The University of Texas at Arlington
Student Conference
In
Linguistics and TESOL

Friday, February 28, 2020

Book of Abstracts

The abstracts included in this book have been reformatted
from the original submissions for the purpose of consistency.

Keynote Presentation:
Getting ahead of ourselves: Structural prediction in sentence parsing
Jesse Harris (University of California, Los Angeles)

Much recent work has addressed the extent to which the language parser is predictive, typically concentrating on the anticipation of a single word in highly constraining contexts (see DeLong, Troyer, & Kutas, 2014; Staub, 2015 for review). A related strand of research explores whether the parser also anticipates structure ahead of the input. I present several collaborative studies addressing how fine-grained structural predictions might be in two sets of studies. I first present results from a series of experiments on correlative structures (e.g., either ... or; not only ... but also) supporting the view that the parser makes relatively detailed syntactic predictions which are sensitive to grammatical constraints (Harris, 2018; Harris & Rich, 2017, in preparation; Rich & Harris, 2019). Then, I briefly discuss ongoing research indicating that listeners adapt their expectations to how individual speakers use prosodic information to disambiguate structural interpretations (Nakamura, Harris, & Jun, 2019, in preparation).

Laughter as a discourse marker in computer-mediated communication

Emily Finley (UT Arlington)

Language evolves to adapt to new avenues for use. As we have increased our use of computer-mediated communication (CMC), we have changed our language use to make up for the loss of body language and other cues. This project focuses on the pragmatic function of laughter in CMC, specifically within text messages. I am looking at identifying what functions laughter holds as a discourse marker (DM) in these exchanges. Expanding on a small pilot corpus of English messages with close friends, the current corpus expands the participant base through an online survey and codes for interlocuter relationship. Previous research by Markman (2017) looked into stand-alone, utterance-initial, and utterance-final uses of 'lol', where Tagliamonte (2016) discussed variants and their uses across registers. I argue that laughter in CMC functions as a DM and exhibits pragmatic functions that can mirror spoken discourse, including politeness, backchanneling, or turn-taking. Below are some examples from the pilot study:

1) A: So I just realized A and B have changed their profile pics **lol**. I don't know why this just occurred to me.
2) A: **Lolol**
   B: **Haha** I love them

In (1) we can see a medial use of laughter that helps the interlocuter switch topic and in (2B) we can see emotional agreement as one interlocuter takes their turn. By analyzing and comparing these functions to spoken discourse, we can see how closely CMC can imitate speech. This will allow us to see how far our adaptation of language has come, specifically in the use of laughter.

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Trauma-informed ESL for preliterate Rohingya refugees

Miranda Kuykendall (Dallas International University)

The state of Texas resettles the largest number of refugees per year in the United States, and Dallas resettles the largest number of refugees in Texas. Many Dallas refugees arrive with limited or no literacy in their native languages, let alone English. Resettling in the United States with limited or no literacy inhibits one's ability to acculturate and function effectively in critical sectors such as health and human services, education, and the workplace. Trauma, stemming from a lifetime of restrictions on education, travel, and marriage as well as the effects of genocide and sudden, long-term separation from loved ones, compounds the challenges of resettling.

Research indicates that the compound effects of sustained trauma impacts an individual's ability to learn and retain new information (ELL Training Network 2017, 3). Therefore, ESL teaching strategies must be culturally sensitive and trauma-informed in order to be effective. Teaching oral-centric, preliterate students who have endured sustained trauma increases the need for specialized resources.

