The 31st International Systemic Functional Congress
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Workshops
Many different things happen at the same time in human language. In the science of linguistics these are traditionally treated in analytically separate sub-disciplines, for example phonetics, phonology, morphology, lexical semantics, and syntax. Our method for examining the vocalizations of language competent bonobos is more integrated; the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics regards language as a whole which must be analyzed as relations between the different systems in five strata: context, semantics, lexicogrammar, phonology and phonetics. Because the essence of this approach is the relationships, the wholeness of language is emphasized, but at the same time the systems discovered in each stratum display the discriminations which make language’s creation of information possible. Language as a whole offers literally billions of choices—a seemingly infinite chaos. This chapter focuses on the process of discrimination through choices within systems at all strata, but in particular those systems related to sound which make it possible for an English speaking human interpreter to recognize English words in the very non-human sounds emitted by a language competent bonobo engaged in discourse with the human.
While physical sciences seek a universal structure underlying physical phenomena, a science of semantics must be ultimately grounded in particular, and therefore varying, ‘forms of life’. In this workshop, I explore the practical implications of this difference between physical and semiotic sciences – how do we arrive at useful descriptions at the level of semantics and context when different registers, in different cultures, exert different semantic pressures on interactants?

In the traditions of systemic functional linguistics, the crucial concept in relation to the social grounding of semantic behaviour is ‘meaning potential’ (following Halliday, 1973). And the tool for mapping ‘meaning potential’ is the network. The combination of this concept and tool has produced a number of approaches to describing semantic behaviour.

Step 1: I will survey a selection of these approaches, giving special attention to what I take to be the motivations and distinctive aspects of SFL proposals in context and semantics (including proposals from Halliday (sociological semantics), Hasan (context and semantic networks), Halliday and Matthiessen (sequence, figure, element), Matthiessen (Rhetorical Structure Theory), Martin (genre and context, appraisal), Cloran (Rhetorical Unit), as well as practical aspects of the early work of Firth, Mitchell, Ure and Ellis).

Step 2: After the introductory survey (designed to assist conferees who may have not had an opportunity to review the proposals themselves), I look separately at the range of options (contrasts of meaning) one may wish to include in a semantic description and in a contextual description (with context organised around networks of field, tenor and mode). Important questions at this stage include: How are the proposals on semantics and context ‘doing different work’ in SFL descriptions of meaningful behaviour? How can we make the level of context take more responsibility in a description? How do we manage different scales of semantic phenomena (viz. are ‘argument’ structures to be treated as just special sequences of ‘messages’ or as structures in their own right but at a different ‘rank’?)?

Step 3: I examine the implications of different kinds of networks, and the role of the crucial characteristics of networks, in actual examples of description. Problems addressed here include: ‘entry conditions’ (to a network); ‘realisation statements’ (how a network ultimately connects to recognisable options of speaking/behaving); and ‘recursive selection’ (when one may need to choose over again, and again, in order to ‘net in’ semantic overlays, nestings and other forms of textual compression). My own work on Network Cycles will be introduced here also.

An issue to be considered concerning networks is the status of any network without realisation statements (i.e. without statements on what to ‘expect’ on the next level down in the levels of language). One needs to ask how one identifies contrasts of meaning which are consequential in the social process (context; register) and in the semantic options (i.e. those mediating specifically between the levels of context (above) and lexicogrammar (below)).

Step 4: Finally, we will consider what directions are opening up with this kind of semiotic modelling. In seeking to balance the ‘typical-actual’ of human behaviours with the ‘hypothetical-potential’ of a particular social process, register based networks exemplify many of the current requirements of scientific modelling. Networks are, for instance: empirical; testable; statistical; customisable; and free of the Platonic baggage of intuition and mentalese.
Workshop 1. Both Praat sound analysis software and Mick O’Donnell’s Systemic Coder can be downloaded without cost. This workshop will introduce the use of each, and will show how to incorporate the results obtained with the Coder in a TextGrid on Praat. No previous experience with either program will be assumed.

Workshop 2. Bonobos are a species of ape sharing 99.7% of the genes that humans have. Dr. Sue Savage Rumbaugh has raised Kanzi, Panbanisha and a new generation in conditions not unlike a very high quality nursery school at the Language Research Center in Atlanta. This workshop will introduce the way Jim Benson and Bill Greaves are using Praat and Systemic Coder to explore the possibility that Kanzi and Panbanisha are using their own vocalizations in addition to the Lexigram Keyboard in their discourse with Sue. Some familiarity with Praat and the Coder (for example participation in Workshop 1) will be assumed.

References for Workshop 2:
Motoko Hori  
Kansai Gaidai University

Sanae Tsuda  
Tokai Gakuen University

Yasumi Murata  
Chukyo University

Yoko Otsuka  
Gifu Shotoku-Gakuen University

Yuka Shigemitsu  
Tokyo Polytechnic University

Kazuyo Murata  
Ryukoku University

Mami Otani  
Ochanomizu University

The Japanese System of Politeness: Its Manifestation in English Interactions

The aim of this workshop is to describe the language use by the Japanese from the politeness point of view. The politeness system of Japanese is often regarded as equivalent to the honorific system of the language, other politeness strategies in the language often being neglected. In our present study, we propose to include positive politeness strategies in addition to the negative politeness strategies in order to capture a better picture of how politeness manifests in interactions.

