

# Natural language as a programming language

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# 1. Outline

I compare two foundational principles of computational semantics:

- ▶ Montague: compositionality as a homomorphism  $\text{syntax} \rightsquigarrow \text{semantics}$
- ▶ Curry: formulas-as-types, proofs-as-programs

I discuss the role of these principles within two paradigms:

- ▶ Abstract Categorical Grammar
  - ▷ abstract language: tectogrammatical structure
  - ▷ object language: surface realization; semantic interpretation
  - ▷ encoding rewriting grammar formalisms in  $\lambda$  calculus
- ▶ Typelogical Grammar
  - ▷ directional type logics for syntax
  - ▷ symmetry: expressions as **values** or **contexts** for evaluation (continuations)
  - ▷  $\text{syntax} \rightsquigarrow \text{semantics}$ : continuation-passing-style translation

## 2. Compositionality

- ▶ central design principle of computational semantics: Frege's principle

'the meaning of an expression is a function of the meaning of its parts and of the way they are syntactically combined' (Partee)

- ▶ Montague's Universal Grammar program: compositionality as a homomorphism

$$\langle (A_s)_{s \in S}, F \rangle \xrightarrow{h} \langle (B_t)_{t \in T}, G \rangle$$

- ▷ syntactic algebra  $A$  with sorts (categories)  $S$ , operations  $F$
- ▷ semantic algebra  $B$  with sorts (types)  $T$ , operations  $G$
- ▷ homomorphism  $h$ : a mapping that respects (i) sorts and (ii) operations:

$$(i) \quad h[A_s] \subseteq B_{\sigma(s)}$$

$$(ii) \quad h(f(a_1, \dots, a_n)) = g(h(a_1), \dots, h(a_n))$$

- ▶ the principle does not put interesting restrictions on the syntax/semantics itself

### 3. Simply typed lambda calculus

**Simple types** given a finite set of atomic types  $\mathcal{A}$ ,

$$\mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{A}} ::= \mathcal{A} \mid \mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{A}} \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{A}}$$

**Signature** type assignment to constants:  $\Sigma = \langle \mathcal{A}, C, \tau \rangle$

- ▷  $\mathcal{A}$  : finite set of atomic types
- ▷  $C$  : finite set of constants
- ▷  $\tau : C \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{A}}$  type assignment function

**Terms** Given set of variables  $\mathcal{X}$  and signature  $\Sigma = \langle \mathcal{A}, C, \tau \rangle$ , the set of lambda terms built upon  $\Sigma$  is inductively defined as ( $x \in \mathcal{X}$ ,  $c \in C$ )

$$T ::= x \mid c \mid \lambda x.T \mid (T T)$$

## 4. Curry-Howard Correspondence

**Logic and computation** deep connection between logical derivations and programs

INTUITIONISTIC LOGIC	LAMBDA CALCULUS
formulas	types
connectives	type constructors
proofs	terms
normalization	reduction
...	...

### Typing rules

$$\Gamma, x : \alpha \vdash x : \alpha \quad (\text{var}) \qquad \vdash c : \tau(c) \quad (\text{cons})$$

$$\frac{\Gamma, x : \alpha \vdash t : \beta}{\Gamma \vdash \lambda x. t : (\alpha \rightarrow \beta)} \quad (\text{abs})$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : (\alpha \rightarrow \beta) \quad \Gamma \vdash u : \alpha}{\Gamma \vdash (t u) : \beta} \quad (\text{app})$$

## 5. Linear lambda calculus

**Linear logic** A suitable subsystem for natural language analysis:

- ▶ Intuitionistic logic: copying (Contraction), deletion (Weakening) of assumptions
- ▶ Linear Logic: assumptions as resources; every assumption is used exactly once

**Linear typing rules**

$$x : \alpha \vdash x : \alpha \quad (\text{var}) \qquad \vdash c : \tau(c) \quad (\text{cons})$$

$$\frac{\Gamma, x : \alpha \vdash t : \beta}{\Gamma \vdash \lambda x.t : (\alpha \rightarrow \beta)} \quad x \notin \text{dom}(\Gamma) \quad (\text{abs})$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : (\alpha \rightarrow \beta) \quad \Delta \vdash u : \alpha}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash (t u) : \beta} \quad \text{dom}(\Gamma) \cap \text{dom}(\Delta) = \emptyset \quad (\text{app})$$

**Division of labour** derivational semantics: LL; lexical semantics: IL.

## 6. Abstract categorial grammar

**Key idea** Derive both surface forms and semantic interpretation from a more abstract source: Curry's **tectogrammatical** structure.

