COLUMBIA SCHOOL LINGUISTICS

The Columbia School is a group of linguists developing the theoretical framework first established by the late William Diver and his students at Columbia University. In this view, language is a symbolic tool whose structure is shaped both by its communicative function and by the characteristics of its human users. In grammatical analyses, we seek to explain the distribution of linguistic forms as an interaction between hypothesized meaningful signals and pragmatic and functional factors such as inference, ease of processing, iconicity, and the like. In phonological analyses, we seek to explain the syntagmatic and paradigmatic distributions of phonological units within signals, also drawing on both communicative function and human physiological and psychological characteristics. The Columbia School Linguistic Society was founded in 1996 to promote and disseminate linguistic research along these theoretical lines. The Society furthers this goal by sponsoring this series of conferences as well as summer institutes, bi-monthly seminars, invitational seminars, general scholarly exchange, and through our electronic discussion list csling and our web site www.csling.org

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Nancy Stern
The City College, City University of New York

Ricardo Otheguy
Graduate Center, City University of New York

Bernice Rohret
The City College, City University of New York

With thanks to Billur Avlar, Michael Kaplan, Wallis Reid, and Betsy Rodríguez-Bachiller

The support of the Columbia School Linguistic Society is gratefully acknowledged
Saturday, October 13

8:30-9:15  Registration

9:15-9:30  Greetings
Wallis Reid, Rutgers University
Radmila Gorup, President, Columbia School Linguistic Society
Ricardo Otheguy, for the conference organizers

9:30-10:00  Being impersonal in Italian
Joseph Davis

10:00-10:15  Discussion

10:15-10:45  Phonology as Human Behavior (PHB). Type and token frequency: What matters?
Bob de Jonge

10:45-11:00  Discussion

11:00-11:30  Break

11:30-11:50  The grammatical System of Degree of Certainty in Spanish
Jaseleen Ruggles

11:50-12:00  Discussion

12:00-12:30  Back to the future to revisit meanings
Angelita Martínez and Verónica Mailhes

12:30-12:45  Discussion

12:45-2:15  Lunch

2:15-2:35  Generation as predictor of the grammatical distribution of English borrowings among Spanish speakers in New York
Rachel Varra

2:35-2:45  Discussion

2:45-3:05  Acallo cuando hablo: Spanish subject expression in co-referential clauses
Berenice Darwich

3:05-3:15  Discussion

3:15-3:30  Break

3:30-4:00  Urgent imperatives: Cognitive-functional considerations of the Spanish gerund with imperative functions
Victor Prieto

4:00-4:15  Discussion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:15-4:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4:30-5:30 | Group discussion: *Columbia School and linguistic theory*  
Panel: Tanya Christensen (Chair), Joseph Davis, Wallis Reid |
| 5:30-6:30 | Reception on site                          |
| 6:30-7:00 | Free                                      |
| 7:00-9:00 | Dinner on site                             |
Sunday, October 14

9:30-10:15  The semantic analysis of lexical signs
            Wallis Reid
10:15-10:45 Discussion

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-11:30 The Russian case system: A sign-oriented approach
            Alexandra Breytenbrat
11:30-11:45 Discussion

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-12:30 Word order as a signal in Danish main and subordinate clauses
            Tanya Karoli Christensen
12:30-12:45 Discussion

12:45-2:45 Lunch

2:45-3:15 Idioms: The universal escape clause
            Alan Huffman
3:15-3:30 Discussion

3:30-3:45 Break

3:45-4:15 Factuality frame and factuality value-classifying Danish subclauses
            Sune Sønderberg Mortensen
4:15-4:30 Discussion

4:30-5:00 Linguistic expert witness testimony aiding the trier of fact: Does the language support the inference that the defendant was not at the scene of a conspiracy to bribe a judge?
            Robert Leonard
5:00-5:15 Discussion
Monday, October 15

9:00-9:45  The signals of the System of Degree of Control
           Ricardo Otheguy & Wallis Reid
9:45-10:15 Discussion

