

ISW Colloquium – Spring Semester 2024

29.04.2024 | 16:00-17:00 | UniTobler F -111 (U1)

Linda Konnerth (UniBE):

SAP objects: Indexing and pronoun occurrence in two Trans-Himalayan languages

Referents can be tracked through indexing on the verb, as well as through nominals in the clause, while even without any indexing, zero anaphora may be preferred if reference is contextually recoverable. The question then arises when and why referents and their roles are expressed through nominals given different indexation strategies and even when disambiguation is not necessary.

The (non-)occurrence of nominals for 3rd person subjects has been studied from many different angles. Regarding speech act participants (SAP's), we know that overt pronouns may be linked to particular discourse constructions. But as we turn to SAP objects, little is known, clearly in part because they are rare at an estimated rate of about 10% of all objects of transitive clause. It is intuitive that SAP's should behave differently from 3rd person because they are automatically contextually given in the speech act in a way that 3rd person participants are not.

In order to better understand the relationship between indexing and nominal expression in SAP objects, I compare two Trans-Himalayan (TH) languages with different systems of person indexation. Monsang (South-Central TH) exhibits a morphologically rich person indexation system with inverse marking. In contrast, Karbi (unclassified TH) does not have a person indexation system per se but we find an innovative construction that broadly indexes SAP non-subjects. The results suggest that also in the domain of SAP objects, there may be a synchronic relationship between the morphological structure of person indexing and the rate of occurrence of independent pronouns although disambiguation is clearly not what it's all about.