THANK YOU

To all of our presenters and attendees; the faculty and staff of the Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages, especially our LSA Supervising faculty, Dr. Rob Malouf; our 2013-2014 officers—Amanda Austin (President), Alicia Stevers (Vice-President), Shombe Smith (Treasurer), Noelle Todd (Secretary), Laura Jamison (Undergraduate Liaison), and Wendy Holmes (Program Advocate); and our SDSU affiliated funders—Associated Students Finance Board, Instructionally Related Activities (IRA), and the College of Arts & Letters (CAL) Council.

SDSU Linguistics Student Association (LSA)
Website: lsa.sdsu.edu
Email: sdsulsa@gmail.com

38th Annual Linguistics Spring Colloquium
Saturday April 11, 2015

9:00am - 3:30pm
Scripps Cottage
San Diego State University
In order to better understand people’s views of language, Preston pioneered perceptual dialectology as a sub-branch of folk linguistics in the early 1980s. Perceptual dialectology focuses on non-linguists’ commonsense beliefs and subjective mental images about regional and social variation in language. Since Preston’s pioneering research on perceptual dialectology in American English variation, many researchers have contributed to the understanding of perceptions of language variation in the U.S. and outside of the U.S. Previous perceptual dialectology and language attitude studies conducted in Korea have shown that most respondents’ home dialect speech was overwhelmingly rated as “most pleasant”. This linguistic pride in the participants’ home dialects has also been reported in similar studies conducted in western countries. However, there has been one exception to this trend; the majority of the Gyeongsang dialect speakers do not consider their home dialect as “most pleasant”, but rather they view Seoul dialect positively. This result suggests that Gyeongsang speech speakers have a dialect inferiority complex, a feeling that their language is inferior. The purpose of this present study is to investigate perceptions that Gyeongsang dialect speakers have about the Korean spoken in Korea and their language attitudes toward Gyeongsang dialect and Seoul dialect. The specific research questions asked in the present study are the following: (1) Where do Gyeongsang speech speakers perceive differences in the Korean spoken in Korea? (2) What characteristics do they associate with these differences? and (3) How do Gyeongsang dialect speakers feel about their own dialect compared to the standard, Seoul dialect? A total of 488 informants participated in this study. Each of the informants were asked to draw a boundary around each part of Korea where they believe people speak differently and label those areas for that way of speaking on a blank map of Korea. After completing the map-labeling task, informants responded to a questionnaire concerning language attitudes specifically toward Gyeongsang dialect and Seoul dialect. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis reveals that in comparison to Seoul dialect, there is an interplay of dialect inferiority complex and regional pride assigned to Gyeongsang dialect. Findings from this study provide insight on language attitudes and perceptions of language variation in Korea.

Gregory Ward received his BA in Comparative Literature and Linguistics (with honors) from the University of California-Berkeley (1978) and his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania (1985) under the supervision of Ellen F. Prince. He is currently Professor of Linguistics at Northwestern University, where he has taught since 1986 (and was Chair from 1999-2004). He is also an affiliated faculty member in the Department of Philosophy and an advisory board member in the Program of Gender & Sexuality Studies. Ward’s primary research area is discourse/pragmatics, with specific interests in pragmatic theory, information structure, and reference/anaphora. His publications include 4 books and over 75 papers, and he has given over 150 talks and presentations. Outside Northwestern, Ward has taught at the 1993, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2013 Linguistic Society of America (LSA) Summer Linguistic Institutes. From 1986-1998, Ward was a consultant at AT&T Labs, working on intonational meaning. In 2004-05, he was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and from 2004-2007 served as Secretary-Treasurer of the LSA. Ward was elected a Fellow of the LSA in 2009 and was the 2012 recipient of the E. LeRoy Hall Award for Excellence in Teaching in Northwestern’s Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences.
Preliminary data will be discussed with regard to current models of language representation in bilinguals. Additionally, bilinguals looked significantly more to the competitor in the low overlap condition, but no difference was observed in the high overlap condition. These monolinguals. Furthermore, bilinguals tend to look at the competitor more than monolinguals, indicating that competition is stronger in bilinguals. These findings support the idea that competition is a common feature in language processing, regardless of language proficiency.

The competition effect is thought to arise from the activation of words in each language. Pilot data indicates that when both high and low overlap conditions are present, participants show a preference for the competitor word. This suggests that competition is not limited to bilinguals but may also occur in monolinguals. However, further research is needed to understand the mechanisms underlying this effect.

The research will explore said construction to better understand its history, usage, and distribution in English communication. We examine it across various media, in terms of information status, inferrable information, and type/subtype relationships. Said construction is a common feature in spoken language, particularly in American English, but its use varies across different contexts and speakers. Understanding the role of said construction in language production will contribute to a better understanding of spoken language dynamics.