**Interpretations** Given source  $\Sigma_1 = \langle \mathcal{A}_1, C_1, \tau_1 \rangle$ , target  $\Sigma_2 = \langle \mathcal{A}_2, C_2, \tau_2 \rangle$ , a compositional interpretation  $\mathcal{L}$  is a pair of functions  $\langle \eta, \theta \rangle$  such that

- ▷  $\eta : \mathcal{A}_1 \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{A}_2}$
- ▷  $\theta : C_1 \rightarrow \Lambda_{\Sigma_2}$
- ▷  $\vdash \theta(c) : \hat{\eta}(\tau_1(c))$

(with  $\hat{\eta}, \hat{\theta}$  the homomorphic extensions of  $\eta, \theta$ )

**Abstract categorial grammar**  $\mathcal{G} = \langle \Sigma_1, \Sigma_2, \mathcal{L}, s \rangle$  (start symbol  $s$ )

- ▶ abstract language:  $\text{SOURCE}(\mathcal{G}) = \{t \in \Lambda_{\Sigma_1} \mid \vdash t : s \text{ is derivable}\}$
- ▶ object language:  $\text{TARGET}(\mathcal{G}) = \{t \in \Lambda_{\Sigma_2} \mid \exists u \in \text{SOURCE}(\mathcal{G}). t = \mathcal{L}(u)\}$

## 7. Example: 'John seeks a unicorn'

**Source signature  $\Sigma_0$**   $(\{n, np, s\}, \{J, S, A, U\},$   
 $\{J : np, U : n, A : n \rightarrow ((np \rightarrow s) \rightarrow s), S : ((np \rightarrow s) \rightarrow s) \rightarrow (np \rightarrow s)\})$

**Target signature  $\Sigma_1$ : form**  $(\{string\}, \{john, seeks, a, unicorn\}, \{john, seeks, a, unicorn : string\})$

**Interpretation: tecto  $\rightsquigarrow$  form** types:  $\eta(n) = \eta(np) = \eta(s) = string$ ; constants:

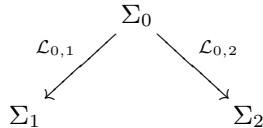
$$\begin{aligned} \theta : \quad J & : john \\ S & : \lambda p \lambda x. p(\lambda y. x \cdot seeks \cdot y) \\ A & : \lambda x \lambda p. p(a \cdot x) \\ U & : unicorn \end{aligned}$$

**Target  $\Sigma_2$ : meaning**  $(\{e, t\}, \{J, SEEK, UNICORN, \wedge, \exists\}, \{J : e, UNICORN : e \rightarrow t, \wedge : t \rightarrow t \rightarrow t, \exists : (e \rightarrow t) \rightarrow t, SEEKS : ((e \rightarrow t) \rightarrow t) \rightarrow (e \rightarrow t)\})$

**Interpretation: tecto  $\rightsquigarrow$  meaning** types:  $\eta(np) = e, \eta(n) = e \rightarrow t, \eta(s) = t$ ;  
constants  $J : J, U : UNICORN, S : SEEK, A : \lambda p \lambda q. (\exists \lambda x. (p \ x) \wedge (q \ x))$



## 8. 'John seeks a unicorn': derivations



**Abstract terms**  $t_1 : (S (A U) J); \quad t_2 : (A U \lambda x.(S \lambda k.(k x)) J)$

**Interpretation: form**  $\mathcal{L}_{0,1}(t_1) = \mathcal{L}_{0,1}(t_2) = \text{john} \cdot \text{seeks} \cdot \text{a} \cdot \text{unicorn}$

**Interpretation: meaning**

$$\mathcal{L}_{0,2}(t_1) = (\text{SEEK } \lambda q.(\exists \lambda x.(\text{UNICORN } x) \wedge (q x)) J)$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{0,2}(t_2) = (\exists \lambda x.(\text{UNICORN } x) \wedge (\text{SEEK } \lambda p.(p x) J))$$