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 From subject to object in English
             Tom Eccardt
11:00-11:15 Discussion

11:15-11:45 Scene, meaning, and message and the System of Degree of Control: Giving
             the wall a push
             Nancy Stern
11:45-12:00 Discussion

12:00-12:45 Business Meeting

12:45-2:00 Lunch
The paper proposes a semantic analysis of the problem of grammatical case distribution in Russian. The analysis is based on a sign-oriented linguistic approach inspired by the Columbia School. The Russian case system consists of six cases – nominative, genitive, accusative, dative, instrumental and locative/prepositional. I propose that the six cases are divided into two grammatical systems – the System of Contribution and the System of Involvement. The System of Contribution establishes the relative degree of contribution of each participant to the event, i.e., which participant contributes more/most to the event and which less/least (Diver 1974, 1981; Tobin 1985; Zubin 1972, 1977). The System of Involvement means that an entity is “involved”, associated, or related to an event either directly or indirectly. In other words, the System of Contribution plays a central role in the event. The System of Involvement, on the other hand, plays a peripheral role. I postulate that the nominative, the dative and the accusative are part of the System of Contribution, while the genitive, the instrumental and the prepositional belong to the System of Involvement. Thus, according to my analysis the Russian case system can be described as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Degree of Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>HIGH CONTRIBUTOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>MID CONTRIBUTOR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>LOW CONTRIBUTOR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System of Contription</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Type of Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>DIRECT INVOLVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>INDIRECT INVOLVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositional</td>
<td>MORE INDIRECT INVOLVEMENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References:

Word Order as a Signal in Danish Main and Subordinate Clauses

Tanya Karoli Christensen
LANCHART, University of Copenhagen

Danish grammatical tradition considers word order an important signal for different kinds of meaning, and even operates with a detailed, yet flexible model for the word order of sentences. This model distinguishes between two versions, one said to signal main clause status, the other subordinate clause status. The first is characterized by having the negation (or any so-called sentence adverb, e.g. *desværre* ‘unfortunately’, *måske* ‘maybe’, *vist* ‘supposedly’) to the right of the finite verb, the second by having the negation to the left of it:

(1) han kommer ikke til festen (V>Adv)
he comes not to the-party
‘he is not coming to the party’

(2) at han ikke kommer til festen (Adv>V)
that he not comes to the-party
‘that he is not coming to the party’

More recent studies have shown that the correlation between this word order distinction and main/subordinate clause status does not hold (Heltoft 1996; Christensen 2007; Christensen & Heltoft 2010). But other interesting patterns emerge.

In this paper, I will focus on the meaning signalled by V>Adv in subordinate clauses. This has been the subject of numerous theoretically as well as empirically oriented studies, often focusing on the semantic inconsistency between so-called main clause phenomena (here, V>Adv word order) and factivity (Hooper & Thompson 1973; Green 1976; Vikner 1995; Gregersen & Pedersen 2000; Christensen 2007; Heycock 2007; Simons 2007; Wiklund, Bentzen et al. 2009; Bentzen 2010; Heycock, Sorace et al. 2010). The point is that V>Adv seems to signal foregrounded information, and thus should not be possible in subclauses under factive predicates (which are said to presuppose, or background, the content of their subclauses). I will present some challenging data from an extensive corpus-based study of word order contemporary spoken Danish (part of the LANCHART project on variation and change in 20th century Danish, see http://lanchart.hum.ku.dk/). They substantiate the claim that word order signals a meaning while challenging the claim that factive predicates always give rise to presuppositions.

