



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S31. Pragmatic and Discourse-analytic Approaches to Present-day English

Thursday 31 August: 2.30-4.30pm & 5.00-7.00pm

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The purpose of this seminar is to invite linguists, pragmaticians and discourse analysts to discuss recent pragmatic and discourse-analytic approaches to present-day English usage. Among the issues to be discussed are the following: *appraisal* (evaluative devices and expressions of modality), *coherence* (construction of coherence and cohesive sign posts), *conversation* (monologue, dialogue and genre), *metapragmatic devices* (pragmatic particles, discourse markers and hedges) and *speech acts* (institutional and non-institutional).

Modal Adverbs in Interaction

Karin Aijmer (University of Göteborg)

Epistemic adverbs do not only indicate a degree of certainty when they occur in interaction but they develop a number of functions which can be explained by the context. The aim of my presentation is to look at some modal adverbs in the COLT corpus of adolescent speech. The focus will be on adverbs which were used proportionately more often by adolescents in the COLT corpus than by the speakers in the ICE-GB Corpus (for data see Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg forthcoming). The aim of the study is to study if the adverbs develop more and special functions in adolescent speech.

Can I call you? The Idiosyncrasies of Short Message Service Discourse

Claudia Aeschbacher (University of Zürich)

Textual interaction via short message service (SMS) discourse has become an established and widespread form of (predominantly) personal written communication since its advent in the early nineties. Although the text entities are short, they can be very diverse in style as well as performing distinctive communicative functions. Extensive research on 1000 English SMS texts showed that the majority of users has welcomed SMS discourse as an additional medium of communication rather than having an influence on how other media are used. Based on Searle's Speech Act theory, this paper looks into the idiosyncratic mono- and multi-functionalities of personal SMS discourse.

Where is Language Use in the Description of the Englishes?

Anne Barron (Johann Wolfgang University, Frankfurt)

Current descriptions and contrasts of the Englishes focus predominantly on the phonological, syntactic and lexical levels of language. In contrast, research on the conventions of polite language use in and across the Englishes is limited, as indeed it is in the study of intra-lingual varieties in general. The question is posed whether research on this pragmatic level is desirable and if so, whether and how such a variational perspective on the conventions of language use might be included in the teaching of English in the Inner Circle.

Making out the Case for Discourse Markers in ELT

Lieven Buysse (European University College Brussels)

In the extensive study of discourse markers in recent years one aspect has largely been neglected, i.e. how non-native speakers of English acquire DMs. Apart from the obvious comparison between non-native and native speaker use of DMs, it is also worthwhile to differentiate between different types of learners as that may provide information on levels of pragmatic competence and on how non-native speakers acquire such competence. I will present a study of *so* as it is used as a DM by two groups of native speakers of Dutch: one is made up of students majoring in English, the other of economics students.

Themes in Context

Anita Fetzer (University of Lüneburg)

This contribution examines the connectedness between the local phenomenon of theme and its functions in the context of short dyadic political interviews. It shows that the unmarked theme zone for spoken English discourse, [[textual theme] [interpersonal theme] [topical theme]], also holds for the genre of a political interview, and here in particular for the communicative act of a non-acceptance. Analogously to the unmarked sequence, the linguistic realization of the multiple themes also shows a clear preference for particular linguistic devices, namely *well* and *but* for textual themes, *I think* and *I don't think* for interpersonal themes, and indexical expressions and general nouns for topical themes. The theme zone is thus a prime candidate for the communication of textual and interpersonal meaning.

The Activation of New Entities in Discourse: a Contrastive Analysis

A. Jesús Moya Guijarro & M^a Jesús Pinar Sanz (University of Castilla-La Mancha)

Following a view of topic as a discourse, cognitive and contextual notion independent of language-specific coding devices (Cornish, 2004), this paper intends to show how clausal topics (van Dijk 1981, Dik 1997) are introduced in thirty tourist brochures and thirty news items. The empirical analysis carried out reveals that the persuasive function of the tourist brochure frequently leads the writer to use linguistic strategies by which s/he moves the new topical entities away from the thematic slot of the clause. However, in the news items the local topics frequently initiate the sentence without further introduction.

