

**Thursday Interdisciplinary Colloquium**  
**Fall 2013-Winter 2014**  
*Thursdays, 16:15-17:45, Webb 103*

**16.01.14**

**Tali Arad**

Tel Aviv University

***The Nature of Resumptive Pronouns: Evidence from Parasitic Gaps***

Resumptive pronouns are pronouns that occur at the tail of an A'-dependency and are interpreted as bound variables, like gaps.

(1)a. *ha-iši še-ra'iti t<sub>i</sub>*

the-man that-I.saw

'the man that I saw'

b. *ha-iši še-ra'iti oto<sub>i</sub>*

the-man that-I.saw him

'the man that I saw'

A natural question to ask is whether resumptive pronouns inhabit the same structure as gaps do, namely, a movement structure, and it seems that the natural answer is positive; if resumptive pronouns occur in the same contexts as gaps do, and are interpreted like gaps, we would expect them to be compatible with the same syntactic mechanism, a mechanism that creates bound variables: movement.

I argue that Hebrew resumptive pronouns are not compatible with a movement derivation, building on evidence from parasitic gap licensing. If this claim is correct, it raises interesting questions about LF, the syntax-semantics interface, A'-dependencies and competition in grammar.

Resumptive pronouns were observed to show movement-related phenomena, such as parasitic gap licensing and reconstruction effects. In particular, resumptive pronouns in Hebrew, a language that makes grammatical use of resumptive pronouns in relative clauses, were argued to license subject parasitic gaps (Sells 1984) and to allow reconstruction (Doron 1982, Bianchi 2004, Sichel to appear), which supports their compatibility with movement.

I argue that Hebrew parasitic gaps do not, in fact, license parasitic gaps and that works arguing that they do have generalized from the wrong data. I show that the acceptability of resumptive pronouns in subject parasitic gap constructions is due to the fact that Hebrew subject parasitic gaps are actually real gaps, which do not have to be licensed. Furthermore, I show that all resumptive pronouns, even those that were observed to allow reconstruction, do not license parasitic gaps.

This provides a strong argument against the compatibility of resumptive pronouns with movement, and calls for an account of the reconstruction facts observed with resumptive pronouns that does not assume that movement is a necessary condition for reconstruction. I suggest an account in terms of semantic reconstruction (Cresti 1995, Rullmann 1995, Lechner 1998, Sharvit 1999, Sternefeld 2000, among others) and competition between LF-representations that allows for the reconciliation of the inability of resumptive pronouns to license parasitic gaps with their ability to allow reconstruction.

## 09.01.14

**Maria Goldshtein**

Tel Aviv University

### *A Discourse Based Typology of Intensifiers*

Existing definitions of the intensifier function in natural discourse (Bollinger 1972, Altenberg 1990, Biber et al. 1999, Quirk et al. 1985, Bardas 2008) refer to it as 'upscaling' a predicate. They refer to the objective type of intensification we often encounter:

1. He is **very** tall.

However, a further examination of intensifier related data shows us that there are additional effects, for which the existing definitions cannot account:

2. I have to say, that's **very** true.  
(<http://tinyurl.com/6bqjrk>)
3. I'm **dead** serious, I **really** don't play video games.  
(<http://tinyurl.com/o5436jn>)

Some of the examples we encounter are of non-scalar predicates and in others – the strengthening effect does not seem to apply to the predicate.

I suggest a revised definition of the intensifier function which includes subjective strengthening and stance strengthening in addition to the objective strengthening that existing definitions refer to.

The typology described by Heine & Kuteva (2002) includes two semantic sources from which intensifiers grammaticize. Through an examination of intensifiers from English, Hebrew and Russian, I come up with a revised typology of 7 semantic sources for intensifiers which appear in all three languages.

The examination of the semantic sources of intensifiers is instrumental for understanding the grammaticization processes intensifiers undergo. This typology is also useful in arriving at generalizations regarding the nature of intensifiers, their grammaticization, bleaching and renewal processes etc.

**02.01.14**

**Uriel Cohen Priva**  
Brown University  
*Informational Constraints*

Previous research has shown that language is efficient – everything else being equal, redundant elements are shorter and prone to be reduced. In my work I show that language differs from artificial communication systems in two fundamental ways. First, the efficiency of language is sub-optimal, in that language does not minimize linguistic elements only when they are contextually redundant but also when they are usually redundant. Thus, linguistic elements that are usually redundant are more likely to be reduced even when they are highly informative, and linguistic elements that are usually informative are less likely to be reduced even when they are redundant. Second, in artificial communication systems, every symbol is as costly as any other symbol – the most efficient message is the shortest message that transmits a given amount of information. In contrast, linguistic elements have inherent cost – their markedness, confusability or articulatory properties – and languages minimize the cost of transmitting a message, rather than message length.

