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Optionality and Optimality of Russian Possessives

While traditional Russian grammars (e.g., Wade 2000: 142–44) and textbooks (e.g., Ervin et al. 2002: 55–56) point out that optionality exists in the choice between pronominal and reflexive possessives in first- and second-person but not third-person contexts, various linguists (e.g., Yokoyama 1975; Yokoyama and Klenin 1976; Timberlake 1980) attempt to identify the semantic differences in these choices. According to Yokoyama (1975) and Yokoyama and Klenin (1976), these differences can correlate to a variation in closeness, be it temporal closeness or emotional closeness. The examples in (1–2) show such differences: in (1) the speaker has a strong emotional connection, thus the pronominal possessor is used, while in (2) the speaker is attempting to detach himself from his sister and the described events, thus the reflexive possessor is used. Examples (1–2) are cited from works by Pushkin’s Boris Godunov by Yokoyama (1975: 78).

(1) V sem’ë moej ja mnïj najti otradu, ja doč’ moju mnï osčastlivit’
in family my I hoped find joy I daughter my hoped make-happy
brakom…
in-marriage
‘I hoped to find joy in my family, I hoped to make my daughter happy by marrying her off…’

(2) Kto ni umret, ja vsex ubiçja tajnyj:
who NEG dies I all murderer secret
Ja uskoril Feordora končinu,
I sped-up Feodor end
Ja otravil svoju sestru carinu…
I poisoned REFLÈ POSS sister czarina
‘Whoever dies, I am the secret murderer of all / I hastened Feodor’s demise / I poisoned my sister the czarina…’

Such differences are also related to what Timberlake (1980) suggests are categorized under the meta-principle of “uniqueness”: the less the antecedent is individually referential (a hypothetical versus a distinct individual; a member of a collective versus a discrete individual), the less likely the anaphor is to appear as a reflexive. For example, in (3), the partner is not one unique individual, and therefore is not directly referential, and the construction prefers the use of the reflexive possessor. In (4), on the other hand, the speaker refers to one specific partner, positively referential. As such, the pronominal possessor is preferred.

(3) Ved’ do ètogo ja vsegda družestvenno rabotal [’s moim]/[so svoim]
after all to that I always friendly worked with my/with self’s
partnerom, kem by to ni bylo.
partner who COND that NEG was
‘After all, up to that time I had always worked in a friendly way with my partner, whoever he was.’
Vse èto ne moglo ne radovat’ menja, i ja s ešče bol’šim
all that NEG could NEG please me, and I with more great
rveniem prinjalsja zanimat’sja [s moim]/[’so svoim] partnerom.
enthusiasm began rehearse with my/ with self’s partner
‘All this couldn’t help but please me, and I began to rehearse with my partner with even
more enthusiasm.’

Since these treatments of several decades ago, little research has been done on this topic
(although Timberlake 2004 does revisit the subject). In this presentation, I will revisit the factors
at work in selecting the most appropriate form, using an Optimality Theoretic approach. This
framework is ideal for handling the apparent “optionality” between pronouns and reflexives. In
my analysis, a ranked hierarchy of constraints will be proposed to account for the different
options, and it will be shown that the optimal choices are in fact not optional at all.

**References**

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.


An analysis of the progressive with stative verbs in Brazilian Portuguese

Abstract.

In this research, we investigate the occurrence of stative predicates and the progressive in Brazilian Portuguese, as in João está sabendo geografia, John is knowing geography, and Maria está vivendo com Pedro, Mary is living with Peter. According to Cunha (1998, 2004), in a proposal developed for European Portuguese, statives are distinguished by the presence/absence of the semantic feature [+phase], being the progressive used only with phase statives. Analyzing data from Brazilian Portuguese relative to different semantic subclasses of statives (existential, epistemic, copulative, locative, perceptive, and psychological), we developed a hypothesis according to which the progressive with phase statives mark a frontier or transition of phases of a given state, distinguishing the previous phase of a state and a phase in progress. To capture the semantic notion of phaseability proposed by Cunha (1998, 2004) in formal terms, we appeal to Parsons (1990) proposal, to English, which deals with the notion of subatomic events. We depart from the author’s evidence that the progressive has the effect of cutting an interval of time in an event which is identified as a state of things, to claim that, when a verb is originally an stative, the effect is to identify an interval of time in which a transition between two phases of a state occurs denoted by the verb.

