

October 19, 2004

CLASS 7: MEANING, ACQUISITION, DISORDERS

PRESENTATIONS

Today we have a number of **oral presentations** by students. Just to recap, last week we had (where 'lecture' = long [25-30 mins.], 'presentation' = short oral presentation [5-10 mins.]):

- Maria Xanthou: **lecture** on *compounding*
- Maria Xanthou: **presentation** on *compounding in Greek*

(We also had an attempt to **present** the *Russian sound system* by Elena Shelkovaya-Vasiliou, but due to lack of linguistic relevance I asked her to stop; still waiting to hear back from her.)

In **today's four-hour class slot**, we will hear:

- Hatice Asvaroglu: **lecture** on *word meaning*
- Marianna Kyprianou: **lecture** on *lexical variation and change* [then 1st break]
- Elena Shelkovaya-Vasiliou: **lecture** on *aphasia*
- Elena Kkese: **lecture** on *specific language impairment* [then 2nd break]
- Georgia Lambria: **lecture** on *Down syndrome*

My job is the same as last time's:

- to guide the presentation to issues of immediate (course) relevance;
- to ask the speaker to expand on certain points;
- to check feedback from class that all issues are understood and put into perspective;
- and so on (clarification, correction, background, etc.).

Next week, there will be some more oral presentations:

- George Georgiou: **lecture** on *acquisition of words*
- Hatice Asvaroglu: **presentation** on *verbal morphology in Turkish (?)*

This means we'll be **waiting for the following oral presentations** after that (please pick a topic and date whenever you can, and talk to/tell me about it a week in advance at the latest):

- Elena Shelkovaya-Vasiliou: **presentation** (make-up on some topic?)
- Marianna Kyprianou: **presentation** (???)
- Elena Kkese: **presentation** (???)
- Georgia Lambria: **presentation** (???)
- George Georgiou: **presentation** (???)
- Thekklia Kouridou: **lecture** (*acquisition of syntax*) — [November 9 or 16]
- Thekklia Kouridou: **presentation** (*comparative grammars of English and Greek*)
- Marina Constantinou (???): **lecture** and **presentation** (if she still participates)

ASSESSMENT

As became clear last class (if not earlier), my impression is that **theoretical concepts of linguistics analysis** as discussed in class or (should have been) read in the readings didn't ground too well. In order to motivate you to learn such concepts, which will be very useful for later approaches to language/linguistics and which are an integral part of the MA you have signed up for, the paper-assessment will be replaced by a **final exam** — **date: TBA**.

If you would still like to **write a paper**, please feel free to do so. It will count positively on your **participation grade** and possibly bump your overall grade up a notch or two.

You also still have to do the **abstract**, for which you can become more creative — this is something you could possibly build on in later classes. For example, if you'd pick a topic relevant to **first or second language acquisition** (or even **language impairment** perhaps), you could talk to Photini Coutsougera next semester and see whether she'd approve of your topic. In the abstract, you sketch a topic (experiment/research issue) and in the next course you could possibly conduct the necessary experiments/research and write up the paper.

TODAY'S TOPICS

Take today's oral presentations as **basic introductions** to the following topics:

- **word semantics (= meaning of words)**
- **(lexical) variation and change**
- **(first language) acquisition of words**
- **language impairments (aphasia, SLL, Down syndrome)**

We will come back to each one of them. **Semantics** (meaning at large) will also be discussed against the background of syntax (**sentence semantics**). There we will see that meaning of words only partly gives us the full (meaning) interpretation of a sentence. In this sense, the relation between word semantics and sentence semantics is a little bit like morphology vs. syntax: **structure/meaning on the word level vs. structure/meaning on the sentence level**.

The broader topic of **variation and change** will of course a major role in future courses within the MA program in Applied Linguistics (*Principles of Language Use and Variation*). On a theoretical note, we will also see some such instances when we tackle syntax, the sentence structure. And (if time permits), change itself is of **imminent importance to**...

... (first and second) **language acquisition**, which will be the topic of next semester's class with Photini — and we will get back to it with relevance to syntax (Thekklia). How come children acquire language so fast and easily — and how come that sometimes what they end up with is *slightly* different from the **adult grammar**? In many ways, diachronic changes in language parallel language acquisition: one grammar (= set of rules; existing adult grammar or current child grammar) undergoes slight or more drastic changes (in the target adult grammar). The comparison only goes so far, but it's an interesting connection to note.

Lastly **language impairments** (or, less nicely, disorders) also fall into this category: between **two grammars**, something is missing. Here, unfortunately, the reason lies in a **physical damage to the brain** — and this can be of different nature with different consequences. We will also try and get back to issues of language and impairments in the syntax component.