- ▶ each of the interpretations (form, meaning) are compositional homomorphisms
- ▶ the relation  $\text{form} \rightsquigarrow \text{meaning}$  is not: one surface form, two meanings

## 9. Example: context-free grammars

**Source** non-terminal symbols  $\rightsquigarrow$  types; rules  $\rightsquigarrow$  abstract constants.

$$\begin{array}{ll} S \longrightarrow ( S ) & R_1 : S \rightarrow S \\ S \longrightarrow S S & R_2 : S \rightarrow S \rightarrow S \\ S \longrightarrow \epsilon & R_3 : S \end{array}$$

**Target** type: *string*; constants: terminal symbols.

**Interpretation**  $S \mapsto \text{string}$ ,

$$\begin{array}{ll} R_1 & : \lambda x.(\cdot x \cdot) \\ R_2 & : \lambda x \lambda y.x \cdot y \\ R_3 & : \lambda x.x \end{array}$$

**Etcetera**  $\lambda$  calculus encoding of well-known grammar formalisms as ACG's, with interesting expressivity/complexity results (de Groote et al)

## 10. Categorical grammar: the Lambek calculi

**Grammaticality judgements** sequents  $\Gamma \vdash t : B$ , where

- ▶  $\Gamma$  is a structure built from  $x_1 : A_1, \dots, x_n : A_n$
- ▶  $t$  a term of type  $B$  built from the  $x_i$  of type  $A_i$

**Type logics** Different kinds of resource management for  $\Gamma$ :

LOGIC	$\Gamma$	ASSOCIATIVE	COMMUTATIVE
<b>LP</b> (=LL)	multiset	✓	✓
<b>L</b>	string	✓	
<b>NL</b>	tree		

## 11. Directional type logics

**Directional types** given a finite set of atomic types  $\mathcal{A}$ ,

$$A, B ::= \mathcal{A} \mid A \setminus B \mid B / A$$

**Directional terms** given a set of variables  $\mathcal{X}$ ,

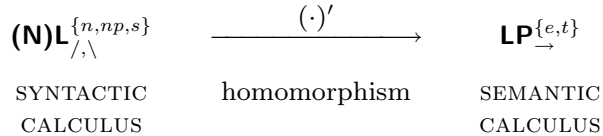
$$M, N ::= x \mid \lambda^r x. M \mid \lambda^l x. M \mid (M \acute{\prime} N) \mid (N \prime M)$$

**Directional typing rules**

$$\frac{\Gamma, x : A \vdash M : B}{\Gamma \vdash \lambda^r x. M : B / A} I/ \qquad \frac{x : A, \Gamma \vdash M : B}{\Gamma \vdash \lambda^l x. M : A \setminus B} I\setminus$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : B / A \quad \Delta \vdash N : A}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash (M \acute{\prime} N) : B} E/ \qquad \frac{\Gamma \vdash N : A \quad \Delta \vdash M : A \setminus B}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash (N \prime M) : B} E\setminus$$

## 12. Compositional interpretation



### Types

$$\begin{aligned} np' &= e \\ s' &= t \\ n' &= e \rightarrow t \end{aligned}$$

### Terms

$$\begin{aligned} x' &= \tilde{x} \\ (\lambda^l x. M)' &= \lambda \tilde{x}. M' \\ (\lambda^r x. M)' &= \lambda \tilde{x}. M' \\ (N \cdot M)' &= (M' N') \\ (M \cdot N)' &= (M' N') \end{aligned}$$

## 13. Lost in translation

Desirable semantic terms are often unobtainable as image of **(NL)** proofs:

$$(\Lambda_{\mathbf{NL}})' \subset (\Lambda_{\mathbf{L}})' \subset \Lambda_{\mathbf{LP}}$$

**Argument lowering** valid in **NL**, hence also in **L**, **LP**

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{NL} : z : (B/(A \setminus B)) \setminus C \vdash \lambda^l x. ((\lambda^r y. (x' y))' z) : A \setminus C \\ (\cdot) : \tilde{z} \vdash \lambda \tilde{x}. (\tilde{z} \lambda \tilde{y}. (\tilde{y} \tilde{x})) \end{aligned}$$

