



# Doctoral Festival 2015

## Programme

FRIDAY, April 17, 2015 in Övningslabbet

<b>9:20 – 9:30</b>	<b>Opening</b>
<b>9:30 – 10:30</b>	<p><b>9:30 – 9:50 Josefina Safar</b> Variation in Yucatec Mayan Sign Languages</p> <p><b>9:50 – 10:10 Pia Simper-Allen</b> Children's acquisition of depicting verb constructions in Swedish sign language</p> <p><b>10:10 – 10:30 Calle Börstell</b> It takes two to tango: Plurality in the visual modality</p>
<b>10:30 – 10:50</b>	<b>Break with snack 20 min</b>
<b>10:50 – 11:50</b>	<p><b>10:50 – 11:10 Lena F. Renner</b> Speech perception in relation to speech production in first language acquisition</p> <p><b>11:10 – 11:30 Natalia Perkova</b> On some non-standard comitative constructions in parallel texts</p> <p><b>11:30 – 11:50 Ghazaleh Vafaeian</b> The imperfective domain in Iranian languages</p>
<b>11:50 – 12:50</b>	<b>Lunch break 1 hour</b>
<b>12:50 – 13:50</b>	<p><b>12:50 – 13:10 Desalegn Hagos</b> On various usages of the converb in TSE languages</p> <p><b>13:10 – 13:30 Elisabet Eir Cortes</b> Speech motor control</p> <p><b>13:30 – 13:50 Pernilla Hallonsten Halling</b> Are adverbs modifiers?</p>
<b>13:50 – 14:00</b>	<b>Break 10 min</b>
<b>14:00–15:00</b>	<p><b>14:00 – 14:20 Ellen Marklund</b> TBA</p> <p><b>14:20 – 14:40 Ulrika Marklund</b> Pause and utterance duration in speech directed to 6- to 33-month-old children</p> <p><b>14:40 – 15:00 Hatice Zora</b> Prosodic word representations in Swedish</p>
<b>15:00-15:20</b>	<b>Break with snack 20 min</b>
<b>15:20–16:40</b>	<p><b>15:20 – 15:40 Susanne Vejdemo</b> Zombie gredelin and other color tales: Intergenerational change in the Swedish PINK and PURPLE domain.</p> <p><b>15:40 – 16:00 Robert Östling</b> Gibbs sampling for computational linguistics</p> <p><b>16:00 – 16:20 Johan Sjons</b> Articulation rate in infant directed speech</p> <p><b>16:20 – 16:40 Thomas Hörberg</b> Neurophysiological evidence for the functional-typological view of grammatical relations</p>
<b>16:40–16:50</b>	<b>Concluding remarks</b>
<b>17:00</b>	<b>Buffet in the department kitchen</b>

Booklet  
of  
Abstracts

**Josefina Safar**

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## **Variation in Yucatec Mayan Sign Languages**

My PhD project focuses on comparing sign languages used by deaf and hearing signers in four Yucatec Mayan villages with a high incidence of deafness, by looking at the extent to which they incorporate gestural elements of the surrounding hearing communities. The sociolinguistic context of signing communities in Yucatan presents a rich opportunity for such a study: we are dealing with a situation where sign languages have developed in various communities of the same geographic region, sharing the same cultural background. This can provide important insights about language emergence, language evolution and the interface between gesture and sign.

Although some previous studies have been carried out (e.g. Shuman 1980, Fox Tree 2009, Escobedo Delgado 2012, Le Guen 2012), in-depth descriptions of Yucatec Mayan sign languages are still lacking. Previous research in the communities Chicán and Nohkop (Le Guen 2012; 2015) has shown that, despite the fact that signers from these villages have never been in contact, their sign languages display striking similarities on a lexical level and beyond and there is a high degree of mutual intelligibility. This may partly be attributed to common underlying gestural precursors. The Yucatec Maya make extensive use of multimodal communication and a high number of “quotable gestures” (Kendon 1992), i.e. conventionalized gestures with a stable form-meaning pairing, can be observed. This constitutes a rich resource of possible input for the emergence of sign languages. In language communities where deaf and hearing people are in close interaction and use a shared sign language, many conventional co-speech gestures of the hearing population are incorporated and further systematised in the local sign language (see e.g. Le Guen 2012, for the domain of time). Interestingly, we can notice significant regional and inter-individual variation in other domains, which are not gesturally encoded in the surrounded spoken language, for instance colours (Le Guen 2015).

