Plenary Talks

All plenary talks will take place in Lecture Hall HS 2010

Plenary talk 1: Grammar between explicitness and economy

Wednesday, 6 March 2019, 09:30-10:30

Walter Bisang (Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

The distinction between explicitness and economy is well established in various approaches to linguistics (e.g. iconicity vs. economy as competing motivations in Haiman 1983, faithfulness vs. markedness constraints in Optimality Theory, etc.). In my presentation, I will apply explicitness and economy to the notion of linguistic complexity, a topic that is currently discussed from various perspectives. Psycho-linguists and specialists of language acquisition focus on cognitive costs and difficulty of acquisition, typologists look at the properties of the form by which grammatical distinctions are marked and theoretical linguists argue in terms of recursion and merge.

What is common to these approaches is their concentration on linguistic form. In my presentation, I argue that form is only one side of complexity. If one looks at complexity from the perspective of the two competing motivations of explicitness vs. economy the form side can be seen as the result of explicitness, while there is a second side which is based on economy and the pragmatic inference of grammatical information which is available in the grammar of individual languages. The former type of complexity will be called overt complexity, the latter economy-based type will be called hidden complexity (Bisang 2009, 2014, 2015). Hidden complexity manifests itself in the omission of contextually inferable grammatical information and the multifunctionality of individual grammatical markers. In extreme cases in which these properties are recurrent in many grammatical domains, the grammar of a language may allow simple-looking surface struc-tures on the form side which leave a lot of grammatical information to pragmatic inference.

More concretely, it will be shown in my paper that

1. hidden complexity as a property of individual grammars is particularly dominant in East and mainland Southeast Asian languages (EM-SEA),
2. even highly grammaticalized markers still express important discourse functions in these languages,
3. hidden complexity often comes with a different division of labor between grammar and the lexicon,
4. the notions of contrast and opposition get a different status in an environment of dominant hidden complexity.

Since there is a large number of examples, my presentation will be limited to a few phenomena like (i) radical pro-drop, (ii) the tense-aspect marker *-le* in Chinese, (iii) numeral classifiers as markers of definiteness and indefiniteness and (iv) the specifics of grammaticalization and multifunctionality.

References: • Bisang, W. 2009. On the evolution of complexity – sometimes less is more in East and mainland Southeast Asia. In G. Sampson, D. Gil & P. Trudgill (eds.), *Language complexity as an evolving variable*, 34–49. Oxford: Oxford University Press. • Bisang, W. 2014. On the strength of morphological paradigms – a historical account of radical pro-drop. In M. Robbeets & W. Bisang (eds.), *Paradigm change in historical reconstruction*, 23–60. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.• Bisang, W. 2015. Hidden complexity – the neglected side of complexity and its consequences. *Linguistics Vanguard***1(1)**. 177–187. • Haiman, J. 1983. Iconic and economic motivation. *Language***59**. 781–819.

Plenary talk 2: Between word formation and syntax

Wednesday, 6 March 2019, 11:30-12:30

Barbara Schlücker (Universität Leipzig)

The relation between word formation and syntax and the question whether they form distinct domains of grammar or not has been discussed controversially in different theoretical frameworks. In my talk, I will discuss this relation on the basis of complex lexical units of various kinds. More specifically, I will compare compounds, which are usually considered morphological objects, and various kinds of phrasal lexical entities, often referred to as multi-word expressions or lexical phrases. On the basis of data from German, Dutch, English, Icelandic, French, Italian, Polish, Finnish, and other languages, and in line with constructionist approaches, and in particular Construction Morphology (cf. Booij 2010), I will argue that a clear distinction between morphological and syntactic formations cannot always been drawn. For this reason, the relation between compounds and phrases, and, more generally, between word formation and syntax, should be characterized not in terms of a categorical but instead in terms of a gradient distinction.

References: Booij, Geert. 2010. *Construction morphology*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Plenary talk 3: Continuity and creativity in Creole grammar

Friday, 8 March 2019, 09:00-10:00

Eeva Sippola (University of Helsinki)

Creoles are languages that arose in situations of intense contact, where people of diverse ethno-cultural and linguistic backgrounds came together,

often under conditions of slavery or indentured labor, and formed distinct communities and languages. It is often claimed that due to the conditions of their emergence and typological nature, creoles are exceptional or distinct languages in comparison to other languages (Bakker et al. 2011, McWhorter 2018). Also differing views have been voiced, arguing that grammars are robustly transmitted during the emergence of creoles (Blasi et al. 2017) and that creole exceptionalism reproduces tropes of colonial imagination and prejudice (DeGraff 2005).