**Function composition** invalid in **NL**, valid in **L(P)**

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{L} : y : A \setminus B, z : B \setminus C \vdash \lambda^l x. ((x' y)' z) : A \setminus C \\ (\cdot) : \tilde{y}, \tilde{z} \vdash \lambda \tilde{x}. (\tilde{z} (\tilde{y} \tilde{x})) \end{aligned}$$

**Argument raising** valid only in **LP**

$$\mathbf{LP} : x : A \rightarrow (B \rightarrow C) \vdash \lambda w. \lambda z. (w \lambda y. ((x y) z)) : ((A \rightarrow C) \rightarrow C) \rightarrow (B \rightarrow C)$$

## 14. Symmetric categorial grammar

**Through the looking glass** We introduce a dual perspective on linguistic resources:

value		context
		(aka continuation)
supply		demand
producer		consumer
credit		debet

$$\underbrace{x_1 : A_1, \dots, x_n : A_n}_{\text{multiplicative conjunction}} \vdash \underbrace{\alpha_1 : B_1, \dots, \alpha_m : B_m}_{\text{multiplicative disjunction}}$$

- ▶ sequents with multiple hypotheses and **multiple conclusions**
- ▶ equilibrium: balance between the supply and the demand side
- ▶ computation: surplus on the supply (focus on  $A_i$ ) or demand side (focus on  $B_j$ )

## 15. Symmetry: types and terms

**Types** given a finite set of atomic types  $\mathcal{A}$ ,

$$A, B ::= \mathcal{A} \mid A \setminus B \mid B/A \mid A \otimes B \mid B \otimes A$$

Two ways of putting together  $A$  value and  $B$  continuation:

- ▶ implications  $A \setminus B, B/A$
- ▶ coimplications  $A \otimes B$  (' $A$  minus  $B$ '),  $B \otimes A$  (' $B$  from  $A$ ')

**Terms** given a set of regular variables  $Var$  and a set of continuation variables  $CoVar$ ,

$$\text{(commands)} \quad c ::= \langle v \mid e \rangle$$

$$\text{(terms)} \quad v ::= x \mid \mu\alpha.c \mid v \otimes e \mid e \otimes v \mid \lambda(x, \beta).c \mid \lambda(\beta, x).c$$

$$\text{(contexts)} \quad e ::= \alpha \mid \tilde{\mu}x.c \mid v \setminus e \mid e / v \mid \tilde{\lambda}(x, \beta).c \mid \tilde{\lambda}(\beta, x).c$$



## 16. LG: typing rules

**Sequents** Three types (cf commands, terms, contexts):

$$X \vdash^c Y \quad | \quad X \vdash^v A \quad | \quad A \vdash^e Y$$

**Identity** Axiom, co-axiom; cut.

$$x : A \vdash^x A \quad \frac{X \vdash^v A \quad A \vdash^e Y}{X \vdash^{(v|e)} Y} \textit{cut} \quad A \vdash^\alpha \alpha : A$$

**Focusing** Activate a passive formula.

$$\frac{X \vdash^c \alpha : A}{X \vdash^{\mu\alpha.c} A} \mu \quad \frac{x : A \vdash^c Y}{A \vdash^{\tilde{\mu}x.c} Y} \tilde{\mu}$$

## 17. LG: logical rules

Left and right introduction rules for the connectives.

$$\frac{X \vdash^v A \quad B \vdash^e Y}{A \backslash B \vdash^{v \backslash e} X \cdot \backslash \cdot Y} \backslash L$$

$$\frac{X \vdash^v A \quad B \vdash^e Y}{X \cdot \odot \cdot Y \vdash^{v \odot e} A \odot B} \odot R$$

$$\frac{X \vdash^c x : A \cdot \backslash \cdot \beta : B}{X \vdash^{\lambda(x,\beta).c} A \backslash B} \backslash R$$

$$\frac{x : A \cdot \odot \cdot \beta : B \vdash^c X}{A \odot B \vdash^{\bar{\lambda}(x,\beta).c} X} \odot L$$