This paper reports the results of a survey of the language, literacy, and communication needs of Dallas/Fort Worth-area refugees. The survey team identified a target population of preliterate refugees as a community of focus and developed a program to address English and acculturation needs of that population. The survey team conducted interviews with stakeholders and focus groups which included an estimated 5% of the target population. They also did a literature review of similar communities who have begun to thrive in their new American home. The community of focus is the Rohingya of Myanmar, an oral-centric, largely preliterate population of whom an estimated 200 families have resettled in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The Rohingya, whose language is neither taught nor written in formal education settings, arrive in the United States largely preliterate or nominally literate and having endured significant trauma. Formal, grammar-based ESL classes are seldom effective when teaching students from oral-centric cultures and communities whose languages have been marginalized. Dr. Anne Saw of DePaul University notes in a March 2019 interview that of programs observed in Chicago, the community with the highest population of Rohingya in the U.S., "the English being taught …wasn't working." Seniors and women with small children are the ones with the most need. According to Saw, "If you're 30 or older, you probably have a story to tell about trauma." She stresses the need to develop trauma-informed English language-learning tools to be taught in the homes of Rohingya women, who are often culturally and circumstantially home-bound.

This paper describes how we are addressing some of the acculturation and language-learning challenges faced by Dallas-area Rohingya. It outlines the research that led to the development of a programmatic approach to teaching English in a way that is trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and inclusive of preliterate and oral-centric participants. It also discusses the impact of informal language-learning within the home, the use of culturally relevant images for learning, and specific tools and strategies that are useful for overcoming barriers of trauma in the language-learning process.

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Is *scissors* made up of *scissor* and a plural marker?

Seung Ah Kwak, Rongchao Tang, and Naoko Witzel (UT Arlington)

Many current models of morphological decomposition agree that morphologically-complex words are decomposed into their individual constituents at some point during the processing of these words (see e.g., morpho-orthographic model, Rastle et al., 2004; morpho-semantic model, Feldman et al., 2009; the dual-route model, Diependaele et al., 2005). Some models, however, argue that whether complex words are decomposed or not depends on their surface frequency, and that high frequency words are processed in their whole word form (see e.g., Caramazza et al. 1988; Hay, 2001). Thus, this study tests whether complex words that are higher in frequency than their respective base words, such as *scissors* and *scissor*, are decomposed following regular inflectional rules. As such, this study tests whether relative frequency between the morphologically-complex words and their stems affects whether these complex words are decomposed using the masked priming technique. Results (N=24) revealed that there were somewhat equivalent effects of masked priming for higher frequency complex word and its base (*developed-DEVELOP*) and for lower frequency complex word and its base (*develops- DEVELOP*). This suggests that no matter what the relative frequency between the complex word and its stem is, all complex words go through decomposition at the early stages of processing, supporting McCormick et al. (2009). We will discuss how morphologically-complex words are represented as well as how they are accessed during the early stages of processing.

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Spanish contact effects on /s/ and /ʃ/ in K'iche: A sociophonetic study

Corinne Van Ryckeghem (UT Arlington)

The K'iche' language is one of the most widely spoken Mayan languages of Guatemala, (Eberhard. 2003). Many indigenous Mayan communities also speak Spanish, the official national language, and language of prestige (Adell. 2014). This study examines a long-term language contact environment between K'iche' and Spanish where K'iche' lexicon and phonemes are especially impacted. Analysis of K'iche' community members' interviews will observe acoustic and sociolinguistic factors. The goal of this sociophonetic study is to compare fricatives /s/ and /ʃ/ in both Spanish and K'iche' from bilingual speakers. This presentation will focus on two groups of speakers: K'iche' Dominant and Spanish Dominant. Speakers' age, gender, location, and education are also predicted to impact the acoustic data.

Phonological variation among participants can be attributed to language contact and more specifically to bilingualism, and, impressionistically, language shift (Thomas. 2016. Vaughn, Baese-Berk, Idemaru. 2018). This study adds to the growing field of sociophonetics, and the literature on indigenous communities in contact with Spanish. The paper also employs acoustic methods to examine phoneme variation among bilinguals, socio categories, and individuals (Thomas, 2016).

