

Workshop “Ways of reference in Romance languages”

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Abstracts

Experiencers and differential object marking

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In this talk, I will focus on an animacy related differential object marking (DOM) effect that arises in the context of experiencer predicates (in both literal and coerced interpretations) in Greek, a language that otherwise lacks DOM. Drawing on recent joint work with Elena Anagnostopoulou, I will argue that the presence of this effect signals a particular syntax for the constructions under investigation. I will furthermore explore how this analysis can extend to Romance experiencer constructions.

Production vs. comprehension: Evidence from referential strategies in bilingual children

C03: Maria Andreou, Christiane Bongartz, Claudia Rizzo and Jacopo Torregrossa

(University of Cologne)

We investigate the factors that underlie production and comprehension of referring expressions in Greek and Italian by Greek-Italian bilingual children. By taking into account a number of linguistic, cognitive and input factors we aim to capture individual differences in our sample.

Forty Greek-Italian bilingual children (age-range: 8.00-11.8, M: 9.5) – living in Athens and attending a Greek-Italian bilingual school – took part in the study. Our main battery consisted of the following; i) a narrative production task (Schneider et al., 2005) eliciting referring expressions (REs) in Italian/Greek and; ii) a reference comprehension task: the children watched a video and had to associate subtitles in Italian/Greek to the actions performed by a character, choosing between two sentences that differed only in the presence of a null vs. full noun. For the comprehension task, we calculated the average amount of sentences containing a null which were shown to the child before choosing a full noun as well as reaction times.

The analysis of the bilingual data from the narration task showed that the production of ambiguous null-subject (NS), in other words the production of underspecified forms, is affected by different factors in each language. More specifically, in Italian we observe an extension of the reference possibilities of NS according to the pattern observed in Greek, which is accounted for by traditional theories on cross-linguistic effects in bilingual language production. In Greek, the variation in the conditions of use of NS is motivated only by developmental effects, as operationalized by using a ToM task. On the other hand, the production of overspecified forms seem to be affected by cognitive factors only, since our results capture some participants' limited ability to shift pattern.

The analysis of the comprehension data shows that the bilingual children had better performance in the Italian task, which was conducted in the language of their literacy versus the Greek task in which their performance was at chance level. The participants' variation in this task can be explained by cognitive effects, as implemented by the use of a cognitive flexibility task.

A Prominence-based account of temporal discourse structure and the case of Free Indirect Discourse

C02: Martin Becker and Jakob Egetenmeyer
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In a recent paper (Becker / Egetenmeyer in press), we explore temporal discourse structure using prominence as a central ingredient of the account. We take temporal discourse structure to be complex as the relevant discourse entities are understood to be ordered not only linearly, but also hierarchically. The hierarchical ordering is determined based on the concept of prominence (cf. Himmelmann / Primus 2015). We consider three different levels of discourse, namely the (linear) interrelations between time points and time spans, perspective and perspective taking and the temporal relief, i.e., foreground vs. background and story lines.

In the talk, we introduce our approach. We show how it can be applied and discuss its benefits. As an additional case in point, we treat Free Indirect Discourse (FID) and its role in the temporal structure of discourse.

FID is a literary phenomenon mostly occurring in narratives. A thought or speech of a prominent protagonist (cf. Hinterwimmer 2017) is presented without being clearly embedded as it would be in a parallel direct or indirect discourse (cf. Banfield 1982). In the following example taken from Eckardt (2014: 22) with minor adaptations, the second sentence is an instance of FID:

(1) *Eugen sat next to Clara. How cleverly she **talked** about her travels to foreign countries!*

An important line of research states that there are two contexts, “one for the narrator and one for the respective protagonist” (Eckardt 2014: 30), which differ in the case of FID. Thereby, the unexpected property may be explained that “all deictic elements with the exception of first and second person pronouns and verbal tense are interpreted with respect to the protagonist’s context” (Hinterwimmer 2017: 3). As sometimes mentioned in the literature, the generalization needs to be refined in what concerns tense in Romance languages (cf. Giorgi 2015: 238). Another important relation, by contrast, seems to be widely ignored in the literature. The FID passage itself also forms part of the discourse and contributes to its temporal properties. As we will show on the basis of our approach (Becker / Egetenmeyer in press), instances of FID have specific temporal relations to the surrounding discourse and may even contribute to the development of narrative time.

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Temporal Framing and Connectors in Oral Narrative: Evidence from French and Occitan

Janice Carruthers

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This paper will concern questions of **temporal structuring in oral narrative**, looking in particular at temporal adverbials operating as **frame introducers** (Charolles 1997) and at **connectors** attested in context of the Discourse Relation (DR) of ‘Narration’ (Asher and Lascarides 2003), notably *puis, alors, et* etc. In narrative discourse, frame introducers and connectors are regarded as having complementary roles; while connectors associated with the Narration DR have a role in moving the narrative forward, frame introducers such as *un jour, le lendemain matin* etc. index a block of discourse which, at least in theory, falls within the temporal scope of the frame introducer (Le Draoulec and Péry-Woodley 2005).

