The 38th Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society
University of Chicago, April 25-27 2002
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The 38th Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society took place at the University of Chicago on April 25-27 2002. In those three days, more than one hundred participants had the chance to attend 71 talks, 10 invited talks, and 18 posters on a large variety of topics ranging from formal semantics to phonology, from syntax to connectionist approaches to language. They were organized into a main session and three parasessions (Indigenous Languages of Latin America: Standardization and Multilingualism (1st day); Sub-Symbolic Approaches to Language (2nd day); Negation and Polarity Items (3rd day)).

In what follows, I will briefly comment on some of the talks and posters. The selection is based just on the author of this report’s interests and time restrictions and it does not imply any kind of judgment about the quality of the work that is not mentioned. The complete conference program can be found at the conference web page:


The expected publication date for the conference proceedings is March 2003.

NEGATION AND POLARITY ITEM

I start with some of the contributions that were presented on negation and polarity items. The contributions in this group and in the following ones are ordered alphabetically by authors’ names.

Luis Alonso-Ovalle (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and Elena Guerzoni (MIT), Double negation, negative concord and metalinguistic negation. In their poster, the authors argued that the so called “n-words” (Laka 1990) like Italian niente, nessuno and Spanish nada, nadie are neither negative existential quantifiers, nor negative polarity items, nor lexically ambiguous between the former two. They are existential quantifiers at the truth condition level, but, due to their negative morphology, they are closer to negative existential quantifiers at the level of the speaker’s presuppositions, because they introduce a negative existential epistemic presupposition. The clash between the two components of their meaning accounts for their limited NPI-like distribution.

Anastasia Giannakidou (University of Chicago and University of Groningen), Licensing and sensitivity in polarity items: from downward entailment to (non)veridicality. In her invited talk, Giannakidou summarized part of her work on polarity items. She first showed that polarity-item licensors cannot be unified as a natural class in terms of negation or downward entailment. Then she argued that polarity dependencies are dependencies on (non)veridicality. Finally, she showed that her approach can derive the distribution of polarity items from their lexical semantics: polarity items are ungrammatical in veridical contexts because in these they cannot be interpreted.

Laurence Horn (University of Yale), Assertoric inertia and NPI licensing. Horn focused his invited talk on three scalar particles: almost, barely, and only. He argued that the new construct of “assertoric inertia” must be introduced in order to account for the entailment and NPI licensing properties of these three particles. Semantically entailed material that is outside the scope of the asserted, and hence potentially controversial, part of the utterance meaning (Stalnaker 1978) is assertorically inert. Such material will be effectively transparent to polarity licensing, as it is downward assertion and not downward entailment that licenses negative polarity items. Horn
finally argued that several of the familiar putative diagnostics for presupposition or conventional implicature are actually diagnostics for non-asserted material.

William Ladusaw (University of California, Santa Cruz), **The biasing effect on polarity items in questions.** In his invited talk, Ladusaw explored the hypothesis that negative and positive polarity items can contribute a contextual bias that affects the interpretation of questions. The bias plays out in different ways depending upon the type of question (polar, constituent, or alternative). Ladusaw proposed to model that bias within a dynamic semantic framework based upon Gunlogson’s 2001 UCSC dissertation. The bias of polarity items is modeled as constraints on expected projects of the current context. The limiting case of polarity items’ unacceptability is the result of rendering all contexts unexpected. When successor contexts are reduced to one option, a rhetorical interpretation of the question results.

Balazs Suranyi (Utrecht University Uil-OTS), **Hungarian Negative Concord: a universal quantifier/indefinite ambiguity account.** In his poster, the author argued that Negative Concord Items (NCI) in Hungarian are ambiguous. They can receive either a universally quantified interpretation or a Heimian non-quantified indefinite interpretation with existential closure at the VP level. He also showed that NCIs themselves do not involve logical negation, which, instead, is linked to the modifying particle sem. The final part of the poster explored the interaction between NCI readings and focusing.