Keywords: Stative predicates. Progressive. Phaseability. Subatomic events.
References


The aim of this project is to extend the current empirical base and typological scope of questions, through investigating how different semantic and pragmatic elements affect the kinds of meanings questions express, and how they are interpreted. Broadly speaking, questions are often characterized as having a specific kind of syntactic and semantic structure. Pragmatically, they are typically used to request information. However, questions can also have pragmatic effects unrelated to information requests.

Two of the more familiar kinds are wh-exclamatives and rhetorical questions. Exclamatives such as ‘What a great movie that was!’ have the semantics of a question, but pragmatically function as statements of surprise or unexpectedness – they are not a request for information (cf. Portner & Zanuttini 2004). Rhetorical questions also pragmatically implicate other kinds of meaning, usually to affirm something both the speaker and addressee already know (cf. Caponigro & Sprouse 2007). However, the meaning of a question can be altered by the insertion of other elements into the interrogative clause. For example, the insertion of the evidential modal =ima in Gitksan (Tsimshianic, an endangered indigenous isolate language in Canada) into a question creates an utterance translated by speakers using ‘I wonder...’.

One of the central empirical goals of this project is to examine how the semantic and pragmatic features of evidentials condition or determine those of conjectural, rhetorical and wh-exclamative questions – or what I call extended interrogatives (EI). This also entails a study of how these phenomena shed light on what we know about extended interrogatives in more familiar languages as, for example, wonder-like verbs or rhetorical questions in English, or the use of the reflexive in French.
The Influence of Language on Attitudes and Biases between English and Spanish

The current study is to determine whether language affects attitudes and biases. The motivation behind this study stems whether bilingual speakers have different attitudes and biases depending on the influence of a language. This study will attempt to satisfy whether bilinguals speakers respond differently to cues and stimuli in English and Spanish. The study will administer two identical implicit attitude tests (IAT), and both tests will be administered in English and Spanish. Hypothetically, if the results differ between an IAT in Spanish from an IAT in English, the results might corroborate that language influences attitudes and biases.

Ogunnaike, Dunham, and Banaji (2010) explain that the IAT measures “implicit attitudes based on the simple notion that it is easier to jointly categorize related concepts than less related or unrelated concepts” (p. 1000). Blair (2002) claims that situations as stimuli cue buried, unconscious motivation toward attitudes and biases (p. 255-7). Ogunnaike, Dunham, and Banaji (2010) finds that in two experiments bilinguals exhibit different biases and attitudes taking an implicit attitude test (IAT) in each language even though the content between the two tests are the same, just differing in language. Greenwald and Banaji (1995) introduce the IAT to tap into unconscious biases and attitudes through implicit rather than explicit testing.

Bilingual speakers of Spanish and English will be given an IAT in English and Spanish, so these IATs will be two distinct tests but precisely the same in content, just differing in language. There will be two control groups. There will be an English control group of English speaking monolinguals and a Spanish control group of Spanish speaking monolinguals so that this study captures an average measure for attitudes and biases among speakers of one language and can anticipate L1 transfer among bilinguals.
Understanding the affiliation between language and the motivation for attitudes and biases can reveal the extent of language’s influence. This study will provide the academic community whether language affects attitudes and biases. Testing participants with an IAT will provide results for differing attitudes and biases. By administering an English and Spanish IAT, the tests will show whether bilinguals have different attitudes and biases when using a particular language.

References


Delay via hashtag placement: A diachronic study of hashtags in a survivor corpus

Overview: Many popular activist campaigns use branded hashtags as a means of collectively discussing the same subject. Since the 2014 #whyIstayed/#whyIleft campaign focuses on the awareness of domestic abuse, the hashtags were used to collectively talk about violence, disclosing survivor stories on Twitter. Using the Twitter search function, coupled with Google Chrome extension Web Scraper, I gathered a sampling of disclosure tweets (at most 20 tweets per day) that specifically reveal survivor stories using #whyIstayed and #whyIleft. The tweets from this campaign span over 73 days, where the density of tweets correspond with current events.