## 18. Two-step interpretation

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \mathbf{NL}_{/\backslash}^{\mathcal{A}} & \xrightarrow{h} & \mathbf{LP}_{\rightarrow}^{\{e,t\}} \\
 \downarrow \cap & & \uparrow g \\
 \mathbf{LG}_{/\backslash,\emptyset,\otimes}^{\mathcal{A}} & \xrightarrow{f} & \mathbf{LP}_{\rightarrow}^{\mathcal{A} \cup \{R\}}
 \end{array}$$

- ▶  $f$  : continuation-passing-style translation (CPS)
  - ▷ maps multiple conclusion source logic to intuitionistic linear logic
  - ▷ special type  $R$ : ‘response of computation’, logic: absurdum  $\perp$
- ▶  $g$  : the usual syntax-semantics homomorphism
  - ▷  $g[\mathcal{A}] = h[\mathcal{A}]$ ,
  - ▷  $g(R) = t$
- ▶ target interpretation:  $g \circ f$

## 19. Continuation-passing-style translation

**Types** Values  $\lceil A \rceil$ , continuations  $\lceil A \rceil \rightarrow R$ , computations  $(\lceil A \rceil \rightarrow R) \rightarrow R$

$$\begin{aligned} \lceil B/A \rceil = \lceil A \backslash B \rceil &= \lceil B \rceil^\perp \rightarrow \lceil A \rceil^\perp \\ \lceil B \otimes A \rceil = \lceil A \otimes B \rceil &= \lceil A \backslash B \rceil^\perp = (\lceil B \rceil^\perp \rightarrow \lceil A \rceil^\perp)^\perp \end{aligned}$$

### Invariants of the translation

source:  $\mathbf{LG}_{/, \backslash, \otimes, \ominus}^A \xrightarrow{\text{CPS}}$

target:  $\mathbf{LP}_{\rightarrow}^{A \cup \{R\}}$

$$\begin{array}{llll} X \overset{v}{\vdash} B & \lceil X^\bullet \rceil, \lceil X^\circ \rceil^\perp & \vdash & \lceil v \rceil : \lceil B \rceil^{\perp\perp} \\ A \overset{e}{\vdash} Y & \lceil Y^\bullet \rceil, \lceil Y^\circ \rceil^\perp & \vdash & \lceil e \rceil : \lceil A \rceil^\perp \\ X \overset{c}{\vdash} Y & \lceil X^\bullet \rceil, \lceil Y^\bullet \rceil, \lceil X^\circ \rceil^\perp, \lceil Y^\circ \rceil^\perp & \vdash & \lceil c \rceil : R \end{array}$$

( $X^\bullet$  input/value parts of  $X$ ;  $X^\circ$  output/continuation parts of  $X$ )

## 20. CPS translation: terms

$$\begin{array}{lll} \text{(terms)} & [x] & = \lambda k.(k \tilde{x}) \\ & [\lambda(x, \beta).c] = [\lambda(\beta, x).c] & = \lambda k.(k \lambda \tilde{\beta} \lambda \tilde{x}.[c]) \\ & [v \otimes e] = [e \otimes v] & = \lambda k.(k \lambda u.([\tilde{v}] (u [\tilde{e}]))) \\ & [\mu \alpha.c] & = \lambda \tilde{\alpha}.[c] \\ \\ \text{(contexts)} & [\alpha] & = \tilde{\alpha} \quad (= \lambda x.(\tilde{\alpha} x)) \\ & [v \setminus e] = [e / v] & = \lambda u.([\tilde{v}] (u [\tilde{e}])) \\ & [\tilde{\lambda}(x, \beta).c] = [\tilde{\lambda}(\beta, x).c] & = \lambda u.(u \lambda \tilde{\beta} \lambda \tilde{x}.[c]) \\ & [\tilde{\mu}x.c] & = \lambda \tilde{x}.[c] \\ \\ \text{(commands)} & [\langle v \mid e \rangle] & = ([\tilde{v}] [\tilde{e}]) \end{array}$$

## 21. Two step interpretation: illustration

### Source

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma_1 = & (\{np, s\}, \{mary, left, teases, everybody, someone\}, \\ & \{mary \mapsto np, \\ & \quad left \mapsto np \setminus s, \\ & \quad teases \mapsto (np \setminus s) / np, \\ & \quad everybody \mapsto s / (np \setminus s), \\ & \quad someone \mapsto (s \otimes s) \otimes np \} \quad )\end{aligned}$$

