The Faculty of Language across Phenotypes: Biolinguistic Considerations

Prof. Kleanthes K. Grohmann
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Date: October 29, 2019 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
Venue: Lecture Theatre 1, Lee Shau Kee Building,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract

This talk aims at considering theoretical and methodological issues that shed light on the human faculty of language with respect to language development and pathology. The main proposal derives from joint work with Evelina Leivada and Maria Kambanaros on the Locus Preservation Hypothesis (Leivada et al. 2017), which in addition has implications for typical language acquisition, second language learning, and language variation in general. The first part of this talk will build on joint work with Iantxi Tsimpli and Maria Kambanaros (Tsimpli et al. 2017) and present language pathology from the perspective of the underlying system: What can non-intact language tell us about UG? Particular emphasis will be put on evidence from Greek, and how the investigation of impaired (cognitive-)linguistic abilities from one language can inform the study at large—and how it can (not) shed light on the study of an impaired language faculty. The second part picks up the long-standing observation that grammatical markers are not uniformly impaired across speakers of different languages, even when speakers share a diagnosis and the marker in question is grammaticalized in a similar way in these languages. This work aims to demarcate, from a cross-linguistic perspective, the linguistic phenotype of three genetically heterogeneous developmental disorders—Specific Language Impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Down Syndrome.

Speaker

Kleanthes K. Grohmann is Professor of Biolinguistics in the Department of English Studies at the University of Cyprus (UCY) and the Director of CAT, the Cyprus Acquisition Team (CAT Lab). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland (2000) and has published widely in the areas of syntactic theory, comparative syntax, language acquisition, impaired language, and multilingualism. Among the books written and (co-)edited are Understanding Minimalism (with N. Hornstein & J. Nunes, 2005, CUP), InterPhases (2009, OUP), and The Cambridge Handbook of Biolinguistics (with Cedric Boeckx, 2013, CUP). At the moment he is preparing The Cambridge Handbook of Minimalism. He is founding co-editor of the John Benjamins book series Language Faculty and Beyond and editor of the open-access journal Biolinguistics.

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