In this talk I will focus on the second difference, and show how phonetic properties modulate the distribution of sounds in a language. Using cross-linguistic evidence, I will demonstrate that language uses perceptual resources to maximize the transmission of information, thereby minimizing the cost required to transmit a given message, not message length.

**26.12.13**

**Daphna Heller**  
University of Toronto  
*On the Probabilistic Nature of Referential Domains:  
Evidence from Mismatched Perspectives*

Theoretical approaches to reference assume that definite descriptions such as “the duck” are used to refer to a duck which is uniquely identifiable relative to a set of entities defined by the situational context. Thus, the interpretation of definite descriptions crucially depends on listeners’ ability to correctly construct this situation-specific “referential domain.” While there is considerable experimental evidence that listeners are indeed able to use various types of information to construct referential domains in real time, some evidence seems to suggest that information about the other interlocutor, i.e., information about what is in common ground, is not used in this task. In other words, evidence in the psycholinguistics literature is mixed regarding whether listeners incorporate the distinction between common and private information in the earliest moments of processing.

In this talk, I will review some of these apparently-contradictory results (Keysar et al., 2000; Heller et al., 2008), and argue that they reveal the probabilistic nature of referential domains. Specifically, I propose that instead of selecting one of several competing domains, listeners simultaneously consider more than one

domain, weighing their relative contribution. I present data from two experiments in support of this approach, and discuss the implications for our understanding of referential domains more generally.

### 19.12.13

**Yael Sharvit**  
UCLA  
***Whether or not Anything***

We address the problem of the (un)acceptability of negative polarity items in interrogative clauses, and propose that some, though not all, question types contain inherent (and often covert) negation in their underlying syntax.

### 12.12.13

**Keren Khrizman**  
Bar-Ilan University  
***Approximative Inversion in Russian as a Measure Construction***  
*(joint work with Susan Rothstein, Bar-Ilan University)*

We present a semantic analysis of approximative inversion (AI) constructions in Russian (1):

- (1) a. Ivan pročitat' dvadcat' knig      b. Ivan pročitat' knig dvadcat'  
Ivan read    twenty books      Ivan read    books twenty  
'Ivan read twenty books.'  
'Ivan read approximately/about/maybe  
twenty book.'

The syntax of these constructions has been discussed in Franks 1995, Yadroff and Billings 1998, and others. Zaroukian 2012 offers a semantic analysis, suggesting that these are expressions of uncertainty, involving a null modal operator similarly to 'maybe' with scope over the number phrase. We argue that these constructions are not expressions of modal uncertainty. Instead, we follow Rothstein 2012, Li and Rothstein 2012 who show, based on English and Mandarin data that: i) Num + N phrases can be measure phrases in which cardinal values are ascribed to a quantity or set via estimation and not by counting individual entities; ii) approximation effects follow from the semantics of the estimation operation, and the numeral phrases show syntactic properties associated with measure phrases.

We argue that AI phrases instantiate a similar measure operation in Russian, estimating the numerosity of the denotation of a predicate set as being close to a particular number. Following Franks 1995, we show that syntactic properties of AI constructions are characteristic of measure contexts. Finally, we propose that the relevant measure operation is the estimation operation, and that Number is the head of a Measure Phrase. *litrov pjat' moloka* 'about five liters of milk' is the most transparent structure syntactically: *litrov* 'liters' and *pjat'* 'five' combine to form a measure predicate which modifies the bare NP *moloka* 'milk.'

**Nomi Erteschik-Shir**

Ben-Gurion University

***Prosody: A Source of Word-Order Microparameters***

*(joint work with Gunlög Josefsson, Lund University)*

Danish grammarians have observed that in certain South Danish dialects OS (1b) is not required as it is in standard Danish, allowing also for the order (1c).

1. a. *Jeg så ikke Ruth.*

I saw not Ruth

b. *Jeg så hende ikke.*

I saw her not

c. *Jeg så ikke hende.* (only SD)

The optionality between the word order in (1b) and in (1c) is also to be found in many Swedish and Norwegian dialects.

We demonstrate that in the dialects we have examined there is a correlation between the existence of a tone distinction and the optionality of OS. Standard Danish has no tone distinction and also does not allow the word order in (1c). Certain Swedish, Norwegian and SD dialects exhibit tone distinctions in polysyllabic words (Accent 1 and Accent 2), and also allow (1c). Polysyllabic words in these tonal dialects have one of two word accents. Here we focus on Swedish and on the SD dialect spoken on Ærø and show not only that the correlation holds, but we also argue that the correlation follows from the prosodic properties of weak pronouns in general and the property of tonal accents to combine words together into one prosodic 'tone' unit (TU), Hellan 2005; Riad 2008.