References:

This paper focuses on the Spanish syntactic phenomenon of subject optionality. From a discourse-pragmatic perspective, it qualitatively analyzes the occurrence of subject expression as a noun or personal pronoun in the second clause of a sequence of two or more co-referential clauses (a), in opposition to its non-occurrence (b).

a. Cuando mis sobrinos viajan, mis sobrinos/éllos disfrutan del paisaje.
   "When my nephews travel, my nephews/they enjoy the view’

b. Cuando mis sobrinos viajan, Ø disfrutan el paisaje.
   "When my nephews travel, (my nephews/they) enjoy the view’

The present study suggests that in linguistic environments of co-reference and topic continuity, the packaging of subject is related to syntactic and semantic features of the first clause of the sequence. Oral data gathered from the PRESEEA-Mexico corpus is analyzed in order to show that transitivity, and the agency, animacy and definiteness of the participants of the event described by this clause play a role in the selection of subject form.
**Being Impersonal in Italian**

Joseph Davis  
The City College of New York, CUNY

This talk concerns use of the clitic *si* in literary Italian for impersonal messages. Authentic examples are analyzed in context and compared with impersonal examples containing a different grammatical signal. *Si* is part of a network of oppositions of value and of substance. That is, the members of the pronominal system share certain semantic substances which they partition into relative meanings, and they also differ in terms of the number and identities of semantic substances in which they participate. For example, *egli* ‘he,’ *gli/l+* ‘him/her/it/them,’ and *ne* ‘of him/her/it/them’ divide into three parts a semantic substance of Focus, signaling relative degree of attention to participants in an event: thus oppositions of value. At the same time, *egli* also signals meanings of Sex (MALE) and Number (ONE), while *gli* and *l+* do not signal Sex or Number but do signal values from another semantic substance, Control: thus, oppositions of substance. Among all the members of the network, *si* and *ne* bear the least semantic substance. For most writers, these signal only meanings of grammatical person (third) and Focus (INNER vs. OUTER); they do not signal meanings of Sex, gender, Number, or Control; nor, unlike *lui*, do they signal a meaning of Deixis. These oppositions of substance—it is relatively light semantic load—along with the oppositions of grammatical person, account for the distribution of *si*, both as reflexive (not covered in this talk) and as impersonal. The fact that *si* does not signal gender or Number accounts for its distribution relative to *uno* ‘one.’ That *si* is third-person accounts for its distribution relative to *tu* ‘you’ and relative to *noi* ‘we.’ And that *si* does not signal Sex, Number, or Deixis accounts for its distribution relative to *lui* ‘he.’ In its interpretation, *si* is the most generalized impersonal.

**References:**


Phonology as Human Behavior (PHB). Type and Token Frequency: What Matters?

Bob de Jonge

In ‘traditional’ PHB, the distribution of phonemes is studied in a given set of vocabulary. The explanation behind the observed preferences of certain, say, initial consonants or consonant clusters as opposed to final ones always lies in human behavior, related to its physiology or to the so-called human factor: communication and/or economization of effort.

However, as various case studies have shown, individual historical processes in languages may influence expected preferences, so that actual exceptions may be explained by these historical events. So, for example, an expected preference for initial /f/ in Spanish, being a more visual, redundant phoneme, is actually not observed due to the fact that in the history of Spanish, /f/ > /h/ > Ø. Consequently, the very few words with initial /f/ that remain in Spanish are the result of later loans, and are therefore relatively infrequent.

Another matter that has not been taken into consideration is the influence of type frequency vs. token frequency. In traditional PHB studies, conclusions are drawn on the basis of the distribution of certain sounds in the inventory of words in a given language, which should be seen as the influence of the human factor in a certain type frequency in the particular set. Distributional particularities like the example given above might be the result of language use in which token frequency might play a role. In this paper, a number of PHB hypotheses are tested, not in a vocabulary set, but in a language sample to see if they also hold in actual language use. In this paper, we will focus on syllable structure. Examples will be given from Spanish and Italian. The results might enhance the value of PHB as an explanatory force for phonological systems.

References:


From Subject to Object in English or How I Lost the “Patient”

Thomas Eccardt

One of W. Diver's breakthroughs was the grammatical system as a scale of relative degrees. The thematic participants in a verbal scenario, subject, indirect object and object, are an example of this, where subject and object are at the extremities and indirect object is intermediate. This system is known as “control,” because the subject is usually the most in control of the situation and the direct object the least.