**EXPERIMENTS OR ANALYSES OF DATA COLLECTION**

The following group includes contributions containing experiments or analyses of data collections.

Mary Baltazani (University of California, Los Angeles), **The prosodic structure of quantificational sentences in Greek.** Baltazani presented three experiments on scope ambiguity in Greek that are part of her UCLA dissertation (in progress). Experiment 1 was based on sentences containing negation and an object quantifier. Experiment 2 was about sentences containing two DP quantifiers. Finally, experiment 3 dealt with sentences containing negation and a because-clause. Each interpretation of such sentences was delivered with a distinct intonation contour (differences in word order (VO or OV) with the same intonation contour turned out to be irrelevant for scope relations). She found that, although intonation does not set scope, it anchors an utterance to its context (i.e. the question that that sentence is/can be an answer to). If the context is unambiguous, then intonation disambiguates the sentence, i.e. a different intonation countour will signal a different interpretation; otherwise, it does not.

Misha Becker (University of Pennsylvania/IRCS), **‘Seem’ and other hazards of the lexicon.** Becker discussed the sorts of sentential environments that might give learners a clue to the meaning of seem and/or the syntactic structure of sentences containing seem. She presented the results of four experiments with adult native speakers of English in which the subjects were asked to fill in the blank to make the sentence sound natural. The results showed that frames alone are not sufficient cues (*It ____ that….*). Expletive subjects are good cues (*It ____ to + weather predicates) and semantic cues help with ambiguous frames as well (e.g. eventive vs. stative, animate subject vs. inanimate subject). Finally, she presented the initial results of a preliminary acquisition experiment whose design makes use of the conclusions above.

Svetlana Godjevac (San Diego State University), **Croatian children prefer broad focus.** Based on the analysis of focus projection and the rules of signaling information prominence via word order in Serbo-Croatian (a scrambling language), Godjevac argued that the data about children acquiring Serbo-Croatian she analyzed clearly show that children as early as 2 with MLU of 2.68 have begun to produce utterances that conform to some of the rules of adult grammar regarding pragmatic word ordering (contra Radulovic 1975). In particular, she argued that the production of young children shows systematic preference for broad focus.

Chung-hye Han (Simon Fraser University), Jeff Lidz (Northwestern University), and Julien Musolino (Indiana University), **Negation and quantifier scope: Implications for verb-raising in Korean.** The authors started with the observation that, in head final languages like Korean,
verb-raising is hard to detect because of lack of word order evidence. From this, they concluded that not all children acquiring those languages will acquire a verb raising grammar. They supported this conclusion by the results of an experiment they ran on scope interaction between negation and object quantified NPs in which 160 adult speakers of Korean were tested using the Truth Value Judgment Task.

Elsi Kaiser (University of Pennsylvania), On patterns of anaphoric reference in Finnish. Kaiser addressed the general issue of how grammatical/syntactic role and word order influence the salience of a referent by two sentence completion experiments investigating the referential properties of hän ‘she/he’ and täma ‘this’ in Finnish. The results showed that hän is sensitive to the grammatical/syntactic role of its referent, while täma tends to be more sensitive to the word order and the position of its referent. Kaiser’s more general conclusion was that the referential properties of different elements are not necessarily determined by the entire system as a whole (e.g. along an accessibility hierarchy), but different elements can also have different referential properties.

Anna Papafragou (University of Pennsylvania), Scalar implicatures in language acquisition: some evidence from Modern Greek. Papafragou presented the findings from two experimental studies conducted with native speakers of Modern Greek which asked how children acquire both the semantic content of aspectual and degree expressions (e.g. start and halfway, respectively), and the corresponding scalar implicatures. Experiment 1 compared 5-year-olds’ and adults’ comprehension of the scalar implicatures associated with those expressions. It was found that in general children have limited success deriving scalar implicatures. Experiment 2 tested 5-year-olds for knowledge of the semantics of aspectual/degree expressions in environments which cancel scalar implicatures. It was found that children know the meaning of those expressions.