In my dissertation project, I will investigate this issue of variation in more detail and extend the study to two further communities with a significant number of deaf people in the region. Data will be collected during three field trips to Yucatan in collaboration with the project team “Proyecto de Lengua de Señas Maya Yucateca”, coordinated by Le Guen. During the first fieldtrip, I will focus on the analysis of variation on a lexical level and its relation to gestures. By carrying out lexical elicitation tasks, I want to find out which semantic domains of the lexicon display a high degree of variation between the different communities and to determine if similarities in certain semantic domains can be traced back to common gestural roots.

To be able to determine which items show an overlap in form between gesture and sign, I will ask hearing non-signers of Yucatec Mayan communities without any deaf people to produce silent gestures for the same list of concepts. Studying similarities and variation in YMSL will also give us an opportunity to observe the limits of the influence of gestures and to understand which other sociolinguistic factors may be influential in shaping the emergence of sign languages in Yucatan.

## References

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## **Children's acquisition of depicting verb constructions in Swedish sign language**

This investigation explores children's acquisition of depicting verb constructions, specifically handshape categories within the Cut and Break-domain. The investigation is based on a previous study of adult's handshape categories in depicting verb constructions within Cut and Break-domain in Swedish Sign Language (SSL) (Simper-Allen 2013). Twelve deaf children (native-users of SSL) to deaf adults, age 2;1 – 6;6, participated.

The children performed a task that involved describing what had occurred in film clips of cutting-and-breaking events. The stimuli were made up of 53 film clips which show separation of materials with and without tools (Bohnenmeyer, Bowerman, & Brown 2001, Bowerman & Majid 2003).

A preliminary result shows that majority of the children start to construct a depicting verb construction at age 3;0 but children use different strategies ("simplification strategies") to obtain description of these events, i.e. amongst other children use the active hand (referring to the tool) act (have contact) on the other (still) hand or on a surface in the surrounding area. The strategies are grouped according to Clark's (2009) categories of children's simplification strategies and are i) omissions ii) substitutions iii) supplements iv) sequences and v) assimilations.

## References

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**Calle Börstell**

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### **It takes two to tango: Plurality in the visual modality**

Linguistic research on spoken language has found that inherently plural concepts may exhibit special features with regard to e.g. inflection (cf. Acquaviva 2008). In sign language linguistics, the use of the two hands as plural articulators has been shown to be associated with e.g. inflectional plural morphology (cf. Bergman 1983; Johnston & Schembri 1999; Pfau & Steinbach 2006; Börstell 2011). However, recent studies have shown that plurality is an important feature also in lexically two-handed signs across sign languages (Lepic et al. submitted).

In this talk, I will present results from a two-part study on lexical plurality and the use of plural articulators. For both parts of the study, a target list of 50 items sharing the feature of inherent plurality was used, for which three subcategories of lexical plurality are distinguished: (i) lexical reciprocals (situations involving more than one participant, e.g. 'fight', 'friend'); (ii) collective nouns (collections of objects grouped as a whole, e.g. 'audience', 'family'); and (iii) dual entities (artifacts/body parts consisting of two parts, e.g. 'scissors', 'eyes'). The first part of the study concerns a cross-linguistic investigation of lexical plurality in sign language lexicons: ten different sign languages are all found to show a strong preference for two-handed signs for the target items, i.e. inherently plural concepts (Börstell, Lepic & Belsitzman submitted). Then, in an attempt to disentangle the linguistic from the universal, the target list is presented to hearing non-signers in the second part: five participants are asked to invent silent gestures for each target item (as well as frequency-matched filler items).

The results indicate that the gesturers also show a preference for two-handed forms when expressing inherently plural concepts, suggesting that the iconic expression of plurality that is possible by the use of plural articulators in the visual modality is—at least partly—a feature of the modality rather than purely a linguistic feature of signed language.