Our reasoning goes as follows: It seems reasonable to assume that weak pronouns can incorporate into a verb (1b) or a subject (in non-subject initial clauses) - this is simply OS. Adverbs are unsuitable (primary) hosts for weak pronouns. However, in varieties with tone, an additional way of incorporation is available, incorporation into the maximal prosodic word. In varieties without this possibility, a weak pronoun following an adverb is left prosodically stranded, which makes the sentence ungrammatical.

We conclude that what drives the variation in word order is the microparametric prosodic properties of each dialect. Our conclusion supports the view that OS is a prosodically driven process as argued in Erteschik-Shir 2005 and Josefsson 2012 and therefore also provides evidence against syntactic accounts of OS which cannot account for the covariation of prosodic properties and the optionality of OS presented here.

28.11.13

**Hadass Zaidenberg**

Tel-Aviv University

***Prosody-Pragmatics Interface:  
Evidence from Hebrew speakers with Asperger Syndrome***

Individuals with Autism spectrum disorders and Asperger syndrome are often described as having pronounced abnormalities associated with the prosody of speech. This was already reported as a marked feature of impaired communication in both Kanner's (1943) and Asperger's (1944) early descriptions of autism, and it has been established since, that these prosodic deficits are one of the major inhibiting factors obstructing successful social communication and social integration.

However, not enough is known about the perception of prosody in Autism and about the possible influence of a prosodic receptive impairment on expressive prosody and on other cognitive and lingual abilities such as pragmatic competence and Theory of Mind.

The present study focuses on receptive prosody, aiming at assessing whether individuals with Asperger syndrome perceive and comprehend prosodic information differently than typically developing individuals. The study compares the Asperger groups' performance in processing prosody in three domains of speech - grammatical prosody, pragmatic prosody and affective prosody.

A group of 10 participants diagnosed with Asperger syndrome (mean age 30;4) and a control group of 30 typically developed individuals (mean age 25;1) participated in the present study. The experiment consisted of a battery of prosodic tests designed to assess the participants' performance in prosodic discrimination and comprehension tasks.

Results reveal heterogenic patterns of performance within the test group, and yet a trend could be detected indicating that pragmatic aspects of prosody are more prone to be affected than grammatical and lexical aspects.

21.11.13

**Olga Kagan**

Ben-Gurion University

***On the Interaction of Gradability and Modality: The Case of almost***  
*(Joint work with Lavi Wolf, Ben-Gurion University)*

The contribution that the item *almost* makes to a sentence includes a proximity meaning component. For instance, (1) entails that the number of guests whom John invited was close to 100.

(1) *John invited almost 100 guests to his anniversary.*

Most analyses that have been proposed for the proximity interpretation of *almost* can be divided into two types: scalar approaches and modal approaches (Nouwen 2006). Under the scalar approach, *almost p* entails, roughly, that a scalar alternative *p'* that is located close to *p* on a scale of alternatives is true. Under the alternative modal approach, *almost p* entails that *p* is true in a world that is close to the actual one. Both analyses appear to be challenged by sentences in which *almost* appears on the VP-level, and the VP does not seem to contain any scale-inducing expressions (e.g., (2)). In the case of the scalar approach, it is unclear what the relevant scale is in such sentences and which propositions should count as proximal alternatives. In turn, modal analyses, we argue, fail to capture the nature of proximity that is required to hold between the relevant worlds.

(2) *Mary almost told John to leave.*

Interestingly, Russian has two counterparts of *almost*: *pochti* and *chut' (ne)*. We argue that the former is best analyzed as *almost* under the scalar approach, while the latter systematically receives a modal interpretation. In order to account for *chut'* and for the modal use of *almost*, we develop an analysis that is based on the notion of inertia worlds. We further discuss the shared meaning component that unifies the modal and the scalar uses of *almost*.

