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Review of Karine Baschung (1991)
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contrôle des infinitives en français.
(Langues naturelles et traitement de
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Reviews

Baschung, Karine, *Grammaires d'unification à traits et contrôle des infinitives en français*. Clermont-Ferrand: Editions Adosa, 1991, 303 pp. + appendices. 2 86639 007 5

This work is a version of the author's doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Clermont-Ferrand II in 1990. The author's purpose is a consideration of obligatory (arbitrary and non-arbitrary) control phenomena, i.e. the interpretation of the implicit subject of argumental infinitives, on the basis of data from verbal and adjectival control predicates. The author provides theoretical accounts of the data based on models of *Feature Unification Grammar*, namely *Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar* (GPSG) and two versions of *Unification Categorical Grammar* (UCG) specially adapted for French, i.e., *French Dialogue Parser* (FDP) and the closely related *French Grammar* (FG).

After an introductory first chapter, the author presents, in chapter 2, control phenomena attested in French infinitives as catalogued by Gross (verbs) and Le Goffic & Combe McBride (adjectives). Essentially, pre-theoretical locality constraints oblige an argumental infinitive to be controlled within its matrix clause. Beyond this, the author suggests uncontroversially that *non-potential control*, e.g. by an NP embedded in a semantic PP or by an expletive, is ruled out in the syntax, whereas *ambiguous control* (e.g. Jules_i a demandé à Jim_j de _{i,j}partir and *unrealised potential control* (e.g. Jules a promis à Jim_j de _jpartir/Jules a ordonné à Jim de _ipartir) are determined by the lexical entry of the respective (matrix) control predicate. These observations prepare the ground for the theoretical discussion in the following two chapters. Chapter 3 looks at GPSG, analysing control as a *semantically-driven syntactic* process mediated by the Control Agreement Principle (CAP) rather than an *intrinsically syntactic* phenomenon. Chapter 4 considers UCG in general, then FDP and FG in particular. Here, control is analysed as the result of the unification of the implicit subject of the embedded infinitive with either the subject or (prepositional) object of the matrix predicate. The locality constraints operative on control are thus a natural consequence of the impossibility of unifying the embedded subject with anything which the matrix predicate does not subcategorise for. Some of the problems inherent in FDP, e.g. ordering and lexical ambiguity, are discussed within the context of FG where solutions are also proposed. A number of the author's conclusions are drawn together in chapter 5.

Given the nature of this work, i.e. the consideration of a particular phenomenon from two different but related theoretical syntactic perspectives, perhaps the most disappointing aspect of Baschung's book is the lack of comparison and contrastive evaluation. (What there is is contained within the ten pages of chapter 5.) While

recognising the difficulty inherent in attempting to compare an implemented model (UCG) with an as yet unimplemented one (GPSG), it is a pity, I think, that the author dwells on an issue on which both GPSG and UCG take the same stand, i.e. the syntactic/semantic status of embedded argumental infinitives. For, although Government-Binding theory – which is not considered here – analyses embedded infinitives as clauses, i.e. as syntactic Ss and, implicitly, as semantic propositions, both GPSG and UCG view these constituents as predicates, i.e. as syntactic VPs and as semantic properties. This reservation notwithstanding, the obvious attraction of this work is that it offers a much-needed introduction, in *French*, to two contemporary models of Unification Grammar which is at the forefront of current research in mathematical and computational linguistics.

To conclude, this is a work which will be of interest not just to French syntacticians but also to IT specialists looking at natural language modelling. It is thorough in its approach and not surprisingly highly technical. Not for the faint-hearted!

REFERENCES

Gross, M. (1975). *Méthodes en Syntaxe. Régime des constructions complétives*. Paris: Hermann.

Le Goffic, P. & N. Combe McBride (1975). *Les Constructions fondamentales du Français*, *Le Français dans le Monde*, BELC. Paris: Hachette-Larousse.

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Battye, Adrian and Hintze, Marie-Anne, *The French Language Today*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992, x + 374 pp. 0 415 07814 8

This book, which is intended primarily for the benefit of undergraduate students of French, is an attempt to apply the techniques of modern linguistics to the French language.

Chapter 1 deals with the geographical distribution of French and the external history of French from the breakup of the Roman Empire to the present day; Chapter 2 describes the sound system of French in minute detail; Chapter 3 centres on the internal structure of the word in French; Chapter 4 is concerned with the sentence structure of French; and Chapter 5 focuses on the geographical and social diversity of French. The book is rounded off with two appendices ('Dialects and Regional Languages' and 'French in the World'), a select bibliography of academic writings, a list of articles published in *L'Express*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Le Monde* and a six-page subject index.

What Battye and Hintze provide is both a thorough introduction to the French language system and a frame of reference for defining and analysing universal linguistic phenomena. Thus detailed descriptions of various aspects of the French language frequently alternate with brief forays into subjects such as the physical production of speech sounds, the distinction between inflectional and derivational morphology, the heterogeneity of adverbs or tense and temporal reference.