-friendly, **type-logical grammars (TLGs)** [8,9] are more elegant and illuminating
- TLGs view **grammar as logic**
- Extensively studied as a competence theory
- Linguistic expressions are assigned **types**
 - Basic types: S, NP, etc.
 - Derived types: A/B, B\A (cf. fractions), etc.
- Basic rules of inference (Lambek calculus [7])



$$\frac{B \quad B \backslash A}{A} \backslash E \quad \frac{A/B \quad B}{A} /E \quad \frac{[B]_i \dots}{A} \backslash I_i \quad \frac{\dots [B]_i}{A/B} /I_i$$

- A basic example:

$$\frac{\text{Pat} \quad \frac{\text{NP} \quad \frac{\text{NP} \quad \frac{\text{NP} \quad \text{saw} \quad \text{Kim}}{\text{NP} \backslash S} /E}{\text{NP} \backslash S} /E}{S} /E$$

★ Can account for key characteristics of human sentence processing

Incrementality, predictivity, grammar-guidedness

- Incremental parse just by mechanisms equipped in the grammar (strict competence hypothesis; [4])
- Parsing as deduction**; hypothetical reasoning as prediction

$$\frac{\text{Pat}}{\text{NP}} \Rightarrow \frac{\text{Pat}}{\text{NP}} \quad \frac{\text{saw}}{\text{NP} \backslash S} /E \Rightarrow \frac{\text{Pat} \quad \frac{\text{NP} \quad \frac{\text{NP} \quad \text{saw} \quad \text{Kim}}{\text{NP} \backslash S} /E}{\text{NP} \backslash S} /E \quad \frac{[NP]_1}{S} /I_1$$

("S if NP follows")

- Incremental processing of long-distance dependencies, which can be a headache for mainstream-based approaches [10], is also possible just within grammar
- While CCG poses a fixed limit on incrementality (by the choice of rules) [11], TLGs offer a scale of complexity

Resource sensitivity

- TLG-based processing is resource-efficient in two ways, overcoming limitations in cognitive resources [12]
- Actions as theorems**: Multiple inference steps can be chunked as a theorem, e.g.,

$$\frac{\text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \backslash S}{S \backslash \text{NP}} \text{Theorem}$$

* CCG can be seen as a set of theorems

- States as propositions (types)**: Types provide an austere summary of the past input; once a type is inferred for the string, no need to maintain what was in between, e.g.,:

$$\frac{\text{Pat} \quad \text{saw}}{S \backslash \text{NP}} \text{whatever}$$

- [6,7] show (CCG-based) chunking failure predicts slowdown in English and Japanese reading time datasets

$$\frac{\text{the article that} \quad \text{the student}}{\text{NP} / (S \mid \text{NP})} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{***No rule to apply***}$$

Resilience and vulnerability to structural ambiguity

- A puzzling contrast in the magnitude of garden-path effect:
 - "NP/S" ambiguity: *Pat knows the baby cried.* **not too hard**
 - "NP/Z" ambiguity: *When Pat dressed the baby cried.* **very hard**
- TLGs' conjunction operators, \sqcap 'and' and \sqcup 'or', offer a new approach to ambiguity, accounting for the puzzle
- Lexical type assignments based on semantic considerations:
 - know* $\rightarrow (NP \backslash S) / (NP \sqcup S)$
 - dressed* $\rightarrow ((NP \backslash S) / NP) \sqcap (NP \backslash S)$
- "NP/S" ambiguity requires **reanalysis** of the NP only

$$\frac{\text{Pat knows} \quad \frac{\text{NP} \quad \text{the baby}}{\text{NP} \sqcup S} /E}{S / (NP \sqcup S)} \sqcup I_1$$

- "NP/Z" ambiguity requires **reanalysis** of the verb and the NP

$$\frac{\text{When Pat} \quad \frac{\text{dressed} \quad \text{the baby}}{((NP \backslash S) / NP) \sqcap (NP \backslash S)} /E_1}{(S/S) / NP} \sqcup I_1$$

References

- [1] Futrell & Mahowald 2025 *arXiv* [2] Borsley & Müller 2021 In Müller et al. (eds) *HPSG handbook* [3] Sag & Wasow 2011 In Borsley & Börjars (eds) *Non-transformational syntax* [4] Steedman 2000 *The syntactic process* [5] Stanojević et al. 2023 *Cog Sci* [6] Isono 2024 *Cogn* [7] Isono et al. 2025 *PsyArXiv* [8] Lambek 1958 *Am Math Mon* [9] Moortgat 1997 In van Benthem & ter Meulen (eds) *Handbook of Logic and Lang* [10] Hunter 2019 In Berwick & Stabler (eds) *Minimalist Parsing* [11] Demberg 2012 *TAG+11* [12] Christiansen & Chater 2016 *Behav & Brain Sci*