

Western Interdisciplinary Student Symposium on Language Research

MARCH 5TH, 2022



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Overview of WISSLR 2022 Conference

Event Location & Time:

Zoom 9:00 – 17:00 EST

Opening Remarks	9:00 – 9:15
Session 1	9:15-10:30
First Break	10:30-10:40
Session 2	10:40-12:20
Lunch Break	12:20-13:15
Keynote Presentation	13:15-14:20
Session 3	14:20-15:10
Social Session	15:10-16:00
Session 4	16:00-16:50
Closing Remarks	16:50-17:00

WISSLR 2022 Schedule

March 5th, Saturday, 2022	
<i>Location: Online</i>	
8:30-9:00	<i>Registration</i>
9:00-9:15	Opening Remarks
Session 1	
9:15	TV Series as a Learning Approach for Learners of Spanish as a Foreign Language (ELE) Hanna Barnett University of Western Ontario
9:40	Adoption of the Flipped Approach: Teaching English for Academic Purposes Tsz Ching Jasmine Lam The Chinese University of Hong Kong
10:05	Grammatical Morpheme Acquisition in Hearing Limited L1 English Children Taylor Jamieson, Christina Horvath, Emma Anderson and Luke Liu University of Western Ontario
10:30-10:40	<i>Break</i>
Session 2	
10:40	Referential Language Use and Perceptions of Relationship Validity Sydney Dawson University of Western Ontario
11:05	How Narrative Structure and Flouts of Gricean Maxims Reduce Face-Threat of Storytelling Celine Tsang University of Western Ontario
11:30	Communication Accommodation: Gender and Technology Factors Macy Floyd University of Wisconsin (Madison)
11:55	Memes and Their Implications on Language and Metalinguistic Ability Erik Houston and Madison Blagden University of Manitoba
12:20-13:15	<i>Lunch</i>

Session 3	
13:15	Keynote Presentation: Some ABCs of Remote Language Reclamation Dr. Claire Bowern Yale University
14:20	Vowel Reduction and Deletion in Palauan Yixin Wang University of Toronto
14:45	The Sociolinguistics of Naso Runze Qian University of Toronto
15:10-16:00	<i>Social Session</i>
Session 4	
16:00	Investigating the Correlation Between Topicality and Applicativization Bárbara Guimarães Rocha Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
16:25	Free Choice and Epistemicity in Bangla: A Test for Exhaustification Based Approaches Ankana Saha Harvard University
16:50-17:00	Closing Remarks



Abstracts

Keynote Presentation:

Some ABCs of Remote Language Reclamation

Dr. Claire Bower | Yale University

In this talk I draw on experience with collaborations with Australian Indigenous communities to discuss effective long-distance and long-term strategies for language work. I work through some of the decisions that need to be made (and who needs to make them) and provide examples of collaborations that have been effective, with a focus on why they have worked, and how the lessons from such projects might (or might not) generalize. Key points include: advantages and limitations of apps; who has access to the reclamation materials (and how that changes between remote and in person/on country work); "bandwidth" - both physical and emotional - what infrastructure is needed for a successful remote project, how remote work differs (emotionally) from in person work, and what appropriate expectations might be; and collaboration - how to collaborate appropriately and effectively. I provide illustrations from Bardi and Kullilli projects as well as discussion from published literature.

Session 1:

TV Series as a Learning Approach for Learners of Spanish as a Foreign Language (ELE)

Hanna Barnett | University of Western Ontario

Over the past few years, we have witnessed the explosion in popularity of Spanish television series such as *Élite*, *La Casa de Papel*, *La Casa de las Flores*, and many more. These series have seen commercial success outside the Hispanic world and, as a result, have exposed the Spanish language to millions of non-speakers. For example, out of the most watched shows on Netflix in their first 28 days on the platform, Spain's *Money Heist: Part 4* ranks #2 overall (Netflix, 2021). These Spanish series have garnered interest in learning Spanish as well as how they can be used as tools for teaching and learning ELE (Español como Lengua Extranjera – Spanish as a Foreign Language.)

