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Abstracts

Fabienne Chevalier

Unfinished utterances in French conversation: sequential context and syntax as primary resources

Despite the fact that the turn-taking system for conversation provides for an obligation to complete a turn (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974), incomplete turns are frequent in conversation, at least in French conversation, e.g., '.hh oui enfin bon on veut pas non plus euh::::' (.hh yes except that well we don't want to uh::::). Further, unfinished turns are regularly treated as interactionally complete and are responded to 'appropriately'. This talk uses a conversation analytic approach to explore how it is possible for turns to be left unfinished in conversation and what enables unfinished utterances to be treated as interactionally complete and coherent by the recipient.

Data extracts from two-party telephone conversations are presented and reveal that sequential context and grammar are major resources that provide for the recognisability of actions. Firstly, sequentiality, or the structural relationship that exists between the unfinished turn and the sequence of action in which it participates, is a primary resource that contributes to making the context so rich that a turn need not be finished for the action it embodies to be recognisable. In particular, unfinished utterances are shown to be answerable to position in sequence. Subsequent sequential positions are environments in which unfinished utterances may be done without disrupting the trajectory of the talk, whilst, in initial positions, unfinished utterances display a vulnerability to not being recognisable. Further, the data reveal that participants orient not so much to the completion of the turn for its own sake as they do to what its possible completion (or non-completion) reveals of the ways in which the turn shows itself to be relevantly activated in the service of the work that the sequence in which it participates seeks to perform. Secondly, whilst syntax projects the type of constituent(s) that is/are due next in the unfolding of a turn, turns are also constructed in actual conversation in such a way that grammar is adapted and fitted to sequential position, i.e., to the positions in which various actions are done in conversation. Participants draw upon this combination of resources to make use, and sense, of unfinished utterances in context.

Fadi Helani

Topic Proffering and Stepwise Transition of Topics in Mundane Arabic Conversation

Arabic speakers tend to do frequently exchanges of "how-are-yous" in their conversation. The sequential distribution of "how-are-yous" appears to be employed occasionally by speakers in openings and closings of topics in their talk. Though this is not the default system of openings and closings of topics in Arabic, data will show some problematic issues that accompany the transition of topics in the absence of "how-are-you" exchanges.

It is, however, the sequential order of the "how-are-you" exchanges that do the openings and closings of the topics in the talk. Speakers, therefore, usually tend to display their disengagement from a current topic before they open another through an exchange of "how-are-yous". This is, however, the achievement of the two participants to the talk. Data will, thus, display instances when a speaker's move to close a topic fails in the absence of the co-participant's cooperation.

It is in the core of my argument to refer that the exchanges of "how-are-yous" in topic transition is done in the disjunctive movement from topics. This is unlike the stepwise transition of topics which speakers achieve through their gradual, unnoticed disengagement from the topic over the span of their talk.

Dr Rebecca Clift

Indexing stance: reported speech as an interactional evidential

The notion of linguistic stance as a non-grammaticalized form of evidentiality is here explored through an investigation of reported speech in English interaction. Reported speech is found to be one of a variety of resources with which speakers lay claim to epistemic priority vis-à-vis recipients. Such resources are not identifiable as stance markers independently of the sequential contexts in which they appear; sequential position is shown to be central in providing at once a constraint on what can be said and a resource to exploit in saying it. Resources dependent on sequential position to index stance are deemed to be INTERACTIONAL EVIDENTIALS to distinguish them from the well-documented STAND ALONE EVIDENTIALS. Interactional and standalone evidentials, as forms of deixis, are directed to the orientations of epistemic authority and accountability respectively; their distinct means of marking evidentiality are grounded in the motivation to be explicit with regard to accountability and inexplicit with regard to authority.

Keywords: reported speech, evidentiality, stance, deixis, interaction

Emma Watts

Mobility-induced contact and new dialect formation in Wilmslow, Cheshire: the case of ((NG))

Increased socio-geographic mobility and the resultant dialect contact have considerable linguistic consequence in the speech community. It is expected for instance, that in situations of face-to-face contact, speakers of mutually intelligible varieties are highly likely to modify their speech even though there is no communicative purpose for doing so. Wilmslow is an ideal community to further investigate such claims. Home to a predominantly middle-class and highly mobile population, the north Cheshire town was used to fulfil the overspill needs of Manchester City Council in the 1970s. Contact between individuals of contrasting social and geographical backgrounds was the result.

This paper discusses the results of the variable ((NG)), comprising two separate but interrelated variables (ING) and (NG). The former refers to the well-known variation in English between [n] and [] in unstressed syllables, walkin' or walking. The latter to variation between [] and [þ] in stressed syllables so that singer may on occasion rhyme with finger. In this part of the northwest [þ] is also available as a minority variant in unstressed syllables and leads to the overlap and comparability of the two components.

It is shown that as expected the results of contact are considerable. Not only are the affects of contact-induced accommodation clearly visible, the most significant shift is directly related to the greatest level of exposure.

