TEMPORAL ANAPHORA IN TENSELESS LANGUAGES

Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR:
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(download lecture notes, publications, text studies)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course presupposes familiarity with the DRT theory of temporal anaphora. According to DRT, tense is crucial for temporal anaphora in English. However, the Eskimo language Kalaallisut does not have any tense morphology (Bittner 2005). Instead, verbs inflect for mood, classifying eventualities not as past, present or future, but as facts, non-facts or requests. Still, Kalaallisut translators readily translate English books and vice versa. Temporal information is encoded in Kalaallisut as precisely as in English, albeit by a very different grammatical system.

This course will first introduce the Kalaallisut system and compare it point for point to English. We will then develop a general theory, extending DRT, in a dynamic system that combines the Logic of Change of Muskens 1995 with the stack-based theory of centering of Bittner 2001. Corresponding discourses in English and Kalaallisut will be explicitly analyzed by surface-based Online Update (OU, see Bittner in press). If time allows, we will also extend the OU analysis to another tenseless language, e.g. Yukatek (Mayan) or Mohawk (Iroquoian).

REFERENCES:
Shaer, B. 2003. ‘Toward the tenseless analysis of a tenseless language’ Proceedings of SULA 2, GLSA, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 139–56.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES:
Lecture 1 The problem: Temporal anaphora in a tenseless language
Lecture 2 English-based theory: Kalaallisut as English minus tense
Lecture 3 Aspect-based theory (1)
Lecture 4 Aspect-based theory (2)
Lecture 5 Aspect-based theory (3)

READ:
Bittner 2005
Muskens 1995
Shaer 2003
Bittner 2006
Bittner in press
Webber 1988