SOME OTHER TALKS

Before concluding, I would like to briefly mention a few more talks I attended.

Ash Asudeh (Stanford University and Palo Alto Research Center), Richard III. Asudeh proposed a new analysis for Copy Raising Verbs (CRV, e.g. Gonzo seems like he enjoys beer) and Physical Perception Verbs (PPV, e.g. Gonzo smells like he enjoys beer) according to which they are syntactically identical, but semantically different. The analysis is framed in Glue Semantics (Dalrymple 1999, 2000). Asudeh argued that both CRV and PPV take a predicative PP complement consisting of the preposition like and a clausal complement. The crucial difference is that CRVs require a pronominal copy in their complements, while PPVs do not. This follows from a resource-sensitive semantics and the mechanism of manager resources. Finally, the author presented a crosslinguistic typology of raising, control and physical perception verbs that arises from his analysis.

Gülsat Aygen (Harvard University), Epistemic modality/Mood as Finiteness & clausal Dependency marked with Subject Case and Agreement. Aygen addressed two main questions: 1) what feature licenses Nominative Case on subjects and whether it varies parametrically, and 2) what Subject Case and S-V Agreement mark. Her answers were that 1) Finiteness as Nominative Case licensing feature is a complex feature consisting of mood (the I(nflection) component) and epistemic modality (the C component); 2) Subject Case and S-V Agreement mark the syntactic and semantic (in)dependency of a clause. Crosslinguistic evidence from Turkish, English, European Portuguese, Italian, Catalan, and Greek was given in support of these claims.

Francesca Del Gobbo (University of California, Irvine, and Harvard University), Appositive and Chinese relative clauses. Del Gobbo argued that appositive relatives in English are an example of E-type anaphora that follow one of the following two strategies: 1) if the antecedent is definite, the relative pronoun is replaced by a copy of the antecedent; 2) if the antecedent is not definite, the content of the relative pronoun is defined by the context of utterance. At the level of discourse, appositives are re-analyzed as independent sentences and a Text level structure (Heim 1982) is created. Del Gobbo also argued that her proposal correctly predicts the interaction
of quantification with appositives in English and the unavailability of appositives in a language with only pronominal relatives like Chinese.

Jo-Eun Lee (Harvard University), **Light-predicate analysis of passive construction.** Lee argued that passive morphemes in Korean are independent predicates whose semantics contributes to the event structure, contra proposals in which they are treated as an empty functional head (little v) with only formal properties. The main theoretical implications of her talk were that: 1) external argument suppression, Accusative Case absorption, and NP movement of standard passivization theories are not universal; 2) a predicate can be altered in either transitivity or aspectuality to give rise to the sense of passivity; and, 3) a passive morpheme can be an independent light predicate of eventuality.

Rose Letsholo (University of Michigan), **Subjects and agreement in Ikalanga: Implications for Bantu.** Letsholo presented the results of her work on optionally overt preverbal subjects and obligatory subject markers in Ikalanga, a virtually unstudied Bantu language. She argued that these apparent subjects are generated in their surface A’ position. Also, she rejected the hypothesis that subject markers are incorporated pronouns (as has been argued for other Bantu languages), saying they are better analyzed as standard subject-verb agreement.

Ayse Pinar Saygin (University of California, San Diego) and Stephen Wilson (University of California, Los Angeles). **Paradigm reanalysis and the representation of morphologically complex words in Turkish.** The authors showed that in many Turkish dialects, tense and agreement morphemes in the progressive and future verb paradigms have become fused together. The phonological processes involved are not general, but occur only in very particular environments where certain pairs of morphemes appear adjacent to one another with high frequency. The authors argued that these data favor a usage-based model of morphology which is sensitive to frequency rather than standard generative approaches.