Roots aren't acategorial; They're supercategorial!

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RTG 2636

Form-meaning mismatches

Funded by DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft German Research Foundation

TRADITIONALLY

Complete words contain a minimal 'core', which remains invariant when all other morphological formatives have been abstracted away: ROOTS.

- Roots are acategorial.
- Roots have no grammatical features.
- Roots are dominated by functional material (rather than the other way around).
- Lexical categories are made up of roots combined with category-assigning heads.

MOTIVATION

- Lexical items can be used in a wide variety of ways, both nominally and verbally.
- Many properties, traditionally assigned to verbs or nouns, nowadays turn out to be performed by functional heads.
- Categoryless roots remove redundancy from the grammatical architecture.

Claim

All conceptual arguments outlined in favour of roots being featureless/acategorial are *fully compatible* with roots carrying a formal superfeature:

[PRED(ICATE): _]

In the course of the derivation [PRED: _] gets valued for being either verbal, nominal or (predicatively) adjectival (or a more specific version of those).

ADVANTAGE

If every root carries an unvalued, formal feature [PRED: _], Merge can be restricted to elements carrying formal features only; otherwise, Merge has to remain more complicated in being able to apply to both elements with and without formal features.

SUPPORT

- Certain languages (Samoan, Mundari, Riau Indonesian) appear to lack a noun-verb distinction.
- Nouns, (intransitive) verbs and adjectives share a semantic core in the sense that they denote sets.
- Several selectional processes target roots rather than nominals or verbals (e.g., PP-adjunction).
- No proper delineation between functional and lexical elements has yet been identified, casting doubt on this grammatical distinction.