

## SHORT SCIENTIFIC REPORT

COST-STSM-ECOST-STSM-IC1207-100314-039115

### HOST INSTITUTION

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Laboratory of Formal Linguistics (LLF) at the University Paris Diderot – Paris 7, France

### TIMEFRAME

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10 March 2014 – 18 April 2014

### PURPOSE

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The overall purpose of the STSM was to make progress regarding the goal of my dissertation, which is to compare three different approaches to analyzing idioms within the framework of Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), which all fall into the combinatorial (vs. monolithic) category in the sense of Sailer’s 2014 manuscript “Idioms: *pull strings*, *spill the beans*, and *kick the bucket*”.

This was planned to be achieved by presenting and critically discussing (the HPSG formalization of) my morpho-syntactic lexical identifier (LID) and syntactico-semantic logical form (LF) approach, and, consecutively, starting to develop and formalize a purely semantic denotational approach based on partial functions that leaves the HPSG syntax entirely untouched.

### WORK CARRIED OUT

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The presentation of my LID and LF approach took place at the Ling Lunch of the LLF. In the audience were, among many others, Anne Abeillé, Danièle Godard, Berit Gehrke, Olivier Bonami, Berthold Crysmann, and Philip Miller. In the question period, Anne, Olivier, Berthold, and I engaged in a fruitful discussion about the exact formulation and localization of my constraints.

Subsequently, I reviewed one of the open data questions, namely whether *spill the beans* can undergo what has traditionally been referred to as A<sup>2</sup>-movement, in a private meeting with Philip Miller, who, on the basis of introspection and corpus data (COCA, Davies: 2008-), confirmed my assumption that discourses like those in (1) and (2) do, in fact, occur in English.

- (1) We've found out that our new mission president that will arrive in July is named Derek Cardon. That's all the beans that have been spilled for now.
- (2) A: Well I thought Bridget broke up with her boyfriend. So I spilled the beans to her. Come to find out she's still with him. B: What beans did you spill? A: How I still felt towards her.

In a first meeting with Olivier Bonami, we debated data like the questionable sentence in (3), originally pointed out to me by Eric Groat.

- (3) ?Due to the extreme cold, the German soldiers kicked bucket after bucket.

If this kind of sentence is, in fact, grammatical, it represents an interesting challenge for the original formulation of the theory, which predicted the idiom *kick the bucket* to be an entirely frozen VP (not considering verbal inflection).

In a second meeting with Olivier, we looked into the interaction of nominal inflection in idioms and the *N after N* construction. He suggested Jackendoff’s 2008 paper “Construction after construction and its theoretical challenges” to me, a close reading of which inspired me to conduct internet queries for data involving “[spill] bean after bean” and “[pull] string after string”, which, according to the original formulation of the theory, should be ungrammatical. However, I found quite a few instances of this pattern, two of which are given in (4) and (5):

- (4) The whole idea of the really talented/successful person in their 20’s isn’t a real thing. Or at the very least, it isn’t an actual attainable thing. All those people have people behind them pulling string after string for them. Rich parents, well connected parents, well connected god parents... whatever it is, I can guarantee you it’s there somewhere.

- (5) Instead of throwing a rock, he is throwing all her family secrets and dirty laundry out to the media. He enjoys it. You can see it in his smirk as he spills bean after bean of little juicy nasty tidbits about Palin.

In view of these new challenging data, I am currently investigating an account in which the *N after N* construction has the power to overwrite the constraint that the nouns in the idioms *spill the beans* and *pull strings* need to be in the plural.

In two meetings with Berit Gehrke, we talked about adjectival adjuncts to the nominal element of VP idioms and the notion of internal, external, and conjunctive modification in the sense of Ernst's 1981 paper "Grist for the linguistic mill: idioms and 'extra' adjectives". In this context, she suggested that I read McNally's handbook article "Modification" (to appear), Morzycki's 2013 book *Modification*, and Beck & von Stechow's 2006 paper "Dog after dog revisited". As a result, I am currently collecting modification examples that we will categorize according to the classification in her and McNally's 2013 paper "Distributional modification: the case of frequency adjectives" in order to determine whether certain constraints on the modification of idioms might actually be constraints on the modifiers rather than the idioms.

