

GSAS Workshop in Indo-European and Historical Linguistics

Speaker: [Jonathan Bobaljik](#) (Department of Linguistics, Harvard University)

Time: Thursday April 4 @ 5 PM EST

Location: *Boylston 335* (Linguistics department, third floor)

Title: "Chukotko-Kamchatkan Inflection: Ergativity and the putative Inverse"

Abstract: Itelmen and the Chukotkan languages share an extremely intricate verbal inflection system. Some authors (Volodin) have suggested that this was borrowed from Chukotkan into Itelmen, while others (Fortescue, Kantarovich) argue that the languages have a common origin. I propose here some steps towards an internal reconstruction, arguing that the Itelmen system is conservative, and that the core Chukotkan system arose via heteroclisis — I make a specific conjecture about the ambiguous constructions in Itelmen that were the (or a) locus of reanalysis. In agreement with Kantarovich (2019-Diachronica), but differing in details, I argue that Ergativity in Chukotkan (lacking in Itelmen) arose as a consequence of the reanalysis of the verbal inflectional system. I also argue that the existence of “inverse” marking in Chukotkan (proposed by Comrie 1980) is epiphenomenal, converging in part with recent conclusions about Algonquian (Oxford).