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semantics more Equitable & Diverse

- * offering need-based travel scholarships
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SALTED Workshop:

(Prestige) English as an Object and Meta-Language

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What impact has the focus on English had on scholars outside of the Anglophone world? What can be done to increase the representation of non-English languages and non-prestige dialects in semantic research, pedagogy, and scholarly publication?

(Prestige) English as an Object and Meta-Language

SALTed workshop

Donka F. Farkas

June 9, 2022

Two topics

1. General lesson linguists can and should teach: radical equality of languages
2. Some ideas for bringing a cross-linguistic perspective in introductory semantics courses

1. Radical equality of languages

Two lessons we have learned and should pass on every chance we get:

(i) Despite great diversity, human languages are equally complex and equally worth studying

- ▶ Take any two languages: neither one is more complex, better organized, richer or intrinsically more worth studying than the other.
- ▶ This is an obvious fact to us but not to non-linguists; it goes against the grain because of a deep seated bias for our own way of doing things, particularly strong in matters of language.

We should practice what we preach:

- ▶ The importance of work on ‘understudied’ languages has become clear over the years but should not be overlooked.
- ▶ We shouldn’t forget, however, that we have not finished ‘over-studied’ languages either.
- ▶ We should be careful not to under-appreciate work on English or other well-studied languages.

(ii) The difference between **(standard) language** and **dialect** is linguistically arbitrary.

An anonymous saying popularized by the Yiddish scholar Max Weinreich:

A language is a dialect with an army and a flag / a navy.

This observation goes against the grain for both speakers of 'standard' varieties and speakers of 'dialects': there is a deep seated belief that differences are due to dialect speakers making mistakes, or using a 'lower' form of language.

Our job: teach the world that linguistic behavior is universally rule governed and complex.

2. Cross-linguistic perspective in Intro to Semantics

Negative concord

Co-occurrence of verbal negation and negative indefinites

- ▶ allowed with/without sensitivity to pre/post verbal field:
Slavic, Romanian, Italian, French, Hungarian, non-standard varieties of English
- ▶ not allowed - standard English

Assignment (Tom Roberts): research a language (preferably by working with a speaker) to find out how negation interacts with (negative) indefinites in that language.

Other topics that come to mind

- ▶ the distribution and interpretation of special indefinites
- ▶ marked biased questions and other types of specially marked interrogatives
- ▶ differential object marking in Spanish

SALT(ED) WORKSHOP

(Prestige) English as an Object and Meta Language

Carol Rose Little

University of Oklahoma

SALT 32 June 9, 2022

WHO I AM

- Carol Rose Little, Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma
- Interested in syntax and its interfaces with semantics and morphology
- Have taught semantics at the undergraduate level at the University of Oklahoma
- Taught Introducción a la semántica: MA level at CIESAS in Mexico, delivered online in Spanish
 - 3 weeks, 36 hours, June – July 2020
 - All 12 students in the course were speakers of indigenous languages of Latin America, representing 11 languages
 - Purépecha, Bolivian Quechua, Tsotsil, Me'paa, Lhimasipij, Zapotec, Mixtec, Zoque, Triqui, Tojol-ab'al, Mixe

TEACHING SEMANTICS IN SPANISH



Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios
Superiores
en Antropología Social



**Maestría en Lingüística
Indoamericana**

Unidad México, D.F.

Introducción a la semántica (36 horas)

CIESAS, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas

DESCRIPCIÓN

Este curso ofrece una introducción a los fundamentos de la semántica de las lenguas naturales, es decir, a la codificación del significado de las expresiones lingüísticas. En él, los estudiantes adquirirán las herramientas necesarias para realizar investigaciones en el ámbito de la semántica de forma independiente y llevar a cabo proyectos autodirigidos en varias lenguas. El curso trata no solo los fundamentos básicos de la semántica sino también cuestiones más especializadas tales como la (in)definitud, la morfosemántica, los numerales, los comparativos, las cláusulas relativas, así como aspectos metodológicos de la investigación semántica. Durante el curso, los estudiantes deberán leer artículos originales sobre semántica, realizar ejercicios y varias tareas, y exponer un proyecto independiente con el fin de escribir un trabajo final sobre la definitud.

