

INTRODUCTION

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The papers contained in this special issue of *Linguistica atlantica* were presented at the sixth *Workshop on Structure and Constituency in the Languages of the Americas* (WSCLA), hosted by the Department of Linguistics of Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, from 23-25 March, 2001. The organizers—Phil Branigan, Carrie Dyck, and Marguerite MacKenzie—acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, grant #646-2000-0093.

Since its inception, the annual WSCLA conference has been organized around a theme, and many of the papers presented take the conference theme as their point of departure. For the 2001 conference, the organizers selected the theme: 'The role of hierarchies in linguistic analysis'. Understood broadly, grammatical hierarchies include almost every domain of theoretical linguistics, ranging from prosodic hierarchies in phonology to phrase structure in syntax. The importance of understanding hierarchical relations in describing grammar has been highlighted in recent years, with the emergence of Optimality Theoretic approaches in linguistic theory.

Understood more narrowly, featural hierarchies of various sorts play particularly significant role in many of the languages /language families of the Americas. Among the better known examples of such hierarchies are the person hierarchies of Algonquian and Athabaskan languages, which have driven much discussion and theorizing among linguists with an interest in these languages. As the papers in this volume demonstrate, hierarchies of other sorts play a central role in the grammars of other types of American languages, as well.

It was the hope of the organizers that a conference devoted to examining the grammatical functions of hierarchies would provide the participants with a chance to compare the unique hierarchies of quite disparate languages, and, ideally, to begin to identify common threads (patterns, constraints) in the intricate linguistic webs woven in the languages of the Americas. That hope was, we believe, fulfilled. The papers presented here should allow others to participate in the same experience.

The first paper, by Judith Aissen, presents an Optimality Theoretic analysis of obviation effects, considering data from, among others, Fox, Navajo, and Tzotzil. A general account of obviation-like hierarchies is presented, based on the idea that groups of relatively simple hierarchic struc-

tures can be combined in an arithmetic fashion to produce more complex and intricate hierarchical constraints.

David Beck considers a possible instance of 'pragmatic skewing' (Heath 1991) in Totonac (Totonac-Tepehua: East-Central Mexico), where discourse factors seem to have consequences for the morphological system. Beck shows how subtle grammatical choices may ultimately be driven by the social context in which a language is used.

Discussing data from Plains Cree and Western Naskapi, Julie Brittain shows that Crossover (Ross 1967) effects (or their apparent absence) in these languages argues for the existence of a derivational requirement—the One Proximate Referent per Derivation (OPRD) Condition—that takes precedence over the Binding Principles.

Optimality Theory is revisited in Kiel Christianson's examination of Odawa verbal forms. In this paper, experimentally controlled data collection is employed, and reconciliation of certain aspects of OT with recent work on language variation is pursued.

The status of the so-called antipassive construction in Inuktitut plays a role in both Alana Johns' and Bettina Spreng's papers. Johns takes a comparative approach to cross-dialectal variation in this construction's properties in Inuktitut, arguing that a structure-based account of these variations is preferred—from the perspective of both descriptive and explanatory adequacy—to an approach which takes rankings of definiteness or case hierarchies as primitives. Spreng's paper constitutes a comprehensive analysis of argument structure in one dialect of Inuktitut spoken in North Baffin, arguing that one construction canonically understood to contain the antipassive cannot, in fact, have such status.

As has been the tradition of WSCLA since its first meeting (as the Workshop on Structure and Constituency in Native American Languages, held at the University of Manitoba in 1996), the workshop ended with a round-table discussion of the situation of languages in indigenous communities. This year, the round-table was on incorporating linguistic knowledge into Native language curriculum, and presentations preliminary to the discussion were given by Rod Jeddore, of the Miawpukek First Nation (Mi'kmaq), and Robert Leavitt, and Leavitt's paper on the experience of Passamaquoddy-Maliseet is included in these proceedings.

REFERENCES

- Heath, J. 1991. Pragmatic disguise in pronominal-affix paradigms. In F. Plank (ed.), *Paradigms: The Economy of Inflection*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
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