

Department of Linguistics 2014 Senior Thesis Colloquium

Tuesday, May 6th, 2014
2:15 pm – 4:30 pm
Sever Hall 102

- 2:15 – 2:30 Welcoming remarks, Prof. Maria Polinsky, Head Tutor
- 2:30 – 2:50 Preston So
*Broadcast Diglossia and the Institutionalization of Official Welsh:
A Sociolinguistic and Political Perspective*
- 2:50 – 3:10 Nicholas Longenbaugh
Tree Adjoining Grammar at the Interfaces
- 3:10 – 3:30 Naomi Wills
*The Original Word Jumble:
A Case Study of Latin Word Order in the Vindolanda Tablets*
- 3:30 – 3:40 ~ Break ~
- 3:40 – 4:00 Michael Goncalves
Art without Iambs: The Free Verse Poetics of Kirill Medvedev
- 4:00 – 4:20 Miriam Farkas
*Switchers, Social Identity, and Striped Elephants:
An Account of Language Interaction and Agreement
in Moroccan French-Arabic Code-switching*
- 4:20 – 4:30 Closing remarks
- 5:00 Reception (*meet us in Boylston Hall, 3rd floor*)

Broadcast Diglossia and the Institutionalization of Official Welsh: A Sociolinguistic and Political Perspective

Preston So

Linguistics and Government

One of the major success stories of language revitalization, the Welsh language has undergone a seemingly impossible reversal in fortune through explicit language planning. Today, it enjoys wide use and support in the Welsh public sphere. The Welsh language exhibits strong diglossia between an informal, colloquial register used in speech and a formal, literary register used in writing. Despite its successes, Welsh language policy is burdened by pressures that encourage the institutionalization of official formal Welsh at the expense of colloquial Welsh. These pressures derive from a broad appeal to Welsh as a “cultural tool” that galvanized the Welsh language movement. As the successor to the Welsh language movement, the Welsh government, a beneficiary of European devolution, has been accused of adhering too closely to canonical literary norms and the Welsh historical context in order to standardize a disused variant of Welsh in public discourse. Together with the impact of cultural diffusion from British institutions and of interclass relations, this institutionalization of official Welsh has narrowed the scope and inclusivity of the Welsh language movement, creating a new sociolinguistic milieu for the language. This thesis aims to scrutinize the intersection of written and spoken Welsh within subtitles on Sianel Pedwar Cymru, the subsidized television channel which, through implicit language planning, has institutionalized official Welsh without conferring legitimacy on all Welsh registers. Through a variational study of diglossia in written subtitles, this paper contends that subtitle overcorrection in the soap opera *Rownd a Rownd* is symptomatic—even arguably a byproduct—of the institutionalization of official Welsh.

Tree Adjoining Grammar at the Interfaces

Nicholas Longenbaugh

Computer Science and Linguistics

This thesis constitutes an exploration of the applications of tree adjoining grammar (TAG) to natural language syntax. Perhaps more than any of its major competitors such as HPSG and LFG, TAG has never strayed too far from the guiding principles of generative syntax. Indeed, following the pioneering work of Frank (2004), TAG has been successfully incorporated into Chomsky's (1995) Minimalist Program (MP). In large part, however, Frank (2004) leaves unexplored the issue of how TAG applies at the PF and LF interfaces. Given the fundamental importance of interfaces within the MP, no minimalist syntactic theory is complete without at least some notion of the means by which syntactic structure relates to pronunciation and interpretation. In this thesis we attempt to provide insight on this very issue: we address how TAG interfaces with the articulatory and interpretive components of the language faculty, and what insights it provides to minimalist conceptions of these interfaces. Ultimately, our aim is both to reaffirm the viability of TAG as a minimalist syntactic theory as well as to demonstrate that TAG makes clear otherwise arcane facts in natural language syntax.

The central proposal of this thesis is twofold. First, TAG may be naturally extended to interface with the articulatory and interpretive components of the language faculty by making recourse to synchronous TAG (STAG). Second, once such a framework has been adopted, minimalist ideas regarding the interaction between syntax and linear order can be applied to deal with certain problematic examples in the TAG framework. TAG thus offers confirmation that in at least some cases, certain aspects of linear order are dependent on post-syntactic operations, so that syntax does not always wholly determine linear order. As a corollary of our proposal, we also demonstrate, through a case study in Niuean raising, that

the TAG system makes clear predictions on phenomena that are difficult to describe in mainstream minimalist theories.