Interviews with K'iche' community members, ages 21-78, reflect a severe lack of K'iche' vocabulary among youth as well as speaker variation in loanword phonological production. In Summer 2019, interviews were conducted with members of the Maya K'iche' community in Santa Lucía Utatlán, Guatemala. These interviews included a sociolinguistic survey, and elicitation of K'iche' loanwords adapted from Spanish. In the loanword elicitation task, older speakers retain native K'iche' phonemes and stress patterns while some younger speakers tend to use more Spanish-like patterns. For example, among the K'iche' loanwords elicited were /meʃa'/ and /rɔʃɔʃ/, coming from the Spanish "Mesa" and "Rosa". For the younger speakers, Spanish-like [mesa] or [rɔʃa] are more common than the K'iche' [meʃa'] and [rɔʃɔʃ].

To further explore this data, the fricatives /s/ and /ʃ/ in Spanish and K'iche' are compared from 6 speakers, organized into K'iche' Dominant or Spanish Dominant. Using Praat, fricative duration measurements were taken as well as spectral center of gravity. These acoustic measurements are chosen to show fricative stress patterns in Spanish or K'iche', and variations in the place of articulation (Thomas. 2016). Results show an extreme gap in K'iche' vocabulary among youth, and significant differences in K'iche' fluency scores across speakers' age, location, and education. Results are expected to also reflect different acoustic patterns between the two groups. The methods described above are designed to deepen understanding of K'iche' bilinguals' usage, and phonological variation, in these language contact environments.

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What we know about Erick: Name signs in American Sign Language as deixis
Laurel Whitsett (UT Arlington)

Within the linguistics branch of pragmatics, relational social deixis refers to the social connection between a speaker and an addressee, bystander, or other referent within an extralinguistic context (Huang, 2014). A paucity of research related to function of the language's name signs (NS) as anything pragmatic --- let alone deictic --- is justification for inquiry.

NS are unique signs substituted for an individual's name to refer to that particular person in the world. They are neither abbreviations nor nicknames, and cultural norms govern their creation, use, and longevity (Baker-Shenk and Cokely, 1991). There are generally two types of NS: descriptive and arbitrary. A descriptive NS denotes something about the person attached to it, such as a physical characteristic, hobby, or profession. For instance, Figure 1 shows former president Barack Obama's NS, which begins as the handshape 'O' to represent the first initial of his last name and ends in a handshape representing the American flag (Lapiak, 2020). By contrast, Figure 2 shows an arbitrary NS; the signer is using the manual alphabet to show the initial 'D' of the name 'Daniel' near the head (ASL That, 2012). Note that while this NS occurs in a classic location on the signer's body and does not appear to be attributive in nature, the NS would still have to have been created with this specific Daniel in mind.

In this paper, I use data from the American Sign Language Linguistic Research Project SignStream® 3 corpus to support the claim that the presence of an NS encodes extra-linguistic information about interlocutors. I present this argument with the goal of identifying enigmatic features susceptible to being under-analyzed since ASL is a visual language with no orthography, while also striving for the global contribution of closing the gap between spoken and signed language research.

Figure 1. Example of descriptive NS for former president Barack Obama. Adapted from Handspeak Sign Language Dictionary, 2020, retrieved from https://www.handspeak.com/. Copyright Jolanta Lapiak.

Figure 2. Example of arbitrary NS for a person named Daniel. Adapted from ASL That, February 13, 2012. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/9hHt3wzxXjc.

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Metalinguistic comparatives in Mandarin Chinese

Meng Yang (UT Arlington)

Studies on Metalinguistic Comparatives (MC) in Greek (Giannakidou and Stavrou 2009) have characterized MC as a distinct species from degree comparatives in that the "MC-than" has its distinctive lexicalization and the attitude holder compares two *propositions* with regard to their preference or appropriateness.

MC phenomena in Korean exhibit a striking parallel and furthermore feature unique negative metalinguistic comparative forms to express an extremely dispreferred proposition. Giannakidou and Yoon (2011) define the expressive content of MCs in terms of expressive relation between an individual and a proposition based on the system of Conventionalized Implicature logic (Potts 2007).

