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Notice of Exceptions in Grammar

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Expecting the Unexpected: Exceptions in Grammar. By HORST J. SIMON AND HEIKE WIESE, eds. (Trends in Linguistics Studies and Monographs 216.) Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011. Pp. 450. ISBN 9783110219081. \$140 (Hb).

Reviewed by NATALIE OPERSTEIN, *California State University, Fullerton*

This volume takes a systematic look at one of the most thorny problems in linguistics: that of exceptions to observed structural regularities. It contains both invited papers and contributions to a 2005 workshop on exceptions in grammars from the 27th Annual Meeting of the German Society for Linguistics. The volume consists of a brief preface, and two introductory and ten thematic chapters divided in four parts. Each thematic chapter is supplemented by an invited critical commentary and, in all cases but one, a response from the original author(s).

Horst J. Simon and Heike Wiese discuss the relationship between exceptions and rules, existing approaches to dealing with exceptions, the historical development and disappearance of exceptions, and the role of exceptions in linguistic theory. The second introductory chapter, by Edith Moravcsik, identifies general approaches to the problem of exceptions, drawing examples from syntax.

“Classical loci for exceptions: morphology and the lexicon” opens with a paper by Barış Kabak and Irene Vogel, who examine exceptions to vowel harmony and stress assignment in Turkish and propose lexical pre-specification of the exceptional forms as an alternative to previous analyses. Greville G. Corbett looks at interaction of exceptional phenomena in the area of inflectional morphology, and Damaris Nübling

examines irregularities in the diachronic development of the Germanic verbs *have*, *become*, *give*, *take*, *come*, and *say*.

“Taking into account interactions of grammatical sub-systems” opens with a paper by Thomas Wasow, T. Florian Jaeger and David Orr, who use quantitative approach to correlate both exceptionally high and exceptionally low uses of relativizers in certain relative clauses in English with the lexical choices of determiner, noun and adjective in the head NP. Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson and Thórhallur Eythórsson use the diachronic development of case selection in Icelandic and Faroese to argue for a dichotomy between two kinds of exceptions: those that are semantically related and partially productive, and those that are semantically unrelated and cannot be extended to new lexical items.

“Loosening the strictness of grammar” opens with a paper by Frederick J. Newmeyer, who argues that exceptions to typological generalizations in syntax are best handled by extra-syntactic approaches. Sam Featherston uses selected syntactic phenomena from German and English to argue that, when more refined primary data are used, many perceived exceptions turn out to be systematic and rule-governed. Ralf Vogel argues, on the basis of variation in speaker acceptability of certain free relative constructions in German, that a distinction needs to be made between exceptions and systematic variation in speech communities. Frederik Fouvry presents a computational linguistics view of “extra-grammaticalities”, proposing a method for dealing with exceptional structures.

The main paper in “Unexpected loci for exceptions: languages and language families” is by Michael Cysouw, who uses the *World Atlas of Language Structures* to explore the global distribution of rare traits in the world languages.

The volume provides an interesting overview of exceptionality in grammars. A useful feature of some of the papers are discussions of existing approaches to dealing with exceptionality and healthy critique of idealizations current in linguistic work. Although the selection of papers is heavily tilted towards syntax, the volume as a whole may be of interest to a wider range of linguists interested in the issue of exceptionality.