Based on a corpus of written texts, Le Draoulec and Péry-Woodley have argued that frames are often ‘weak’ in narrative discourse: rather than exclusively marking temporal reference, they assume structural roles that are connected to the segmentation of discourse. I have argued elsewhere (Carruthers 2011) that frames can be crucial for the processes of performance and memorisation of oral narratives, segmenting the narrative in ways that are integral to the context of oral storytelling. As far as connectors are concerned, we have evidence of their widespread use in oral narrative, where their frequency is often linked to the paratactic structure of the discourse (Fleischman 1990).

In this paper, which is based on research for the ExpressioNarration project on which I work with Marianne Vergez-Couret (Poitiers) and which is funded by a Marie Curie Individual Fellowship (EU), I will examine the extent to which the role of connectors and frames is correlated with **degrees of orality**. The analysis will be based on a corpus of oral narrative in Occitan that has been created for the ExpressioNarration project and on the French Oral Narrative corpus frenchoralnarrative.qub.ac.uk. The research questions underpinning the paper are:

- How do connectors and frames operate in terms of temporal structuring in Occitan and French oral narratives?
- Is there any evidence that their usage is in fact complementary?
- Is there any link between patterns of usage and degrees of orality? To what extent are sources, practice and transmission of narratives relevant in the patterns observed?
- What other factors impact on patterns observed?
- What do the patterns observed tell us about connectors and frames more broadly, particularly in relation to their function in oral narrative?

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Explaining individual variation in reference production and comprehension through cognitive modeling

Petra Hendriks

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A challenge for many accounts of linguistic reference is the observation that language users vary considerably in their referential choices, such as the choice between a definite expression and an overt pronoun in English or between an overt and null pronoun in Italian (e.g., Vogelzang, 2017). Part of the variation observed among and within language users and across tasks may be explained from variation in the cognitive resources available to speakers and listeners, such as working memory capacity, processing speed and perspective taking abilities. In this talk I will present the results of a number of cognitive modeling studies of reference production and comprehension that we carried out within the cognitive architecture ACT-R (Adaptive Control of Thought-Rational; Anderson, 2007). Through computational simulations with this ACT-R model, it can be investigated how cognitive constraints interact with linguistic constraints and discourse prominence in adults and children, and how this interaction may give rise to variation in reference production and comprehension.

Prominence scales and micro-variation of DOM in Spanish

B04: Klaus von Heusinger and Marco García García

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Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Spanish shows a complex interaction between several prominence features, such as the nominal factors animacy and referentiality, the verbal factors telicity, affectedness and agentivity, and the information structural factor topicality. Moreover, recent studies have shown that DOM exhibits considerable micro-variation across different diatopical areas (cf. e.g. Alfaraz 2011, Company Company 2002, Montrul 2014). On the basis of unified questionnaire studies for Caribbean Spanish (Cuba and Puerto Rico), European Spanish, Mexican Spanish, and US Spanish we will propose a general prominence model for DOM that aims to account for the mentioned micro-variation in terms of an interaction of prominence depending features.

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Game, set and match: Is a change in perspective outing the French *passé simple* from sports reports?

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Since Cellard’s (1979) rather impressionistic claims, sports press has widely been considered one of the last strongholds of the *passé simple* in French. Corpus studies from the 1980s (Herzog 1981, Engel 1990) confirmed those impressions. Indeed, Herzog’s (1981) corpus of sports reports contained 27.3% of PS, a much higher proportion than in any other sections. According to him, the PS is particularly suited to such articles due to its ability to express a chronological development and inactuality, appropriate to express results that soon become outdated. Even the most strident detractors of the PS acknowledged its relative vitality in sports reports (Van Vliet 1983:90, Krell 1987:372-3).

However, more recent studies (Engel & Labeau 2005; Labeau 2004, 2013; Labeau & Vettres 2013) have shown a limited presence of the PS in sports reports and the intertwining of various narrative tenses. A diachronic study of World Cup Finale reports (Labeau 2007) has also revealed some decline in the use of the PS, and a widening of tenses used for narration since 1950.

Those trends could be attributed to the hotly debated disappearance of the PS – and indeed the affinities of that tense with a limited range of verbs (mostly *être* and monosyllabic verbs) and set idioms, as well as its frequent use in isolation (Labeau 2004) could support that explanation. However, we contend that a shift in perspective, imposed by the changing role of the written press, may also be invoked to explain the evolution in tense usage in sports reports.

In this talk, we will provide a systematic aspect-temporal description of the PS and its contenders adapted from Azzopardi & Bres (2017), and show on the basis of a corpus of press reports how those specific features are applied in that genre.

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Coherence relations in pronominal and temporal anaphora: null subjects and imperfective past

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Romance imperfective past is usually invoked in the literature as a clear case of temporal anaphora. A comparison with anaphora resolution in the case of null pronouns in languages like Spanish and Italian raises some questions on the alleged parallelism between pronominal and temporal anaphora, and may contribute to understand the role of coherence relations in anaphora.