Meanwhile, scholars have researched the benefits of watching television shows with subtitles in a target language on learners. Their findings include that participants demonstrate an increase in vocabulary development (Shabani & Zanussi, 2015; Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019) and higher levels of listening comprehension (Huang & Eskey, 1999; Rodgers & Webb, 2017). Other benefits include exposure to Spanish in leisure time and exposure to the target culture and different dialects.

In my proposed presentation, I will discuss the benefits of using current television series as a learning tool and encourage the use of this learning tool for learners, specifically in the ELE context.

Adoption of the Flipped Approach: Teaching English for Academic Purposes

Tsz Ching Jasmine Lam | The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Most of the local higher education institutions in Hong Kong offer humanities and social science-related subjects. The university language teaching units place a certain emphasis on guiding the students to write their own research articles or thesis. It used to be a lengthy process that require at least two semester-long courses for a total of 6-credit. Under the pandemic, the students can have very limited access to the universities and hardly communicate with the course

instructors. The students may feel lost during the course as they have little chance to undergo peer review or seek advice. The teachers also found it hard to monitor their learning performances and evaluate the intended learning outcomes. Teaching English for academic purposes need to be interactive because students' ideas vary, and consultation is required throughout the progress at different stages. According to Kristeva (1980) and Bhatia (2010), intertextuality and interdiscursivity are crucial in ESP teaching. Intertextuality refers to the discussion of the associations between texts while interdiscursivity brings in incorporative features across discourses that are unrestricted to the type of discourse used, which could be in the format of media recording, video or even graphic. In view of that, we would like to adopt the flipped approach which combines the use of technology with ESP teaching materials and pedagogic design. We are proposing to make use of video-sharing platforms like Flipgrid and YouTube for pre-class tasks and post-class peer review activities. The pre-class videos serve as instruction given to guide the students and get them prepared before lessons, the students will also record their capstone presentations for peer commenting and assessment. Hence, the in-class period could be fully utilized for discussions and synchronous group work. Various tools could be used to facilitate in-class participation like Padlet, Class, Zoom polling, Nearpod and Google Docs. The flipped approach could employ a greater degree of flexibility for the learning and teaching of ESP as it is not constrained by the geographical barriers and time limit that allow greater interactivity among learners.

Grammatical Morpheme Acquisition in Hearing Limited L1 English Children

Taylor Jamieson, Christina Horvath, Emma Anderson and Luke Liu | University of Western Ontario

The relationship between hearing and speech input in the development of language is uncontested, however for children with hearing impairments this relationship is often minimized. Due to these impairments the timeline in which hearing limited children acquire certain grammatical morphemes is called into question, when compared to normal hearing children. Previous research among this field has found varying evidence for whether or not hearing loss causes a delayed or different grammatical morpheme acquisition. The major limitations that have been presented within previous research are the age of their participants and inconclusive results

due to third factor influence. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the patterns and differences between the process of morphological rule acquisition for Hearing Limited (HL) children and Non-Hearing Limited (NH) children at the ages of 22 and 36 months old. This study explores Hearing Limited and Non-Hearing Limited boy's and girl's conversations during play, investigating specifically their use of the possessive [-s], the plural [-s], and the progressive [-ing]. The present research's findings show that HL children experience delays in grammatical morpheme acquisition. In addition, the study's findings suggest that having a later age of identification and age of receiving a hearing aid may both be factors that are associated with improved language acquisition, but data on this was limited.

Session 2:

Referential Language Use and Perceptions of Relationship Validity

Sydney Dawson | University of Western Ontario

Purpose: Language used on social media to refer to LGBTQ+ individuals and couples is reflective of societal stereotypes constructing Queer identities as childlike or liminal, and this usage -- while possibly intended as linguistic allyship-- poses a significant risk of stereotype internalization among LGBTQ+ media users.