While the name “control” is appropriate in most cases, there are some kinds of verbs, such as those of perception and feeling, where the subject is not at all in control, and even where the object may typically exercise a kind of control. This paper will propose renaming the “control” system to “human role” system, at least for English, because it is a better fit for actual language data.

The first chapter of the modern novel The Great Gatsby was examined for all of its (419) transitively used verb tokens. 90% of grammatical subjects referred to either persons or their body parts, compared to 20% for the grammatical objects. So subjects are more often human beings than objects are. On the other hand, 99% of the subjects (human or non-human) fulfilled the role in the verbal scenario that is most characteristically human. This can be compared to 80% of subjects fulfilling the role that has greatest control of the scenario.

The remaining 1% of subjects were so-called psych verbs such as “annoy” which tend to be used participially: “I was more annoyed than interested.” These “object experiencer” verbs have been a conundrum in modern linguistics, because they pair with verbs such as “dislike” whose subject is the “experiencer” in a synonymous scenario. But “annoy” often implies “responsibility,” and since “responsibility” is a more uniquely human characteristic than “experiencing,” one can easily see how these verbs follow the humanness principle. “Dislike” implies blameless participants, so in this case the “experiencer” has to be compared for humanness with the “stimulus,” which may not even be alive.

The role of indirect objects will be shown to be intermediate in humanness between the subject and the object.
Idioms: The Universal Escape Clause – he may change the title

Alan Huffman
Graduate Center, CUNY

In language textbooks, reference grammars, etc., the term “idiom” is applied to any case where a rule of grammar fails, where a construction seems non-canonical, or where there is anomalous use of a lexical item. The idiom is, in effect, a universal escape clause that can be invoked whenever a grammar fails. The idiom is used in modern grammatical theories for essentially the same purpose. It serves as a way of rejecting responsibility for data when theory offers no analysis.

This talk will show how the analytical tools offered by Columbia School theory provide the means to analyze and thus demystify most or all idioms. First we will offer a categorization of idioms by the factor that makes them “idiomatic”: relative opacity, lack of fit between form and grammatical category, non-compositionality. Then we will then analyze idioms in two stages: 1) The lexical part. Idioms can usually be (partially) demystified in terms of well-known rhetorical categories: allusion; creative exploitation or imagery; metonymy; metaphor; use of a rare or archaic lexical item. 2) The grammatical part. Here is where the unique understanding of grammatical systems and formatives offered by Columbia School really makes a difference. To take one of many examples that will be discussed: The CS meaning assigned to English the, DIFFERENTIATION NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT, motivates its frequent use to indicate that one is to think of a familiar situation—bring down the house, take the bull by the horns, chew the fat, spill the beans, kick the bucket, The early bird catches the worm—where there is no specific referent on the scene, a usage that conflicts with the traditional view that the is selected for a specific or definite referent.

Time permitting, some remarks on the link between the “idiom” and Construction Grammar will be offered.
Linguistic expert witness testimony aiding the trier of fact:
Does the language data support the inference that the defendant was or was not at the scene of a conspiracy to bribe a judge?

Robert A. Leonard
Hofstra University

This analysis concerns 1) the meaning of second person pronouns and 2) topic initiation and support.

Members of a law firm bribe a judge. “Mr. Jones” is caught in the act of bribing the judge. He is turned by the police, outfitted with a wire, and sent by them to the law firm to initiate and record a conversation about the bribery.

Jones chats about various topics to “Mr. Brown”, a main partner in the firm, and “Mr. Smith”, the novice son of the main partner. There is an 8 second pause, and then Jones speaks about the bribe to Brown. Smith, the defendant at issue, is not a participant to the actual conversation about bribery but is heard speaking on the recording before the 8 second pause. Smith claims in court that he had no knowledge of the bribery.

Based solely on a sound recording, the trier of fact must infer whether Smith was present during the conversation, or not present. This is the most direct evidence of Smith’s knowledge of, and involvement in, the bribe.

