

Alessandra Giorgi

Università Ca'Foscari di Venezia

Universal Grammar and temporal dependencies

In this talk I will consider temporal dependencies across languages from the point of view of Universal Grammar. Temporal relations are usually implemented in the various languages (mostly) by means of verbal morpho-syntax. Temporal, aspectual and modal morphemes codify the possible relations between events in main and embedded clauses. However, whereas on one side the inventory of the possible *interpretive* relations is universal – as well as relatively limited – on the other, verbal *morpho-syntax* varies a lot across languages. To exemplify, Italian and Romanian have a much richer morphology than English, and all of them have a richer morphology than Chinese – which has almost none. On the other hand, the ability of expressing a preceding relation, i.e., past or future, between events does not significantly differ among the languages I just listed and, in a way, we do not expect it to vary. The presence of very considerable morpho-syntactic differences is therefore rather puzzling. The important issue is to reduce language variability, by means of an appropriate level of abstraction, in order to predict and explain the arising of the various language types, by identifying the relevant dimensions and their universal properties.