SinFonIJa 15

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Keynote presentations

Abstracts

Default Case in English
Pavel Caha (Masaryk University in Brno)

Schütze (2001) argues for two claims. First, that Universal Grammar makes use of the so-called Default Case, which refers to "case forms used to spell out nominals that do not receive a case specification by assignment or other syntactic means" (Schütze 2001:205). The second claim is that "ACC is the default case in English" (Schütze 2001:210). This talk challenges the second claim by pointing out that all environments with Default Case (as argued by Schütze) are simultaneously environments which require the so-called strong pronouns. Building on this observation, this article suggests that the Default-Case forms in English are nominative forms of strong pronouns, which have been mistaken for accusative pronouns because they happen to be syncretic with them (i.e., morphologically identical to them). This reinterpretation allows for a more restrictive theory of Default Case, and it has implications for the specific constructions where Default Case has been argued to be needed.

Is DOM syntactic? Yes it is

Roberta D'Alessandro, Utrecht University

This paper will offer an overview of the questions that still remain open regarding the nature of Differential Object Marking (DOM), especially as far as its syntactic nature is concerned. When talking about DOM, most studies highlight its "semantic" or "discourse-oriented" nature. It is indeed the case that DOM usually marks animate or definite objects, as well as topics, depending on the language.

In this talk I will highlight the syntactic nature of DOM, however. DOM will be observed in diachrony and in contact. It will be shown that DOM is syntactic, since: 1. it interacts with structural mapping and alignment; 2. It marks case; 3. It intervenes in agreement; 4. It delimits the domain of long-distance dependencies.

Data will be presented from heritage Italo-Romance as well as other language families and language pairs that are not usually considered, such as Spanish in contact with Shipibo and Asháninka in Peru; furthermore, about 15 Western Indo-Aryan varieties will be shown to display a clear shift from split-ergative alignment to nominative-accusative alignment linked to DOM.

Towards an integrated model of syntax, prosody and gesture
Alessandra Giorgi (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

In this work I address some issues concerning the relationship between syntax and pragmatics, i.e., the contribution of the context to the interpretation. I consider some data from Italian, where the context is essential in defining the grammaticality and felicitousness of the sentence, and discuss the role of syntax and prosody, together with gesture, in obtaining the intended interpretation.

According to the traditional view, which is often left implicit, Pragmatics comes '*later*', i.e., syntax pairs sound and meaning and then the contribution of the context is taken into account, as the final part of the interpretive process.

I'm going to challenge this perspective in favor of a new one. I propose an integrated model of syntax, prosody (and gesture) and interpretation, where a peculiar syntax triggers a certain prosodic contour and a certain interpretation. In other words, I will argue that the context does not intervene at a later stage, but is there from the very beginning, contributing to define the syntactic representation of the sentence. I illustrate this point by means of three kinds of sentences: Surprise counter-expectational questions, surprise-disapproval questions and warnings.

Topics at the Ethanol-Phonetics Interface

Andrew Nevins (University College London)

Alcohol intoxication is known to affect pitch variability in non-tonal languages. In this study, intoxication's effects on pitch were examined in tonal and non-tonal language speakers, in both their native language (L1; German, Korean, Mandarin) and nonnative language (L2; English). Intoxication significantly increased pitch variability in the German group (in L1 and L2), but not in the Korean or Mandarin groups (in L1 or L2), although there were individual differences. These results support the view that pitch control is related to the functional load of pitch and is an aspect of speech production that can be advantageously transferred across languages, overriding the expected effects of alcohol.

The encoding of locative agreement in lexical verbs: the view from sign languages
Josep Quer (ICREA-Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

Padden's (1983/1988) classical tripartite division of sign language verbs according to their agreeing properties (plain, person agreement and spatial agreement) has been decisive for the characterization of agreement. However, the study of sign language agreement has mainly focused on verbs that agree with person arguments. With a few exceptions, lexical spatial verbs and spatial/locative agreement have received relatively little attention, since spatial agreement seems to come "for free" in the signed modality. However, spatial verbs such as BRING, MOVE or STAY, which mark agreement with the same exponents as person agreement verbs, typically agree overtly with their locative arguments (source, goal, location), and not with the (personal) arguments when they cooccur. Psycholinguistic evidence also seems to support the distinction between the two types of agreement.

In this talk I revisit the notion of verb class in sign languages and review and evaluate the proposals on lexical verb classes focusing on the characterization of lexical spatial verbs, as well as on their agreeing behavior in morphosyntax with examples from Catalan Sign Language (LSC).