

**Linguistics 117r - Linguistic Field Methods Poster Session**  
**Diti Bhadra, Lecturer**

**May 4, 2018 at 3:30 pm**  
**Boylston Hall 3rd Floor Lounge**

**Complementation as Predication: An analysis of /akka/ constructions in Oromo**  
**Shannon Bryant**

In Oromo, the function word /akka/ is used in constructions corresponding to English clausal complementation. But unlike a complementizer, /akka/ can associate with either clause in the complex sentence without any difference in meaning. In this project, I propose two alternative structural analyses of /akka/: (i) /akka/ is a predicational head that takes a pro-predicate sister (c.f. den Dikken, 2006). (ii) /akka/ is a relational head that takes an NP sister.

**What Oromo can tell us about scrambling**  
**Giuseppe Ricciardi**

Oromo is a flexible word order language: all the six logical permutations of a simple sentence with a subject, an object and a verb sound natural to our informant; nonetheless, the data elicited predominantly exhibit a SOV order which can be, consequently, be considered more basic than the other five. This situation raises naturally the question as to under which conditions in a concrete speech act an Oromo speaker would deviate from the canonical SOV order and utter, for example, an OSV sentence. Concerning this issue, in the literature one can find contrastive claims based on different flexible word order languages: Mahajan (1990) argues based on Hindi that scrambling of the object is ambiguous between a A-movement derivation and a A'-movement derivation; Miyagawa (1997, 2001, 2003) replicates Mahajan's observation for Japanese and suggests that an A-moved scrambled object targets [Spec, TP] while a an A'-moved scrambled object targets [Spec, FP]; Bailyn (2003) replicates this A vs A'-scrambling distinction for Russian and suggests that A-scrambling is an instance of Generalized Inversion while A'-scrambling targets [Spec, TopicP] yielding a topic/comment structure; Kidwai (2000) argues based on Hindi-Urdu that scrambled objects uniformly yield topic/comment structures; however, based on the syntactic differences with phrases marked with the topic marker -to, she argues further that the scrambled object themselves are not topicalized phrases (i.e. they don't target Spec TopicP) but they target an XP-adjoined position. In this work, I show that Oromo supports a Kidwai-like analysis that posits a uniform nature for scrambled objects (i.e. they are topics in a topic/comment structure) but I remain agnostic with respect to whether the syntactic collocation of the scrambled object is [Spec, TopicXP] or XP-adjoined since Oromo doesn't show overt marking of topicalized phrases, hence it doesn't allow the investigator to make an explicit comparison between topicalized objects and scrambled objects.

**The Elusive [-ma-] Suffix in the Oromo Language**  
**Mustafa Bal**

The Oromo language is the most widely spoken language of the Cushitic branch in the Afroasiatic family. In Oromo, the suffix [-ma-] appears in many cases. The suffix [-ma-] can attach to verbs, nouns, adjectives and demonstratives. We found that the [-ma-] suffix is a scalar particle that can scale with intensifiers, exhaustifiers and ability modals. In addition, we found that the usage of the [-ma-] suffix can be interpreted in three different readings: "only," "very," and "able to," and that all three readings are possible in many usages

of [-ma-]. Moreover, the behavior of this suffix is very unique, and similar multiple readings are not possible in neighboring languages such as Amharic.