



South American Languages

Vortragsreihe im WS 2022/23 am Institut für Allgemeine und Typologische Sprachwissenschaft der LMU

Montags, 18-20 Uhr (online)

Abstracts der Vorträge

Matthias Pache (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium)

The study of indigenous languages of the Americas: From early missionaries to computational approaches.

The linguistic exploration of the Americas began relatively quickly after the first European ships reached the double continent. Missionaries in particular played an essential role in this process, compiling the first grammars and dictionaries of indigenous languages. The circle of people working on American indigenous languages expanded over time, and in addition to descriptive work, questions of language contact and language affinities increasingly came to the fore from the 18th century onward. This session provides a bird's eye view of how the study of American indigenous languages has developed over the last 450 years and which debates and methods have shaped it.

Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz (Stirling, UK)

The Translation of Culture: (Mis)understandings of Missionary Translation Strategies

Indigenous peoples (as well as certain sectors of mainstream societies) have been, for a considerable time, the target groups of religious conversion to Christianity. Missionaries have tried to translate their own religious beliefs and practices into those of these groups, mostly by changing lexical meanings in order to re-interpret or eliminate native experiences. Situating them in theoretical models of transmission, we will examine approaches to the translation of Christianity, in terms of culture as well as language.

Thus, the lecture will look at the translation of culture and language in a colonial (and post-colonial) context and ask which methods missionaries use(d) for the Christianisation of indigenous peoples of South America. The wider framework includes themes such as foreignisation vs. domestication in translation; decontextualisation and recontextualisation; power and demonisation. On the basis of these conceptual fields we will ask what happens to the text in translational and linguistic terms. For this I will present a colonial Quechua text passage and explain how Spanish key terms were translated into the Amerindian language. We will read the Quechua and Spanish text (translated into English!) and discuss whether the translation can be considered an imitation, a paraphrase, a re-creation, a re-semantisation ... and how its outcome relates to the above themes, thus trying to bring theoretical and case-study oriented approaches together.

Reading

Nowak, Elke. 2005. Missionary Linguistics. In: Keith Brown (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 8, pp. 167-170. Oxford: Elsevier (2nd edition).

⇒ The linguist Nowak gives an outline of missionary linguistics. She describes how missionaries work and what the conversion to Christianity implies on a cultural level.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. 1813. Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens. <<https://sites.unimi.it/dililefi/costazza/programmi/2006-07/Schleiermacher.pdf>> [08.09.2022].

[In English in: Schleiermacher, Friedrich. 2004 [German 1813]. On the Different Methods of Translating. Susan Bernofsky, trans. In: Lawrence Venuti (ed.): *The Translation Studies Reader*, pp. 43-63. London: Routledge (2nd edition).]

⇒ Venuti (1995: 20)* about Schleiermacher:

Admitting (with qualifications like "as much as possible") that translation can never be completely adequate to the foreign text, Schleiermacher allowed the translator to choose between a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.

* Venuti, Lawrence. 1995. Invisibility. In: Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*, pp. 1-42. (Translation Studies.) London: Routledge. <<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.475.4973&rep=rep1&type=pdf>> [08.09.2022].

Villalón, María E. 1999. De/Recentring the Native Text: Contemporary Discourse Strategies in Christianising Latin America. In: Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz and Lindsey Crickmay (eds.): *La lengua de la cristianización en Latinoamérica: Catequización e instrucción en lenguas amerindias / The Language of Christianisation in Latin America: Catechisation and Instruction in Amerindian Languages*. (Bonner Amerikanistische Studien / Estudios Americanistas de Bonn / Bonn Americanist Studies BAS 32; Centre for Indigenous American Studies and Exchange, St. Andrews, CIASE Occasional Papers 29). Markt Schwaben: Verlag Anton Saurwein, pp. 313-329.

⇒ The anthropologist Villalón studied examples of mission in Venezuela. She describes and analyses different kinds of missionaries' efforts to Christianise indigenous peoples.

Alejandra Regúnaga (CONICET/Universidad de La Pampa, Argentina)

Documentation & dormant languages: the case of Yahgan

When a language has lost its “last” speaker, it is often said that that language has become “dead” or “extinct”; but many of these languages have left an important body of documentation that allows a person (or a group of people) with sufficient motivation to learn them.

