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KEEPING ME AWAKE

STATE OF THE ART

- ▶ Mainstream Syntax has failed
- ▶ But they have not quite realized it yet
 - ▶ Largely irrelevant for Applied Linguistics
 - ▶ Unworkable for serious interface issues
 - ▶ Ramchand on the Syntax-Semantic Interface: "The semanticists have left the room."

SOME SOUL SEARCHING CONFERENCES

▶ Athens, May 2015:

- ▶ *Generative Syntax in the Twenty-First Century: The Road Ahead* will be a 3-day round-table taking stock of generative syntax and discussing the future of the field.
- ▶ <https://castl.uit.no/index.php/component/content/article/76-other-castl-events/conferencesaworkshops/338-generative-syntax-in-the-twenty-first-century-the-road-ahead>

▶ Reading, May 2017

- ▶ *Generative Linguistics in the 21st Century: the Evidence and the Rhetoric*
- ▶ The purpose of this workshop is to present and consider the evidence that still points in this linguistic domain-specificity, while at the same time sifting through and seriously considering the rhetoric that in recent years has rejected the general tenets of generative linguistics. In doing so, we will examine the role of generative linguistics at present and consider where it will be going as the 21st century unfolds.
- ▶ <http://linguistlist.org/callconf/browse-conf-action.cfm?ConfID=270276>

WHY IS THIS BAD?

- ▶ Alternative Theories of Syntax are not gaining greater currency
- ▶ Rather, syntax is ignored
 - ▶ Example: some talks at *Sinn und Bedeutung 2016* in Edinburgh where the semantics got unnecessarily complex because there was no awareness of syntactic structure.
 - ▶ Workshop at GLOW 2017 on *Compositionality at the Interface* has no independent syntactic analyses – the analyses are almost entirely driven by semantic and pragmatic considerations.

IS DEEP SYNTAX NECESSARY?

- ▶ Dependency Parsers have enjoyed great success
 - ▶ They represent “syntax lite”.
- ▶ Statistical Approaches have enjoyed great success.
 - ▶ They represent giving up understanding what is going on.
- ▶ But as a linguist I am interested in understanding our cognitive system and the structure of language.

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON SYNTAX

- ▶ Theories like LFG, HPSG and CCG have a lot to offer.
- ▶ Complex awareness of language structure and interfaces.
- ▶ However, mainstream syntax has achieved many interesting insights over the years.
- ▶ These have not been incorporated into our theories.
- ▶ Failure of alternative theories to look attractive may be because we are not entering those conversations.

EXAMPLES: CASE

- ▶ Case Marking has been implicated in
 - ▶ Identification of Event Participants (Dependencies)
 - ▶ Thematic Roles
 - ▶ Grammatical Relations
 - ▶ Quantizability (Specificity/Definiteness, Telicity/Boundedness)
 - ▶ Information Structure (Focus, Topic)
 - ▶ Figure/Ground
- ▶ No theory of syntax is currently equipped to do justice to all of these **simultaneous** dimensions (though LFG is very close).

FURTHER EXAMPLES

- ▶ Locality effects.
- ▶ Understanding of complex nature of (sub)evental syntax:
 - ▶ complex predicates vs. simple verbs
 - ▶ complex predicates vs. serial verbs
- ▶ Predictions as to scope of functional categories:
 - ▶ VP innermost layer, then Aspect, then Tense
 - ▶ Derivational morphology innermost, inflectional outer

WAY FORWARD?

- ▶ How do we make sure syntax stays alive and relevant?
- ▶ Time for a new theory of syntax?
- ▶ This could arise out of crosstheoretical discussions.
- ▶ Resulting in some kind of “white paper”.
 - ▶ On what a good theory of syntax should contain.
 - ▶ Given past (proven) insights (not assumptions).
 - ▶ And demands of interface interaction
 - ▶ And demands of applied linguistics
 - ▶ Including hybrid processing (computer and human)