1. The Problem: It is well known that words like *unhappier* give rise to bracketing paradoxes (Pesetsky 1979, 1985, Kiparsky 1982, Sproat 1992, Lieber 1992, Hoeksema 1987, among many others): their phonological structure seems to be in conflict with their semantics. The phonological restrictions on the comparative –er force us to assume the structure in (i). –er can attach to one syllable adjectives (*cooler*), and some two syllable adjectives (*sillier*), but never to adjectives of three syllables or more (*intelligenter*). Yet the semantics of *unhappier* force us to assume the structure in (ii). *Unhappier* can only mean ‘more unhappy’ and not ‘not more happy’.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{i)} & \quad \text{[un[happier]]} \\
\text{ii)} & \quad \text{[[unhappy]er]}
\end{align*}
\]

2. A Solution: This talk will propose that the solution to this puzzle rests on the following generalization: All morphological bracketing paradoxes must involve a morphological adjunct. I define a morphological adjunct as a morpheme whose contribution to the word involves no percolation of features. This entails that such a morpheme will never induce a change of category, and will never be the head of a word. For words to which morphemes such as *un-* in *unhappier* attach (iii), as with XP adjunction (iv), the root node is an extension of the element adjoined to.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{iii)} \\
\text{[un]} \quad \text{A} \\
\text{[happy]} \\
\text{iv)} \\
\text{VP} \quad \uparrow \\
\text{[eat cake]} \quad \text{VP} \quad \text{PP} \\
\text{[in the hallway]}
\end{array}
\]

It is argued here that all morphological bracketing paradoxes involve one morpheme whose contribution to the word involves no percolation of features as in (iii).

3. Late Adjunction: In recent literature (Lebeaux 1988, Chomsky 1993, Fox and Nissenbaum 1999, Nissenbaum 2000, Stepanov 2001 and others), it has been proposed that adjunction may, and perhaps must, involve acyclical merger of elements to a non-root node. Pairing this proposal with the view that both word and phrase formation are subject to the same combinatorial processes and are both constructed in the syntax (see Lieber 1992, Halle & Marantz 1993, and many others) it is proposed (following Nissenbaum 2000) that morphological adjuncts are also merged acyclically. This late merger of morphological adjuncts allows for a solution to bracketing paradoxes that does not require the parallel structures in (i) and (ii), but rather enables both the semantic and phonological requirements of *unhappier* to be met in a single derivational structure.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{v)a.} \quad \text{A-Comparative} \\
\text{A} \quad \text{A-Comp.} \quad \uparrow \\
\text{[happy]} \quad \text{[er]} \\
\text{b.} \quad \text{A-Comparative} \\
\text{A} \quad \text{A-Comp.} \quad \uparrow \\
\text{[un]} \quad \text{A} \quad \text{[er]} \quad \uparrow \\
\text{[happy]}
\end{array}
\]

Nissenbaum’s Linear Edge Condition (2000:201) assumes a theory of cyclic spell-out and constrains late merger to the phonological edge of structures that have already undergone phonological computation. Therefore the lexical items *happy* and –er must be submitted to the phonological component before the insertion of *un-*; allowing the phonological restrictions of –er to be met. Post spell-out insertion of *un-* must be prefixal, as suffixion of *un-*; creating `[happyun]er`, would violate the LEC. The semantically motivated structure in (ii) is also respected here, in the final structure (v)b., where the comparative scopes over negation.

In this paper I argue that late adjunction offers a solution to bracketing paradoxes cross-linguistically. In addition to *unhappier*, level ordering paradoxes such as *extrametricality*, compounding paradoxes like *transformational grammarian*, and prefix-verb construction paradoxes of a class with *podżęg* ‘set on fire.past.masc.’ in Russian, German and Warlpiri, are all argued here to involve one morpheme that does not, and in fact cannot, percolate any features to the root node. Syntactically, morphological adjuncts (*un-, extra-, podU-* etc…) are argued to be acyclically merged after non-adjuncts, (*–er, -ian* etc…).
Selected References