I show how early hashtag placement acts as a delay device in tweets conveying survivor stories; furthermore, I show that while the pattern of hashtag placement changes over 73 days of the 2014 Domestic Abuse Awareness campaign, this diachronic change is indicative of the emergence of the delay function in survivor tweets.

While speakers naturally hesitate when talking (Erard 2008), more hesitation is used when discussing sensitive information; delaying devices, including discourse markers, frequently appear in emotional narratives (Romano 2014). Since tweets are often colloquial, delay devices should appear in these emotional narrative tweets; however, the character limitations on Twitter complicate how hesitations and discourse markers are realized.

Corpus Collection: Analyzing 443 tweets from the 2014 #whyIstayed/#whyIleft campaign, I diachronically examine hashtag position and content in relation to the delay function of discourse markers.

Hashtag placement: Hashtags are categorized as being in one of the three following placement areas: initial (as shown with #WhyILeft in (1)), medial (as shown in (2) with #adopted), and final (#depressed, #crying, and #WhyIStayed in (3)).

(1) #WhyILeft I knew, that no matter how perfect I was. It would never be enough to stop him. I had to take care of me

(2) #WhyILeft Because being treated inferior because you were #adopted is NOT okay. #respect

(3) Sometimes I dont understand why...why they treat me like this..I did sth wrong? #depressed #crying #WhyIStayed

This study looks at the initial placement, where the the hashtag is connecting to the larger conversation, but the placement of the hashtag is a delay before disclosing details of violence, akin to other discourse markers that precede content and act as delays like well (Jucker 1993) and so (Buysse 2012).

Delay function: The placement of the hashtags #whyIstayed and #whyIleft have changed over the course of the broader discussion on domestic abuse. Since the first instance of #whyIstayed used with a self-disclosure features a final placement hashtag, one might expect this to affect how others use this hashtag to join the larger discussion. However, the prevalence of initial hashtags in the campaign as a whole is indicative of pragmatically motivated placement.

Conclusion: While not all early hashtags are delays before a personal disclosure, speakers employ such delay discourse markers as tools in this survivor corpus to distance themselves when discussing personal, traumatizing information.
References
On the Obligatory Appositive Interpretation of Massive Pied-Piping

In relative clause formations, additional material can be ‘pied-piped’ to the left edge of the relative clause by a wh-element (Ross, 1967). The structure in (2) depicts what Safir (1986) and Heck (2008) subcategorize as ‘heavy’ or ‘massive pied-piping’. This is compared to the wh-element only movement in (1). Safir, Heck, and others note that when massive pied-piping occurs, the relative clause must be interpreted as an appositive. This contrasts with the availability of a restrictive reading of the relative clause in other pied-piping contexts such as ‘recursive pied-piping’ by a specifier, as shown in (3). The acceptance of massive pied-piping forcing an appositive reading has not been universally accepted (Stockwell et al., 1973; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002).

(1) Reports [ which ] the government prescribes the height of the lettering on the covers of t_i are invariably boring.

(2) Reports [ the covers of which ] the government prescribes the height of the lettering on t_i are invariably boring.

(3) The student [ whose paper ] I read ti knew nothing about syntax.

This study investigates the assumption of an appositive reading of massive pied-piping with diagnostics derived from Demirdache (1991), including the availability of parasitic gap licensing, weakest crossover effects, and variable binding. While massive pied-piping constructions appear to pattern after appositive relative clauses with respect to weakest crossover and variable binding, parasitic gaps appear to be licensable in massively pied-piped structures where they are not licensed in appositives. This information suggests that, while massive pie-piping allows for and possibly prefers an appositive interpretation, it does not necessitate an appositive interpretation.