From the outset, we, as Politeness Study Group in JACET, have been concerned with the different ways people adopt to create what they consider successful conversations in Japanese and English. We have researched various aspects of conversations that are related to politeness, such as the use of address forms and discourse markers drawing data from textbooks, videotaped conversations and teacher talks. The most significant finding this far is that the greatest difference between English and Japanese conversations lies in the use of politeness strategies as described by Brown and Levinson. For instance, in an initial encounter, a native speaker of English pays attention to the hearer’s positive face, while a native speaker of Japanese pays attention to the hearer’s negative face. This difference in the direction of politeness may have been one of the major causes of misunderstanding of messages and misinterpretation of participants’ personalities.

We will first give the general view of the Japanese politeness, including honorifics and other strategies, and hope to make it clear how and why positive politeness has been neglected in the past research. In order to see it in the actual data, we will report some of the results of our analyses of conversations carried in English between native speakers of Japanese and those of other languages in their first encounters. We hope the participants will give their comments and suggestions from their own cultural and linguistic viewpoints to make this workshop an international crossroad on language use.
Japanese Onomatopoeia: Its Structure and Function

As is well known, discussions concerning the origins of language were officially banned by the Linguistic Society of Paris (1866), because they were so speculative and so-called “Ding-dong theory” was no exception. However, no language in the world is without onomatopoeic expressions, and now onomatopoeias are really worth scientific analysis.

The workshop presents some of the characteristic features of Japanese onomatopoeia in its structure and function. In the former part, the basic forms (CV(CV)) and Onomatopoeic Markers (moraic consonant Q, moraic nasal N, vowel prolongation R, reduplication, and ri) are taken up. In the latter, the degree of lexicalization, the analysis of dependency relations based on Glossematics are discussed and finally a passage from O. Henry’s short story will be introduced to exemplify the use and non-use of onomatopoeias in English and in Japanese translated versions.

The participants are cordially expected to get something about Japanese onomatopoeias and, at the same time, to know more about onomatopoeic expressions in their respective languages.
A computational model of language in context and its application to Everyday Language Computing

The aims of the workshop are:

1) to show the research achievements that we are currently finalizing at Division of Creating the Brain, Brain Science Institute, RIKEN, Japan, and

2) to seek ways of making systemic functional linguistics more "applicable".

Since we launched a 5-year research project under the name of Everyday Language Computing in 2000, we have developed a computational model of a language (Japanese) system with context and algorithms of language processing. Our research group members will present papers and give demonstrations. The topics will be concerned with computational ways of constructing a linguistic database as a language model and a contextual model from the systemic functional perspective and the algorithms based on the database for Japanese text understanding and generation, and the prototypes of the language-based application software (e.g., a word processor) that users can operate through natural language. After the presentations, we will have discussions where active involvement by participants at the workshop will be appreciated.

Participants who would like to prepare for the workshop are invited to visit our web site:

http://www.brain.riken.go.jp/labs/lbis/English/index.html
This workshop will introduce effective treatments of the description of the Japanese language in the framework of the Kyoto Grammar. The Kyoto Grammar is proposed by Tatsuki (1998) as a grammar for analyzing Japanese from a Systemic Functional perspective. The focus of the research is to examine the analyses of (i) the thematic structure and (ii) modality in Japanese by making use of new concepts, Communicative Unit (CU) and Communicative Unit Constituent (CUC).

In this workshop, we will first propose a new analysis of a Japanese text from a textual viewpoint, i.e., the analysis of the thematic structure in Japanese. As advocated in Tatsuki (2004), it is necessary to analyze Japanese texts from the communicative viewpoint and thus a new unit, Communicative Unit (CU), is proposed in the Communicative level. Accordingly, the analysis of thematic structure can be treated by employing the Communicative level, and elements occurring in a CU are regarded as its constituents (CUCs). CUCs are distinguished into three types of Theme in terms of their communicative functions: (i) Supra Theme, (ii) Veiled Theme and (iii) Consequence Theme. Each type has the set of different properties, so that a CU is organized to provide the cohesive pattern of structure in a Japanese text.

The second part of this workshop will discuss the treatment of modality in Japanese in the Kyoto Grammar approach. This workshop will show that Modal Auxiliaries contribute to the organization of a CU from the viewpoint of an exchange structure in Japanese. Unlike the English modals, the Japanese Modal Auxiliaries do not function as the Operator. As stated above, Japanese texts need to employ the more expanded unit than a clause. This is particularly the case of an Auxiliary which solely occurs without any accompanying elements. Form a viewpoint of an exchange structure, it functions as ‘responding’ to the earlier statement, and there is no need to state the proposition repeatedly. Accordingly, it is considered to be a type of CUC realizing modality in Japanese.

References: