French-American Graduate Symposium
Paris-Sorbonne - SUNY, Albany
Albany, April 18-19 2016

PROGRAM

April 18, Monday (ED335)
2:00- 2:10 Opening
Professor Istvan Kecskes, SUNY, Albany
Professor Muriel Grosbois, Université Paris-Sorbonne

2:15 – 3 :15 Presentation of Dr. Muriel Grosbois, Université Paris-Sorbonne

Corrective Feedback in a Blended Learning Environment: Revisiting the ‘Grammar Correction’ Debate

Muriel Grosbois is an Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics at Université Paris-Sorbonne, ESPE (School of Education), France. She is a member of the CeLiSo (http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/celiso) research team. Her research interests include language course development in online settings, the integration of technology in language learning and teaching, SLA and teacher education. She is Head of the Center for Digital Resources in Languages and Cultures and Chief Editor of the online Journal Alsic (alsic.revues.org).

April 19, Tuesday (Alumni House Conference Room)

MORNING

9:00 Opening

9:10 – 9:50
Mathilde Gaillard, Université Paris-Sorbonne
Defining the world of American think tanks: An overview of the methodological and epistemological issues in an English for Specific Purposes research project.

9 :55 – 10:35
Romain Delhem, Université Paris-Sorbonne
Do argument structures have meaning?

10:35 – 10:55 Coffee Break
11:00 – 11:40
Ernest Hounhouyenou – Université Paris-Sorbonne
Irrealis and Unreality in English grammars: a can of worms?

11:45 – 1:30 Lunch Break (Light lunch will be available in the Alumni House)

AFTERNOON (Alumni House Conference Room)

1:35 – 2:15
Isabel Martinez-Cuenca – SUNY, Albany
The development of earth science concepts in English by Spanish-speaking students

2:20 – 2:40 Coffee Break

2:45 – 4:00
Doctoral Thesis Defense of Shu Han Yeh, SUNY, Albany
The Teachability of Situation-Bound Utterances in Modern Chinese as a Foreign Language Context

Committee Members: Istvan Kecskes, Professor, SUNY, Albany
James Hargett, Professor, SUNY, Albany
Carlotta Sparvoli, Professor, University College, Cork, Ireland

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Istvan Kecskes  Wilfrid Rotgé
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CELISO (Centre de Linguistique en Sorbonne) : http://www.paris-sorbonne.fr/celiso

Abstracts :


This presentation aims to report on a study that was conducted at Paris-Sorbonne University in the context of the reorganization of the language classes offered to specialists of disciplines other than languages. A blended learning English course was set up in 2013. It was first administered to a cohort of B1 students during the academic year 2014-15.
Throughout this course, students have to perform online aural and written tasks but the whole device raises questions as to the type of corrective feedback (CF) which has to be implemented to promote second language acquisition since CF can be provided to learners in different ways (direct/explicit, indirect/implicit, focused or unfocused) and is the subject of major controversies in SLA research (Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996). In addition, although research hasn’t managed to show which CF type is the most effective one, its usefulness is now well documented (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Sheen, 2007; Ellis et al., 2008).

In line with Bitchener & Knoch (2009), we believe that more empirical evidence is needed to investigate the optimal conditions for effective feedback, even more so in the case of virtual learning environments which offer new opportunities to complement current CF strategies. In this respect, different types of corrective feedback were given to various groups of students on their written productions to analyse and compare the relative effectiveness of the different CF strategies. A performance comparison in terms of accuracy between the first and last piece of writing was carried out in 2014-15 and will be again in 2015-2016, to track the evolution of the number of errors made and the nature of these errors and to identify which CF strategy is the most effective.

The main hypothesis of our study is that unfocused indirect CF in the form of metalinguistic comments on the nature of errors combined with a series of extra technology-mediated micro-tasks on the specific problems identified should give the best results. This strategy also makes the most of the added value of technology-mediated tasks in online settings.

