

WS 09
Negotiating within cognitive and language systems
AG Kognitive und linguistische Anthropologie

30.09.2019, 14:00-15:30 Uhr, Raum D522

Organisiert von / organized by:

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Negotiation processes seem to occur anywhere in the world when different parties with different interests and perspectives interact. However, the way of negotiating differs along multiple parameters, such as the negotiating parties and the distribution of power, the socio-cultural negotiation strategies and constraints, the object of negotiation the individual interests (frame of negotiability), the place and context (in private vs. in public), to name but a few.

In this workshop, we will focus on the conference topic from a cognitive and linguistic perspective: What are the cognitive frames and schemata within negotiation processes and in which way do they cross-culturally differ? What are unconscious parameters (e.g., interpersonal sentiments, overall or subtle interests)? What are mental strategies of mediation? What is the role of individual or shared knowledge of facts or strategies or moral assumptions (e.g., public opinion) in constraining public ways of negotiation? What are language-specific forms and practices of negotiating (verbal means and body-language) or avoiding negotiations (e.g., verbal taboos)? What are instances in which language is a direct or indirect object of negotiation (language and identity, language policy)? What is the outcome of such negotiation processes (e.g. language loss or shift, revitalization, emergence of contact languages/varieties, language choice in multilingual settings)?

For having a chance to bring negotiation processes to a successful end for all parties, mutual understanding of underlying parameters, mental and psychological strategies and linguistic practices is essential. In this sense, we welcome comparative studies aiming at systematic findings on the cognitive or linguistic framework of negotiation, as well as case studies describing instances of negotiation in detail.

Keynote:

Paul Kockelman (Yale University, USA)

The role of mas (< Sp. más) in Q'eqchi': comparison and degree in a Mayan language

This essay analyzes the present usage and past history of degree modifiers and comparative constructions in Q'eqchi', a Mayan language spoken in Guatemala. It focuses on the role of mas (< Sp. más) and the function of the modern comparative construction (long thought to be a calque of its Spanish equivalent). In contrast to previous analyses, it shows that Q'eqchi' mas does not function as a comparative (like Spanish más), but rather as a degree modifier, indefinite quantity and differential operator (like Spanish muy and mucho). It shows that the comparative construction doesn't require mas, but only the positive form of gradable predicate, along with the adposition chiru (before, in the face of) to mark the standard. It shows that mas came into Q'eqchi' during the late 1800s, and seems to have functioned this way from the beginning. And it offers reasons for this shift in meaning, and its frequent misanalysis by linguists.

Vortragende / Speakers:

Thomas Widlok (University of Cologne)

Establishing the terms of negotiation, in climate change discourses for instance

For negotiation to take place there has to be shared common ground on what is to be negotiated and in which terms. Key debates such as that on climate change presuppose some agreement as to how one is to ascertain whether environmental changes are the result of underlying climate change and how one may establish the relevant actors responsible for this change or affected by it, i.e. presupposed is a shared set of notions such as “weather”, “plants”, “animals”, “people” or “natural” versus “supernatural” and “causal” versus “coincidental”. However, basic research with cognitive and linguistic methods shows that in many contexts there is less shared common ground (within and between social groups) than one might expect. Are these cases in which negotiations come to an end before they started? Or are we simply dealing with negotiation at a metalevel? Is there any bottom line that provide an end to negotiation at the level of experiential and embodied indexical meanings? This presentation discusses such questions in the light of recent field data collected with Hai//om in Namibia and with reference to the NSF-funded collaborative research project on “cultural models of nature”.

Antonia Schneider (University of Munich)

Is “truth” negotiable? – Pragmatics, indexicality and (linguistic) evidence in bilingual court proceedings in Huancavelica/Peru

Interactions in court proceedings are intrinsically related to processes of negotiation. Especially in intercultural contact situations speech acts, texts and genres highly depend on cultural, institutional, moral or religious backgrounds. Departing from excerpts from court proceedings in the provincial capital Huancavelica, Peru (2004), it will be described how processes of translation between Quechua (local) and Spanish (national language), negotiation and ideologically informed interpretations take place, in what ways relations of power are enacted and created, but also undergone or reversed. This includes not only differences in vocabulary and interpretive power, but also conversational strategies or social practices used to create evidence for accusation, conviction or defense. It will be shown, for example, how concepts as “truth”, “justice” or “promising” are communicated indexically in linguistic utterances and speech acts, how ambivalences, ideologies as well as creative manipulation and adaptation emerge in translational processes and local metapragmatics, challenging current assumptions about equivalence, (linguistic) evidence or “negotiability” of meaning.

Gerhard Böck

Keywords as openers in business and fieldwork

When I reentered my anthropological studies in 2009 I applied my experience of nearly two decades of negotiation in business to get quick access to the yeniche people of Bavarian Sueba. The universal recipe in initiating meetings was salting my speech slightly with keywords as openers for a more confidential communication. The casually interspersing of markers suggested an assumed common past and opened so an ambience of belonging.

The trick aimed at creating the illusion of a common memory, condensed in terms of a common semantic container yet attended with proper emotional sensations. The phenomenological feature will be presented with empirical examples and put in relation to their cognitive, linguistic, social and mnemonic interlacing. The success of this proceeding could also pay off in theoretical terms.

This leads to the question whether there could be drawn up a theory of keywords as negotiation aid, as markers which could trigger the notion of an assumed common memory and past. And, more interesting, to the question, how keywords as openers could be evaluated, gradually enhanced in their effectiveness and used and prepared in terms of future epistemic participation.