Discussion:

1. There is no linguistic evidence that Smith heard, engaged in, or participated in any part of the conversation after the 8 second pause, after which Jones utters the inculpatory words “another delivery of sweet potatoes” and “we’re paying for it to get it done right.”

2. There is linguistic evidence that Smith was not engaged or participating in the conversation during the inculpatory portion between Jones and Brown.

• Smith did not introduce any topics relating to the bribery.
• Smith did not respond to any topics relating to the bribery.
• Analysis of second person pronouns you, y’all, and (not in these data) all y’all, shows Jones consistently used the pronoun y’all when he was speaking to more than one person and the pronoun you when he was speaking to only one person. Jones used the you pronoun when he discussed the bribery of the Judge with Brown, supporting the position that Smith was not a part of the conversation at that time.
Back to the Future to Re-visit meanings

Angelita Martínez
Universidad Nacional de La Plata y Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires.

Verónica Mailhes
Universidad Nacional de La Matanza

Both in synchronic studies and in those studies where the diachronic aspect is treated, it becomes evident that in Spanish there are different ways to express future time. For example, the morphological future ending in 

\[ \text{--ré} \]

alternates, in current Spanish, with the periphrasis of the verb \( \text{ir} \) (go), preposition \( \text{a} \) (to) and infinitive \( \text{“voy a...”} \) (I’m going to...), as shown in the following examples which come from the Río de La Plata variety:

(1) CFK advirtió que “\text{Vamos a sostener} este modelo de crecimiento con todas las decisiones que haya que tomar”. (Diario Digital 25-04-2012)

‘CFK announced that ‘\text{We are going to sustain} this growth model with all the decisions that have to be taken’’

(2) Rossi aseguró que \text{votarán} a favor de YPF unos doscientos diputados (La Nación 28-04-2012)

‘Rossi assured that about two hundred deputies will vote in favor of YPF’

This fact has been examined by innumerable studies and a number of authors, many of whom have approached the issue from a variationist perspective which related meanings and contexts (Martínez 1987, Sedano 1994, Company 1999, Alaniz 2010) and which, generally speaking, assigned the meaningful contribution of the forms to a continuum of factivity \( \text{ir+a+inf.} \) (more factual) vs. the synthetic form (less factual).

The data analyses according to the postulated meanings seemed to confirm the hypothesis, at least in the contexts related to daily oral communication (Martínez 1987). Nevertheless, a deeper insight into the use of forms in other discursive genders (Mailhes 2010) encourages us to rethink these basic meanings. In this sense, the hypothesis we are interested in confirming is that forms are linked to the evaluation of the fact by means of the possibility of controlling the given fact. If there is control, we can select the periphrasis. If there is no control, the synthetic form will be more appropriate. The absence of control can give place to a more or less remote possibility as well as to prophecy, two spheres where variation is exploited in discursive evolution.
Factuality Frame and Factuality Value – Classifying Danish Subclauses

Sune Sønderberg Mortensen
University of Copenhagen, Department of Scandinavian Studies and Linguistics

Studies of subordinate clause semantics frequently invoke notions of e.g. factuality and reality to account for speaker commitment/non-commitment to the truth of what the subclause expresses (e.g. Leech 1974; Quirk et al. 1985; Hengeveld 1998; Teleman et al. 1999; Givón 2001; Cristofaro 2003; Nordström 2010; Hansen & Heltoft 2011). Indeed, subclauses are often classified along these notions, rendering e.g. because-clauses “factual” (Hengeveld 1998: 357), if-clauses “nonfactual” (ibid.: 357) and that-clauses “unmarked” (Nordström 2010: 278) or “neutral” (Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 1497, on the Danish equivalent). But as I will argue, such labels tend to be applied in an overly simplistic manner, disregarding crucial empirical facts, and blurring the complex relations between how speaker commitment is structurally coded in particular subclause expressions and how these codings are actually exploited by language users in discourse.