In the present paper, we suggest broadening the spectrum of attitudinal scales in MCs by identifying three major MC constructions in Mandarin Chinese. We show: (i) they are different from the degree comparative morpheme; (ii) they further substantiate that MCs are a distinctive creature from degree comparatives; and (iii) MCs express a fine-grained subjective attitudinal preference towards two propositional contents in Mandarin Chinese. Unlike ***nuni*** in Korean, which always has strong negative emphatic effects marking the least preferred choice, MC construction ***nìngkě***… ***yěbù***… in Mandarin Chinese can express a less preferred option out of two unideal propositions as choosing the lesser of the two evils. Building on Potts (2007) and Giannakidou and Yoon (2011), we propose to assign differentiated numerical intervals for three subtypes of MCs in Mandarin Chinese to capture an individual's relative emotional attitude toward each proposition. As such, we capture the different levels of negative feelings towards the dispreferred propositions.

In exploring how three types of MCs compare an individual's emotional attitude towards two compared propositions, *p* and *q*, we propose that the following scales in which their relativized degree of emotion is represented as two intervals as in <α $\mathbf{I_1}$ p, α $\mathbf{I_2}$ q>, where I ⊆ [-1, 1]. The expressive indices allow us to capture how precisely the three major MC constructions in Mandarin Chinese, ***yǔqí…bùrú…***, ***shì…búshì…***, and ***nìngkě…yěbù…,*** encode the orientation and level of emotive content with regard to two propositions in MCs, as given in (1-4).

(1) ***yǔqí***	p	***bùrú***	q <a [0, 0.5] p, a [0.5, 1] q>
(2) ***shì***	p	***érbúshì***	q <a [0, 1] p, a [-1, 0] q>
(3) ***nìngkě***	p	***yěbù***	q <a [-0.5, 0] p, a [-1, -0.5] q> **The lesser of two evils**
(4) ***nìngkě***	p	***yěbù***	q <a [-1, -0.9] p, a [-5, -1] q> **Extremely negative**

The current analysis has the following implications. First, contra Lin's (2009) claim that certain constituents are not comparable in Mandarin Chinese, whose analysis was restricted to degree comparatives with **bǐ**, we show that such comparison can be conveyed by MCs. Second, our proposal on relativized expressivity allows us to capture the nuanced scalarity that is morphologically encoded in various MC markers in Mandarin Chinese. Third, it allows us the generalization that metalinguistic functions in language are indeed part of grammar, i.e. a manifestation of expressivity, supporting Potts (2007). Finally, our analysis shows that the complementizer 'than' in comparatives is not semantically vacuous, as is generally believed, but contentful: it is the locus of the interaction between descriptive and expressive meaning.

The interaction of semantic information and parsing biases: An A-maze investigation
Xinwen Zhang and Jeffrey Witzel (UT Arlington)

This study uses the A-Maze task (Boyce et al., 2020) to examine the influence of semantic information on online parsing biases. In the A-Maze task, as in all maze task variants (see e.g., Forster et al., 2009; Witzel et al., 2012), each word in a sentence is presented along with a distractor word, and the participant selects the word that best continues the sentence as quickly and accurately as possible. Boyce and colleagues (2020) have demonstrated that like other versions of this task, the A-Maze produces robust and highly localized indications of incremental processing difficulty. Moreover, the A-Maze improves on other task variants in that it involves automatically generated distractors for each word, simplifying and systematizing item creation. Crucially, these distractors are generated by a program that selects words that are highly unlikely at each point in the sentence. This means that distractors are sometimes ungrammatical, sometimes semantically unexpected, and sometimes both. In this way, the A-Maze essentially forces incremental syntactic *and* semantic integration of each word into the developing sentence structure. The present study takes advantage of this task to examine the influence of semantic constraints on syntactic parsing biases in sentence types that have yielded conflicting findings under other online reading paradigms.