Areti Karamitsiou

Swearing language and gender: Male and female use of the word Malakas among Greek University students

This paper is based on empirical data and aims to investigate the Greek swear word Malakas (which literally means "wanker"), as used by young male and female Greek speakers. The research is centered on the specific word, due to its relatively high frequency of use and because it varies in function and meaning according to the age of the participants and the context.

Traditionally, swear words, as an expression of strong and aggressive emotions are associated with the construction of male identities. Recent studies have demonstrated that swearing may serve different purposes according to the context. In informal settings and especially among friends swearing may serve as positive politeness strategy, expressing solidarity (Kuiper, 1991; Holmes, 1995). On this basis, women's use of swearing is related to the notion of solidarity or even affection (Stapleton, 2003). The word Malakas, bearing sexual connotations, is mainly used as abusive insult. However, recently it has begun to function as an element of in-group talk among Greek youth. This research examines the use of this word in terms of frequency and tolerance. The sample includes 40 young male and female Greek native speakers, of the age group 20-25. The data were gathered by means of observation, questionnaire and natural recordings.

The results of the research demonstrate the double function of the word Malakas and emphasize the differences observed between the two sexes. Although both sexes use it equally frequently, there are considerable differences between the sexes according to the age and sex of the addressee. Notably, women tend to use it more frequently in mixed sex conversations than men; they also show a higher rate of tolerance concerning the use of the word in informal settings by people of the opposite sex. The paper concludes by arguing that even though women are equally and/or more prepared to use the word, remnants of taboo and linguistic stereotypes are still apparent.

Prof. Peter Patrick

Language analysis of asylum claimants: A problem in linguistic human rights

This report considers the practice of language analysis in the cases of refugees applying for asylum, in the context of linguistic human rights (LHR). I consider the relationship of national origins, language socialization, and linguistic profiling; beliefs and fallacies among linguists and non-linguists about language, race and ethnicity; reservations and agreement on best-practice among linguists concerned with the use of language expertise by governments and lawyers handling asylum claims.

Bukpa A. Bagamba

Language and the Environment Local economy, socio-cultural values and language behaviour

Sociologists of language generally point at macro-sociological phenomena such as industrialisation, urbanisation and migration, etc, as causes of language shift and death around the world. Based on the data collected last summer among the Nywagi Hema of the Democratic Republic of Congo, I am going to show that the ongoing shift from Kihema (Bantu J10) to Kilendu (Central-Sudanic language) among the Hema was triggered off by environmental contingencies rather than by macro-sociological factors. At the break of 20th century, successive outbreaks of cattle plague and cattle raids by rival communities considerably diminished the livestock of the Hema and thereby threatened the very existence of a community that solely depended on animal husbandry. In response to the perceived threat, the community reprioritised cattle use and made a pragmatic decision of selecting wives from communities that demanded fewer cows for bride wealth than they had been paying. In so doing, the community deprived new generations of Hema children of Kihema speaking mothers and replaced them with Kilendu speaking ones. As a result, the process of language shift was triggered off. I therefore argue that investigators of language shift and maintenance must be alert and prepared to look beyond macro-sociological phenomena in order to identity primary causes of language shift and death instead of limiting their investigations to the apparent and immediate causes of changes of linguistic behaviour within the community under study.

Eleftherios Kailoglou

"Why do you want to mess with it? I tell you, we don't speak the language": The Slavic dialects of Greek Macedonia and the formation of Greek national identity

The aim of this paper is to discuss the connection between politics, culture and identity, and their effects on the use of the Slavic dialects in Greece.

The political situation in a national state (here Greece) affects its language policy towards its linguistic minorities. In the case of Greece, an important factor which has had a serious repercussion on the fate of minority languages is related to the procedure by which the Greek national identity has been constructed, which required the total and complete assimilation of the minority groups in terms of tongue, race, and religion. Historically, the speakers of the Slavic dialects of Greek Macedonia found themselves in the core of the Macedonian question. Since the formation of national states in the Balkans during the 19th century, their region became an object of desire for the regionally contrasted nationalisms.

Drawing on the socio-political history of the area, and in preparation for my forthcoming research, I intend to show that the attitudes of the speakers towards their (minority) language are not just the echo of the will of the State, but mostly the outcome of a compilation of factors denoting the complex relationship between language, culture, identity and politics. Within this framework, the words of the local old woman quoted in the title of my paper, encapsulate the identity problem that these populations face when trying to participate in the Greek nationhood. It also shows that priority is given to the national identity through denying the local one.

Veronique Lacoste

A sociophonological study of Standard Jamaican English in school: Some field experiences in rural Jamaica

This paper examines ethnographic data collection methodology employed in fieldwork I conducted in three Jamaican primary schools. The related ongoing thesis project aims to investigate phonological variation in the speech of 7-year-olds learning Standard Jamaican English (SJE) in class. I will determine whether the oral performance of the 24 children correlates with the standard used by their teachers.

