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Introduction

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Introduction

Dennis Philps

- 1 This issue of *Miranda*, the first in the area of linguistics, is devoted to submorphemics, an emerging—and therefore still controversial—field of study whose aim is to account for elements of a language that form parts of morphemes and are construed as playing a role in the construction of ‘meaning’. Its object of study may be considered to be the ‘submorpheme’, defined by Crystal (*A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 5th edition, 2003, p. 301) as “a part of a morpheme that has recurrent form and meaning, such as the *sl-* beginning of *slimy*, *slug*, etc.”. Topics commonly discussed are the structure and function of the submorpheme itself, its combinatorial properties, distribution, invariance and variability, and its links with notional domains, cognition, motricity, Cratylism, etc. Arguably, one of the strong points of this field in terms of other, more traditional approaches to the linguistic sign, is its ambition to identify and systematize possible links between the linguistic and the extralinguistic, a feature that lends pertinence to its contribution to the scientific study of language as a whole.
- 2 The present issue contains a collection of peer-assessed articles which build upon talks given at the International Linguistics Symposium on Submorphemics organized by Cultures Anglo-Saxonnes (CAS2–Linguistique anglaise) at the University of Toulouse 2–Le Mirail on 6–7 October 2011. Although most speakers chose to explore submorphemic phenomena through the prism of English, notably with respect to the theme of ‘circularity’, a few focused on other languages, namely French lexified Creole, Arabic, Tahitian, and Proto-Indo-European. I extend my grateful thanks to *Miranda*’s Director, Muriel Adrien, and to her Editorial Board for agreeing to publish all these papers, thereby helping to preserve the scientific integrity of the Symposium. One perhaps unexpected feature of this event, reflected herein, was the variety of submorphemic topics broached, ranging from acronyms in Modern English to the possible origins of the linguistic sign, and encompassing embodied cognition, the sublanguage of music and poetry, lexical submorphology, phonæstheses, semiophony in creoles, matrix theories, functional markers, and the modelling of semantic change.
- 3 In the first of the six articles devoted to English, Ingrid Fandrych addresses the rapid increase of acronyms and abbreviations, showing how one of the most productive and

creative word-formation processes in the language makes use of the initials of longer phrases to form new words. She focuses on how these formations lend themselves to ironic reinterpretation by language users once they have lost their primary motivation, and on how the semantic flexibility of acronyms can be used for mnemonic purposes and for effect. Her conclusion is that this flexibility relies on the multifunctionality of initials as the smallest word-formation elements below the morpheme level: the submorphemic elements in question ‘stand for’ the longer words they represent yet are, at the same time, independent enough to be used in new interpretations.

- 4 In the second article, Michel Barrucand suggests that what he terms the submorphemic level of a poem, a level he equates with phenomena such as onomatopoeia, alliterations, assonances, and paronomases, can be considered as a logistic basis on which the creation of the poem is set up, and opines that the poem itself can be considered as a musical score. By analysing the recurrence of the vocalic sounds in a corpus of American poems written in the 19th century by poets largely influenced by music (E. Poe, W. Whitman) or themselves musicians (W. Longfellow, S. Lanier, E. Dickinson), he shows that the musical structure of the poem can reveal melodic lines constructed according to the laws of classical musical composition, melodies which also play a part in the semantic definition of the poem and its comprehension.
- 5 In the third article, Didier Bottineau shows that lexical submorphology, which includes the study of phonæstheses, is instrumental in profiling the cognitive processes subtending the vocal forms used in speech production. It is dedicated to anchoring notions in semantic fields bearing on the typical sensorimotor experience through which language-speaking communities are trained to conceptualize these notions. As for grammatical submorphology, the author posits that it involves more basic submorphemic units he dubs ‘cognemes’, whose effect is to activate radical cognitive procedural schemas deployed when elaborating complex dynamic patterns (deixis, representation of space and time, modality, interpersonal relations). Combining lexical and grammatical submorphology allows him to construct a partial model of the way in which meaning is produced by means of the motoric and perceptual effects of the vocal forms involved.
- 6 In the fourth article, an earlier version of which appeared in *Anglophonia/Sigma* 28, published in Toulouse by the Presses universitaires du Mirail (2010, pp. 49-89), Line Argoud identifies traces of a notional invariance linked to a formal invariance pertaining to the class of English lexical items beginning with the submorpheme *sm-*, which may date back to a very early stage of the language. She lays special emphasis on the duality prevailing in the two-way movement between the object and the subject of perception, but also on the relations between the ‘inward’ movement of impressions or sensations and the ‘outward’ movement of the expression of emotions pertaining to the senses of smell, taste, and touch. Her claim is that the meanings of most ‘*sm-* words’ access mental representations relating to experiential information transmitted via the nose and/or mouth, and to physical expressions of emotions through movements or positions of these two body parts.
- 7 In the fifth article, Dennis Philips claims, within a semiogenetic theory of the conditions of emergence and evolution of the linguistic sign (STEELS), that the polysemy exhibited by Modern English ‘*kn-* words’ related to body-joints and their actions (*knead*, *knee*, *knuckle*, etc.) is a vestige of a self-referential naming strategy that may date back to the period when articulated speech emerged. Since the ‘*kn-* words’ in question appear to be

