The 6th Mediterranean Morphology Meeting took place in the wonderful setting of the Greek island of Ithaca. The three organizers, Geert Booij (University of Leiden), Angeliki Ralli (University of Patras) and Sergio Scalise (University of Bologna) proposed for this sixth meeting a common topic, *morphology and dialectal variation*, to which the first of the two days was dedicated. The second day of the meeting was, as usual, open to a more or less free choice of some of the current themes of morphology. Needless to say, the MMM again proved to be one of the most exciting conferences on morphology.

The first day was opened by Angeliki Ralli, one of the five invited speakers, who gave an interesting survey of the Greek dialects from a morphological perspective. She focused on the formal properties of stems that show up in compounding across the Greek dialects and formulated a general constraint (Bare Stem Constraint) on what the first constituent should look like. She also presented the system of stem allomorphy of the Greek inflectional paradigms. Finally, she gave some valuable examples from the Cappadocian dialect as an instance of historically, geographically and typologically conditioned change. In fact, some of the nominal morphology, which presents clear agglutinative features, is amenable to the influence of Turkish.

In the morning session, then, other remarkable talks were given. Eulalia Bonet, Maria-Rosa Lloret and Joan Mascaró (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona/Universitat de Barcelona) presented a variation in the system of concord within the Determiner Phrase (DP) in some Catalan dialects. They focused on the difference between *un meu companys casats* and *uns meus companys casats* ('some married fellows of mine') where in one variety of Catalan, the plural marker *-s* does not surface. They formulated an Optimality Theory (OT) account of such variation. What is interesting about this account is the fact that they established a constraint ranking that involves not only phonological constraints but also purely syntactic ones, i.e. the phonological condition of *-s* deletion and the syntactic requirement of morphologically realized agreement of all modifiers of N within the DP (as stated by Cinque, 2005).

The morning session also offered a detailed study of phonologically conditioned allomorphy of Surmiran (one of the Rumantsch dialects/languages) presented by Stephen R. Anderson (Yale University). Against the background of a complex system of allomorphy, Anderson’s main claim was that the stem alternations that we find in Surmiran cannot be
explained only by assuming some recent OT-based explanations that characterize stem choice as a phonologically governed optimization.

In the afternoon of the first day other important contributions were presented. Beside the talk given by the second invited speaker, Peter Trudgill (Fribourg University), on so-called "default singulars" across English dialects, there were at least two papers worth noticing. Greville Corbett offered what he called a canonical approach to morphosyntactic features. He put forward a general, cross-linguistically based, picture of these. He individuated two criteria whereby we could define such features (dedicated forms and simple syntax-morphology interface). The topic of inflectional morphology was also pursued by Andrew Spencer (who was not present though) and Catherine Taylor in a talk devoted to the definition of stem. What Spencer and Taylor proposed was in fact a kind of maximisation of stem classes. In such a way, only unambiguous inflectional endings are to be taken as such. They tried to demonstrate this approach, yet to be discussed widely, on the system of Spanish conjugation.

A very similar proposal, based on more data from Romance languages, was put forward by Olivier Bonami, Gilles Boyé, Fabio Montermini and Patrizia Cabredo Hofherr. These scholars presented a definition of "stem spaces". One of their interesting conclusions was that in the case of Romance conjugation, it is not quite appropriate to talk about inflectional classes (as it is, on the contrary, for Latin).

The first day was concluded by the lecture given by the third invited speaker, Vito Pirrelli (CNR Pisa), who gave a fascinating survey (and also a specific proposal) of learning/processing theories. He focused on the definition of Self-Organizing Maps which is a computational model of the mental lexicon (as far as morphological phenomena are concerned). One of the surprising conclusions of such a model is that it predicts correctly an unexpected fact, namely, that highly complex morphological paradigms are usually learned more quickly than those traditionally assumed as easier and poorer.