Methods: Following a theoretical scaffolding for LGBTQ+ stereotypes, linguistic accommodation phenomena, and the effects of infantilizing language, a discourse analysis was undertaken. This methodological approach included a thematic categorization of 3000 Instagram comments evenly divided amongst heterosexual and LGBTQ+ Instagram pages, which aimed to establish the actual language use patterns taking place in this online space. Posts were selected through a variety of algorithmic and manual searching and eliminating criteria. Accompanying the discourse analysis was a survey (180 responses) and interviews, to better understand reported language use, perceptions of LGBTQ+ identities, experiences with infantilizing language, and connotative meaning of select words and phrases. The reported language use was then contrasted with the actual language use, and the theoretical framework established during the literature review was applied in the following analysis of the language trends in question.

Results and discussion: Results showed that survey respondents felt words like “cute,” “sweet,” or “adorable” were significantly more condescending than words like “perfect,” or “committed.” These words were also heavily associated with children, play relationships, and feminization. Despite these established understandings, thematic categories which addressed these same words (“cute,” “sweet,” “adorable,”) were used twice as frequently in LGBTQ+ than heterosexual relationship posts, which received more affirming terms such as “perfect” or “committed.” Survey results indicated that there was a widespread familiarity with negative LGBTQ+ stereotypes, such as the LGBTQ+ phase (Monaghan, 2016), and that Queer respondents who had experiences being stereotyped in this way were at a much higher risk of internalizing stigma than heterosexual participants. Notably, thematic categories in comments that encapsulated explicit life steps (such as marriage, pregnancy, etc.) were nearly 15 times more common in heterosexual

posts, a finding that suggests opposite-sex pairings are invoking expectations of relationship permanence and validity more than same-sex relationships. Discussion of these results will include theories such as non-homophobic Heterosexualities (Dean, 2016), infantilizing language internalization and feminization (Huot, 2013; Ponterotto, 2014), and Accommodative speech (Brown and Draper, 2003).

How Narrative Structure and Flouts of Gricean Maxims Reduce Face-Threat of Storytelling

Celine Tsang | University of Western Ontario

This paper explores how narratives can potentially pose a face-threat to others in the conversation, and thus how they can be constructed carefully to limit their threat. This investigation specifically seeks to reveal how discourse structures and flouts of Gricean maxims can work together seamlessly (and often unnoticeably) to minimize the severity of a disagreement. While all of these elements have seen considerable study in discourse analysis thus far, there is limited research concerning how face-threat can be reduced by the other two factors in tandem.

This paper focuses on one data set that I collected and excerpted from over an hour and a half of casual conversation between English-speaking university students. Specifically, I look at one speaker's telling of a narrative which purports that having two earrings on a male indexes them as gay, which contradicts an earlier conclusion by another participant that the first earring is what often signals that someone might be gay.

I argue that discourse structure such as asides, changes in verb tense, and direct discourse, along with flouts of quality and quantity, all contribute in detaching the narrator from the potentially threatening message of the story. Overall, this is achieved through such ends as increasing the narrator's temporal distance from the story, indicating uncertainty, solidifying themselves as solely the orator and not the perpetrator, injecting humour, and more.

This study points to the inherent complexity in narrative-telling, as storytellers must juggle telling their story in an engaging manner while also considering the contributions and reactions of their listeners, which supports previously proposed theories that narrative is a co-constructed

process. Furthermore, it illustrates potential intersections between Indigenous and Western schools of thought, as this paper analyzes both Algonquin basic narrative structures and the more westernized Gricean maxims.

When discussing the results of this study, it must be noted that under primary scrutiny was only one person's style of narration, meaning the conclusions drawn may not apply as well to speakers from a different background and/or conversation with multiple speakers equally contributing to the story-telling. Therefore, with more time I would like to explore longer narratives and/or those with multiple storytellers, along with how the potentially controversial issue of queer identities could play a role in the narrator's face-threat minimization, as in this case they were not a part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Communication Accommodation: Gender and Technology Factors

Macy Floyd | University of Wisconsin (Madison)

People use speech to connect identities, languages, and environments with others. This attempt at unity may be furthered through conscious or unconscious decisions to adjust speech and speech patterns to match conversational partners. Accommodation between interlocutors may be categorized into one of two primary categories: convergence (West, et. Al, 2010) or divergence (Dragojevic, et. Al, 2015), with the assumption that standard speech between willing participants will display more convergence (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Accommodation between partners has been evaluated between genders, though this focused primarily on binary genders (Parcha, 2014), as well as in computer-mediated communication (Muir, Joinson, & Dewdney, 2016). This study investigated accommodative behavior in communication situations involving various gender configurations and mediational modes, with a focus on the intersection of accommodation seen between genders across multiple platforms and how that may impact instances of convergence and divergence.

