

2 Abstracts

Introduction to Navajo Language Studies

Amy V. Fountain

This chapter briefly describes traditional approaches to the grammatical structure of Navajo, and is intended to provide definitions and examples of important and basic terms and concepts used (and perhaps argued against) in the rest of the papers in this volume. Readers who are unfamiliar with the Navajo language, or with the linguistic literature about Navajo, are encouraged to read this chapter before delving into the subsequent articles in this volume.

An Optimality-Theoretic Analysis of Navajo Sibilant Harmony

Stacey Oberly

This paper presents an Optimality-Theoretic analysis (Prince and Smolensky, 1993) of sibilant harmony in Navajo. This Optimality-Theoretic (OT) analysis uses correspondence theory (McCarthy and Prince, 1995) to account for changes in the [\pm anterior] feature in coronal segments in the verbal conjunct domain. Specifically, the place of articulation of the rightmost coronal fricative segment determines the place of articulation of all other coronal fricatives in the verbal conjunct domain via IDENT, AGREE and MAX constraints. This OT analysis is innovative in that it posits a constraint that protects pronominal-argument morphemes from deletion.

Tone, Intonation, Stress and Duration in Navajo

Emily Kidder

The phenomena of tone, intonation, stress and duration interact on the phonetic level due to their shared use of the acoustic cues of pitch and segment length. The Navajo language, in which the existence of intonation and stress has been questioned by native speakers and scholars (McDonough, 2002), provides a unique system for studying this interaction, due to the presence

of both phonemic tone and phonemic segment length. The variable nature of stress and intonation, as well as their status as linguistic universals has been debated among scholars of prosody (Connell and Ladd, 1990; Laniran, 1992; McDonough, 2002; Hayes, 1995). This paper discusses the interaction between these prosodic elements in Navajo, arguing that stress and intonation cannot be concretely identified, and positing a causal relationship between the presence of contrastive tone and length, the lack of stress and the lack of intonation.

Evidentiality in Athabaskan

Ferdinand de Haan

This paper is a typological survey of grammatical evidentials across the Athabaskan language family. It is shown that expressions of evidentiality differ widely from language to language. There are languages in which evidentiality is poorly grammaticalized (such as Chiricahua) to very full evidential systems (in Hupa and San Carlos Apache). Explanations for this difference must be sought in the area of contact features and general typological development, rather than trying to look for genetic explanations for the difference in evidential systems between languages. This is exemplified with two cases, (a) the morpheme /la/ 'inferential', which may be traced back to a verb 'to be', a well-known grammaticalization source; (b) the origin of visual evidentials, which derive from deictic sources.

A Unification of Indo-European Aktionsart and Navajo Verb Theme Categories

Sumayya Racy

In this paper, I explore verb theme categories in Navajo in general, and their relation to Indo-European Aktionsart in particular. Midgette (1995) argues that we should not consider Navajo verb theme categories to be the same sort of property as Indo-European Aktionsart, both because there are more verb theme categories than there are Aktionsarts, and because Aktionsart is part of the lexical semantics of a verb, while verb theme categories are derived through morphological processes. I suggest, however, that we may in fact view these as related phenomena. In making the case for a unified treatment of Navajo verb themes and Indo-European Aktionsart, I appeal

to arguments from Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz, 1993), from non-lexical Aktionsart (Harley, 1999), and from varied approaches to word building (Marantz, 2001; Arad, 2003).

An Experiment in Computational Parsing of the Navajo Verb

Mans Hulden and Shannon T. Bischoff

This paper presents preliminary research on a computational parser for core Navajo morphology where any inflected verb is automatically decomposed, together with the inflectional and derivational structure of the verb. The grammatical implementation largely follows Faltz (1998) and Young and Morgan (1987); Young et al. (1992). We also report some proposals for reducing the amount of allomorphy and phonological rules in the description of Navajo verbal morphology, and potential uses of such a parser.