The primary evidence for nanosemantics are sets (parallel “octopi”) of words with the same first consonant and related meanings. Dimensions of the icons to be discussed here include also: their universality shown by: lexical parallels across languages (statistically supported by a “D.O.E.” to be explained); and parallel graphic evolution in alphabets in various languages, related and unrelated. The oral dimension of the Key-letters is found primarily in their reconstructed origin, but also continues into various in various modern Indo-European and non-IE languages, i.e. even without benefit of genetic relationship. Their oral dimension is also supported by: the semantic explanation they offer for unexplained features of Grimm’s Law; application to overcoming various obstacles to reading, including dyslexia,aphasia, deafness, and a spectrum or disorders here nicknamed “glossophobia”: fear of (or difficulty with) foreign languages (FLs). These applications are available through the “Global Alphabet,” which is a sort of “Periodic Table” of meanings in language. My current workshops, “Tune Up Your Brain with the Global Alphabet,” to expose the elderly and other “glossophobics” to a variety of foreign language experiences are obviously a benefit in themselves, but the research pay-off comes when the Global Alphabet also makes FL study materially more effective, offering external support for nanosemantics, as in these workshops and in language courses satisfying regular curricular goals, as at SDSU and UCSD.

The research on word order freedom in West Germanic--and beyond focuses on the historical and typological comparison of modern Dutch and modern German shows that such pronoun object preposing is still predominant in German, but has all but disappeared in Dutch. Thus, while in German both the older, grammatically driven object preposing (1b) and the innovating, grammatically driven object are possible (1a), in modern Dutch largely only the grammatically determined order (2a) is admissible. A comparison of modern Dutch and modern German shows that such pronoun object preposing is still predominant in German, but has all but disappeared in Dutch. Thus, while in German both the older, grammatically driven object preposing (1b) and the innovating, grammatically driven object are possible (1a), in modern Dutch largely only the grammatically determined order (2a) is admissible.

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The main catalyst here (cf. Sapir 1921, Hawkins 1986) appears to be the deterioration of case and verbal agreement marking: the resultant syntactic ambiguity has lead speakers to favor the unambiguous order of subject before object. The maintenance of pronoun object preposing in German as opposed to Dutch can be attributed to the former’s greater preservation of inflectional signals of subject vs. object. The present paper continues research in this area by filling in some gaps within West Germanic. Data will be presented on the historical development of object preposing in German, as well as its synchronic state in Yiddish. Has German maintained a fairly constant rate of object preposing over time? Furthermore, Yiddish follows German in better preserving inflectional cues for subject vs. object: does it consequently also maintain pronoun object preposing as well as German or not? This presentation provides additional data to address these questions on syntactic drift within the West Germanic languages. Moreover, data will be provided to demonstrate that at least one language outside of Indo-European also evinces pronoun object preposing. This in turn leads to a consideration of the historical and/or typological features that could lead to the preposing of object pronouns.
This work presents a phonological description and acoustic analysis of the tone system of Ixpantepec Nieves Mixtec, within the context of the word prosodic structure. The analysis of Nieves Mixtec word prosody is complicated by a close association between morphological structure and prosodic structure, and by the interactions between word prosody and phonation type, which has both contrastive and non-contrastive roles in the phonology. Building on analyses of other Mixtec tone systems, I show that the distribution of tone and the tone processes in Nieves Mixtec support an analysis in which morae may bear H, M or L tone, where M tone is underlyingly unspecified, and each morpheme may sponsor a final +H or +L floating tone. Bimoraic roots thus host up to two linked tones and one floating tone, while monomoraic clitics host just one linked tone and one floating tone, and tonal morphemes are limited to a single floating tone. I then present three studies describing the acoustic realization of tone and comparing the realization of tone in different prosodic types. The findings of these studies include a strong directional asymmetry in tonal coarticulation, increased duration at the word or phrase boundary, and glottalization spreading rightward while breathy phonation spreads leftward.

Recent studies suggest that cross-linguistic differences in grammar may impact performance on linguistic and non-linguistic tasks related to event perception. For example, English speakers remembered agents of accidental actions more accurately than Spanish speakers (Fausey & Boroditsky, 2011). This performance pattern aligns with cross-linguistic differences in that English speakers frequently use agentive constructions (“She broke the vase”) even for accidental actions, while Spanish speakers use non-agentive constructions (that could be translated as “The vase broke itself”). Such studies, in addition to work on spatial orientation, conceptualization of time, and color perception, have been taken as evidence of the potential for language to impact cognition. Extending this line of inquiry to bilingual speakers not only sheds light on the relationship between language and cognition, it may provide valuable insight on the impact of various bilingual profile characteristics, such as relative proficiency and age of acquisition.