This study included six females and six males who were well-acquainted with one another and had access to smartphones. Participants were divided into two separate dyads, one with a same-gender partner, one with a mixed-gender partner, and were asked to record approximately 15 minutes of face-to-face communication with one another, as well as submitting text messages

dating back 3-6 months, depending on how often they corresponded. After the interactions were transcribed, the data provided compelling indications that seemed to indicate there were notable differences in communication based on both gender and mediational mode. There was enough evidence from the interlocutors' conversations to identify accommodative behaviors including convergence, maintenance, and divergence, as well as particularly interesting occurrences such as overaccommodation, deviant convergence, and accommodation through turn-taking.

Instances of accommodation were identified in the data through primarily qualitative methods including totaling the number of words used by interlocutors in specific settings to identify stylistic matching or distancing, categorizing instances of participants matching dialects or speech patterns, and analyzing participants use of semiotic resource for similarities and differences. Analysis of the participant interactions appeared to indicate that within FtF contexts, females tended to display more obvious convergence through features including politeness markers, complimenting one another, and emotional displays. Males were less overt about converging behaviors but still exhibited similar levels such as adopting similar vocal qualities and converging through humor. Within CMC environments, the females displayed even more dramatic convergence through politeness techniques and emotional language, generally accompanied by semiotic resources including emojis. Males demonstrated a greater degree of convergence than in FtF interactions, with more emotional displays and politeness specifically after a possible imposition. Mixed-gender dyads tended to display similar accommodative behaviors, with the most remarkable feature being males functioning as an expert in several of the CMC examples. These results support previous research on accommodation, with a specific emphasis on convergence due to the pre-existing relationships of the interlocutors, and may be expanded in the future to include accommodation between previously understudied populations such as African American participants and nonbinary genders including the LGBTQIA+ community.

Memes and Their Implications on Language and Metalinguistic Ability

Erik Houston and Madison Blagden | University of Manitoba

Internet memes, particularly pictorial memes, have evolved into a form of visual language that requires a certain level of metalinguistic awareness to engage with. Previous work has been done

on internet memes and their validity as speech acts; we will be accepting this concept and developing it further by examining the metalinguistic processes necessary for competent engagement with them. While there is much work to be done on what processes metalinguistic ability is required to perform, previous research has focused heavily on metalinguistic ability and its relation to bilingualism and translation. Should the definition of metalinguistic ability be understood as the capacity for identifying the flexibility, manipulability, and pragmatic diversity of language, we can surmise that fluent participation with internet memes requires an awareness of these concepts. Through an analysis of two particular internet memes, “Is This a Pigeon?” and “Two Guys on a Bus”, we find that the intrinsic meaning of these memes is fixed. To be executed properly and understood by people who partake in internet meme culture, specific rules must be adhered to depending on which meme is being manipulated. While the meaning of these memes is mostly inflexible, the expression of this message can be diverse. Memes are also distinctly separate from visual art and symbols in their way of transmitting a message and behave more akin to language than the more personal interpretations of messages communicated through visual art and the most abstract meaning of symbols. Our research asks that internet memes be looked at under the same theoretical framework that other languages are examined. Further work can be done into examining the evolution of internet memes; a comparison can be made between that evolutionary process and that of a spoken language. It should also be considered that memes can potentially be avenues across which people who do not speak the same language can use to communicate. This research works towards pushing the boundaries of what can be studied in the field of linguistics and what we can apply the discipline’s frameworks to.

