ENGLISH GRAMMAR: THEORETICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS

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The present volume gathers papers that contribute to our understanding of the English Grammar and how it is acquired in different situations as well as papers that present issues in Contemporary Linguistics within the tradition that traces back to Chomsky´s program. Parameters and Universal Grammar are in the background, as well as the scientific commitment that surfaces in the experimental methodologies whose aim is to evaluate theoretical claims and ultimately the psychological issues of how grammar is stored, processed by and built into our minds/brains[1]. The papers are organized in three sections: the first section congregates papers that focus mainly on English properties; in the second section, the papers discuss issues within the theory of grammar; and the papers in the third section investigate second language acquisition.

The section *English as an Object Language* opens with Mien-Jen Wu and Tania Ionin´s article, entitled "Intonational effects on English scopally-ambiguous sentences", which experimentally investigates the relation between prosody and the interpretation of ambiguous sentences in English. The authors analyzed two types of sentences: sentences with a universal quantifier in subject position and a sentential negation; and sentences with quantifiers in both subject and object positions. In the experiment, native English speakers rated the acceptability of sentences presented auditorily against contexts matching surface-scope vs. inverse-scope readings. Their findings indicate that fall-rise intonation facilitates inverse scope only for quantifier-negation sentences, but not for double-quantifier sentences.

In "The existential perfect and its morphological and adverbial realizations in American English", Fernanda Costa da Silva Machado and Adriana Leitão Martins report some results of a corpora analysis regarding the so-called existential perfect in English. The data collected shows that the existential perfect

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is also conveyed by the simple past. So, it is not exclusively associated with *have* + past participle, with or without the overt realization of the auxiliary verb, as previously hypothesized by the authors.

"Partículas verbais e aspecto nas *complex particle constructions*" contributes to a better understanding of the grammatical role of verb particles in English. Andrea Knöpfle investigates the contribution of the particle for the event structure in complex constructions and concludes that its contribution is aspectual, specifically, it represents a sense of completeness and/or totality, and not of telicity proper.

Karina Bertolino, in "Subject ellipsis in early child English", argues that the omission of subjects in the grammar of children acquiring English cannot be explained by the null subject parameter, in any of its versions (parameter mis-setting or resetting). Her reasoning relies on empirical findings. She argues that the pattern of subject omission in child English is a case of subject ellipsis, an option available for English-speaking adults (´diary drop´).

The second section *Issues in the Theory of Grammar* brings together articles that discuss issues in the theory of grammar. In "No escape from categorization: An insider's view of compounds", Vitor Augusto Nóbrega argues against the view that compounds are built from acategorial roots, showing that any syntactic object made up of two or more uncategorized roots induce formal crashing at the interfaces. He claims that root categorization cannot be analyzed as a matter of parametric variation, nor as an optional derivational step. Additionally, he proposes that lexical integrity effects can be accounted by the presence of a category head merged on the top of two categorized roots. Finally, he claims that non-compositionality is assigned at LF.

Gesoel Mendes, in "Does ellipsis repair Head Movement Constraint violations?", investigates English data to show that Head Movement Constraint violations cannot be explained simply by deletion and compares this result with cases of both salvation and non-salvation by ellipsis from previous literature. He compares two proposals from the literature which would account for the lack of salvation in Head Movement Constraint violations: the proposal that treats it as a derivational constraint and the one that subsumes it under Chomsky's 1986 treatment of the ECP.

In "Remarks on minimalist accounts for binding", Cilene Nunes Rodrigues assesses empirical and theoretical arguments for binding. She compares the solution according to which binding principles are conditions on LF representations to that where they are derived by narrow syntax computations. The author argues that, although there is not yet a satisfactory minimalist account for binding, the evidence tilts towards derivation, and that pragmatics is also engaged in building coreferentiality.

The last section, *Second Language Acquisition*, deals with issues concerning bilinguals and experimental methodologies. Elaine Grolla, Adam Liter and Jeffery Lidz, in "The development of language and its interaction with other aspects of cognition: the case of medial wh-questions in English and in Brazilian

Portuguese", propose that the peculiar behavior of preschool children acquiring English and Brazilian Portuguese when prompted to produce multi-clause wh-questions can be explained as reflecting difficulties of their developing cognitive system. In elicited production tasks, children produced structures with an extra wh-element in medial position, a construction that is impossible in the adult languages being acquired. The authors propose that children's more limited inhibition control capacity leads them to pronounce elements with high activation levels in wrong places of the structure. Experimental data on both languages are provided, which corroborate this claim.

In "The development of the Voice Onset Time pattern of initial voiceless stops of English by Brazilian learners from Salvador, Brazil: Effects of explicit instruction", Felipe Flores Kupske and Michele Santos investigated the effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on the development of the Voice Onset Time (VOT) pattern of initial voiceless English stops by Brazilian learners. The results showed that in the group that received explicit instruction, it was possible to perceive a considerable increase in the duration of the L2 stops; while the control group, which received no instruction, did not produce the expected VOT pattern for English at any time of study. They conclude that Brazilian speakers can achieve productions that are statistically close to what is expected for English, at least as far as VOT is concerned.

Anabela Alves dos Santos Rato and Angélica Carle, in "Second language perception of English vowels by Portuguese learners: The effect of stimulus type", studied the effect of stimulus type on L2 English vowel perception; it also examined the relation between subject factors and L2 learners' performance. The study confirmed the Portuguese learners' difficulties in accurately categorizing the target vowels, particularly when identifying the L2 vowel sounds embedded in pseudo words, which suggests that L2 phonological categories may be established after lexical forms. The study also found a significant correlation between L2 language use and accurate perception of four of the target vowels, which indicates that the more frequently learners use the target language, the more accurate is their L2 English vowel perception.

The volume closes with "Assessing second language oral proficiency development with holistic and analytic scales", where Rosane Silveira and Thaisy da Silva Martins discuss some methodological questions regarding rating. The authors show how experienced raters use different types of scales to assess the development of oral proficiency in English as a second language. They performed an experiment to detect changes in speakers' performance in four out of five scales: L2 oral proficiency, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, and these differences in rates across time were significant for oral proficiency, vocabulary, and fluency. The conclusion is that the different types of scale allow detecting L2 oral proficiency development.

It was a great honor to organize this volume of *Ilha do Desterro*. The reader will certainly concur that the articles testify for the flourishing researches on English Language in contemporary linguistics.

Note

1. See the debate about contemporary linguistics in Kratzer et al (2020).

References

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