

## **Report on the 29<sup>th</sup> International Lexical-Functional Grammar Conference in Accra, Ghana**

Thanks to CIPL's generosity in awarding me a travel grant, I recently had the privilege of attending the 29<sup>th</sup> International Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) Conference, which was held in the vibrant and bustling city of Accra, the capital of Ghana. The conference, hosted by the University of Ghana and co-located with the Linguistics Association of Ghana conference, was a very academically enriching event, which also came with valuable opportunities for cultural exchange.

The LFG conference is an annual event that brings together linguists from around the world to discuss developments in the field of Lexical-Functional Grammar and syntactic theory. My own presentation focused on the XP-Trigger Hypothesis, a theory concerning a phenomenon known as mutation. Mutations are regular alternations in the initial segments of words, often triggered by a preceding word, but also by syntactic context. There has been considerable debate about how to correctly capture the syntactic context that triggers mutation in Welsh. The XP-Trigger hypothesis suggests that syntactic mutations occur when a word follows the right edge of any XP (phrasal category). It is difficult to import the XP-Trigger Hypothesis (which had been developed in the frameworks of Minimalism and Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar) into LFG, because it assumes the existence of some phonologically null XPs, such as null subjects. This poses a challenge for a core principle of LFG, namely that empty categories should be used as a "last resort". In my talk, I argued that LFG can account for syntactic mutation in Welsh without the need to assume the existence of these empty phrases. The presentation was well-received, and I had the chance to receive invaluable feedback and to refine my formalism and hypothesis further. I have submitted an article to the conference proceedings, which is currently going through the required review process.

Beyond my own contribution, the conference featured an array of interesting talks on topics ranging from computational semantics and prosody to morpheme-based and paradigm-based morphological theories. It was really valuable for me to engage with this hot-off-the-press research in my field.

It was also wonderful to meet linguists from around the world. The co-location of the LFG conference with the Linguistics Association of Ghana conference meant that there was a unique opportunity to learn about linguistic research priorities in the Ghanaian and wider West African context.

Conference attendees were offered the opportunity to engage with the local history through a visit to Elmina Castle, a historical site on the Ghanaian coast that now stands as a stark reminder of the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. We also had the opportunity to experience some of the natural beauty that Ghana has to offer with a canopy walk in Kakum National Park. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to experience a country and culture I have never visited before.

Presenting my research on Welsh syntax in such a diverse and intellectually stimulating environment was a highlight of my academic journey so far, and I left the conference with new insights, connections, and memories that will stay with me for a long time.