References


Dennys Tenelanda, Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, and Monica Castelo, Escuela Superior Politecnica de Chimborazo (POSTER)

**Title:** Using the voice recorder app on mobile phones to improve speaking subskills in the EFL classroom.

**Abstract:**

The paper entitled “Using the voice recorder app on mobile phones to improve speaking subskills in the EFL classroom” aimed to contribute to develop appropriately two of the speaking sub skills such as: pronunciation and intonation. The population was 41 students of the first level of the Medicine School of the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo during the academic term April-August 2016. The study was quasi-experimental and the proposal was carried out as a complement for the class activities considering the syllabus of the English subject. The strategy was applied for 20 English lessons working inside and outside classroom. A pre-test, intermediate test and post-test were applied in order to obtain results of the application of the strategy. The results showed that students felt more confident working by themselves and at their own pace by the means of listening audios in English and recording them as many times as necessary with their own voices imitating pronunciation and intonation of the original audio. It was evidenced that students had a meaningful progress of 31.46% comparing the three test mentioned above. In short, it may be said that the proposed strategy is useful and easy to be used by any teacher.

**Key words:** mobile phones>, <speaking sub skills>, <strategy>, <confident>, <meaningful progress>. 
Bibliography


The Subject in Central Sinama

The notion of subject is a vexed one for a number of Austronesian languages in the Philippines and Borneo. The most well-known dispute pertains to Tagalog [tgl], with Schachter (1976) famously positing that Tagalog subjecthood properties are divided between actors and topics, leaving no single syntactic category that can be identified as the subject. Other researchers, though, have argued for identifying the subject in Philippine-type languages with the nominative noun phrase, the NP which is selected by the verb morphology (Kroeger 1991 for Tagalog; Schwartz 1976 for Ilokano).

This paper analyzes the identity of the subject in Central Sinama [sml], a Sama-Bajaw language spoken in the southern Philippines and northern Borneo. At least three syntactic constructions clearly identify the Sinama nominative NP as the subject: functional control, relativization, and subject inversion. This analysis is in line with studies of other Sama-Bajaw languages. In Sama Bangingi’ [sse] the large majority of subject properties are associated with the nominative NP, despite some splitting of subject properties similar to that identified in Tagalog (Gault 1999). Likewise, the nominative NP is identified as subject for West Coast Bajau [bdr] of Borneo (Miller 2007) and Indonesian Bajau [bdl] (Donohue 1998). In Sama Pangutaran [slm], the nominative NP has been described as “the syntactic pivot for all of the major syntactic constructions” (Walton 1983).

The basic Sinama voice system consists of a three-way alternation among Actor Voice, or AV (ex. 1), in which the verb morphology selects the actor of the clause as the nominative NP; Undergoer Voice, or UV (ex. 2), in which the undergoer is selected; and passive (ex. 3), in which the undergoer is selected and the actor is demoted or omitted.

(1) Hal kita aN-baklay bang t'bba.
merely 1DU.INCL AV-travel.by.foot when low.tide
‘When the tide is low we just travel along the shore.’

(2) Bay Ø-b'lla=na daing itu.
PST UV-cook=3SG fish this
S/he cooked this fish.

(3) Bang kami <ni> holdap he' mundu
when 1SG.EXCL <PASS> hold.up AM bandit
s <in> urang-an kami timbak.
<PASS> point.weapon-TR 1SG.EXCL gun
‘When we are held up by bandits we have weapons pointed at us.’

Control: In Sinama, only the nominative NP of a subordinate clause can be controlled, whether the actor (ex. 4) or the undergoer (ex. 5). This pattern provides strong evidence for the nominative NP’s status as the subject of a Sinama clause, because in most languages only the subject of the subordinate clause can be the controlee.
(4) Bay kami Ø-bowa = nu aN-adjal daing hē'.
  PST 1PL.EXCL UV-influence = 2SG AV-prepare.food fish DET
‘You had us prepare that fish.’

(5) Makannak itu mbal ta-kolē' <ni>lāng.
children DET NEG PASS.APT-able <PASS> forbid
‘These children are impossible to make stop.’

