**Forecast: Sunny with scattered annoyances, but with a chance of storms
(Recommended action: very basic linguistics education)**

(1)   **The Most Basic Facts (MBF) of our field**
        The linguistic capacity of every human being is an intricate system, full of surprises but clearly law-governed, in ways that we can discern by scientific investigation. Though we still have much to learn about this system, a great deal has been discovered already.

The establishment of MBF is the joint achievement of many research traditions and multiple branches of linguistics over the past two centuries.

In comparison, the specifically Chomskyan revolution that gave birth to generative grammar is a *second-order phenomenon*, presupposing MBF while focusing research on specific questions about it. These questions have proved fruitful and exciting (field-changing, in fact) for two interrelated reasons: (1) they link MBF to broader questions about the human language faculty and human nature more generally; and (2) they loop back to expand and deepen our understanding of MBF itself. As we all know at this workshop, the most famous of these questions concerns the interaction of innate knowledge with linguistic experience (Plato's Problem, Chomsky 1986), with its twin pillars in acquisition research and in the cross-linguistic investigation of formal universals — to which one might add the more abstract and controversial Strong Minimalist Thesis (Chomsky 2001) and compelling questions concerning language use and biological mechanism.

Sunny: Focusing on syntax, I think am much more sanguine than some of the organizers of this gathering about the continuing success and infra-structural health of these second-order endeavors. As I work with students, attend conferences and read the journals, it seems to me that the field is as successful and exciting as it has ever been. I am particularly struck by the continued success of the most basic assumptions of standard science when applied to the questions of our field: that the world is always less complex than it appears, and that inspired experimentation and creative thinking can reveal the simplicity behind surface complexity. In generative syntax, I see this in two domains.

First is the continual revelation that behind the surface diversity of human languages, there is a deep uniformity. In the early 1980s, Perlmutter and Postal were teaching us that the GF-changing rules of the world's languages obey the same abstract laws; Huang (1981) was demonstrating that languages with in situ *wh*-questions are nearly identical to languages with overt *wh*-movement but for the different phonology; Rizzi (1982) showed that languages that seem to violate the *that*-trace filter really do not; and Koopman (1984) discovered Dutch-style verb-second in the Kru language Vata. In just the past few years, to just mention a few discoveries with which I am most familiar, Claire Halpert's (2012) dissertation and forthcoming OUP book have shown case-theoretic effects in Bantu, which has almost uniformly been thought to lack such effects, Coppe van Urk (dissertation in prep.; Erlewine, Levin & van Urk in press) has shown the Nilotic language Dinka to be, in effect, what you get when Germanic-style verb-second coexists with Austronesian voice; while my colleague Norvin Richards (2007) and I (Pesetsky 2013) have both argued that the Russian case system is Lardil in sheep's clothing. And

as we all know, hundreds of comparable results from the intervening years and from research groups all over the planet could be added to this list.

A similar, if much more controversial discovery concerns the unity-in-diversity of the laws of syntax themselves. A central conjecture of many streams of generative syntax over the past decade is the idea that a vast array of alternations and dislocations, which one is tempted to attribute to very different syntactic mechanisms, are all instantiations of the same basic process of movement (Internal Merge) and are thus expected to obey the same fundamental laws. This unification is denied in many approaches to syntax, including LFG and HPSG (which treat A-alternations such as active~passive entirely differently from long-distance dependencies), as well as streams of Minimalist syntax that treat head movement phenomena as outside the purview of so-called Narrow Syntax. Cowardly Minimalists aside, I consider the successful pursuit of a unified theory of syntactic displacement, against all odds, to be one of the signal achievements of recent work in the field. (See Hartman 2011 for a particularly spectacular argument.) The resolution of outstanding questions in this domain, such as the source of the evident *differences* among movement types, is perhaps the most outstanding syntax-specific issue facing the field, but recent work on syntactic features and agreement might be close to a solution.

To these discoveries and findings could be added many more, including the increasing realization that the syntax-semantics interface is not spaghetti-wired, as some approaches led us to fear, but law-governed and illuminatingly simple — and recent work suggesting the same about interactions with phonology.

The overall picture that emerges, for me at least, looks and smells like science. Steady progress in solving difficult problems, punctuated by brilliant discoveries and leaps in understanding — all of which in turn raises new difficult problems, and so on. Furthermore, progress at more abstract levels continually adds content to MBF as well, in a mutually reinforcing cycle of deepening understanding and broadening factual knowledge about the human language faculty and the languages that embody it.

