

PROGRESS REPORT

15 November 2006

ESRC RES-051-27-0122 Professorial Fellowship “Grammatical features: a key to understanding language” (1 November 2004 – 31 October 2007)

1. Summary

The project is well under way. Useful progress has been made towards each objective and the main aim of the project. The project has aroused interest as shown by numerous invitations for seminars and advanced courses. Relevant publications are forthcoming and some have already appeared. The seminar series is going well. There are no major problems to report. The main benefits besides those foreseen in the proposal are the international collaborations and the large number of opportunities for dissemination.

2. Details of progress

The main aim of the Fellowship is: *To make a substantial contribution to our understanding of language by deepening our knowledge of the central concept ‘feature’. To do this by bringing together typological research on the content of features with formal work on their behaviour.* We have made substantial progress in our research towards reaching this ambitious aim. We have identified and worked through the essential sources tracing the rise of features, and those sources which have led to the current situation in which features are both ubiquitous and yet poorly understood. (Publication [5] is a brief account of the issue). We have analysed several instances of the interactions of features. In particular, claimed instances of values of one feature being available as values of another (which would increase the theoretical space considerably) have been shown to be unfounded. (Around a dozen presentations have addressed the problem of the interactions of features, and publication [15] is also relevant to this objective; seminar [4], held in conjunction with the concurrent Extended Deponency project, proved invaluable in working out this specific type of feature interaction, and has led to a volume [10] being published by the British Academy and OUP). We have identified and argued for the types of features on which linguistic theory can legitimately call. (This objective has been addressed in seminars [2], [3], [6] and [8]; it has also been the focus of five presentations, one submitted paper, and our international collaboration with the ISO and with Linguist List’s E-MELD team). We have analysed in detail the expressions of several key features found in the world’s languages. This information forms part of the Inventory of Features being compiled in the form of a website. (The analysis of the features found in the world’s languages has been the focus of seminars [1], [5] and [7]; progress towards this objective has been reported in several presentations; this strand of the project has led to our participation and presentations at two E-MELD workshops which began a very useful interaction with our American collaborator).

‘Bringing together typological research on the content of features with formal work on their behaviour’ has been accomplished especially through the **seminar series**, where speakers from one side of the issue have addressed audiences representing both sides. Our own **conference papers and other academic presentations** also reflect this synthesis (we have given 39 presentations to date; for the full list see the website address given at the end of this section). The reaction to our presentations is typically that this is work that needs to be done. By concentrating on the conceptual underpinnings, and on the analytical choices available (rather than on the rights and wrongs of specific theories) we are perceived as having identified a need and as making progress towards answering it. The **international collaborations** reported below also show that we are making good progress towards our aim.

Our ‘contribution to understanding’ is being made first through sustained publication in major journals (we can report on **publications in top outlets**), but also by **contributions to encyclopedias** (three encyclopedia articles published: [5]-[7], and two more submitted: [16]-[17]), by numerous **lectures** at general linguistics conferences (notably the Linguistic Society of America) and at more specialised meetings (such as the Germanic Linguistics Annual Conference), and by **providing advanced courses** for postgraduates (as at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, planned for next March). Two publishers (CUP and OUP) have expressed an interest in a book on the topic.

In the sections below we list our main outputs. The full, regularly updated list of our outputs can be found at: http://www.surrey.ac.uk/LIS/SMG/group_projects.htm . All our listed outputs have arisen wholly or in part from the Fellowship. There is a natural overlap with the projects which make up the Fellowship research programme.

3. Publications

- [1] Corbett, Greville G. 2005. Suppletion in personal pronouns: theory versus practice, and the place of reproducibility in typology. *Linguistic Typology* 9.1-23.
- [2] Corbett, Greville G. 2005. The number of genders (chapter and map). In: Haspelmath, Martin, Matthew Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds) *World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 126-129.
- [3] Corbett, Greville G. 2005. Sex-based and non-sex-based gender (chapter and map). In: Haspelmath, Martin, Matthew Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds) *World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 130-133.
- [4] Corbett, Greville G. 2005. Systems of gender assignment (chapter and map). In: Haspelmath, Martin, Matthew Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds) *World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 134-137.
- [5] Corbett, Greville G. 2006. Linguistic features. In: Keith Brown (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, 2nd Edition, Volume 7*. Oxford: Elsevier. 193-194.
- [6] Corbett, Greville G. 2006. Grammatical gender. In: Keith Brown (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, 2nd Edition, Volume 4*. Oxford: Elsevier. 749-756.
- [7] Corbett, Greville G. 2006. Number. In: Keith Brown (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, 2nd Edition, Volume 8*. Oxford: Elsevier. 724-731.
- [8] Corbett, Greville G. 2006. *Agreement*. Cambridge: CUP.
- [9] Kibort, Anna. 2005. The INs and OUTs of the Participle-Adjective Conversion Rule. In: Butt, Miriam & Tracy Holloway King (eds) *Proceedings of the LFG05 Conference, University of Bergen, Norway*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications. 205-225.
- [10] Baerman, Matthew, Greville G. Corbett, Dunstan Brown & Andrew Hippisley (eds) (in press) *Deponency and Morphological Mismatches*. British Academy and OUP.
- [11] Chumakina, Marina, Anna Kibort & Greville G. Corbett. Determining a language's feature inventory: person in Archi. To appear in: Austin, Peter & Andrew Simpson (eds) *Linguistic Issues in Endangered Languages* (special issue of *Linguistische Berichte*).
- [12] Corbett, Greville G. Canonical typology, suppletion and possible words. To appear in *Language*. [This journal accepts only 8% of the articles offered.]
- [13] Corbett, Greville G. Gender and noun classes. To appear in: Timothy Shopen (ed.) *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, second edition. Cambridge: CUP.
- [14] Corbett, Greville G. Agreement. To appear in: Berger, Tilman, Karl Gutschmidt, Sebastian Kempgen & Peter Kosta (eds) *Slavische Sprachen/Slavic Languages: An International Handbook of their History, their Structure and their Investigation*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- [15] Corbett, Greville G. Implicational hierarchies. To appear in: Song, Jae Jung (ed.) *The Handbook of Language Typology*. Oxford: OUP.
- [16] Kibort, Anna. Gender marking. To appear in: Hogan, Patrick (ed.) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*. Cambridge: CUP. [To be published in 2008.]