TEACHING SEMANTICS IN SPANISH

CALENDARIO

| Semana | Contenido |
|-----------------|--|
| <i>Semana 1</i> | <u>Fundamentos de la semántica</u> |
| 29-jun | ¿Qué es la semántica y cómo se investiga? Entrega de tarea 0; Tarea 1 |
| 30-jun | <i>No hay clase</i> |
| 1-jul | Otros fundamentos de la semántica (Escandell 2004: 5.1–5.3) Entrega de tarea 1; Tarea 2 |
| 2-jul | Metodología en semántica, introducción a la definitud Tarea 3 (cuestionario) |
| 3-jul | <i>No hay clase</i> Entrega de tarea 2 |
| <i>Semana 2</i> | <u>(In)definitud, cuantificación y comparativos</u> |
| 6-jul | Cuantificación y numerales (Escandell 2004: 6.5–6.7); Entrega de tarea 3; |
| 7-jul | Definitud en el zapoteco y el español (Ana Arrieta) Reporte de lectura (Leonetti 1999); Tarea 4 |
| 8-jul | <i>No hay clase</i> |
| 9-jul | Clasificadores nominales (Justin Royer) (Royer 2018) Entrega de tarea 4; Tarea 5 |
| 10-jul | Comparativos (Jon Ander Mencia) (Mencia 2019: sec 1–4) |
| <i>Semana 3</i> | <u>Otros temas concretos y exposiciones largas</u> |
| 13-jul | Cláusulas relativas (Scott AnderBois) Entrega de tarea 5 (antes de la clase); (Escandell 2004: cap 7) |
| 14-jul | (Ir)realis (José Armando Fernández Guerrero) Lectura por determinarse; Entrega de un párrafo sobre el proyecto final (Tarea 6) |
| 15-jul | Resumen de los temas del curso |
| 16-jul | Exposiciones sobre el tema del trabajo final |
| 17-jul | Exposiciones sobre el tema del trabajo final |

M. Victoria Escandell Vidal

Fundamentos de Semántica composicional

Ariel Lingüística

CHALLENGES

- Terminology
- More literature on semantics written in English than Spanish
 - Issues for finding readings for students
 - Even less on non-Indo-European languages written in Spanish
- Common introductory textbooks on formal semantics do not discuss much linguistic variation

OUTCOMES OF COURSE

Expresión de la
definitud e
(in)definitud en la
lengua tsotsil totik.

Paraíso del Grijalva, Mpio.
Venustiano Carranza, Chiapas.

LA EXPRESIÓN DE LA DEFINITUD EN EL *LHIMASIPIJ*

Definitud en la
lengua triqui de
Copala

Introducción a la semántica



LA DEFINITUD EN EL MIXE DE SIHM

SEMÁNTICA I



FUTURE

- Seize opportunities to present and publish theoretical semantic work in languages other than English
 - E.g., *Cuadernos de Lingüística de El Colegio de México*
- By presenting, publishing and teaching in languages not English we can expand readership, making the field more inclusive, gain more knowledge on understudied language and provide more opportunities to native speaker linguists

English as a meta-language

A bias problem

SALTed Workshop

México

June 9

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Meta-language and bias

Claim: The practice of doing linguistic science in English, a fact connected to well-known extra-scientific reasons (mainly, historical and sociological reasons), creates a *prestige bias*.

Meta-language and bias

- The prestige bias conditions concrete practices (scientific and others) in various, more direct or indirect, ways by:
 - A. introducing unwanted (and false) hierarchies across languages and researchers
 - B. complicating the dissemination of non-English languages in the scientific field
 - C. impoverishing our actual knowledge of semantic facts as a consequence of making many languages and researchers invisible
 - D. favoring academic discrimination by part of the academic and publication system

Ways of bias mitigation

Talking cure: Acknowledging explicitly the bias with all its unwanted consequences in events like these is a fundamental step, of course. But in addition, I would like to suggest some other ways of mitigating the prestige bias, most of them related to my own position in the field (i.e., as a non-English speaker researcher).

Ways of bias mitigation

Multilingual events (conferences, workshops, etc.): Francisco Ordóñez, Mary Kato and I co-organize the Romania Nova, a workshop about the Romance languages of the Americas. The official languages are English, Portuguese and Spanish with a strong recommendation for having English handouts/ppts. This allows for science dissemination in languages other than English. I also co-organize the *Encuentro de Gramática Generativa* in Argentina under the same modality. The experience has its pro and cons, as usual, but we should insist in the importance of this type of events in order to partially mitigate the language bias and to do science in languages other than English.

Ways of bias mitigation

Advanced research and didactic materials in non-English languages: One of the most undesired consequences of this bias is that many non-English speaker researchers give up doing science in their own native languages. Those of us who are in that position should keep doing science in our native languages even if this is not always properly acknowledged. This way, we can increase scientific knowledge in other languages. If the knowledge produced in these other languages is substantive, attention will be directed to these other languages. In addition, we should be able to produce advanced didactic material in our native languages. The semantic handbook Fernando Carranza and I wrote and published in 2021 is a step in this direction. We already know of some good results of having this material in our country.

Ways of bias mitigation

A public repository of non-English material: The scientific community could make available a public repository of “semantics in non-English languages”. Such repository could contain didactic and research material (including a list of semantic journals in other languages, etc.) and perhaps a guide of how to approach this multilingual material.

Ways of bias mitigation

Pressing publishers for supporting non-English speakers:

Many journals strongly recommend to have a native English corrector for drafts. This is unacceptable since it perpetuates the prestige bias. I know that Mora Maldonado and others created *LingProof*, a free proofreading service for *Glossa Psycholinguistics*. This a great move. But the journals, in particular the “rich” ones, should have that service as a minimum.

Ways of bias mitigation

Perhaps, although needed, these are small steps. Bias eradication depends, of course, on other more radical changes of the academic and non-academic systems within and across countries. Such changes are, to a large extent, independent of the academic system *per se* and involve us, more than as subjects of the academic world, as political subjects committed to actions for a more balanced social world.

¡Muchas gracias!