In the face of the accelerating loss of linguistic diversity, some researchers have pointed out the difference between languages that have neither speakers nor records and those that are documented, recognised as part of a people's cultural heritage and therefore could be used again. These researchers have chosen a less final metaphor and, instead of "extinct", they call them “silent” (Hinton 2001), “sleeping” (Hinton 2001; Leonard 2008), or “dormant” (Lobo 2001; Warner, Luna & Butler 2007) languages.

Dormant languages thus still fall within the category of "endangered languages", but they show a particular feature that makes them special: since they have no speakers, the tools of linguistics become more necessary, since these languages usually need to be –to a greater or lesser extent– reconstituted.

Yahgan is an indigenous language of the southern tip of Patagonia that was spoken from the shores of the Beagle Channel to Cape Horn. At the beginning of 2022, its last native speaker passed away. However, the large number of documentation available (recordings, transcriptions and written records) collected from the early 19th century to the present day, the existence of missionary dictionaries and grammars, as well as the interest of members of the community, give hope that this language can be awakened.

References

- Hinton, Leanne. 2001. Sleeping languages: Can they be awakened? In *The green book of language revitalization in practice*, ed. Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale, 413–17. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Leonard, Wesley Y. 2008. When is an ‘extinct language’ not extinct?: Miami, a formerly sleeping language. In Kendall A. King, Natalie Schilling-Estes, Lyn Fogle, Jia Jackie Lou & Barbara Soukup (eds.) *Sustaining linguistic diversity: Endangered and minority languages and language varieties*, 23–33. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Lobo, Kelina. 2001. *Bringing a ‘dead’ language back to life: Beginning language instruction for dormant languages*. University of California, Berkeley MA thesis.
- Warner, Natasha, Quirina Luna & Lynnika Butler. 2007. Ethics and revitalization of dormant languages: The Mutsun language. *Language Documentation & Conservation* 1(1), 58–76.

Katharina Haude (CNRS Paris, France)

The Movima direct-inverse system

In Movima, an isolate of lowland Bolivia, transitive clauses are organized according to the position of the argument referents on a person/animacy hierarchy, which ranks first person over second, second person over third, and animate third persons over inanimate ones. The argument NP encoding the higher referent on this hierarchy occupies the position directly after the predicate, and the argument encoding the lower-ranking referent follows it.

The semantic roles of the arguments (actor and undergoer) are indicated through verbal markers: when the direction of action is in line with the hierarchy, the verb is marked as 'direct', and when the direction of action goes against the hierarchy, the verb is marked as 'inverse'.

In the third-person domain, it is of course not always clear which event participant ranks higher, since both participants can rank equally on the hierarchy. Here, discourse factors come into play.

The presentation will outline the principles of this crosslinguistically rather unique system and show how it is put to use in spontaneous discourse.

Sonja Gipper (University of Cologne)

A unified account of verbal and nominal predicates in Yurakaré: Evidence for omnipredicativity

In this paper, I propose a unified account of multiclausal utterances in Yurakaré (isolate, Bolivia) under an omnipredicative (Launey 2004) analysis of the language, encompassing both verbal and nominal predicates. On the basis of corpus data (van Gijn et al. 2011), some absolute and statistical asymmetries between verbal and nominal predicates in their use in different clause-combining strategies are identified. These asymmetries pose a challenge to the omnipredicative account of the language, as they constitute cases where verbal and nominal predicates are treated differently at the (morpho)-syntactic level. I argue that a unified account is still possible, offering an explanation on semantic grounds, based both on the semantics of verbal and nominal predicates as aspectually variable and time-stable, and on the semantics of the different clause-combining strategies (see van Gijn 2011). A second goal of this paper is to give the first overview of the omnipredicative features of Yurakaré, a language that has not been analysed as pertaining to the omnipredicative type so far. I thereby intend to contribute to our knowledge about possible manifestations of omnipredicativity across languages.