### **References**

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**Lena F. Renner**

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### **Speech perception in relation to speech production in first language acquisition**

In this talk, I will give an overview of the ongoing project MAGIC (MAGIC Analyses Gaze In Children), which aims to investigate speech perception in relation to speech production in first language acquisition. Earlier studies could show different reactions in gaze behavior when presenting different degrees of mispronunciations to children (e.g. White & Morgan 2008). None of these earlier studies took the productional abilities into account. Usually, the productional abilities are related to e.g. vocabulary size. In MAGIC I record the children's production at a specific point of vocabulary size and adjust the perceptual experiment including eye-tracking according to their productive capacities. I'll present my hypotheses and first results from a pilot study.

#### **References**

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**Ghazaleh Vafaeian**

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### **The imperfective domain in Iranian languages**

In this talk I will present the latest study that I am conducting on the imperfective domain, that is, the present, the past imperfective and the progressive constructions within the Iranian language family. The study is ongoing and in an initial stage and I will present the data I have collected so far. In this study, I am using a template created by Östen Dahl where functional spans of constructions regarding tense and aspect is covered. Ultimately this investigation may enable a structured comparison in a consistent manner among these languages and between different ways of encoding the imperfective domain.

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**Desalegn Hagos**

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### **On various usages of the converb in TSE languages constructions**

The converb in TSE (Transversal South Ethio-Semitic) languages is a quite productive verb form. It becomes grammaticalized/lexicalized into an adverb, adposition, subordinating conjunction/complementizer, and a part of lexical juxtaposition (cf. Meyer 2012, Leslau 196, 1997, Gutt 1997). The converb is also used in the inceptive construction, i.e. a type of complex predicate that mainly involves a converb that shows the initial stage of a following principal verb and further renders nuances like volition, emphasis, or surprise. The objective of this talk is to present comparison of the characteristics of converbs used in the inceptive construction with the converbs in other usages based on some features like agreement, passivization, negation, optionality, and paraphrasability by using ‘and’.

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### **Speech motor control**

The main aim of my PhD project is to investigate the motor control of speech movements in varied voice effort. Motor skills in body movements have been shown to be goal-oriented and governed by compensation, see e.g. Flash & Hogan (1985). Does this hold true for speech movements as well? Talking in loud voice is known to lower the jaw, which has acoustic consequences, which in turn the speaker has to compensate for in some way for the spoken message to reach the listener in recognizable shape. What does the speaker do in terms of articulatory factors? The altered strategy, the compensation, might give us a view of the motor organization of speech movements. Thus, the varied voice effort is merely a tool to open up a window through which the motor organization might be studied.

The questions asked concern amongst other what the speaker does to compensate for the lowered jaw, whether the loud movements are merely scaled variants of the normal movements, and whether the articulatory behavior observed can be said to correlate with the notion of vowel adherence (Sigurd, 1965), thus providing implications for phonology. The goals set up to approach these questions include a replication of earlier work on articulatory behavior of lips and jaw in loud and normal speech (Schulman, 1989), as well as an expansion of this work concerning speech material as well as an acoustical study of formant patterns.

## References

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### **Are adverbs modifiers?**

Adjectives are often defined as 'modifiers of nouns'. In parallel, it is often assumed that manner adverbs are 'modifiers of verbs'. Surprisingly, it is very difficult (if possible at all) to find a definition of what it means to modify in this context. For adjectives, the relation to nouns appears slightly more straightforward: an adjective such as red denotes a property of an object such as house in the red house. Alternatively, the addition of the adjective red can be described as creating a more specific concept than simply the noun phrase the house does – in this sense, the property red modifies the concept of house. Does this then apply in the same way to manner adverbs? A manner adverb ascribes a property to an action, such as fast in Tom ran fast. However, here participants are necessarily involved, and potentially also affected by the manner adverb – there can be no fast running without an agent (in this case Tom) performing it. Accordingly, it seems questionable whether fast modifies the concept of running in the same sense as red modifies house.

In this presentation, the term modification will be discussed as a basic theoretical problem for the typological study of manner adverbs that is the focus of my PhD project. Several examples of both so-called adjectival and adverbial modification will be compared. The aim is to discuss whether modification is a relevant term at all for adjectives and manner adverbs, and what it means to subsume the two categories under this notion.

