

Language and
Linguistic Science
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Dunstan Brown

Professor

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York Research Database

Profile

Biography

Dunstan Brown investigates autonomous morphology, morphology–syntax interaction, and typology. His recent work has focused on describing and understanding different aspects of morphological complexity. After graduating with a BA in Modern Languages and a Master of Linguistics from the University of Manchester, he completed a PhD in Linguistics at the University of Surrey and worked there for many years before taking up a 50th Anniversary Chair at York in 2012.

Career

- Surrey University
 - Research Fellow 1992-1998
 - Foundation Fund Lecturer in Linguistics and Russian Language 1998-2001
 - Lecturer in Linguistics in Linguistics and Russian Language 2001-2005
 - Senior Lecturer in Linguistics 2005-2012
 - Professor in Linguistics April 2012-Sept. 2012
- University of York
 - Anniversary Professor Oct. 2012 -

Departmental roles

- Chair of Board of Examiners

Research

Overview

I am interested in morphology, because of the particular challenge it represents, being pervaded by irregularity and idiosyncrasy, and yet presenting a system of its own. Together with colleagues at Kentucky and Surrey, my recent work has concentrated on developing a theoretical framework, known as 'Network Morphology', to describe the systems of rules which determine the structure of words by construing irregularity as a matter of degree, using examples from a diverse range of languages and phenomena to illustrate. The Network Morphology philosophy promotes the use of [computational implementation](#) to check theories so that neat solutions to one problem can be tested to see what ramifications they have for other parts of the morphology. The results of this work have recently appeared in the book *Network Morphology: a defaults-based theory of word structure* published by Cambridge University Press (with Andrew Hippisley).

Together with Roger Evans (Brighton) I am working on the unsupervised learning of autonomous morphology, such as inflectional classes, which cross-cut the categories typically associated with syntax and cannot readily be accounted for in phonological terms. Because it is difficult to account for this in terms of other linguistic layers, an approach to validation based on independent analysis of the underlying data is of particular interest. In a new project on the Oto-Manguean languages of Mexico I am also working to apply this technique to languages which exhibit a large number of inflectional classes, combining both prosodic and affixal information.

As I am interested in the interaction between morphology and syntax, the Nakh-Daghestanian language Archi provides a rich source of data on this topic, particularly in relation to the role of morphology and syntax in agreement. Working with colleagues in the Surrey Morphology Group I worked on the creation of a [dictionary of the Archi language](#). We have now started a new project on the Archi agreement system. As agreement in Archi is manifested across a wide variety of domains and constructions it is a particularly valuable

language for investigating the mechanisms and constraints on agreement.

I am working with colleagues in Fairbanks (Alaska), Leiden (Netherlands) and Surrey on the Alor-Pantar languages of eastern Indonesia. The area I have focused on, with Sebastian Fedden (Surrey), is the pronominal marking system. One of the results of this work is that we have observed differing degrees of arbitrariness in the choice of prefixal marking, something of particular interest for work on how autonomous structure can arise.

Over the years I have also been active in creating a number of databases for investigating specific [morphology phenomena](#).

Current projects

- [Endangered complexity: inflectional classes in Oto-Manguean languages](#)

Period of award: March 2012 to February 2015

Grant : AHRC & ESRC

Investigators: Dunstan Brown, Matthew Baerman (Surrey), Greville Corbett (Surrey), Enrique Palancar (CNRS and Surrey)

- [From competing theories to fieldwork: the challenge of an extreme agreement system](#)

Period of award: January 2012 to December 2014

Grant: AHRC

Investigators: Dunstan Brown, Bob Borsley (Essex), Greville Corbett (Surrey), Maria Polinsky (Harvard), Louisa Sadler (Essex). Researcher: Marina Chumakina (Surrey)

- [Morphological complexity: typology as a tool for delineating cognitive organization](#)

Period of award: Feb 2009 - Jan 2014

Grant: ERC

Investigators: Greville G. Corbett (Surrey), Matthew Baerman (Surrey), Dunstan Brown

Research group(s)

- [Phonetics and phonology](#)
- [Syntax and semantics](#)

Grants

See Current Projects

Collaborators

On current research projects I collaborate with colleagues at Essex, Fairbanks (Alaska), Harvard, Leiden and

Surrey.