Relativization: Sinama utilizes two strategies to form relative clauses: a gap strategy, and resumptive pronouns. The gap strategy is used to relativize the nominative NP in the relative clause (AV in ex. 6, UV in ex. 7). Resumptive pronouns are used to relativize possessors of nominative NPs.

In many Western Austronesian languages, relativization using the gap strategy is restricted to subjects. As the gap strategy only applies to the nominative NP in Sinama, this is evidence that the nominative NP should be understood as the subject in a Sinama clause.

(6) ni a'a bay aN-b'lli daing ma tabul'
  to person PST AV-buy fish at market
‘to the person who bought fish at the market’

(7) onde' bay Ø-pandi = na ma undam
  child PST UV-bathe = 3SG at basin
‘the child she bathed in the basin’

Subject inversion: Certain sentence-initial words, including negators and tense & aspect markers, cause the nominative NP to move from its normal postverbal position into a preverbal location (ex. 1, repeated here as ex. 8). Only the nominative NP is eligible for this process of inversion. This is another way in which the nominative NP is treated uniquely by the syntax, providing evidence for its subject status.

(8) Hal kita aN-baklay bang t'bba.
  merely 1DU.INCL AV-travel.by.foot when low.tide
‘When the tide is low we just travel along the shore.’
Cleft-Syntactic Amalgams in English: A Construction-Based Perspective

The so-called cleft-syntactic amalgamation construction (CLEFT-SYN-AMAL) involves two independent clauses (main clause (MC) and interrupting amalgam clause (IC)), while sharing a constituent named the ‘content kernel’.

(1) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{MC} \quad \text{He gives a speech in Florida.} \\
\text{IC} \quad \text{I think it was Florida.}
\end{array}
\]

The ‘content kernel’ Florida in (1) functions as both the object of the preposition in as well as the predicate of the verb was.

The construction can occur in various syntactic positions, as illustrated by the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American) examples:

(2) a. Verb object: This president has answered [I think it’s like 4,200 questions]. (COCA: 1992 SPOK)

b. Prepositional object: On [I believe it was Thursday morning], less than ninety-six hours after the event I actually saw a building going back up. (COCA: 2011 SPOK)

c. Predicational: And the ingredients are, [I thought it was Cachaca], but no it’s Cachaca. (COCA: 2015 SPOK)

d. Adjunct: It almost sank [I believe it was Monday or Tuesday of this week]. (COCA: 1990 SPOK)

For example, the ‘content kernel’ 4,200 questions in (2a) functions as both the object of the verb answered as well as predicate of the verb is. Meanwhile, the content kernel in the other examples function as the object of a preposition, a predicative complement, and an adjunct. The construction displays many idiosyncrasies challenging any form-function matching account. In terms of meaning, (2a) means that the president has answered ‘x’, and the value of ‘x’ is, at least to the speaker’s knowledge, 4,200 questions, and also accompanies a ‘hedge’ reading (Lakoff 1974, Kluck 2009).

Most of the existing analyses adopt Lakoff’s (1974) deletion-based account (Kluck 2009). For example, (1) is derived from the combination of two clauses, ellipsis of the empty element, and then elide the clause:

(3) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{He gives a speech in Florida that } \\
\text{I think it was Florida that He gives a speech in.}
\end{array}
\]

Such a deletion-based analysis leaves many peculiar properties of the construction unaccounted for (Tsubomoto and Whitman 2000, Grosu 2006). For example, the Lakoff-style analysis requires the mandatory application of the ellipsis as seen from He gives a speech in I think it was Florida (*that he gives a speech in.), and needs to limit the type of possible subject as well as introducing verb.

In addressing the unusual mapping between form and function in the construction, this paper tries to figure out the authentic uses of the construction, by performing an extensive investigation of the corpus COCA. Some of the corpus findings we can observe include that the dominant subject of the IC is the pronoun I. The verb type introducing the IC is also limited to non-factive verbs like think, believe, guess to allow a hedge reading. Based on the empirical corpus study, we try to sketch a base-generation approach, couched upon the framework of Construction Grammar (CxG) where constructions, pairings of form with meaning, are the basic units of language and linked as form or inheritance hierarchies (network) (see Goldberg 2006 and references therein). Our supposition is that English employs a special clausal-level construction where the content kernel is in-situ (e.g., Thursday morning in (2b), Cachaca in (2c), and Monday or Tuesday of this week in (2d)) and introduced by a non-factive embedding verb.

