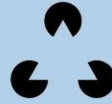




TRAIT

TEMPORAL RELATIONS AT THE INTERFACES



Fundacja na rzecz Nauki Polskiej



Uniwersytet
Wrocławski

The Research Group TRAIT cordially invites you to take part in
the international workshop

How categorical are categories?

to be held at the University of Wrocław in January 2013.

Leitmotiv

How categorical are the traditional distinctions between grammatical categories and how categorical is their semantics? New theoretical and experimental approaches to old problems

Who we are

We are a group of young researchers working at the Centre of General and Comparative Linguistics at the University of Wrocław in Poland (<http://www.ifa.uni.wroc.pl/linguistics/>).

Our project *Understanding Categories: Three approaches to temporality* is funded by the FNP (Foundation for Polish Science) (<http://www.ifa.uni.wroc.pl/trait/>). The project consists of three subprojects, each of them approaching the question of temporality from a different perspective: a typological perspective (looking for macro- and mini-parameters of cross-linguistic variation), a diachronic perspective (looking at the development and changes within the categories of tense and aspect in Slavic languages), and a psycholinguistic perspective (looking, among other things, for new evidence for the categorical status of converbs).

Our agenda

Dates of the workshop: January 7-9, 2013

Submission of the manuscripts for the planned volume: Mid 2013 (June/July)

Complete book manuscript to be submitted to a publisher: End of 2013 (December)

More about the workshop

General issue

The workshop is intended to bring together formal and experimental linguists and thus provide a forum for discussion about the nature of linguistic diversity in syntax and semantics of various grammatical categories, with special focus on **Tense, Aspect and Modality**. Are they universally separate categories with clear-cut distinctions or should they rather be understood as a continuum of a more abstract broader category (cf. Bybee (1985), Haspelmath (2007), Richards and Malchukov (2008)). If the latter option should turn out to be correct or more convincing, then the question is: how categorical are the traditional distinctions between grammatical categories and how categorical is their semantics? For example, languages may vary in the semantics of modals, tense, aspect, evidentials, determiners, etc. (cf. Matthewson (2011) and the references cited therein).

Moreover, the question we are interested in is: how does the status of the traditional grammatical distinctions change in the light of (i) the growing body of evidence from languages that have previously been under-investigated and/or (ii) the explosion of functional projections assumed in a cartographic framework?

Another domain where the borders between different grammatical categories are rather obliterated is **parts of speech** (i.e., lexical categories). Firstly and quite uncontroversially, there exist categories occupying the “grey zone” between verbs and nouns. These include gerunds and various non-finite forms of verbs as, e.g., Romance infinitives (Raposo (1987)) or Turkish nominalized agreeing clauses (Kornfilt and Whitman (2011)). This classificatory problem emerges also in typological work on more exotic languages, where the validity of the distinction is questioned, as, e.g., in the so-called nominalist theory for Eskimo (Thalbitzer (1911), Lois and Vapnarsky (2006)) and Austronesian (Kaufman (2009)). A parallel debate runs in the domain of adjectives and verbs (McCawley (1992), Dixon (1982), etc.). Secondly, even if a given category has strictly defined semantics, as, e.g., the so-called anterior converb (*aka* anterior adverbial participle), it is hard to come up with a universal characterization of its morphosyntactic behavior (cf. noun-like converbs in Turkish, Ge’ez and Evenki (Haspelmath

and König (1995)) vs. adjectival agreeing converbs in Panoan (e.g., Shipibo-Konibo (Velanzuela (2005))).

Finally, a debate concerning lexical categories (nouns vs. verbs) is also present in the neurolinguistic / psycholinguistic literature, where the cortical manifestation of the different categories is being sought. One position quotes evidence for the categorical organization of the mental lexicon (category-specific and modality-specific deficits in Caramazza and Hillis (1991), Damasio and Tranel (1993), electrophysiological evidence for the distinctness of one category (Federmeier et al. (2000)), neuroimaging evidence for distinct neural networks involved (Marslen-Willson (2007), Tyler et al. (2004), Longe et al. (2007), Finnocchiario et al. (2010)). The other stand is to interpret the behavioral and neuroimaging differences as a consequence of the different semantics involved (i.e., visual-object processing for nouns and motor processing for verbs (cf. Pulvermuller et al. (1999), Bird et al. (2000))).

Admittedly, these questions are not new but in our opinion by approaching them from new theoretical, interdisciplinary and experimental perspectives and / or by working on understudied languages we can get new interesting insights.