Mathilde Gaillard: “Defining the world of American think tanks: an overview of the methodological and epistemological issues in an English for Specific Purposes research project”

The approach to ESP that underpins our research project is based on the notion that specialized discourse is produced by specific communities that have their own values, constraints, and raison d’être. Accordingly, we aim to characterize a particular community of experts–American think tanks—by offering a two-pronged analysis of the linguistic features of their discourse and their cultural practices. Set at the crossroads of the academic and political world, American think tanks however constitute a heterogeneous community, uncircumscribed by any official definition. This paper therefore focuses on the methodological and epistemological issues that arise as we first attempt to delineate the community under study and its main characteristics. Deliberately broad or, on the contrary, criteria-based definitions taking into account the organizational status, functions or activities of these organizations have been suggested (Stone, Denham, & Garnett, 1998). However, they fail to account for the variety of institutions using the label “think tank”. Typologies of think tanks also do not seem to reflect the evolutions of a constantly changing world (McGann, 1992). More sociological analyses of their positions halfway between the academic and political world do not offer a working definition of the community studied (Medvetz, 2012). A bottom-up, corpus-driven analysis of a sample of think tanks’ mission statements may then allow yet unseen characteristics to emerge. By looking at various disciplinary backgrounds to map the community of American think tanks, this paper sheds light on the first epistemological questions that may structure a research project in ESP.

References


Romain Delhem: “Do argument structures have meaning?”

Recent research has shown that the argument structure of verbs is meaningful, and that the meaning of these argument structures is independent from and adds to the meaning of the verbs they are associated with. Adele Goldberg, one of the proponents of construction grammars, has even claimed
that as a form, a single argument structure construction has a single meaning, and that some argument structure constructions are redundant with the meaning of some verbs. In this presentation, I will review several potential argument structure constructions, like the Intransitive construction, the Transitive construction and the Middle construction, and show that their monosemy is not so self-evident. I will then present several solutions, including Goldberg’s, to account for all the meanings that could be associated with these argument structure constructions, and I will try to evaluate the various arguments that will have been put forward.

**Ernest Hounhouayenou:** “Irrealis and Unreality in English grammars: A can of worms?”

Are *irrealis* and *unreality* two sides of the same coin? Kruisinga & Erades were the first grammarians of English to refer to *irrealis* as a modal use of the past tense morpheme –ED, expressing a “contrary-to-fact or highly improbable” hypothesis (Kruisinga & Erades 1947: 200). Joos holds that –ED expresses “unreality” aside of its temporal meaning (Joos 1964: 122). I argue, however, that the conceptual structure of *irrealis* is polymorphic and thus nebulous. It is to be carefully distinguished from that of *unreality*.

I first explain that *irrealis* actually hovers between the unreal, the potential1 and the non-actual. It is therefore unrelated to any specific marker in English grammar. Givón equates this notional category to an “epistemic uncertainty”2 modality (Givón 1994: 275) and links it to multiple markers, including future tense and habitual present. Huddleston & Pullum treat *irrealis* a “mood” that refers to non-temporal WERE only for *I, she* and *he* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 149):

1 “A proposition is Realis if it asserts that a State of Affairs is an 'actualized and certain fact of reality', whereas it is classified as Irrealis if it implies that a SoA belongs to the realm of the imagined or hypothetical, and as such it constitutes a potential or possible event but it is not an observable fact of reality” (Elliot 2000 : 66-67)

2 “The proposition is weakly asserted as either possible, likely or uncertain, or necessary, desired or undesired.” (Givón 1994: 267)

(1) **If I were** you I’d put the earphones in (BNC).

Hirtle, for his part, associates *Irrealis* with counterfactuality in sentences such as:

(2) **Were she here now,** Mary would be able to tell us (Hirtle 2007: 64).

I then examine the problematic status of *unreality* through a comparative study of its treatment in the French tradition of grammar and in Anglophone English grammars. I show that in the Anglophone tradition, this notional category lacks conceptual autonomy. Its semantic perimeter is often conflated with notions that are close, albeit different (*remote, counterfactual, hypothetical*) (Matthews 1997: 192). I argue that such associations prevent one to delineate the precise conceptual perimeter of *unreality*.

Finally, I explain why Cognitive Grammar offers a valuable insight into the link between reality and unreality/unreality. I refer to Langacker’s *Dynamic Evolutionary Model* (1991; 2008), but I challenge his take on “irreality” (2008: 302) by dissociating *unreality* from modality. In doing so, I propose a definition of *unreality* that is based on a philosophical approach of the concept of *virtuality* (Granger 1995).

**References**