In this presentation, I will explore some contrasts and oppositions that have been claimed to show proof of the exceptional nature of creole grammars. With data from the most extensive database on creoles, *the Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, I will focus on some core areas of creole grammars that have been claimed to feature typical creole features. Detailed typological and descriptive case studies of selected areas, such as TMA marking, grammatical gender, and word order, will contrast creoles and subgroups of them to their lexifiers and substrate and adstrate languages. The analysis shows that in balanced samples of these languages, continuity from the lexifiers and adstrates can be identified in both pattern and matter replication of the forms and their functions and meanings, while innovations and creativity play a role as well. For example, it is clear that in the subgroup of Ibero-Asian creoles TMA marker forms are derived from the lexifier, while the functions of those markers are clearly patterned in the adstrate languages. With regard to gender marking, gender neutral systems are common in creoles, but partial gender marking prevails in both lexifier and substrate forms and functions in subgroups of creoles that have been or continue to be in close contact with the lexifiers. In addition, word order in creoles does not seem to differ significantly from other languages (c.f. Sinnemäki 2017). These examples and further case studies in combination with sociohistorical data about the creoles' formation settings provide a basis for evaluating the claims about the nature of transmission in contact situations leading to the emergence of creoles. The results will add to the discussion of the degree of continuity and creativity in creole grammars and diverse approaches to them, considering both issues of typological description and grammatical change.

References: • Bakker, P., A. Daval-Markussen, I. Plag & M. Parkvall. 2011. Creoles are typologically distinct from non-creoles. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 26(1). 5–42. • Blasi, D., S. Michaelis & M. Haspelmath. 2017. Grammars are robustly transmitted even during the emergence of creole languages. *Nature Human Behaviour* 1(10), 723–729. • DeGraff, M. 2005. Linguists' most dangerous myth: The fallacy of Creole exceptionalism. *Language inSociety* 34. 533–591 • McWhorter, J. 2018. *The Creole debate.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. • Sinnemäki, K. 2017. How useful are creoles in language evolution research? Evaluating

cross-linguistic universals of word order and argument marking. OSF. April 4. osf.io/t8dqb.

Plenary talk 4: Grammaticalisation in Cushitic Languages

Friday, 8 March 2019, 10:0-11:00

Martine Vanhove (LLACAN (CNRS - INALCO -Université Sorbonne Paris-Cité))

Reconstructible grammaticalization processes in Cushitic (Afroasiatic) concern mainly the pronominal and verbal domains, markers of subordination, adpositions, questions words and discourse particles. This presentation, based on the investigation of the various sources, targets and paths of 70 grammaticalization processes in Beja, the sole representative of North Cushitic, compared with similar phenomena in three other branches of Cushitic, Central, Highland East and Lowland East, will focus on the most salient grammaticalization processes. They will be compared with the list provided in Heine and Kuteva's (2002) lexicon for the languages of the world, or with other literature about the languages of the Horn of Africa where Cushitic languages are spoken. Four main features of grammaticalization in Cushitic that emerge from this investigation will be discussed: (i) the nominal domain, which can be a source of grammaticalization, but not (or hardly) the case for targets; (ii) auxiliaries, in particular the quotative verb that shows a vast array of functions, which are often the source of the renewal and enrichment of the verbal system, as opposed to verbless clauses which are pervasive in other Afroasiatic families, namely Semitic and Egyptian (Cohen 1984); (iii) quo-tative verbs, which have a strong tendency to grammaticalize at different levels of the language structure: verbs, complex sentences, discourse, including functions unattested in other genetic stocks; (iv) the fact that Cushitic languages show a pervasive semantic link between 'say' and 'purpose' at large.

References: • Cohen, D. 1984. *La phrase nominale et l'évolution du système verbal en sémitique. Etude de syntaxe historique*. Leuven: Peeters. • Heine, B. & T. Kuteva. 2002. *World lexicon of grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.