The University of Arizona  
Department of Linguistics

Fall 2012  
Linguistics Colloquium  
LING 495/595A

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Fridays, 3 PM – 4:30 PM at Communication 311

Colloquia are every other week.

Program

Friday August 31, 2012

Orientation for 1st and 2nd year students

Speakers: Diana Archangeli, Simin Karimi, Janet Nicol, Shayna Walker

In this orientation, we cover some of the nuts and bolts of being a graduate student at the University of Arizona, for entering students in LING, NAMA, HLT, and ANLI. Topics include but are not limited to a welcome from Simin Karimi, department head; discussion of the progress to degree by Diana Archangeli, director of graduate studies; involving human subjects in research by Janet Nicol, department committee on human subjects protection; and dealing with bureaucracy, by Shayna Walker, graduate coordinator.
Friday September 14, 2012

Speaker: David Basilico, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Linguistics Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Title: Noun Incorporation and the Syntax of Argument Structure

Abstract: A core fact about the distribution of noun incorporation is that in transitive clauses, direct objects can incorporate but subjects cannot (Mithun 1984, Baker 1988). In this talk, I argue that the distribution of noun incorporation is even more restricted. In the past twenty years, a number of researchers have posited that the ‘direct object’ position is not a unitary one, in that some objects occupy a specifier position and hence are more ‘subject-like’, while other objects are complements of the verbal head (Larson 1988, Basilico 1998, Ramchand 2006 and others). Ramchand (2006) has drawn a distinction between ‘undergoer’ objects and ‘rhematic’ objects, with the former occupying a specifier position and the latter occupying a complement position and contributing to “the description of the predicate” (35). In this talk, I argue that noun incorporation is limited to rhematic objects; undergoer objects do not incorporate. Apparent counterexamples in which it appears that an undergoer object has incorporated involve a difference in meaning from the unincorporated construction that indicates these objects are no longer undergoers.

Friday September 28, 2012

Speaker: Diana Archangeli, Linguistics Department, University of Arizona

Title: Emergent Phonology: Evidence from English

Abstract: This paper argues in favor of a serious consideration of Emergent Grammar, the hypothesis that language is acquired with only minimal benefit of an innate language-specific endowment. After reviewing arguments in favor of Emergence based on the challenge of mapping sounds to features and on highly individual (and sometimes) covert articulatory patterns, we turn to an exploration of Canadian Raising and its interaction with Flapping. The discussion demonstrates that an Emergent Grammar account of these facts is possible and that it accounts for the patterns as effectively, if not more effectively,
than a rule-based or a constraint-based alternative. It also provides a model for phonological and morphological analysis under Emergent Grammar.

Friday October 12, 2012

Speaker: Edward Stabler, department of Linguistics, University of California, Los Angeles

Title: Universals in parsing and learning

Abstract: Many linguistic universals proposed in the last 50 years have been disconfirmed, or revealed to be only tendencies. This talk explores some of the more abstract computational proposals about universals that have fared somewhat better, showing how they are leading to new perspectives on language processing and acquisition.

Friday October 26, 2012

Speaker: LouAnn Gerken, departments of Linguistics, Psychology, and Cognitive Science, University of Arizona

Title: What sort of language learner is a human infant?

Abstract: What sort of learner generalizes better from fewer input examples than from more? Associative accounts of learning, in which learners accumulate input examples and generalize over these examples without forming an independent model of the input perform better with more data. Nativist accounts, even those that use statistical inference to select among innate models of the input (grammars) are at best neutral about the number of input examples required for grammar selection. In contrast, model building accounts, such as Bayesian inference, in which learners both generate hypotheses de novo about the input and use statistical inference to select among these models predict that learners generalize better from a handful of examples than from many more examples. In my talk, I'll present new data showing that infants, in fact, do generalize better from fewer examples and offer some thoughts about the origin of infants' hypotheses.
Friday November 9, 2012

**Speaker:** Trevor Harley, Chair of Cognitive Psychology and Dean and Head of the School of Psychology at the University of Dundee.

**Title:** Intact and impaired phonological awareness in typical aging and Parkinson’s disease

**Abstract:** We show that Parkinson’s disease (PD) and, to a lesser extent, typical aging, affect people’s ability to manipulate language. Performance of people with PD was significantly worse than typically aging older adults (TAO) on phonological awareness tasks including rhyme detection, rhyme generation, phoneme deletion, and common-unit identification. The TAO participants in turn performed significantly worse than healthy younger adult participants (HYA) on some of these tasks. As the level of difficulty increases, the PD and TAO groups respond more slowly and make more errors. We propose that there is a relationship between high-level language functions such as phonological awareness, working memory, and those frontal regions, specifically the frontostriate loop, known to deteriorate with age.

Friday November 30, 2012

**Speaker:** Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir of the University of Iceland and Joan Maling of the National Science Foundation and Brandeis University

**Title:** Syntactic Change in Progress: The New Impersonal Construction in Icelandic.

**Abstract:** A new impersonal construction has arisen in Icelandic in recent decades and is gaining ground. The innovative construction is illustrated in (1a,b).

(1) a. Það var beðið mig að vaska upp.
   itEXPL was asked me-ACC to wash up
   Literally: it was asked me to do the dishes
   Intended: 'I was asked to do the dishes' or 'they asked me to do the dishes'

b. Loks var fundið stelpuna eftir mikla leit.
   finally was found girl.the-ACC after great search
Literal: finally was found the girl after a long search
Intended: 'the girl was finally found after a long search' or 'they finally found the girl after a long search'

The New Impersonal (NI) appears to have passive morphology but differs from canonical passives in that the verbal object remains in situ and gets assigned accusative case. Scholars differ in their assessment of whether the NI is a passive or an active impersonal construction. We argued in Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling (2001) and Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir (2002) that the NI is a syntactically active impersonal which has its roots in the reanalysis and gradual extension of the traditional impersonal passive of intransitive verbs. Eythórsson (2008) and Jónsson (2009), on the other hand, challenge the active analysis of the NI and maintain that the construction is an impersonal passive. However, there is no disagreement about the fact that a major syntactic innovation is taking place. This system-internal change is not the result of borrowing, nor is it the result of any phonological change or morphological weakening in the language.

In this talk we discuss what features of Icelandic make this change possible, highlighting the significant age-related variation observed in adults, which is exactly what would be expected during a period of syntactic change. We focus on the occurrence of bound anaphors. Impersonal passives of reflexive verbs are an innovation of Modern Icelandic, first appearing about 100 years ago. We suggest that the reflexive passive is syntactically ambiguous, depending on whether the reflexive pronoun is analyzed as an intransitivizing "affix" or as an independent argument which needs a binder. Data collected in two nation-wide surveys show that speakers who accept the NI also accept reflexive impersonal passives, but not vice versa; many adult speakers accept reflexive impersonal passives but do not accept the NI. These data also show that other effects on the acceptability of the NI, like definiteness and volitional control/agentivity, are compatible with our proposed account.