#### 14.11.13

##### Noam Faust

The Hebrew University

##### *Metathesis in Tigre Verbs*

This talk provides an account of a peculiar phenomenon in Tigre, whereby an inflectional vocalic suffix is integrated into (rather than concatenated to) the stem, when it is followed by an additional vocalic suffix, denoting the object. For example, the feminine imperative is *fəgar-i* 'leave (fm.sg.)!', but when a 3m.sg. suffix *-u* is introduced, one finds *fəger-u* 'leave (fm.sg.) it!' The feminine suffix disappears, and the stem vowel changes from [a] to [e]. Raz (1980) calls this phenomenon "transposition," because the quality of the suffix vowel (in this case, [-low]) skips over the final consonant and is added to the last vowel of the base. However, this is but an initial observation, and several other aspects of the phenomenon have to be accounted for, such as the gemination of the final consonant in *fgarr-u* 'leave (m.sg.) it!' and the resistance of certain roots and affixes to this metathesis. In this talk, I will formalize Raz's observation in a manner that will also account for these other aspects.

07.11.13

**Sefi Potashnik**

Tel Aviv University

***The Locus of the Causative-Unaccusative Alternation:  
Syntax or Lexicon?***

The well-known causative-unaccusative alternation (e.g. *the heat melted the ice / the ice melted*) has been a source of an ongoing debate among linguists. Two central approaches exist: (i) A syntactic, decompositional approach, which assumes that the relevant relation is established in the syntax (Alexiadou et al 2006, Harley 2008, Pykkänen 2008 and Ramchand 2008, among others; (ii) A lexicalist approach, which assumes that the alternation is derived in an active lexical component (Levin & Rappaport-Hovav 1995, Reinhart 2002, Koontz-Garboden 2009, Horvath & Siloni, 2011, to name a few).

In this paper, I pursue two complementary tracks of argumentation, based on new empirical evidence, which lead to the conclusion that the alternation is lexically derived. First, I show that the generalizations taken to support syntactic decomposition have, in fact, systematic and productive counterexamples. Second, I present novel evidence demonstrating that syntactic operations cannot give rise to the causative-unaccusative alternation. The new data I discuss are consistent with lexical accounts, but not with syntactic ones.

31.10.13

**Alexander Grosu**

Tel Aviv University

***Transparent Free Relatives: The 'Headedness' Controversy –  
Semantic and Morphological Arguments***

Transparent Free Relatives (TFRs) like (1) have the superficial appearance of Free Relatives (FRs) initiated by *what* and having the 'gap' in the subject position of a copular construction, but differ from FRs in general in that their 'pivot' is not the *wh*-element, but the non-subject of the copular construction (cf. (1) with (2) in terms of the ability of the (T)FR to occur in a human context.).

[1] She is talking to [what seems to be {**a policeman, my cousin Bill**}]. β TFR

[2] She will marry [{**whom, \*what**} her father tells her to]. β FR

The structure of TFRs has been the object of a lively controversy between proponents of the view that the pivot is the CP-external (phrasal) head of the TFR (e.g., van Riemsdijk 1998, 2006, 2012) and proponents of the view that they have exactly the structure of FRs, the differences between them being captured in non-structural ways (Grosu 2004, 2010, 2013).

In this talk, I propose to defend my analysis with argumentation of a different sort, and first and foremost, by asking how the meaning of a TFR can be compositionally derived from its structure. I will argue that my proposed structure straightforwardly supports a satisfactory compositional analysis, while

pivot-as-head analyses (van Riemsdijk's in particular) cannot serve as basis for compositionally capturing the correct truth conditions. If my argumentation goes through, it has knock-out status.

In addition, I will examine certain facts concerning morphological Case in German, which van Riemsdijk has used to argue for his proposed structure. I will show that when additional facts are taken into account, the totality of the facts turn out to provide no support for his structure, and to provide instead support for mine.

### 24.10.13

**Dganit Kim**

Tel Aviv University

#### ***The Dative Dispositional Construction in Russian***

The study focuses on the Russian variant of the Dative Dispositional Construction (DDC); for example,

1. ***mne ne rabotaetsja.***

IDAT NEG workPRESENT.3Sg-SJA

'I don't feel like working' / 'I can't work' / 'My work is going badly'

The verbs found in the DDC also have a 'regular' active derivation, as in (2).

2. ***ja ne rabotaju.***

INOM NEG workPRESENT.1Sg

'I don't work' / 'I'm not working'

The talk will concentrate on the DDC formation process. First, I show that the existing definition of the set of verbs participating in the construction is not accurate, and I propose a revised definition. Based on the revised definition of the input, I argue that in Russian the DDC formation process takes place in the lexicon (as opposed to syntactic formation in other Slavic languages). Further, I show evidence that the original theta-role of the verb is manipulated as part of this lexical operation, and discuss the nature of this manipulation. If time allows, I will also present the controversy in the existing literature regarding possible types and possible meanings of the Russian DDC, and the results of two surveys among native speakers that I conducted in order to shed some light on these controversial issues.