Why does Indonesian ask *nama siapa?* ('name who'), rather than *What is your name?* as in English? English speakers are often puzzled by the Indonesian construction, believing that since names are inanimate, *what* should be used. Conversely, Indonesian speakers are often surprised to learn that English uses *what*, arguing that since names refer to people, it should be *who*. This paper poses the question whether the different choice of *Wh*-words in Indonesian and English reflects some more fundamental property distinguishing between the two languages, or whether it is a superficial feature without deeper typological ramifications. The answer that is provided is: a combination of both.

The first part of this paper presents the results of an ongoing world-wide cross-linguistic survey examining the choice of *Wh*-word in "What is your name?" questions, covering over 850 languages. The results show that the Indonesian *who* construction represents a cross-linguistically widespread option, spanning a wide range of seemingly typologically diverse languages, including, among others, Zulu, Amharic, Tsez, Mongolian, Dani, Tahitian, and Squamish. Moreover, the presence of areal patterning evident in the map shows that the choice of *Wh*-word is a feature that is readily borrowed across languages of different genealogical and typological groups. Thus, in large part, Indonesian uses *who* because it is a typical Insular Southeast Asian language, while English uses "What is your name?" because it is a run-of-the-mill Western European language.

However, the second part of this paper shows that in spite of such areal patterning, the choice of *Wh*-word does indeed also reflect deeper aspects of morphosyntactic organization. The choice between *who* and *what* is shown to correlate with the results of an in-progress cross-linguistic experiment on over 60 languages world-wide measuring the extent to which the assignment of thematic roles are grammaticalized. Specifically, *what* languages tend to exhibit more grammaticalization of thematic role assignment than *who* languages. Thus, while in English, *what* and *your name* are related via thematic role assignment, in Indonesian, *nama* and *siapa* are connected through a looser relationship of association.

The choice of *Wh*-word in "What is your name?" questions is thus partly arbitrary, reflecting the outcome of diachronic processes of language contact and borrowing, and partly principled, reflecting the degree of
grammaticalization of thematic role assignment in the grammar. This case study underscores the way in which a single linguistic phenomenon may simultaneously reflect an ontologically heterogeneous potpourri of factors, some diachronic, others synchronic – there can be no one single story explaining everything.

22.11.18

Diane Lillo-Martin
University of Connecticut
American Sign Language Pronouns and Their Acquisition

Pointing is a ubiquitous activity that humans engage in from a very young age. For this reason, the analyses of index-finger pointing in sign languages and the development of these points in signing children has been a matter of great interest and some controversy. Traditionally, pointing is interpreted as pronominal in sign languages such as American Sign Language (ASL); however, differences are noted between pointing signs and pronouns, which have led some to consider the signs to be a mixture of linguistic and gestural. Here we report new data on asymmetries in the emergence of pointing in deaf signing children, hearing bimodal bilingual children, and hearing non-signers. These data show that children do not treat all points the same, and they contribute to reconsideration of the analysis of pointing and its role in the pronominal system of ASL.

15.11.18

Flóra Lili Donáti
Université Paris 8 - SFL, CNRS
A Non-Unified Account of Obligatory "Focused" Expressions in Hungarian

In Hungarian, wh-words, only-phrases and downward-entailing (DE) expressions must move to the preverbal Focus position. Although many aspects of this position were thoroughly investigated in the literature, a detailed analysis of the above constituents and their relation to this position seems to be lacking. This paper proposes a non-unified analysis: For wh-phrases, I argue that they move because of the Wh-Criterion (Rizzi, 1997), while the movement of only-phrases and DE expressions is triggered by their inherent negativity.

08.11.18

Kriszta Szendroi
(in collaboration with Zoe Belk and Lily Kahn)
University College London
No Case for Case (or Gender) in Stamford Hill Hasidic Yiddish

Yiddish was the everyday language spoken by most Central and East European Jews during the last millennium. As a result of the extreme loss of speakers during the Holocaust, subsequent geographic dispersal, and lack of institutional support, Yiddish is now an endangered language. Yet it
continues to be a native and daily language for Haredi (strictly Orthodox) Jews, who live in close-knit communities worldwide. We have conducted the first study of the linguistic characteristics of the Yiddish spoken in the community in London's Stamford Hill. In this paper, we defend the claim that current-day Stamford Hill Hasidic (SHH) Yiddish has no notion of case and gender. Indeed, as can be expected in a VO language with no morphological case (e.g., Neeleman and Weerman, 1999), Stamford Hill Yiddish speakers no longer allow adverbial scrambling or argument-over-argument scrambling. Thus we found evidence for implicational syntactic change. We also demonstrate that while the case and gender system of the spoken medium was already beginning to undergo morphological syncretism, case and gender distinctions were clearly present in the mental grammar of both Hasidic and non-Hasidic speakers of the relevant Yiddish dialects pre-World War II. We conclude the paper by identifying some of the language-internal, sociolinguistic, and historical factors that have contributed to such rapid and pervasive language change. We make the case for Hasidic Yiddish being recognised as a distinct variety of Yiddish, with substantially different typological features, which should be studied in more detail on its own right.