The present analysis factors out generalizations of CLEFT-SYN-AMAL constructions. This factorization allows us to capture generalizations as well as idiosyncrasies about English CLEFT-SYN-AMAL construction in a systematic way.
Selected References


The overall aim of this study is to synthesize the current discrepancies found by linking pragmatics with Alzheimer's Disease. In particular to explore the pronoun and reflexive loss associated with Alzheimer's Disease.

There is a growing number of persons who will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease in Canada. It is estimated that there will be 1.4 million persons diagnosed cases of Alzheimer's Disease by 2031 (Alzheimer Society Canada, 2012). At the current rate, Canada is in dire need to better understand diagnosis, prevention, and rehabilitation of Alzheimer's Disease in order to keep up with the rising demand. Bridging the gap between linguistics and Alzheimer's Disease will provide a better framework for understanding language loss with patients with Alzheimer's Disease. In discourse, it is observed that patients with Alzheimer's Disease either misuse pronouns or are missing referents to the pronouns. This same misuse does not occur with reflexives to the same extent. Working within Binding Theory, it seems that principle B is impaired while principle A is not. However, currently the literature proposes that syntax is preserved up until the later stages of the disease. It is puzzling that syntax is preserved yet one syntactic property (principle B) is not. This misuse or missing referents in Alzheimer's Disease could be linked to a loss of the pragmatic principle, proposed by Reinhart (1983, 1986).

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the pragmatic principle is related to pronoun and reflexive loss in patients with Alzheimer's Disease. Specifically questions are whether it is the syntactic principle B that is impaired or if it is the pragmatic principle instead. How do these results impact current literature about syntax preservation in Alzheimer's Disease? How is the pragmatic impaired during discourse? This study will allow for greater understanding and minimization of the discrepancies found between the current framework used to study Alzheimer's Disease, and the actual results obtained in practice.

The study was a judgement comprehension task that consisted of a statement coinciding to a picture. Judgement was if the statement matched the picture. Results from this study showed that the difference in performance between the two groups was found to be significant. Patients with Alzheimer's Disease incorrectly allowed mismatching statements at a significantly higher rate than was found in the control group, where such errors were not observed. Future steps from this preliminary study would be to extend this to include working memory and fMRIs.

The implications of the study could potentially have long standing effects. The theoretical framework of neurolinguistics and dementia is being tested and it could start the process to revising how we view pragmatics in discourse with patients with Alzheimer's Disease. This hypothesis could also be extended to other neurological degenerative diseases as well as the general aging population.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Semantics, Language Impairment, Alzheimer's Disease, Psycholinguistics
References


There are two critical issues about Chinese A-Not-A questions, one is which item should the A-not-A operator attach to; the other is how the A-not-A operator changes the sentence structure. Most previous studies focus on the second issue, investigating different types of A-not-A questions, including C-T James Huang (1991), Wen-Hsin Karen Tseng (2009), etc. This study, however, tackles the first issue, raises a hypothesis of the underlying sentence structure of Chinese A-not-A questions and examines the generation of various types of Chinese A-not-A questions. Furthermore, it also presents a comparison between Chinese A-not-A operator and the negation operator.

Because the A-not-A operator can attach to various kinds of tokens, for example, auxiliaries, verbs, as well as be verb shi, most linguists analyze Chinese A-not-A questions as different types of sentence structures based on which kind of token the sentence contains. However, their studies fail to explain which item the A-not-A operator will attach to when there are more than one kind of verbs in a sentence. This research argues that there is only one sentence structure for Chinese A-not-A questions and the surface of the sentence changes based on which token the A-not-A operator attaches to, rather than which type of token the sentence contains. The main conclusion is that there is a hierarchy of the tokens to which the A-not-A operator attaches, which is shi > Auxiliaries > Verbs.