The second day of the MMM 6 began with a lecture by Ingo Plag, the fourth invited speaker. Plag, in his wonderful talk, focused on one particular phenomenon closely tied to morphology, namely the problem of stress assignment in English compounds. He reviewed all of the rule-based accounts of stress assignment and he showed, on a large corpus, that no rule was able to predict the correct result of this phonological operation. Finally, he argued for a version of "analogy hypothesis" according to which there would be patterns of stress assignment distributed analogically, i.e. based on the similarity with other compounds present in the mental lexicon. Thus Plag's insight might be in line with what Pirrelli said about the organization of the morphological component of the mental lexicon.

The second ("free-topic") day morning session brought up some other no less interesting problems. After Livio Gaeta's (University of Naples) presentation of the cross-linguistic typology of head position in compounds, the phenomenon of compounding still remained a leading theme of the conference. Chiara Melloni (University of Verona) and Antonietta Bisetto (University of Bologna) put forward a well-argued account of parasynthetic compounding. They presented data mainly from Slavonic languages (Russian, Polish and Czech) in which the compounding pattern in question is widely represented. Against the tradition-
ally assumed explanation of adjectives such as blue-eyed that sees the "*eyed" formation as non-existent for pragmatic reasons (cf. Booij, 2007, 59), they argued that in Russian, Polish and Czech the second constituent is non-existent also from a morphological point of view. They attempted to explain the pattern by using a theory recently put forward by Peter Ackema and Ad Neeleman (2004).

The morning session was then closed with two talks dedicated to Italian verb-nominal compounds (Klaus von Heusinger and Christoph Schwarze, University of Stuttgart and University of Konstanz, respectively) and to special Italian V-V constructions (Francesca Masini and Anna M. Thornton, University of Roma Tre and University of L'Aquila, respectively). There were also two papers on the classification of Chinese compounds (Antonella Ceccagno and Bianca Basciano, University of Bologna and University of Verona, respectively) and about the Chinese "shīng" complex words (Emanuele Banfi and Giorgio Francesco Arcodia, University of Milano-Bicocca and University of Pavia, respectively).

The closing evening session was also devoted to some special problems (exemplified with languages such as Arabic and Persian). There were two talks that merit some further remarks. Bernard Fradin (CNRS, University of Paris 7) offered a survey of the semantics of relational adjectives. He used the formal apparatus developed already earlier (cf. Fradin, 2003). Carola Trips (University of Stuttgart) also focused on semantic issues of word formation. In her absence, Klaus von Heusinger read and commented on her very detailed handout on semantic differences between the English suffixes, -hood, -ship and -dom. Based on an earlier paper by Aronoff and Cho (2001), she aptly described the diachronic evolution of the meaning of these suffixes. She also put forward an extension of Lieber's (2004) formal apparatus designed to capture the relevant semantic differences.

In conclusion, a word should be said about the poster session in which there were, unfortunately, only six posters. One of these is certainly worth noticing. Marco Baroni, Emiliano Guevara and Roberto Zamparelli focused on Italian deverbal formations such as trasporto latte ('milk transport') which are normally assumed to fall within compounds (cf. Bisetto, 2004, 41). They showed, not only against a well-defined theoretical background but also on a large corpus, that these formations can be best accommodated as instances of the so-called "headlines", an example of defective syntactic structures. The point of such an analysis is especially in not complicating the theory of compounding beyond necessity.

To sum up, we could say that what clearly emerges in this variety of topics is a certain tendency or predilection to, at least, two main themes of current morphological research. First, it is the increasing interest in inflectional morphology and, especially, in the definition of its essential units (stems, features, paradigms etc.). Second, it is, undoubtedly, compounding in its typological perspective. On the other hand, what was rather missing was a deeper semantic consideration on word formation, more data from psycholinguistic research (the wonderful exception being Pirrelli's talk) and, perhaps, more syntax-based approaches to word formation (little was said about Distributed Morphology and about morphology within the MP).

_Pavel Štichauer (Prague)_
Notes

* The participation in MMM 6 was enabled by the grant n. 405/06/P009 by the Czech Science Foundation. I wish to thank Greville Corbett for having read and commented on an earlier version of this brief text.

References