References

- Gijn, Rik van. 2011. Semantic and grammatical integration in Yurakaré subordination. In Rik van Gijn, Katharina Haude & Pieter Muysken (eds.), *Typological Studies in Language*, vol. 97, 169–192. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tsl.97.07van>.
- Gijn, Rik van, Vincent Hirtzel, Sonja Gipper & Jeremías Ballivián Torrico. 2011. The Yurakaré Archive. Online language documentation, DoBeS Archive, MPI Nijmegen. <https://archive.mpi.nl/tla>.
- Launey, Michel. 2004. The features of omnipredicativity in Classical Nahuatl. *STUF - Language Typology and Universals*. 57(1). 49–69. <https://doi.org/10.1524/stuf.2004.57.1.49>.

Karolina Grzech (Stockholm University, Sweden)

Evidential marking as an interactional device

Languages of South America are well-known for marking *evidentiality*, a linguistic category indicating the 'source of evidence' for what is being said (cf. Aikhenvald 2004). The example from Cuzco Quechua (Quechuan, Peru, Faller 2002: 122) demonstrates how an evidentiality can work in a language in which it is expressed by dedicated morphemes:

Parashanmi 'It is raining' [the speaker sees the rain]

Parashanchá 'It is raining' [the speakers conjectures it without observing the rain]

Parashansi 'It is raining' [the speaker was told by another person]

As the example suggests, the use of evidentials does not change the propositional content of the utterance. Rather, it adds an additional layer of meaning (cf. Faller 2002; Boye 2012).

In line with the definition of evidentiality, this additional layer is widely assumed to indicate 'how the speaker knows' in all languages with evidential markers. However, a growing body of descriptive research on languages spoken in and beyond South America shows that evidentials do more than that.

When we analyse interaction rather than isolated sentences, we find that evidentials signal not so much the type of evidence, as the basis on which the proposition should be integrated with what is already known. Source of evidence is relevant, but not key for how they are used and interpreted. In interaction, evidentials appear to be structuring knowledge and providing interpretative cues to make communication more effective.

In this talk, I will show that interactional data on evidentials in the languages of South America support the above observations. It will also propose that, in the light of new data, we need to re-think the dominant definition of evidentiality, and the established ways of documenting and analysing evidential systems.

References:

Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2004. *Evidentiality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Boye, Kasper. 2012. *Epistemic Meaning, A Crosslinguistic and Functional-Cognitive Study*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Faller, Martina T. 2002. *Semantics and Pragmatics of Evidentials in Cuzco Quechua*. Stanford University.

Nick Emlen (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Hearing the voice of an Aymara speaker in a 17th century text from Peru

In the early 17th century, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, an Aymara speaker named Martín de Sancta Cruz Hanansaya embarked on a remarkable translation project. At the request of a Jesuit priest named Ludovico Bertonio, he transformed an earlier Spanish book about the life of Jesus Christ (the 1591 *Vita Christi*) into a nearly 600-page Aymara version (published in 1612). This was not a close, literal translation—Bertonio wanted an Aymara version that would be compelling and comprehensible to a local audience, and he encouraged Sancta Cruz to take great liberties in introducing Aymara metaphors, imagery, sound symbolism, dialogue, textual structure, and even references to local landmarks and social relations. The result is the longest and richest piece of literature written by an Aymara speaker in the colonial period. It also serves as a cultural encyclopedia of the colonial Andes and a unique record of the region's indigenous discursive practices, as composed by a speaker himself.

This talk presents an ongoing project to draw out the voice of Martín de Sancta Cruz by comparing his 1612 Aymara version, line by line, with the 1591 Spanish original. By identifying the modifications that he introduced, we can learn about the poetics of 17th century Aymara in a manner that is impossible with other language documents (such as dictionaries and religious texts) that were composed by Europeans in the same period. Furthermore, the Aymara *Vita Christi* presents a valuable resource for Aymara speakers today, though it is rare and written in an orthography that makes it difficult to use. This project creates a digital version accessible to contemporary Aymara speakers, and involves those communities in the analysis and use of the text. In this manner, the discursive culture of the region can be traced from the colonial period to the present. The project also has important implications for our understanding of the historical linguistic panorama of the Central Andes.