

South Asia in Generative Grammar: A Workshop in Memory of Alice Davison and James Gair

SALA 34

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Konstanz, Germany

Opening Remarks: Prof. Hans Henrich Hock (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign)

Session 1

Barbara Lust (Cornell University): *Linked Open Data in Linguistics: Preserving and Extending the Work of James W. Gair on Sinhala First Language Acquisition*

Although much of the oeuvre of Prof. James Wells Gair is well known, e.g., his broad and deep contributions to theoretical, typological and historical linguistics, often uniquely focused on the study of Sinhala, less is known of his significant contributions to Cognitive Science, especially the science of language acquisition. In this paper we will describe an extensive set of data derived from 4 experimental studies of the first language acquisition of the Sinhala language from 425 children in Sri Lanka. The project was designed and conducted through our co-authorship with Prof. Gair. We will report on current work to convert these unique and significant data to a lasting archive, internationally accessible to collaboration through a web based cross-linguistic database, in keeping with an ongoing international project to support “Linked Open Data in Linguistics”. The goal is to cultivate an international community for scientific collaboration which surpasses national and linguistic boundaries, thus exploiting both the richness of the existing Sinhala data and the vision of cross-linguistic scholarly collaboration which grounded all of Prof. Gair’s oeuvre.

Karumuri V. Subbarao (formerly: Delhi University) **with Vanlal T. Bapui**: *Stem 1 and Stem 2 Predicate Alternations in Mizo (Kuki-Chin) from the Finiteness Point of View*

Mizo is a Kuki-Chin language spoken in the state of Mizoram. Mizo and many other Kuki-Chin languages of the Tibeto-Burman language family exhibit a dichotomy or trichotomy in their predicate (verbal as well as adjectival) stem forms. Such alternations are labelled as Stem 1 and Stem 2 alternations. These alternations may manifest themselves as tonal, or as deletion or addition of a consonant, or as changes in vowel quality.

In this talk we wish to propose that the Stem 1 and Stem 2 alternations can be analyzed as: [+finite] and [-finite] alternations respectively to meet the conditions of descriptive as well as explanatory adequacy. We present arguments to show that by viewing such alternations in verbs and adjectives in terms of finiteness, not only would we be able to account for several syntactic phenomena in a systematic fashion, but we can also provide a suitable explanation as to why such alternations occur in Kuki-Chin languages. We shall show that the finite-non-finite distinction percolates down in a clause downwards and it has its syntactic impact on

postpositions, adverbial phrases etc. in the embedded clause. We present the following cases in which such alternations occur: Forward Control and Backward Control, Externally-Headed and Internally-Headed relative clauses, Clefts, Incorporation of the Comitative and the Locative postposition in the embedded verb/adjective, Compound Formation, Compounds with a Vector Verb, Passives, Purpose-adverbial clauses, Adverbs, Non-finite complements, Causatives, Subjunctive clauses. We shall attempt to provide an explanation for these cases.

Session 2

Tanmoy Bhattacharya (Delhi University): *Agreement Variation in Adverbial and Relative Participles in Hindi-Urdu*

The two issues that form the foundation of this talk are (i) a historical account of the role of object agreement, and (ii) the role of variation in grammar. With respect to (i), I will take up the case of the genesis of object-Agr in theoretical syntax in general, and with respect to (ii), I will discuss the case of agreement variation; both these points will be illustrated with data from relative and adverbial participle agreement in Hindi-Urdu. It will be also noted that both these issues have interesting historical precedence and relation to similar empirical facts from Romance; thus, the cases of past participle object agreement in the domains of object in-situ, object as a clitic, and Wh-object on the one hand and agreement variability in Catalan, varieties of Occitan, Beuil, Corsican, Milanese, Cremonese, and Bolognese dialects of Italian, on the other, count as illustrations. Coming back to Hindi-Urdu, theoretically, it will be shown that standard Agree with a minor alteration in feature-valuation mechanism can account for the agreement variation noticed in these two domains. In particular, in the case of adverbial participle agreement, it will be shown that valued features of the matrix-T spread to Aux, Asp, and in some cases the V inside the adjunct; whereas in case of relative participle agreement, although the object is relativized, the object features are nonetheless accessed by the T inside the vP, resulting in object agreement.

Ayesha Kidwai (Jawaharlal Nehru University): *COMP-Lex Subordination: A theoretical account of SAY based complementizers in South Asia*

In this talk, I study the properties of the languages that have ‘COMPs’ that can occur in both initial and final position, a topic that was of interest to both Davison (2001) and Gair (2001). I shall first present the case for a differentiation between complementizers that originate from the verb ‘say’, from the others, by examining Hindi-Urdu, Bangla, Malayalam, Sinhala, Dakkhini, Meitlion, English, etc. I shall present a theoretical account of say-based complementizers that will distinguish at least two classes of say-based complementizers, focusing on (a) the nature of the C-T connection between these Cs and their finite/non-finite complements (b) the nature and depth of embedding of clausal complements and (c) the distribution of clausal complements in the linear order. In particular I shall argue that say-based Complementizers form an extended projection with the main clause and therefore do not introduce the same kind of phasal boundary, and that the two basic subclasses arise from the degree of grammaticalisation of the verbal base of the complementizer head itself.

Closing Tribute: Workshop Organizers

Rajesh Bhatt (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), **Veneeta Dayal** (Rutgers University),
Anoop Mahajan (University of California, Los Angeles)