

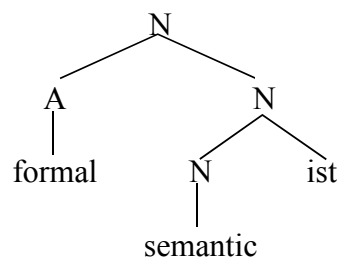
Bracketing Paradoxes, p. 1

We will begin with English.

Consider the word *formal semanticist*.

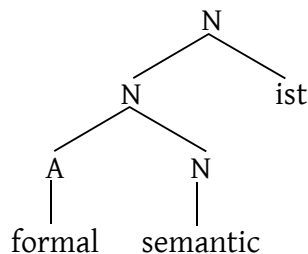
From a morpheme-based perspective, this appears to be the compounding of *formal* and *semanticist*.

[formal [semantic - ist]]

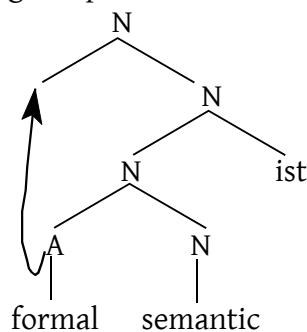


But the meaning of the word is not ‘semanticist who is formal’ (s/he could be very informal!); rather, it is ‘practitioner of formal semantics’, which would suggest a structure:

[[formal semantic] ist]



So the paradox is that there are two contradictory structures/bracketings which can be motivated. Various solutions have been proposed, such as movement, rebracketing, and creative methods of combining morphemes. For example:



Bracketing Paradoxes, p. 2

If we consider Hebrew, the situation is even worse. The Hebrew translation of ‘formal semanticist’, סמנטיקאי פורמלי (*semantikai formali*) can only be bracketed the first way; ‘formal semantics’ (סמנטיקה פורמלית) *semantika formali(t)* is not a constituent of the word.

However, whatever one’s view of such mechanisms in general, they do not provide a complete solution in this situation in any case. Consider the word *theoretical linguist*. As is the case with *formal semanticist*, a theoretical linguist is not a linguist who is theoretical (theoretical linguists I know are very real), but rather a practitioner of theoretical linguistics. In this case, however, we cannot talk about the correct bracketing/structure of the morphemes, because while *semanticist* is derived from *semantic(s)* by adding a morpheme, *linguist* is not thus derived from *linguistics*.

Because of the problem they pose for morphological analysis, bracketing paradoxes were at one time a major topic of discussion in morphology.

Strikingly, from a word-based perspective, the following four-way morphological rule accounts for the facts straightforwardly:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \left[\begin{array}{c} /X/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{‘field of activity } x\text{’} \end{array} \right] & \leftrightarrow & \left[\begin{array}{c} /Y/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{‘practitioner of field } x\text{’} \end{array} \right] \\
 \updownarrow & & \updownarrow \\
 \left[\begin{array}{c} /ZX/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{‘field } x \text{ with qualification } z\text{’} \end{array} \right] & \leftrightarrow & \left[\begin{array}{c} /ZY/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{‘practitioner of field } xz\text{’} \end{array} \right]
 \end{array}$$

There is no need for additional theoretical mechanisms. Once we abandon a tree-based structure for morphology, there is no paradox!