Our argumentation for these proposals proceeds in three major stages. First, we formalize the synchronous TAG system that has to date been applied in a mostly piecemeal way by various researchers (see Shieber & Nesson 2006, Frank & Storoshenko 2012 for some examples). As a part of this formalization, we argue that the derivation of the LF object, but not the PF object, should make recourse to a more expressive version of the TAG system: multicomponent TAG, a variant that relaxes some constraints on the primitive units in the TAG system to yield greater expressive power. Second, we argue that the STAG system lends credence to the view that at least some word order is determined post-syntactically. In the past, researchers have presented ad hoc extensions of the expressive power of TAG to handle various difficult examples such as subject-to-subject raising in English questions and Irish and Welsh main clauses. We demonstrate that these extensions are both theoretically suspect and ultimately unnecessary given minimalist notions of the derivation: for many of the data motivating these extensions, there is independent evidence that their derivation in fact relies on post-syntactic rearrangements of certain verbal heads. Such examples are therefore well within the generative capacity of a framework with a TAG-based syntactic component that allows certain specific and well motivated post-syntactic rearrangements. Third, we demonstrate that not only is our particular system well motivated within the theoretical bounds of the MP, but also that it makes surprising and accurate empirical predications in cases that have otherwise defied analysis. Specifically, the Austronesian language Niuean features a peculiar instance of raising that has defied a satisfactory analysis since its discovery by Seiter (1980, 1983). We show that TAG makes the clear prediction that there is no raising in Niuean, then argue that this prediction is borne out under a careful examination of the facts. Given that the framework was developed almost exclusively based on the Indo-European language family, its ability to capture confounding behavior in a typologically dissimilar Austronesian language is a strong confirmation of its status as a reasonable alternative to mainstream minimalist syntactic theories.

**The Original Word Jumble:
A Case Study of Latin Word Order in the Vindolanda Tablets**

Naomi Wills

The Classics and Linguistics

In order to establish a more concrete way of determining the word order in Latin sentences, I propose a look at non-literary letters written in Latin, specifically the Vindolanda Tablets. This is a collection of miscellaneous letters written around 100A.D. in a Roman Fort in Britain. These letters are a unique way to determine how the ancient non-literary Romans wrote to their peers. Although classicist J. N. Adams has done extensive descriptive analysis on the letters, a modern linguistic analysis of these letters is lacking. Hilla Halla-aho, who writes on the linguistic nature of the syntax of these letters, concludes that there is OV word order, but it is purely observational and uses a flat syntactical structure.

This analysis explores the syntax structure provided in Devine and Stephens' *Latin Word Order*. The proposed specifier structure on scrambling and neutral word order in the Latin language is applicable to the tablets, however it fails to determine the workings of negation. I propose that the Negative Phrase does have its own projection outside of the Verb Phrase.

Further study of Latin using non-literary sources is necessary in order to determine the structure of the language. This will affect ideas of diachronic and historical linguistics, more specifically the transition from a Latin word order to the word order of the Romance languages. This will also be relevant to the research on free word order languages by providing a new method of approaching their syntax.

Art without Iambs: The Free Verse Poetics of Kirill Medvedev

Michael Goncalves

Linguistics and Slavic Languages & Literatures

Linguistics and literary study are two disciplines chiefly concerned with language, but they are brought together far less than one would like. In Russian literature, free verse has exploded in popularity over the past several decades, but it has not yet been examined with formal linguistic methodology. In this thesis, I combine the data-driven research process of a linguist to the work of a contemporary Russian poet, Kirill Medvedev, who published his first collection of poems in 2000.

My research focuses initially on Medvedev's stress patterns, since sequences of stressed and unstressed feet are the building blocks of traditional meter. I compare Medvedev's poetry to his prose to investigate whether stress patterns are distinctive of poetic rhythm. I prove that this is not the case, as the patterns of stress in the two genres are nearly identical. I then turn to other poetic devices that Medvedev employs, focusing on line structure and sound repetition. Each of these elements, in contrast to stress patterns, play an important role in poetry that does not appear in prose. Finally, I examine the effects of oral performance, looking at spectrograms of Medvedev's poetry readings and discussing his quick pace and the effect of the pervasive stutter with which he speaks.

I ultimately conclude that Medvedev certainly incorporates poetic devices into his free verse that distinguish it from his prose. However, I also offer several directions for future research that would expand the scope of current project, suggesting that Medvedev's verse can be examined more broadly and be compared to that of other contemporary Russian poets.

**Switchers, Social Identity, and Striped Elephants:
An Account of Language Interaction and Agreement
in Moroccan French-Arabic Code-switching**

Miriam Farkas

Linguistics

Code-switching, the use of more than one language or code over the course of a single speech event, occurs in bilingual communities as a result of language contact. One such linguistic community is Morocco: due to its history of Berber dynasties, Arabic speaking Muslim conquests, and French colonial control, contemporary Morocco has a complex linguistic profile with widespread fluency in multiple languages. Most young, educated citizens are bilingual and switch between Moroccan Arabic and French fluidly, alternating between the languages repeatedly in casual speech. This thesis examines Moroccan French-Arabic code-switching from both a broad and narrow perspective, framing it within the context of contemporary models of language switching and addressing issues of linguistic choice, innovation, and social identity. Specific cases of switching between French and Moroccan Arabic are shown to contradict current theories and constraints while others do not. In particular, we address code-switching across noun-adjective phrases where the agreement paradigms of the two languages come into conflict. Native speaker intuitions suggest that the narrow case of code-switching between nouns and adjectives occasionally violates the syntax of at least one language involved and displays unpredictable patterns of grammaticality, a finding which poses problems for traditional theories of code-switching.