



Department of
Linguistics and Modern Languages

語言學及現代語言系

Reciprocals, Symmetry, and Resolved Agreement Morphology in Sampang

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Date: November 21, 2023 (Tuesday)
Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
Venue: Lecture Theatre 4, Lee Shau Kee Building,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Sampang is Sino-Tibetan language of the Kiranti branch, primarily spoken in Nepal's Khotang district. Sampang is substantially underdocumented and this paper represents the first theoretically-oriented work on the language. Like most Kiranti languages, Sampang has a complex system of verbal agreement, indexing both subjects and objects. Generally speaking, a verb indexes at most a single subject argument and a single object argument, but certain ditransitive verbs show a very unusual pattern -- we see resolved, summative agreement with both arguments, of a type more commonly seen in agreement with coordinated phrases, so that e.g. a 1st person and 2nd person argument are marked together with 1st person inclusive morphology, etc. In this talk I will both provide an overview of the Sampang verbal agreement system as a whole, drawing on Deal's (2023) interaction/satisfaction model of agreement, and also provide an account of the unusual behaviour of ditransitives. It turns out that the ditransitive verbs which display resolved agreement are causative forms of symmetric predicates, that is to say predicates where $P(x, y)$ implies $P(y, x)$, such as 'meet', 'fight', etc. It turns out that the model of agreement, motivated by other aspects of the Sampang agreement system, can relatively easily account for the pattern we observe when coupled with assumptions which account for the semantic and syntactic properties of symmetric predicates in Sampang.

Speaker

Dr Perry received his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2016, where his thesis concerned the interaction between tone and syntax in Gyalsumdo, a Tibetic variety spoken in Nepal. His interests cover both language description and linguistic theory, and he has worked on a number of Sino-Tibetan languages in Nepal (particularly Gyalsumdo and Sampang), Sanskrit, dialects of Chinese (in particular Yixing Chinese) and Irish. His theoretical interests primarily concern the interaction of syntax with other components of grammar, including (morpho)phonology and semantics, working in a broadly Minimalist/DM framework.

All Are Welcome

Enquiries

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