In the present study, we investigate whether native language patterns in event description are present when Russian-English bilingual speakers are prompted in their second language. While aspect, or an event’s degree of completion, is obligatorily marked on the verb in Russian, it is only optionally marked in English (e.g., it is possible to say “Max drank the juice” if Max drank the entire glass or if he had one sip). Given this difference, it is possible that individuals with Russian language experience attend more closely to events’ degree of progress, which may be reflected in an event description task. Thirty-nine Russian-English bilinguals (mean age=32.69 years, SD=8.7) viewed images of complete and incomplete actions and were prompted to describe them. Responses were categorized as either providing aspectual information (e.g., “Max had eaten the bowl of cereal”) or not (e.g., “Max ate cereal”). Results indicate that sequential Russian-English bilinguals provided more responses with degree of completion information than monolingual English controls. Further, individuals that identified themselves as native Russian and non-native English speakers were significantly more likely to provide event progress information than individuals who identified as native speakers of both Russian and English. Overall, findings suggest that language experience is associated with event description patterns. Building on these preliminary findings, follow-up experiments employing non-linguistic performance are underway.
Morning Schedule

[9:00-9:20] – A light breakfast will be served for morning attendees and presenters

[9:20am-9:50am] – FREQUENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT OF LEXICAL KNOWLEDGE IN EAP CONTEXT (PROF. MAGDOLNA LEHMANN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF PECS)
This talk reports on the development of a corpus-based vocabulary test designed to meet the special lexical needs of first-year students of English at a Hungarian university. Earlier studies found vocabulary size to be predictive of achievement in reading, writing, general language proficiency, and academic success. As words common in academic texts behave differently across disciplines, learners and testers need to focus on discipline-specific lexis in higher education. Therefore, the four validated vocabulary tests proposed here incorporate the most frequent words in the Corpus of Readings in English Studies (CORES), a specialized compilation of texts used in our English studies program. It is shown that besides a good knowledge of frequent and academic words, being familiar with specific lexis that are rare in general English texts but frequent in the discipline of English studies highly increases the potential of students in academic text comprehension.

[9:50am-10:20am] – WITTGENSTEIN’S PRIVATE LANGUAGE (BRIAN THOMAS, SDSU, PHILOSOPHY)
This work presents two theories of a private language constructed from the refutation of 3 of Wittgenstein’s assumptions concerning Language. There are 2 parts: Part (I) a refutation of 3 assumptions made by Wittgenstein regarding aspects of Language. The refutation and assumptions in the order as they are addressed: (A) How Wittgenstein fails to address all aspects of the function of Language, (B) How Wittgenstein’s approach to Language makes a presupposition about users of a given language, finally, (X) How language is used between individuals that is not consistent with the argument against private language. Part (II) constructs and presents 2 theories of a private language: (A) an argument for a weak private language, and (E) an argument for a strong private language. The argument for a weak private language is based, primarily, on qualia language. I argue qualia language is always used with reference to the subject using the term, thus there cannot be an objective standard for the meaning of the term. Under the strong private language theory, I argue one attaches qualia language to an image, or has a qualitative state evoked. In the instance of the strong private language, there are 2 obstacles: the perception, and the qualia language or description of the perceptive image. The completed research will result in two complete theories for a private language.

[10:20am-10:50am] – INFERENTIAL RELATIONS IN SHORT FICTION (AMANDA AUSTIN, SDSU, GENERAL LINGUISTICS)
This study takes a discourse analytic approach to examine and compare inferential relations in noncanonical syntactic structures in a contemporary corpus of Short Fiction. Is there any relation between length of text and frequency of inferential relations in this Short Fiction corpus? Is there any relation between inferential relations and literary motifs? The syntactic structures analyzed are argument-reversing constructions, i.e., preposings & inversions, and the English existential construction. The types of inferable relationships under investigation are bridging, elaborating, and identity inferables. This study also integrates literary theory and Narratology in a linguistic account of the Maxim of Manner in respect to brevity, ambiguity, and breaks in chronological narration. The results of this study provide an analysis of inferables in fictional narratives that are less than two thousand words in length, as well as a pragmatic account of the flouting of Maxims for literary effect.

[2:30-3:30] - Keynote Speaker
Dr. Jesse Harris

Jesse Harris received a joint BA/MA in Linguistics from the University of Chicago (2003), his Masters in Logic from the University of Amsterdam, Institute for Logic, Language and Computation (2007), and his PhD from UMass Amherst (2012). Before joining the Department of Linguistics at UCLA as an assistant professor in 2014, he was an assistant professor at Pomona College in the Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science. Harris’ research uses experimental methods to investigate how language users develop a sufficiently rich linguistic meaning during online comprehension, concentrating in particular on three related areas: (a) the formal semantics of context sensitive expressions, (b) the semantic processing of contextually dependent terms, and (c) the pragmatic and processing defaults engaged when generating a semantic or discourse representation for an utterance or phrase.

[3:30pm] Closing comments from LSA Officers
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Linguistics Student Association Presents:
“Language Across the Disciplines”
9:00am-4:00 pm
Aztec Student Union Theatre
San Diego State University