Scattered annoyances: Don't get me wrong: I do resonate with some of the infrastructural concerns that constitute the published "rationale" for this conference. Our field has bad habits that impair communication and progress to some extent. First and foremost among these is our robust tradition of intellectual factionalism — the drive to present exciting new ideas as "frameworks" (each with its own name or acronym), presented intellectually as a take-it-or-leave-it package deal and sociologically as a safe haven for those in search of community. This tradition of ours is harmful both field-internally and field-externally. Internally, it discourages engagement with genuine connections and disconnections among new ideas. It also harms the field when journal and conference reviewers condemn papers because they support or presuppose a disfavored framework or sub-framework (e.g. bad paper because it {presupposes, doesn't presuppose} {cartography, nanosyntax, antisymmetry, Inclusiveness, backwards Agree, HPSG...}) — even though the author's findings might be of great interest to others independent of framework allegiances or choice of diagrammatic conventions. Field-externally, our alphabet soup of frameworks and subframeworks renders some of our debates and non-debates opaque to well-intentioned outsiders trying to figure out what we think we have discovered.

But honestly, though these problems are real, I think they are annoyances, not catastrophes, worth railing about on social media and doing something about in our daily lives, but not

necessarily worth flying all of us to Greece. The very fact that we continue to make wonderful discoveries and communicate them to others, who successfully build on them to make their own great discoveries (as a weekend at NELS, WCCFL or GLOW in any given year will teach us)— this alone should tell us that our infrastructural problems, while real, are not lethal, and do not constitute an emergency.

Chance of storms: Unfortunately, there may be a real emergency in our future. This is what should claim our attention now, before it is too late — a genuine existential threat, not just an annoyance. For all that we can and should rejoice in the achievements of our field (annoyances aside), and for all that we understand the progress we have made, the educated world as a whole lacks this ability almost entirely, and barely knows that our field exists. We need to worry about this for reasons both general and very specific to our time.

At the most general level, in an academic world in which competition for resources gets stiffer all the time, a field whose achievements are unappreciated is in obvious continual danger of extinction. Without funding for our research, stipends for our students, and employment after PhD, we have no field. And of course, to the extent that we have achieved something that is intrinsically exciting and revelatory, it is irresponsible not to want to share this with the world.

At a more specific level, however, it cannot have escaped anyone's attention at this conference that the last decade has seen an alarming rise in aggressive attacks on our field that have found a shockingly willing ear among the editors of general science journals (and even some of our own) and broader media. I probably do not need to name names.

The good news is the fact that most of these attacks are so ignorant and incoherent that their baselessness is evident to any student who has completed an introductory linguistics class. (I can attest to this from firsthand experience.) The bad news is that their baselessness is *only* apparent to someone who has completed an introductory linguistics class. And the truly awful news is the fact that hardly anyone has completed such a class. As a consequence, those who find themselves reading these attacks are easy prey.

Now it is all fine and well to reply to misrepresentations of research like the achievements I cited in the first section of this document (and others) with professional assurances that we are indeed being misrepresented and some attempt to set the record straight — and of course we must do just that. (I have participated in several such efforts myself.) But it is not enough, because this is where the logical structure of our achievements and the sadly marginal status of our field gets in the way. How can the average member of the educated public even hope to adjudicate between our claimed achievements and those who declare them non-existent if the point of our achievements is to answer questions raised by MBF — and the public does not even understand that MBF exists, i.e. that there *are* facts about human language that we might want to explain?

In my view, this should be our major worry at the moment. We participate in a field whose achievements, unlike those of almost any other science, are entirely opaque to our colleagues in other fields, to science writers and magazine editors, mainly because the basic factual stuff that generates the questions whose answers constitute our achievements is essentially unknown outside our field. Here the good news is: MBF is not the exclusive province of those who call themselves generative linguists, and there must be sensible people outside our fraction who share our concerns about the future of our field. It is my firm belief that if we participate in efforts to

educate the world about linguistics broadly construed — MBF, not just the second-order questions we ask about it — many or most of our broader problems will be solved, or at least become manageable (at the level of combatting creationism or climate-change denial). A topic for the next Athens conference, perhaps.

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