Session 3:

Vowel Reduction and Deletion in Palauan

Yixin Wang | University of Toronto

This paper investigates vowel reduction, as in (1) and vowel deletion, as in (2) in the Palauan language. They have been observed and discussed in several previous studies, but there are limited examinations in the framework of the Optimality Theory (OT). A comprehensive examination of such phenomena in the generative phonology framework occurs in Flora (1984), while an attempt using OT is observed in Zuraw (2003). In Zuraw's analysis, unstressed vowels delete unless the deletion would create a word-initial triconsonantal cluster, whilst vowel reduction is explained with high-ranking constraints that disprefer sonorous unstressed vowels, but there are other cases of vowel reduction and deletion that Zuraw fails to account for. Thus, the goal of this paper is to further the discussion of Palauan vowel reduction and deletion, building on Zuraw's analysis. All the data analyzed in this paper are taken from Flora (1984).

(1) /mada/ 'eyes' [mədál] 'his eyes' [mədák] 'my eyes' [mədəcám] 'our eyes'

(2) /mada/ - [mád] 'eyes' /keri/ - [kér] 'questions'

Both vowel reduction and deletion are closely related to the stress pattern in Palauan. If a word is unsuffixed, the stress is found on the penultimate stem vowel, whereas if a word is suffixed, the stress is on the rightmost vowel. The stress pattern is accounted for using three markedness constraints: ALIGN (Suffix, R, PrWd, R), NonFinality and GrWd=PrWd.

In general, vowels reduce to schwa when unstressed. Five markedness constraints are thereby proposed corresponding to the five full vowels in Palauan: *Unstressed i, *Unstressed u, *Unstressed e, *Unstressed o, and *Unstressed a. However, there are some cases where unstressed full vowels remain unchanged rather than reducing to schwa, as in (3). One additional markedness constraint *Prefix Stress and a faithfulness constraint Ident-Prefix are helpful in such instances.

(3) /o-lamk/ - [olámk] 'razor' /o-lamk-e-k/ - [oləmkék] 'my razor'

Vowel deletion is observed in two circumstances. First, vowels are deleted word-finally in some cases, as in (2), while in other cases word-final vowels fail to delete, as in (5). Such

discrepancies can be justified by proposing five more constraints: *V]#, Align (Stem, R, Foot, L), *Unstressed ə, Max-IO (a/o/e) and Ident-IO. Second, unstressed high vowels are deleted, as in (6), with some exceptions shown in (7). Three more constraints are proposed in this case: Max-u, Max-i, and *Complex Onset.

(5) /m-dobaʔ-a/ - [məðəbəʔá] ‘to halve’ Perfect Middle Inchoative

(6) /o-rusu-e-k/ - [orsúk] ‘my needle’ /m-tamik-a/ - [mətəmka´] ‘to shave’ Perfect Middle Inchoative

(7) /ʔilt-e-k/ - [ʔilték] ‘my ointment’

This paper improves upon Zuraw’s work and accounts for cases such as unstressed vowels remaining unchanged, unstressed vowels reducing to schwa even if its deletion would not have produced consonantal clusters, and the deletion of word-final stem vowels. This paper serves as a preliminary step for an in-depth investigation of the vowel patterns in Palauan. Furthermore, since the synchronic vowel changes discussed in this paper appear to be strikingly similar to the historical vowel changes observed in Blust (2009), the relationship between synchronic and diachronic changes in Palauan warrants further investigation.

The Sociolinguistics of Naso

Runze Qian | University of Toronto

Naso is an indigenous language spoken mainly in Panama. Due to the influence from Spanish, Naso is in critical condition. This project discussed the sociolinguistic features of the language from generational differences in its sound systems, a speech error that reflected the socio-historical development of the language, and what are some of the challenges that Naso is facing today to be preserved and reclaimed.