We plan to invite distinguished scholars whose recent work has given rise to new, often controversial discussions. Ideally, the invited talks will be supplemented by a few selected papers contributing new facts and new formal approaches to the topics under discussion in specific thematic panels.

Proposed specific thematic panels

Panel 1: Cross-linguistic variation in the syntax and semantics of Tense / Aspect / Modality and universal patterns of their interaction

More specific questions:

- How much freedom is there in the semantic and syntactic variation of Tense, Aspect and Modality?
- What are the parameters along which such variation is organized?
- Can any universal patterns of the interaction between Tense, Aspect and Modality (e.g., in the actuality entailment) be observed?

Invited talks:

[Valentine Hacquard \(University of Maryland\)](#)

[Malte Zimmermann \(University of Potsdam\)](#)

Two slots for additional submissions

Panel 2: What is future?

More specific questions:

- Is future a separate category (e.g., a modal or a temporal category) or is it a combination of other categories (e.g., tense and aspect)?
- Why do we observe so much diversity in the expression and interpretation of future cross-linguistically?
- Can any robust universal generalizations with respect to futurity be made in spite of this diversity?

Invited talks:

[Bridget Copley \(CNRS and Université Paris 8\)](#)

[Anastasia Giannakidou \(University of Chicago\)](#)

Two slots for additional submissions

Panel 3: What is subjunctive?

More specific questions:

- Is subjunctive a separate category (e.g. a modal or a temporal category) or is it a combination of other categories?
- What defines subjunctive? (Is it its special morphology or semantics or is it its dependence on the matrix clause, etc.?)
- Why do we observe so much diversity in the expression and interpretation of subjunctive mood cross-linguistically?
- Can any robust universal generalizations with respect to subjunctive be made in spite of this diversity?

Invited talks:

[Anastasia Giannakidou \(University of Chicago\)](#)

[Martina Wiltschko \(University of British Columbia\)](#)

Two slots for additional submissions

Panel 4: How compositional is the composition of temporal meaning?

More specific questions:

- How can the problem of aspectual coercion be accounted for?
- Should coercion be treated uniformly or should we rather assume different types of coercion?
- What can psycholinguistic experiments contribute to this problem?
- Are psycholinguistic results compatible with a strictly compositional view?

Invited talks:

[Henriëtte de Swart \(Utrecht University\)](#)

[Oliver Bott \(University of Tübingen\)](#)

[Manfred Krifka \(ZAS and Humboldt-University of Berlin\)](#)

Two slots for additional submissions

Panel 5: How can cartographic, feature-based, scalar and experimental approaches contribute to our better understating of categories?

More specific questions:

- How categorical are the traditional categories? – Discreteness vs. scalarity
- What is the definition of finiteness? (especially in the connection with subjunctive)
- What can neurolinguistics (e.g., research on aphasia) contribute to our understanding of cartography/strict hierarchy of functional projections?
- How categorical is the noun-verb distinction?
- Are there any new experimental results relating to the above questions?

Invited talks:

Roumyana Pancheva (University of Southern California)

Martin Haspelmath (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig)

Mark C. Baker (Rutgers University)

Two slots for additional submissions

Poster session

There is a preliminary plan to organize a poster session as well depending on the quality of submissions. We invite papers relating to one of the following issues:

- (i) If the relevant categories are discrete (e.g. cf. Baker (2003)) what definitional properties should they be associated with, how should definitional properties be modified in view of the growing empirical domain (e.g., polysynthesis as the relevant diagnostic for verb vs. noun distinction)?
- (ii) If the categories are not discrete, should they (i) be subsumed under broader discrete categories (e.g., Tense and Aspect as two instantiations of one category related to temporal anchoring of events); or (ii) interpreted as epiphenomenal (i.e., consisting of a number of primitive nano-features? The latter view is especially popular in the recent nanosyntactic approach (cf. Starke (2009)) relying on cartography or in the semantic map approach in the functional literature (cf. Haspelmath 2000).
- (iii) If the categories are not discrete and epiphenomenal, what theoretical model is most adequate and restrictive to capture the empirical data?

- (iv) Can experimental psycholinguistic work provide evidence of the categorical kind (e.g., involvement of a specific cortical region and lack thereof for a category X and Y respectively) or only gradual kind (e.g., modulation of a given ERP component)?
- (v) In what way can comparative experimental work contribute to our understanding of different categories (e.g., processing of Person inflected verbs in language X vs. Y, or processing of Future in language X vs. Y)?

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