I will propose a more detailed framework for classifying subclauses according to their factuality features as coded in the subordinators introducing them. In particular, by distinguishing structurally coded factuality frames from contextually determined factuality values, I will argue that Danish (finite) subclauses can be grouped into four semantically distinct classes, viz. non-factual clauses, factual clauses, scope-sensitive factual clauses and neutral clauses. While the two former subclause classes specify their factuality values within the subclauses themselves, i.e. through their subordinators sometimes combined with possible subclause-internal epistemic elements, the two latter classes allow or require subclause-external specification. In other words, they may be said to share an indexical content element, pointing outside the subclauses themselves for specification of their factuality values.

References:

The Signals of the English System of Control

Ricardo Otheguy
Graduate Center, CUNY

This paper proposes a set of hypotheses regarding the form side, that is, the signals of the grammatical system found in many Englishes known as the System of Control (Huffman 1996, 2002, 2009; Reid 2011: Section 9). We first propose a traditional formulation (the meanings of the System of Control are signaled by the position of NPs with relation to finite verbs). We then outline the limitations of such a statement and advance toward a description in terms compatible with Columbia School theory. An explicit analysis of the signals of the System of Control is important for two reasons. First, because these signals involve positioning of linguistic elements, and as such differ from more familiar grammatical systems whose signals are function words or affixes. Second, the analysis discussed here, and an analysis of the System of Control more broadly, is important because hypotheses regarding the System of Control stand in clear contrast to hypotheses offered for related phenomena in the sentence-based accounts that predominate in grammatical studies. In such accounts, whether situated within traditional-descriptive or formal-generative approaches, the facts of syntactic distribution covered by the System of Control are discussed, especially at the initial parsing stages, by such constructs as subject, predicate, finite verb, direct object, indirect object, and object of a preposition. These constructs are essential to the understanding of language offered by those approaches, an understanding that differs fundamentally from that afforded by Columbia School.

It is the central holding of Columbia School that languages are, in their entirety, symbol systems whose morphological and syntactic facts are wholly explainable through the postulation of signals and meanings (linguistic forms and their notional content) without recourse to the constructs of the sentence. To sustain such a position with relation to simple utterances like Mary saw the child and The child kicked the ball, which in other theories are regarded as having long-since been well and solidly accounted for, requires that not only the meanings, but the signals of the System be formulated with the utmost clarity. This paper attempts such a formulation, playing close attention to the role that inference, long known for its involvement in our understanding of meanings, must also play in our understanding of signals.

References:


Urgent Imperatives: Cognitive-functional Considerations of the Spanish Gerund with Imperative Functions.

Victor Prieto
North Greenville University

Traditionally, Spanish imperatives (IMPs) are not connected with gerund forms normally. This paper, however, shows important cognitive-functional and semantic-pragmatic links between these two grammatical notions. In the CREA corpus of the Spanish Language Academy there are Spanish IMP acts without the traditional IMP endings (e.g. –ad) but gerund forms instead. This ‘gerundial IMP’ has been briefly recognized by a few already (Gimenez-Resano, 1977; Lombardini and Perez-Vazquez, 2005), but there seems to be no complete formal accounts of such a phenomenon.

The current study is a corpus-based analysis of Spanish discourse data with IMPs. The use of the gerund form with IMP functions, instead of the purely aspectual gerund, I argue, is a symbolic tool to achieve a communicative function heavily marked with a semantic-pragmatic component of [+urgent] or [+imminent].

This is explained from a cognitive-functional approach. Langacker’s (2009) Cognitive and Dik’s (1996) Functional approaches to grammar give us a sound ground to formally and accurately account for this. Communicatively, I argue, there is a pragmatic necessity, at times, to make an IMP speech act urgent or to mark it with a semantic feature of [+imminent/urgent] (i.e. a “right now!” effect). Speakers cognitively recognize the “right now” sense of Spanish gerunds and “borrow” this form to achieve this function in the IMP act. Functionally and pragmatically, then, this is an “urgent/imminent/immediate imperative”, and the basis of the GERUND-IMP connection is cognitive and grammatical.