Berthold Crysmann and I compared the (potential) advantages and disadvantages of the LID, LF, and purely semantic approach. While I had a certain preference for the syntactico-semantic LF approach, which I consider to be less stipulative, Berthold defended the lexico-syntactic LID account, arguing that maybe nothing but morpho-syntax is necessary to account for the behavior of idioms and their parts or, if morpho-syntax alone is insufficient, semantic components can be (and have been) incorporated into the LID value.

With Anne Abeillé, I discussed her 1995 article "The flexibility of French idioms: a representation with Lexicalized Tree Adjoining Grammar" (LTAG). In contrast to the three combinatorial approaches that I deal with in my dissertation, Anne's approach to idioms bears a resemblance to monolithic accounts. She treats idioms not as combinations of individual lexical entries, but – as a tree grammar has it – as entire trees that come out of the lexicon as a whole. The main weakness of her theory is that she cannot account for the pronominalization of idiom parts.

To my surprise and great joy, Mary Dalrymple was on a research stay at the LLF during the time of my visit and gave a series of lectures on Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG). I greatly benefited from the opportunity to interact with her and learn more about this close relative of HPSG. With her and Olivier Bonami, I discussed the formal and notational contrasts between LFG and HPSG as well as the various positions HPSG researchers take concerning the signature. On another occasion, Mary and I continued this conversation with Jonathan Ginzburg.

In addition to the numerous interactions with the permanent Paris-Diderot staff and Mary Dalrymple, I also had the chance to meet with Patricia Cabredo-Hofherr (CNRS/Paris 8), who gave me valuable feedback concerning "Idioms as evidence for the proper analysis of relative clauses" (Webelhuth, Bargmann, and Goetze: to appear), and Éric Laporte (University Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée), with whom I looked into the Lexicon-Grammar approach to idioms.

Last but not least, I attended the weekly Ling Lunch meetings of the LLF, where I heard talks by Paolo Acquaviva, Heather Burnett, Ana Muller, Louise McNally, Denis Delfitto, and Elena Soare.

## MAIN RESULTS

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Primarily, I gained a far deeper understanding of the three combinatorial approaches to idioms that I compare in my dissertation. I could also shed more light on the English (and French) data that all of them – or any other approach to idioms – need to cover. On top of that, I have become more skilled at LFG and (L)TAG and the idiomatic account of idioms formulated in the latter. As a bonus, I learned about the formal and notational differences between LFG and HPSG.

## ONGOING COLLABORATION WITH THE HOST INSTITUTION

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Thanks to this STMS, the interaction between the LLF and Frankfurt University has been intensified and extended to the PhD level. As the LLF members and I had a strong interest for our respective research topics, the collaboration did not end with the end of my stay but is still going on. The LLF has already invited me back for an HPSG conference in the fall.

## CONFIRMATION BY THE HOST INSTITUTION

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I confirm the successful execution of Sascha Bargmann's STSM at the Laboratoire de Linguistique Formelle. Sascha presented his work at the group's weekly seminar, and subsequently had research meetings with a number of members of the lab (Anne Abeillé, Olivier Bonami, Berthold Crysmann, Berit Gehrke) as well as other members of Université Paris Diderot (Jonathan Ginzburg, Philip Miller) and visitors (Patricia Cabredo Hofherr, Mary Dalrymple). The stay was successful both in allowing Sascha to benefit from local competence on syntax, semantics, grammatical frameworks, and in furthering the already existing collaboration between LLF and the English Department at the University of Frankfurt in a previously unexplored domain. I personally have learned from the experience on the empirical properties of English idioms and the proper treatment of idioms at the syntax-semantics interface.

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Frankfurt, 18 May 2014