reflexes of Proto-Indo-European **ĝenu-* ‘knee, angle’ (*knee*) and hypothetical **gen-* ‘± compress; compact, knobby bodies’ (*knead, knuckle*, etc.), he postulates a proto-root **ĝen-* ‘± body-joint; body-joint actions’, in which **ĝ-* appears to function submorphemically as a ‘core invariant’ (<**ĝ*->). He also speculates that if the manner feature [+occlusive] characterizing the putative core invariant <**ĝ*-> in PIE is reconstrued as a resonating, close-open, articulatory gesture ([+occlusion]), then this relation may be retraceable in the form {± occlusive articulation, body articulators/articulations} to the emergence of the human capacity for vocomimetic self-reference.

- 8 Lastly, it has been decided to include the résumé/abstract of the talk given by Benjamin Bergen at the International Linguistics Symposium on Submorphemics in this issue (A6). Some of the topics he addressed on that occasion are discussed in a book entitled *Louder than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning*, published by Basic Books (New York) in October 2012.
- 9 Following on in the second section are four articles devoted to submorphemic phenomena in languages other than English, although one of these does in fact refer to data culled from the latter. The first article is penned by Jean Bernabé, who begins by pointing out that in French lexified Creole, the onomatopœic words *blip*, *blo*, *blogodo*, etc., which denote the notions of rapidity or brutality, all begin with *bl-*. Although it refers to the same notions, this segment does not function morphemically (not being a prefix), and so can only be analysed as a submorpheme, i.e. as part of a morpheme which paradoxically conveys meaning. In reality, the paradox in question stems from the dimorphic conception of the linguistic sign as being composed of a signifier and a signified, and from the construal of the morpheme as the smallest meaningful linguistic unit. The author argues that phenomenon may be the concern of semiophony, i.e. that the *bl-* segment under study is both a phonosign and a phonoseme, and is therefore iconic rather than arbitrary.
- 10 In the second article, Georges Bohas reminds us that Line Argoud (see above) has shown that the notional load correlated with the *sm-* submorpheme in English includes three notional fields: to strike a blow“, activities realized by the labial region” and activities linked to the nose as an organ“. He demonstrates that this can be explained within the framework of the Theory of Matrices and Etymons (TME) that he has set up for Arabic, which can also shed light on the organization of the meanings of the submorpheme in question in English.
- 11 In the third article, Claude Delmas proposes a submorphemic study of *te*, *tō*, *tā*, and *nō*, *nā* in Tahitian, and points out that the most recent analyses of Tahitian markers have been conducted within functionalist or enunciative frameworks which provide useful points of departure. Although no systematically theorized submorphemic analyses of these morphemes has been attempted, the author postulates a basic meaning and other subsidiary ones for each of them. He also presents an analysis that takes into account the consonants *t-*, *n-* and the vowels *-a*, *-o*, *-e*, with a view to establishing a relation between a submorphemic ‘stem concept’ and derived meanings in specific contexts, including syntactic relations.
- 12 In the last of these articles, Jean-Christophe Reinmuth presents a method called ‘semantic correlation’ that he deems symmetric in terms of form and meaning to the comparative method, and applies it to the sub-class of Proto-Indo-European (PIE) submorphemes found in what he refers to as ‘archeomorphemes’. This method enables him to establish paradigmatic semiogenetic links between elementary notions. A

reconstruction of etymological trees around the notion of ‘blowing’ is then proposed through the reconstruction of the form and meaning of Pre-PIE etymons. The author further shows that applying this method to the PIE lexicon helps to bring about a better understanding of semantic structure in PIE, and may facilitate the reconstruction of a stage of language prior to PIE, thereby leading us one step further back towards the emergence of language.

- 13 Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those involved in organizing the International Linguistics Symposium on Submorphemics held in Toulouse on 6-7 October 2011, including Nathalie Vincent-Arnaud, Jacques Durand, and Antoine Toma (University of Toulouse 2-Le Mirail), as well as Georges Bohas (ENS Lyon), Didier Bottineau (MoDyCo-Paris Ouest Nanterre-La Défense), Claude Delmas (Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle), and Walter Hirtle (Laval, Quebec). My thanks also go to Catherine Lanone and Wendy Harding, former directors of the CAS, for their unflagging support, to the staff of the CPRS (UTM) for their logistical backup, and, last but not least, to those colleagues who undertook a double-blind assessment of the articles contained in this e-journal.

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