From a generational perspective, the modern Naso language is thought to have two varieties. People who are over the age of 25 tends to use a more conservative form, which is closer to how the language was traditionally used. People who are under 25 tends to use a more innovative form, which showed signs of influence from Spanish. The vowel inventory of Innovative Naso is largely assimilated to the Spanish vowel inventory as near-high and mid-low vowels no longer form contrasts. The conservative form distinguishes between aspirated and unaspirated voiceless

obstruents, whereas the innovative form does not. The syllable structure of Innovative Naso also showed signs of adapting to Spanish as the complex onsets of certain words were reduced to single onsets.

Certain words in Naso have clan affiliations which is expressed through the use of /t/ and /k/ in its onset position. This is the result of a historical development of what was fk in Proto-Isthmic, which Naso developed from. Words that starts with fk in Proto-Isthmic have their onset reduced to one single consonant in modern Naso, and whether that consonant is /t/ or /k/ depends on clan affiliation. However, there are also words that originally started with /t/ or /k/, and such words do not carry any clan information. This project presented a case where a five-year old boy accidentally used /t/ on a word that did not have fk in its proto form, which suggested that this historical feature is still a part of the speaker' underlying knowledge of the language, and the speech error of the five-year old showed his incomplete acquisition of this feature.

Naso has many interesting and unique properties. However, the language health is in critical conditions. According to estimations of Bermúdez (2018), out of the 5000 people who self-identify as Nasos, only one-fifth of them have basic levels of command of the language and only half of those can reach a semi-fluent level. It was estimated that as of 2018, only 500 people can use Naso fluently. This decline is not only the result of colonialism, but also the result of a lot of contacts with other more dominant languages throughout the history of Panama. The language lacks sustainability. It needs the help of researchers to be documented, thus be preserved.

Investigating the Correlation Between Topicality and Applicativization

Bárbara Guimarães Rocha | Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

The goal of the present work is to investigate the relation between applied arguments and the informational notion of topicality. In generative literature, applicatives are understood as a functional category responsible for introducing “extra” objects that would not be considered part of the verb’s argument structure, but nonetheless behave as “true” objects morphosyntactically. Several authors, such as Baker (1988), Marantz (1993) and Pylkkänen (2002) analyze double object constructions as applicative structures. In order to explain the different morphosyntactic and semantic properties of these constructions, Pylkkänen (2002) proposes the existence of two

applicative heads: High and Low. High Applicative takes a VP as its complement and licenses an applied argument in SPEC/APPL, establishing a semantic and syntactic relation between the argument and the event/state described by the verb. Low Applicative licenses the applied and theme object in a transfer of possession relation and is merged as the complement of VP. Regarding topicality, it is an information structure notion related to the idea of aboutness, that is, topics are generally referents that are somehow presupposed, shared, given or accessible to the interlocutor, and the proposition is about this referent. Crosslinguistically, one can observe that applied arguments tend to present properties related to topic status (either discursive or conversational), such as the possibility of deletion or pronominalization of the applied argument. In order to investigate such tendency, we observe data on applicative structures in Dialectal Brazilian Portuguese (Rocha 2017, Armelin 2011), Chichewa (Baker 1988, Bresnan & Mchombo 1987), Nyanja (Rocha 2014), and Upper Necaxa Totonac (Beck 2006, 2007, 2008, apud Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011). Our empirical analysis indicates that there is indeed some correlation between the process of applicativization and the informational notion of topicality.

Free Choice and Epistemicity in Bangla: A Test for Exhaustification Based Approaches

Ankana Saha | Harvard University

There is a rich landscape of free-choice and epistemic modal items in Bangla, centered around the morpheme "kono", which have never been analyzed in complete detail. I present novel data to lay out the full paradigm, situating them with respect to existing typology, and argue that the spectrum of their distribution and interpretation is best understood in a unified theory of polarity and free choice phenomena, couched in an implicature-based approach (Chierchia 2006, et seq). Adopting the framework in Chierchia (2013), we account for the interpretation of "kono" and the three indefinites by assuming that they obligatorily activate alternatives. The different interpretations are argued to stem from the interaction between the types of alternatives they activate (scalar and domain alternatives) and the way these alternatives are factored into meaning via the mechanism of exhaustification.

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