**Target: level 1** The CPS image of the source types and proofs.

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma_2 = & (\{np, s, R\}, \{mary, left, teases, everybody, someone\}, \\ & \{mary \mapsto np, \\ & \quad left \mapsto s^\perp \rightarrow np^\perp, \\ & \quad teases \mapsto (s^\perp \rightarrow np^\perp)^\perp \rightarrow np^\perp, \\ & \quad everybody \mapsto s^\perp \rightarrow (s^\perp \rightarrow np^\perp)^\perp, \\ & \quad someone \mapsto ((s^\perp \rightarrow s^\perp)^{\perp\perp} \rightarrow np^\perp)^\perp \} \quad )\end{aligned}$$

## 22. Step two

**Target: level 2** Final target: regular Montagovian  $\lambda$  recipes

$$\begin{aligned} \Sigma_3 = & (\{e, t\}, \{\text{MARY}, \text{LEFT}, \text{TEASES}\}, \\ & \{\text{MARY} \mapsto e, \\ & \quad \text{LEFT} \mapsto e \rightarrow t, \\ & \quad \text{TEASES} \mapsto e \rightarrow (e \rightarrow t) \} \quad ) \end{aligned}$$

**Interpretation from level 1  $\rightsquigarrow$  2** A mapping  $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket$  *lowering* the CPS terms.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_{2,3} = & (\{np \mapsto e, s \mapsto t, R \mapsto t\}, \\ & \{\text{mary} \mapsto \text{MARY}, \\ & \quad \text{left} \mapsto \lambda c. \lambda x. (c (\text{LEFT } x)), \\ & \quad \text{teases} \mapsto \lambda v. \lambda y. (v \lambda c. \lambda x. (c ((\text{TEASES } y) x))), \\ & \quad \text{everybody} \mapsto \lambda c. \lambda v. (c (\forall \lambda x. ((v \text{ id}) x))), \\ & \quad \text{someone} \mapsto \lambda h. (\exists \lambda x. ((h \lambda u. (u \text{ id})) x)) \} \quad ) \end{aligned}$$

## 23. Derivational ambiguity

In the **LG** source calculus, the following sentence has two proofs.

$$\underbrace{s/(np \setminus s)}_{\text{everybody}} \cdot \otimes \cdot \underbrace{((np \setminus s)/np)}_{\text{teases}} \cdot \otimes \cdot \underbrace{(s \otimes s) \otimes np}_{\text{someone}} \stackrel{v_1 | v_2}{\vdash} s$$

Taking the composition of the CPS translation  $[\cdot]$  and the lowering translation  $[\![\cdot]\!]$  produces the desired readings.

$$eval([\![\![\![v_1]\!]\!]\!]) = (\forall \lambda x. (\exists \lambda y. ((TEASES \ y) \ x)))$$

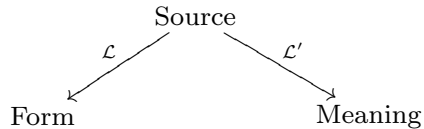
$$eval([\![\![\![v_2]\!]\!]\!]) = (\exists \lambda y. (\forall \lambda x. ((TEASES \ y) \ x)))$$

(*eval* provides the identity mapping for the final continuation)

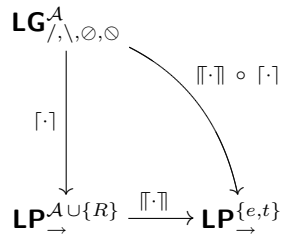


## 24. Comparison: ACG, LG

**Abstract Categorical Grammar** abstract tectogrammatical level; **diverging** compositional mappings to surface forms, semantic readings



**Symmetric categorical grammar** **composition** of compositional mappings



## 25. More to explore

**Abstract categorial grammar** See the ACG homepage at

<http://www.loria.fr/equipes/calligramme/acg/>

**Symmetric categorial grammar** See the course wiki

<http://symcg.pbworks.com/>

and

Moortgat (2009) 'Symmetric categorial grammar'. JPL, 38 (6) 681-710.