Jamaican children are forced to exhibit a peculiarly premature multilingualism in Jamaican Creole (JC) and SJE from early childhood, since SJE - the dominant language - is used in most formal contexts, particularly education, but generally not learned at home. The heterogeneous linguistic situation in Jamaica has been substantially described in the literature. Considerable research has been devoted to the structure of JC speech including vernacular acquisition (Meade 2001); SJE pedagogy (Craig 1979, 1988, Bryan 1998), often using contrastive analysis; and the nature of SJE as an emerging adult dialect or attitudes to JC (Beckford Wassink 1999). Yet investigation of sociophonological variability in children's spoken SJE in Jamaican schools is rare.

I discuss the communities, sample selection and data collection methodology. This paper also outlines the main research questions and examines some key phonetic variants of phonological variables that are mostly expected from Jamaicans. Some transcribed data are presented with an emphasis on examples of the production of SJE by two girls', from different schools, while performing two distinct tests. The phonological variation is compared with historical British English phonological categories as in Wells (1982), and includes the use of features of JC which are well-known to contrast with various SJE varieties (Patrick 1999), such as:

- the substitution of dental stops for fricatives, as in thief [tif], that [dat];
- word-initial palatal stop and glide /kj, gj/ before /a, aa/ as in garden /gjaadn/;
- post-vocalic /r/ as in beard and pork, absent in both JC and SBE but present in SJE;
- lower frequency of final consonant clusters, as in post /puos/.

Preliminary results show a rather systematic correlation between variability in SJE performance and the particular task that the children were asked to do, with a preference for JC for picture tasks and for a more standard form of English in formal, standardised tests that were done in class. Gender, also, appears to be a significant sociolinguistic variable and is indicative of the level of academic achievement across the sample.

Batoul Hassan

"I am not of Persian descent": Language Loss and Shifting Identities Among Minority Persian-Kuwaitis

This study explores the impact of language ideologies and practices on the loss of a variety of Persian spoken by an ethnic minority group in Kuwait. The language variety of Persian known as 'Eimi (derived from the Arabic word Ajam, meaning "foreign, non-Arab") is spoken along the Persian Gulf by Persian-descendents living in the Arab states and is often used by Arabs to demarcate out-groupness. Sulieman (2003) argues that throughout the Arab tradition, the Arabic language has been used as a device to set apart groups of non-Arab origin especially those of Persian backgrounds. In the wake of the Iraq-Iran war, division between native Arab and Persian groups in Kuwait became more pronounced with language and religion often at the center of conflict. The social power relations between Kuwaitis of Persian-descent and the majority of Arab origin is focused on to show the ways in which power structures play an important role in shifting identity construction and language preference. The results of questionnaires and interviews show that social ideologies concerning 'Eimi and Arabic, including attitudes towards children's learning of 'Eimi and perceptions of the value of 'Eimi and its appropriateness in certain contexts/fields, effects the low level of language maintenance and the construction of identity. The major findings of this study show that language choice is narrowly restricted to certain fields. Arabic is used in formal fields such as Governmental Ministries and places of work, while 'Eimi is viewed as an acceptable form of communication in informal settings such as family gatherings and, to a lesser extent, the local supermarket. Negative connotations attached to 'Eimi, such as "embarrassing language" and "not a real language", along with discrimination based on a number of factors, including religion, origin and language, have the effect of attributing low forms of capital to the language which results in a lack of incentive for maintaining 'Eimi. Informants emphasized their children's Kuwaiti identity over their 'Eiminess and discouraged the idea of actively teaching their children 'Eimi. One informant took steps to disallow the use of 'Eimi in the home field. Many felt that it was important to display efforts to fully integrate into the Arab society because of the prejudices faced in their routine activities, e.g. job market, school, Ministerial paperwork…etc. They agreed that 'Persianness/'Eiminess' is a clear barrier to social mobility within the majority culture and access to symbolic and economic capital could only be obtained through abandoning markers of 'Eimi identity, the most salient of which is language. Bourdieu's (1991) theory on language and symbolic power is used to provide insight into the struggles between dominant and subordinate groups in their attempt to gain social mobility through language choice.

Dr Enam Al-Wer

The Loose, The Nerdaat, and Those Who Think They Are Adolescents: social category and the making of the Amman dialect

The Amman project generally aims to investigate the outcome of dialect contact, and focuses particularly on the details of the making of a new dialect. The data obtained from the initial stages of research show that the younger generation in the city are engaged in the making and individuation of a new dialect, which includes features already present in the input dialects, fudged forms, and very many totally new features.

In this paper, I will start with an overview of the project as a whole, especially for the benefit of those who have not heard me speak about it previously; in this part, I will speak about the locality, the input dialects, the research, and some of the linguistic findings. I will then focus the discussion on a topic I am currently working on, which concerns adolescents' social category and its relation to linguistic behaviour (cf. Eckert 2000).