Langacker presents cognitive immediate vs. non-immediate distinctions. Tai & Xue (1989) have functionally described a “future imminent” marker in Chinese. Davis (1995) also has made cognitive-linguistic immediate-remote distinctions and has presented cases of IMMINENCE marking in language. Based on this, we conclude that CREA data such as “!Andando!” (Walk+ing) is an IMP, meaning not just “walk!” (Otherwise speakers would use suffixes like –ad) but rather “Walk right now!”
Polysemy poses major problems for any sign-based linguistic framework. Theoretically, polysemy conflicts with the Saussurean definition of a sign as a one-to-one pairing of form and meaning. Analytically, it requires deciding between a small number of imprecise meanings or a larger number of precise meanings. Methodologically, a polysemic analysis is often untestable. This paper will offer a solution to all three problems by proposing that polysemy be treated as a diachronic fact of language not a synchronic one; thus the proposal is that synchronically there is no polysemy, only homonymy. This solves the theoretical problem since homonyms are separate signs, each manifesting a one-to-one pairing. Treating polysemy as homonymy also solves the methodological problem because unlike a polysemic analysis a homonymic analysis is testable. And this, in turn, serves as the first step in solving the analytical problem of determining how many distinct meanings to posit for a form when a choice exists.
The position held by the grammatical tradition is that the Spanish forms morphological future and periphrastic future mean future, and the simple present means present. However, the observable distribution of these forms as they occur in naturalistic data indicates that the tradition’s hypothesized time meanings for these forms do not fit the data. Counterexamples of these forms as they are used in context show that they occur in all three time spots, past, present, and future. The labels ‘simple present’ and ‘morphological/periphrastic future’ given by the tradition, are conventional names used to refer to these forms, but these labels do not actually correspond to their semantic content. A new meaning analysis is still needed that can provide a more adequate explanation for the distributions of these three verb forms. I propose that the morphological future, periphrastic future, and simple present express different degrees of speaker certainty with regard to the occurrence of the event. My hypothesis will be based on a newly hypothesized grammatical system called the Degree of Certainty System, formulated within the Columbia School approach.
Scene, Meaning, and Message and the System of Degree of Control:  
*Giving the Wall a Push*

Nancy Stern  
The City College of New York, CUNY

The English System of Degree of Control (Huffman 2009; Reid 2011) posits that the positions of participants in relation to an event signal varying degrees of Control over that event. In traditional terms, the System pertains to the placement of what are conventionally called subjects as well as both direct and indirect objects.

Examples such as *She gave the wall a push* appear to pose at least two separate challenges for the Control analysis. First, it is not apparent in what sense an inanimate object like *the wall* exerts Control in the event of *pushing*. And second, it calls for an explanation for why a three-participant event is signaled (1), when the scene appears to have just two participants (2). That is, why is *pushing* conceptualized as a participant rather than as an action in (1), which is what appears to be on the scene.

According to the Control analysis, in the three-participant examples the second participant is signaled to have a MID level of Control, while in the 2-participant example, the second participant is signaled to have a LOWER degree of Control:

(1) She gave **the wall** a push (3-participants)  
HIGH MID LOW

(2) She pushed **the wall** (2-participants)  
HIGHER LOWER

In this paper, an examination of authentic data will reveal that the meanings hypothesized by the Control System do account for differences in messages between these two types of utterances. In the 3-participant examples, we find *the wall* to be more interactively involved in the pushing, and thus exerting a higher degree of Control than in the 2-participant examples. These findings provide support for the Degree of Control analysis.

References:

Generation as Predictor of the Grammatical Distribution of English Borrowings among Spanish Speakers in New York

Rachel Varra
Graduate Center, CUNY

Studies on borrowing show that nouns are the most borrowed grammatical category and that discourse markers are rarely borrowed. But do individuals differ in the proportion that these categories are represented in their borrowings? Extensive interview data (n=147) with Spanish speakers show that, in fact, the distribution of English borrowings among grammatical categories varies by speaker group. Different generations use NPs and discourse markers to different extents. First generation informants borrowings are skewed toward a larger proportion of NPs than average. Second generation informants dedicate a larger proportion of borrowings than average to discourse markers. Nouns and discourse markers are each in their own way easy to borrow, (nouns are semantically rich and discourse markers are highly repetitive and can inserted anywhere in a sentence). Given the potential ease with which these categories could be used by a speaker of another language, the difference in the propensity for each generation to use NPs or discourse markers is hypothesized to reflect contrasts in both the type of meaning each category conveys and the orientation that the generations have to life in the U.S.. The elevated use of nouns by the first generation is thought to be indicative of a spectator’s perspective: informants name things important to the context of life in the U.S. but without necessarily allying themselves to the values and attitudes of English speakers. The elevated use of discourse markers by the second generation is thought to be indicative of an insider’s perspective: they not only name things (as when they use nouns), but also express discourse and cultural attitudes using the appropriate English means to do so (I don’t know, so…). This, naturally, reflects that the first generation are immigrants, born and raised in Latin America and that the second generation are born, raised in New York.
Registered participants

Altin, Tulay
City College of New York, CUNY. altintt@aol.com

Birnbaum, Joanna
Graduate Center, CUNY. joannabirnbaum@yahoo.fr

Breytenbrat, Alexandra
Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. beytenbr@gmail.com

Carpenter, Mary
City College of New York, CUNY and New York University. mfc5@nyu.edu

Chambers, Eric
Graduate Center, CUNY. ericnchambers@gmail.com

Christensen, Tanya Karoli
Lanchart, University of Copenhagen. tkaroli@hum.ku.dk

Darwich, Berenice
Graduate Center, CUNY. beredarwich@yahoo.com

Davis, Joseph
City College of New York, CUNY. jdadvis@ccny.cuny.edu

de Jonge, Bob
University of Groningen. r.de.jonge@rug.nl

Eccardt, Tomas
Independent Scholar. teccardt@gmail.com

Ferreira, Luana
Graduate Center, CUNY. lyferreira@msn.com

Glasser, Paul
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. pglasser@yivo.cjh.org

Gorup, Radmilla
Columbia University. rjg26@columbia.edu

Heidrick, Ingrid
Graduate Center, CUNY. ingrid.heidrick@gmail.com

Ho, Eduardo
Graduate Center, CUNY. eduardo.ho@morganstanleysmithbarney.com
Huffman, Alan  
Graduate Center, CUNY. ah620@att.net

Kaplan, Michael  
Sector Micro Computer. michaelkaplan1@myfastmail.com

Leonard, Robert  
Hofstra University. robert.a.leonard@hofstra.edu

Mailhes, Verónica  
Universidad Nacional de La Matanza. veronicaessex@hotmail.com

McCormick, Andrew  
Graduate Center, CUNY. a.mccormick81@yahoo.com

Montoya, Ignacio  
Graduate Center, CUNY. ignacio.l.montoya@gmail.com

Mortensen, Sune Sønderberg  
University of Copenhagen. sunsm@hum.ku.dk

Nagano, Marisa  
Graduate Center, CUNY. mnagano@gc.cuny.edu

Otheguy, Ricardo  
Graduate Center, CUNY. rothe guy@gc.cuny.edu

Pintado-Casas, Pablo  
Kean University. pcasas@kean.edu

Prieto, Victor  
North Greenville University. vprieto@ngu.edu

Reid, Wallis  
Rutgers University. wallis.reid@gse.rutgers.edu

Robertson, Judith  
Kean University. robertju@kean.edu

Rodríguez-Bachiller, Betsy  
Kean University. b.r.bachiller@gmail.com

Rohret, Bernice  
City College of New York, CUNY. bernice_rohret@simail.com
Ruggles, Jaseleen
Graduate Center, CUNY. jossruggs@hotmail.com

Sabar, Nadav
Graduate Center, CUNY. nadavsabar@yahoo.com

Stern, Nancy
City College of New York, CUNY. nstern@ccny.cuny.edu

Varra, Rachel
Graduate Center, CUNY. rvarra@gc.cuny.edu