Available PhD research projects

I would be happy to supervise research projects on morphology, including computational and theoretical approaches, morphology-syntax interaction and typology.

Supervision

I am currently co-supervising the follow PhD students based at Surrey:

- Maris Camilleri, *Maltese verb morphology*
- Scott Collier, *The evolution of complexity in Greek noun inflection*
- Kasia Marchewka, *Polish gender*



Contact details

Dunstan Brown
Professor
Department of
Language and Linguistic
Science

Tel: (0)1904 32265

dunstan.brown@york.ac.uk

Teaching

Undergraduate

- [Typology \(L52H\)](#)
- [English corpus linguistics \(E/L\)](#)

Memberships

- Member of the A.H.R.C. Peer Review College April 2012 – December 2015 (Academic and International)

Invited talks and conferences

(2008 onwards)

- Fedden, Sebastian and Dunstan Brown. 'Aligning systems in the Pantar language' Presented at the Dissemination workshop on Al Pantar language British Academy London, 14 September 2011
- Brown, Dunstan and Sebastian Fedden. 'Functional verbs in the Al Pantar language' Presented at the Dissemination workshop on Al Pantar language British Academy London, 14 September 2011
- Brown, Dunstan and Sebastian Fedden. 'Pronoun marking: Multidimensional variation between closely related languages'. Presented at the annual meeting

the Linguistics
Association of
Britain (LAGB)
Salford, 5-8
September 201

▶ Fedden, Sebastian
and Dunstan
Brown: 'Pronoun
marking in the
Pantar language
and diachronic
alignment char
Invited talk at
Linguistic
Colloquium,
University of
Zürich, 30 March
2012.

▶ Brown, Dunstan
and Sebastian
Fedden: 'Pronoun
indexing and
referential
hierarchies:
Evidence from
Alor-Pantar
languages'.
Presented at the
Societas Linguae
Europaea (SLE)
Logroño, 8-11
September 20

▶ Fedden, Sebastian
and Dunstan
Brown: 'Pronoun
indexing and
referential
hierarchies:
evidence from
Alor-Pantar
languages'.
Presented at the
Association for
Linguistic Typology
(ALT) 9, Hong
Kong, 21-24 June
2011.

▶ Brown, Dunstan
and Sebastian
Fedden. 'Ditransitive

es in the Alor-
Pantar languag
Presented at th
Workshop on
referential
hierarchies in tl
participant
constructions.
Lancaster
University. 20-:
May 2011.

- ▶ Brown, Dunstar
and Sebastian
Fedden: 'Prono
marking in Alor
Pantar languag
Presented at th
annual meeting
the Linguistics
Association of C
Britain (LAGB)
Leeds, 1-4
September 201
- ▶ Brown, Dunstar
and Roger Evar
Principal parts
defaults in Rus:
Speech and
Language Grou
MRC Cognition
Brain Sciences
Unit, Cambridg
25 March 2010
- ▶ Brown, Dunstar
and Roger Evar
Defaults and
principal parts:
empirical
investigation. P
presented at th
Workshop on
Morphology and
Formal Gramma:
HPSG 2010, Pa
L'Université Par
Diderot-Paris V
and L'Universiti
Paris Sorbonne
Paris IV, 8 July
2010.

- ▶ Brown, Dunstan
Combining form and frequency based approach to morphology. Invited plenary at the 14th International Morphology Meeting, Budapest, Hungary, May 16, 2010.
- ▶ Brown, Dunstan and Roger Evar
Compression at morphological complexity: an evaluation. Workshop 'Morphological Complexity: Implications for Theory of Language', Harvard University, 21 January 2010.
- ▶ Baerman, Matthew, Dunstan Brown, Greville G. Corbett
Morphological complexity: the view from typology. Centre for Linguistics, Department of Humanities, University of Hamburg, 11 November 2006.
- ▶ Baerman, Matthew, Dunstan Brown and Greville Corbett.
Morphological Complexity: a typological perspective. Invited paper at the European Science Foundation