The interpretation of null subjects in consistent null-subject languages is determined by the interaction of two different kinds of factors, as recent research has shown for pronouns in general. On the one hand, there are grammatical factors that provide speakers with cues on the salience / accessibility of the antecedent; the preference of null subjects for topical antecedents, for instance, has been discussed in Carminati (2002) and Filiaci (2011), among others. On the other hand, inferences on coherence relations between clauses play a major role in anaphora resolution, as pointed out in coherence-based approaches (Kehler 2002, Kehler, Kertz, Rohde and Elman 2008).

Since null pronouns pose no specific conditions on their possible antecedents, apart from being salient / accessible, the prominence of a topical subject antecedent may be overridden by the relevance of certain coherence relations in the comprehension process: the search for coherence may ultimately win over salience / accessibility. Whereas narrative relations favour the expected topic / subject bias in the selection of the antecedent, Explanation / Result relations allow for a null subject to choose an object DP as antecedent, despite its less salient status (cf. Jasinskaja & Karagjosova 2016 for an overview of the role of coherence in anaphoric relations).

A look at temporal anaphora with Romance imperfective past tenses shows that, again, both grammatical factors and coherence relations must be taken into account, but the situation is quite different: linguistic cues –in particular, the semantics of imperfective past and its interaction with lexical aspect- play a decisive role and constrain inferences on coherence relations in significant ways. Lexical aspect restricts the possible interpretations of the imperfective past (for instance, only states give rise to a continuous reading, only events give rise to a progressive reading...), and only certain interpretations –basically, the progressive reading- trigger the search for a true temporal antecedent; thus, interpretations clearly constrain coherence relations –progressive readings are compatible with Background / Elaboration, but not with Explanation / Result, whereas continuous and habitual readings allow for Explanation / Result as well.

Among the issues raised by a comparison of pronominal and temporal anaphora in the mentioned cases, the first one I would like to address is why there is a different division of labour between grammatical forms and coherence relations in the two domains; in my view, the answer has to do with the way the search for an antecedent is triggered in the two cases. A second issue is whether the parallelism has to be maintained, and my answer is that it holds only at a very general level (cf. Leonetti 2018). A third point concerns the effects of the distinction between coordinating and subordinating coherence relations. Finally, it could be interesting to discuss how the notion of prominence applies to the two empirical domains.

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Tense use in discourse and dialogue

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Since Kamp & Rohrer (1983), the literature on tense use in discourse focuses on story telling: sequences of events create narrative progress, and states provide background descriptions. In contrast to the anaphoric, definite nature of the *Simple Past*, Partee (1973) analyses the *Present Perfect* as quantificational and indefinite. This view is in line with the non-narrative character of the PERFECT, maintained by Bybee et al. (1994) and Lindstedt (2000). However, the semantic literature is divided on the proper analysis of the PERFECT (compare Portner 2003, Nishyama & Koenig 2010, Kamp et al. 2015 for different proposals and Ritz 2012 for an overview of the literature). Note further that there is little systematic research on the dynamic features of the PERFECT, so we don't know which contexts license its use. Substantial cross-linguistic variation complicates the picture: according to Schaden (2009), German and French make a more liberal use of the PERFECT than English and Spanish, especially in narration, which is unexpected under Partee's (1973) analysis.

We think that a better understanding of the conditions of use of tense forms, including the PERFECT is crucial for building a cross-linguistically robust semantics. Rather than focusing on constructed examples, we investigate actual tense use in a parallel corpus. Under the assumption that translators aim to render the meaning in context in the target language, form variation between original and translation can inform us of the semantics and pragmatics of the various verb forms.

In this talk, we report results of parallel corpus research on tense use in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone* and its Dutch, German, Spanish, French and Italian translations. We chose *Harry Potter* as our corpus, because it has both narrative parts and dialogue. We find that the discourse has a 'classic' narrative style which fits the analysis proposed by Kamp & Rohrer (1983) and Partee (1984). The dialogues are short, but they feel like 'natural' spoken language, so we use them to generate a multilingual conversational corpus.

There is no literature on tense use in dialogue that we are aware of, but we hypothesize that the nature of the PERFECT as building a bridge between a past event and the present utterance situation lends itself well to conversation. Indeed, it turns out that the PERFECT is exclusively found in the dialogue parts of *Harry Potter*, and does not appear in narrative discourse. This generalization holds for all the languages under investigation. Even in dialogue, the *Present Perfect* is infrequent, compared to other verb forms such as the *Simple Present*. There is substantial cross-linguistic variation, but the data only partly confirm Schaden's hypotheses. PERFECT use in the Spanish translation is close to the English original, as expected, but Dutch and German make a wider usage of the PERFECT to report events in the past. The Germanic languages avoid the PERFECT in narrative sequences, though, in contrast to French and Italian where the PERFECT replaces the perfective past in dialogue.

A closer investigation of the data reveals the lexical, compositional and dynamic ingredients that the PERFECT is made up of in the languages under investigation, and provides the beginnings of a cross-linguistic semantics and pragmatics.