01.11.18

Ruti Bardenstein
Tel Aviv University

Grammaticalization Paths of Rectification Constructions

Rectification constructions are form/function associations (constructions in the sense of Goldberg, 1995) which include a rejection of an accessible claim/assumption X (=satellite) and a substitutive alternative claim Y (=nucleus), optionally mediated by an explicit connector of substitution. For example, the ‘not X, but Y’ rectification construction includes an explicit satellite (‘not X’), a nucleus (‘Y’) and an explicit connector of substitution (‘but’).

I will first introduce the semantic, syntactic, and prosodic components of rectification constructions in general. I will then present 17 different rectification constructions, dividing them up according to their evolutionary point of departure. Finally, I will offer a grammaticalization path for each rectification construction, relying on a diachronic analysis.

25.10.18

Kate Mesh and Hope Morgan
University of Haifa

Language from Gesture: Case Studies from Kenya and Mexico

It is widely assumed that the gestures used in day-to-day conversations become the raw material for the creation of new words in sign languages (e.g., Janzen & Shaffer, 2002; Wilcox, 2004; de Vos, 2012). However, there are very few accounts of this transmission. It is not known which gestures
are more likely to enter a sign language, for example. Are all of the distinct, unambiguous, and portable gestures (emblems) used by hearing people recruited into a sign language? Or do some emblems retain their status as gestures? Understandably, most studies tend to start from the point of view of the sign language and work backwards to locate the etymological roots in hearing gestures (e.g., Marsaja, 2008; Nyst, 2007). At the same time, non-grammaticalized gestures used by deaf signers may be overlooked because they are not considered part of the sign language. Here we present two lines of research that investigate how gestures are recruited for use in sign languages.

Emblems and the KSL Lexicon: Comparing Datasets from Gesturers and Signers
Hope Morgan

The project described in this talk widens the scope of investigation to compare both domains – hearing gesture and deaf signing – in one particular ethnic group, the Luo of western Kenya. This project compares a study describing 71 gestures collected in western Kenya in 1970-72 from four ethnic groups (Creider, 1977) with the author’s own corpus of 30+ hours of video with 25 Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) signers (Morgan fieldwork, 2011-2012) and the KSL Lexical Database (Morgan 2017).

Results show that in everyday interactions, nothing from the gestural repertoire is lost, though when gestures become signs, they become more specific semantically and are subject to syntactic and phonotactic constraints. Yet not all gestures turn into signs. Only 33 out of 53 Luo gestures listed by Creider have a lexical counterpart. For those that are lexicalized, further grammaticalization can occur, as demonstrated in the case of a gesture glossed as “no more, with disastrous implication”, which has diverged in both form and meaning into two common KSL signs: the perfective FINISH and the intensifier HARASH.

Overall, this study reveals that patterns of grammaticalization in sign languages reach into the gestural substrate and suggest that a full account of sign language origins should involve an analysis of hearing gesture.

Gestural Analogues and the Origins of Signs in San Juan Quiahije Chatino Sign Language
Kate Mesh

The projects presented here investigate gestural analogues – signs that share their form with conventional gestures – in San Juan Quiahije Chatino Sign Language (SJQCSL), a language emerging in an indigenous community
in southern Mexico.

The first study, performed in collaboration with Dr. Lynn Hou (University of California, Santa Barbara), considers five such gestural analogues with negative meanings (Mesh & Hou, under review). We find that the gesturers and signers map a core set of negative meanings to the five forms. However, deaf signers alone have begun to map new meanings to the forms, as well. We propose that the changes introduced by the deaf signers may result from how they learn the meaning of the analogues, since they receive the gestures in the absence of the speech that often accompanies them.

A second study, performed in the same community, investigates which local pointing practices are integrated into SJQCSL (Mesh, 2017). Speakers in Mesoamerica share the practice of raising the height of the pointing arm to reflect the distance of the target – the higher the arm, the farther away the target, with a near-vertical point used to indicate the farthest targets (Levinson, 2003). SJQCSL Signers share the “up is far” principle, but they do not share speakers’ additional distance-marking practices, including pointing with extended arm and an open handshape. The divergence in signers’ and gesturers’ pointing forms may be due to the fact that arm extension and handshape already bear a distinct set of meanings in SJQCSL.

The findings from these combined studies suggest that signers do not simply “adopt” gestures into their languages wholesale. Rather, signers recruit features of gestures that are accessible to them, and adapt these features as they integrate them into emerging phonological, morphological, and syntactic systems.

References

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