[17] Kibort, Anna. Number. To appear in: Hogan, Patrick (ed.) *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*. Cambridge: CUP. [To be published in 2008.]

4. Seminars

[1] 8 April 2005. A seminar on “Daghestanian Lexicology and Typology”, at the University of Surrey. Invited speakers: Professor Aleksandr Kibrik (Moscow State University), Professor Sandro Kodzasov (Moscow State University), Professor Andrew Spencer (University of Essex).

[2] 21 April 2005. An all-day seminar on “Formal Feature Theories 1958-1988”, at the University of Surrey, led by Professor Gerald Gazdar (University of Sussex).

[3] 19 December 2005. An all-day Morphology Meeting on “Feature-based Grammars”, at the University of Surrey, with guest tutorial by Dr Jim Blevins (University of Cambridge).

[4] 16-17 January 2006. A two-day workshop on “Deponency and Morphological Mismatches”, held at the British Academy. Invited speakers: Professor Mark Aronoff (State University of New York, Stony Brook), Professor Jonathan Bobaljik (University of Connecticut), Professor Nicholas Evans (University of Melbourne), Professor Andrew Spencer (University of Essex), Professor Gregory Stump (University of Kentucky), Professor Nigel Vincent (University of Manchester).

[5] 3 March 2006. An all-day Morphology Meeting on “Morphosyntactic Features: Tense, Aspect, Mood”, at the University of Surrey, with guest tutorial by Professor Östen Dahl (University of Stockholm).

[6] 19 May 2006. An all-day Morphology Meeting on “Feature-based Approaches to Morphology and their Implementation”, at the University of Surrey, with guest presentation by Professor James Kilbury (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf).

[7] 13 October 2006. An all-day Morphology Meeting on “Morphosyntactic Features: Case”, at the University of Surrey, with guest tutorial by Professor Miriam Butt (Universität Konstanz).

[8] 15 December 2006. An all-day Morphology Meeting on “Tagging for morphosyntactic features in large corpora”, at the University of Surrey, with guest tutorial by Dr Adam Przepiórkowski (Institute of Computer Science, Polish Academy of Sciences).

5. International collaboration

Besides its theoretical value, the research was also planned to inform current moves towards standardising the annotation conventions in computational linguistics and electronic language documentation. To this effect, we have initiated contact or entered into collaboration with four external bodies involved with standards in linguistic annotation and linguistic data resources:

[1] We have entered into collaboration with the ISO Technical Committee 37 (TC 37), Sub-Committee 4 (SC 4), regarding their current work on the newly developed standard for morphosyntactic annotation ISO/CD 24613 (<http://www.iso.org/iso/en/CatalogueDetailPage.CatalogueDetail?CSNUMBER=37327&scopelist=PROGRAMME>).

[2] We participated in E-MELD (Electronic Metastructure for Endangered Languages Data: <http://emeld.org/>) 2005 and 2006 Workshops on Digital Language Documentation. Since July 2005 we have acted as E-MELD advisors.

[3] We are members of a network of major EU partners in the domain of electronic data resources for the study of language diversity/typology. This network is aimed at working out detailed proposals to be submitted in EU-programmes, and maintaining the research infrastructure that was set up under the heading of the EU-funded project Language Typology Resources Centre (<http://www.lotschool.nl/Research/ltrc/>).

[4] We are UK partners of a US team lead by the moderators of the Linguist List (<http://www.linguistlist.org/>) in the NSF/ESRC-funded “Special Activity in the Area of e-Science”. The project involves collaborative exchange visits between members of the Surrey Morphology Group and participants in the E-MELD, DATA (Dena’ina Archiving, Training and Access), ODIN (Online Database of Interlinear Text: <http://www.csufresno.edu/odin/>), and GOLD (General Ontology for Linguistic Description) projects.