The sentence types of interest involved reduced and unreduced relative clauses (RCs) with sentential subjects that were either animate (and good agents for the RC verb) or inanimate (and poor agents/good themes for the RC verb), as in the following examples:

reduced/animate
The defendant examined by the lawyer turned out to be unreliable.
unreduced/animate
The defendant who was examined by the lawyer turned out to be unreliable.
reduced/inanimate
The evidence examined by the lawyer turned out to be unreliable.
unreduced/inanimate
The evidence that was examined by the lawyer turned out to be unreliable.

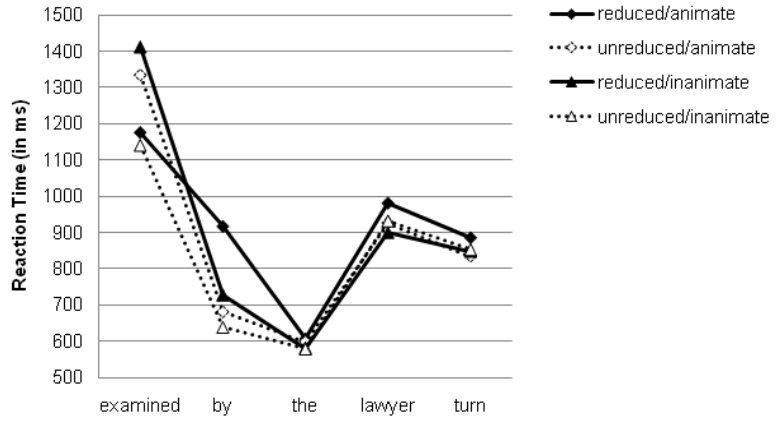
A number of studies have indicated a clear preference for a main-clause interpretation of the RC verb (*examined*) in reduced RC sentences. This is evidenced by processing difficulty (compared to unreduced RC controls) at words that disambiguate the structure of the sentence -- i.e., at and after the RC *by*-phrase. In a now-classic eye-tracking study, however, Trueswell et al. (1994) found that these "garden-path effects" were effectively eliminated in sentences with inanimate subjects. This indicated that semantic information -- in this case, animacy and semantic fit with the verb -- can override syntactic biases. In an expanded replication of this study, however, Clifton et al. (2003) found comparable garden-path effects in these sentences, regardless of the animacy of the subject.

The present study (N=32) attempted to adjudicate between these conflicting findings using the A-Maze task. The results revealed processing difficulty at the RC verb in reduced/inanimate sentences (see the table and figure below), indicating that readers detected the semantic mismatch between the inanimate NP and the verb at this point in the sentence (!*The evidence examined...*). Despite this clear indexation of semantic mismatch, however, there were robust garden-path effects for both reduced/inanimate and reduced/animate sentences. These effects were found exclusively at the first word of the disambiguating *by*-phrase (*by*) and were particularly large for reduced/animate sentences. Taken together, these results indicate that in an online reading task that appears to force incremental syntactic *and* semantic processing, semantic constraints cannot override syntactic biases. Rather, semantic constraints appear only to facilitate reanalysis when the input is inconsistent with these biases. This study also indicates that the maze task, the A-Maze in particular, provides a useful method for examining core theoretical issues in sentence processing.

Mean response times (in milliseconds) by condition and region, with standard errors of the mean for repeated measures in parentheses.

	examined	*by*	*the*	*lawyer*	*turned*
The defendant					
reduced/animate	1175 (19)	917 (30)	608 (9)	981 (16)	886 (21)
unreduced/animate	1334 (27)	680 (13)	598 (6)	926 (17)	834 (19)
The evidence					
reduced/inanimate	1411 (34)	727 (15)	581 (8)	899 (19)	847 (23)
unreduced/inanimate	1141 (27)	638 (18)	578 (8)	932 (14)	853 (23)
Animacy	--	***	*	--	--
RC type	--	***	--	--	--
Animacy* RC type	***	**	--	--	--
animate reduced vs. unreduced	**	***	--	--	--
inanimate reduced vs. unreduced	***	***	--	--	--

*** $p<.001$, ** $p<.01$, * $p<.05$, -- not significant



Mean response time (in milliseconds) by region and condition.

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