Following this pattern, the journalist facilitates the understanding of the message as the clausal topic is clearly activated from the outset.

Conditional Speech Acts

Natasha Kostic (University of Montenegro)

Earlier analyses of conditionals from a linguistic perspective showed that these sentences can function in three different cognitive domains: content, epistemic and pragmatic. The pragmatic domain is the domain of speech acts where conditional protases can be seen as expressing conditions on the successful performance of the relevant speech act in their apodoses. The aim of this presentation is to provide an overview of the main types of protasis – apodosis relations in pragmatic domain, relying on the analysis of 1,300 English conditional sentences taken from *Collins Cobulid* database. I will also comment briefly on the results of contrastive analysis of speech act conditionals in English and Serbian.

Whimperatives as a Tool of Hierarchy

Slavica Perović (University of Montenegro)

The aim of this account is to address some issues concerning one kind of whimperatives in Serbian within a universal cultural script of indirectness of speech. The universality of that cultural script is seen in the indirectness in communication which in conversation always implies the negotiation of meaning and the social roles of the interlocutors. Those roles can be the ones of equal rank but also of subordination where whimperatives can be a tool of hierarchy identification. Whimperatives as indirect speech act express the speaker's intention to influence the hearer in a desired way and perlocution is the test if the speaker's intention was inferred in the right way. Subsequently it is also the test of stability or instability of the social roles and statuses in the given interpersonal relationship.

“Hey man – Mira tío”: London and Madrid Teenagers’ Use of Vocatives

Anna-Brita Stenström (Bergen University)

This paper compares the use of vocatives in among London and Madrid teenagers based on data from *The Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language* (COLT) and *Corpus de Lenguaje Adolescente de Madrid* (COLAm), which consist of casual conversations between 13 to 17 year-old boys and girls. The paper indicates that the Madrid teenagers use the most common vocatives more than four times as often as the London Teenagers and that male vocatives dominate by a large margin in COLT, while female vocatives dominate in COLAm. This emphasizes that the use of vocatives is both culture-bound and gender-related. The core function of vocatives, to create and maintain a social bond between speaker and addressee, is the overriding function. .

Approaches to Analyzing Emotions in News (Agency) Reports, with a Special Focus on the Notions of Objectivity and Factuality

Maija Stenvall (University of Helsinki)

Reporting on emotions – or evoking emotions in news texts – inherently challenges the journalistic ideals of objectivity and factuality. My paper presents two complementary approaches that can be used to reveal what is ‘hidden’ underneath. Tools from Halliday’s Functional Grammar are especially well suited for examining issues of responsibility. For example, when emotions in news reports are presented as Actors, the role of real actors remains obscure. The second approach draws on the Appraisal framework. I argue that the analysis of evoked and provoked APPRAISAL values can show evidence of underlying subjectivity; of the writer’s norms and values.

Intrapersonal Dialogicality in Computer-mediated Interaction

Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen (University of Turku)

I focus on an aspect of computer-mediated interaction which seems to be pervasive in this type of discourse, namely *intrapersonal dialogicality*, considering what it reveals about the position of computer-mediated interaction as a medium of communication as well as the way in which communicators adapt language to its demands. I discuss how the fact that the coherence and metapragmatic strategies used by participants of electronic discussions simulate those of spoken dialogue can be regarded as serving a collaborative purpose: they show communicators taking the perspective of their fellow communicators and constructing their messages accordingly.

Argumentative Use of Stance Adverbials: The Qualification of a Standpoint as a Means to Manage the Obligation to Defend it

Assimakis Tseronis (University of Leiden)

In this paper, I consider an additional, argumentative function of stance adverbials used in the qualification of a standpoint, in particular. Drawing from the analysis of a standpoint within the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, I distinguish five ways in which an utterance that expresses the speaker’s opinion over a disputed issue can be qualified, and I group the various stance adverbials accordingly, as conveying: a) degree of certainty, b) source of evidence, c) domain, d) the protagonist’s reliability, and e) the protagonist’s evaluation. Since advancing a standpoint incurs an obligation to defend it against the criticism of a specific audience, choosing to qualify it can then be considered as a means of managing that burden of proof.