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**Ulrika Marklund**

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## **Pause and utterance duration in speech directed to 6- to 33-month-old children**

My main research interest is the effect of parental linguistic input on child language and communication development. By using data from vocabulary reports and audio recordings of parent-child interactions, I study the relationship between child vocabulary size and factors that can be related: phonological complexity in child word production, parental adjustments of pause and utterance duration in interaction with their children, and parental use of content words.

Parental speech input, even in simple quantitative measures, is known to correlate with child language development. Last year (2014) I presented results concerning pause and utterance duration in child directed speech (CDS) to 18-month-olds, in relation to child vocabulary size. This study investigates the same parameters in CDS but from a developmental perspective. The purpose is to describe durational aspects of parental speech in vocal interaction with seven children from ages 6 to 33 months, and to describe the relationship between these aspects and child vocabulary development.

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**Hatice Zora**

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## **Prosodic word representations in Swedish**

According to Riad (2014), the stress system in Swedish is largely morphologically determined; and in this regard, morphemes may be categorized as prosodically specified and prosodically unspecified. Prosodically specified morphemes are lexically marked (i.e. morphemes bear prosodic specifications as part of their lexical representations) whereas prosodically unspecified morphemes get stress through the phonological system. How lexically and phonologically stressed words are represented in the brain can be investigated by the mismatch negativity paradigm. It should be possible to test if stress is a lexical property of morphemes by investigating the brain responses to prosodic changes in both lexically stressed and phonologically stressed words. Changes in lexically stressed words might presumably elicit larger brain activations than the ones in phonologically stressed words.

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**Susanne Vejdemo**

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## **Zombie gredelin and other color tales: Intergenerational change in the Swedish PINK and PURPLE domain.**

I will present results from a case study in lexical replacement and change, focusing on how, how much and why two generations of Swedish speakers differ in their naming of the PINK and PURPLE color domains. The data comes from experiments with 19 older and 19 younger L1-Swedish speakers. Looking with a "magnifying glass" at this particular domain will reveal ongoing lexical replacement; semantic chain shifts; lexical competition and lexical and semantic change.

Or, in more flamboyant words: the tale of the zombie gredelin, the heroic last stand of violett and skär, and the curious change in the meanings of lila and röd in just one generation...

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**Robert Östling**

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## **Gibbs sampling for computational linguistics**

In my thesis (available since yesterday) I describe several methods for word alignment of parallel texts. At the core of these methods is an algorithm called Gibbs sampling, which is becoming increasingly popular in computational linguistics as well as in other fields of science. In this talk, I will discuss how Gibbs sampling works, how it can be applied to different problems in computational linguistics, and how I have applied it to my own research.

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**Johan Sjons**

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## **Articulation rate in infant directed speech**

Previous studies have shown infant directed speech (IDS) to be different as compared to adult directed speech (ADS), for instance in the sense that IDS contains longer pauses, has a slower speech rate and contains fewer words per utterance than ADS (see e.g. Clark (2009) for an overview). Also, articulation rate (the number of linguistic units per time unit with pauses excluded) has been shown to be lower in IDS than in ADS Fernald and Simon (1984). However, there are, to the best of my knowledge, no studies in which the articulation rate has been compared between Swedish IDS and Swedish ADS. In this study, I address this

issue.

The data consists of one subset from each of two corpora of transcribed spontaneous ADS and IDS, respectively: Spontal (Edlund et al., 2010), and Mingle from Long-Mingle (Nilsson Björkenstam and Wiren, 2014). I approximated the articulation rate to the number of vowels per second in the transcribed material. For each subset and for every adult speaker in that subset, I calculated the average articulation rate of all of his or her utterances. The articulation rate between the two corpora differs significantly (two-tailed unpaired t-test,  $p = 0.0006$ ), with the Mingle corpus having a higher rate.

In future research, I aim to investigate to what extent the articulation rate varies within and between utterances, speakers and infant age groups in IDS.

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## **Neurophysiological evidence for the functional-typological view of grammatical relations**

Grammatical relations in the generative grammar tradition are assumed to be defined on the basis of the syntactic positions of the argument NPs in the phrase structure tree (e.g., Holmberg & Platzak 1995). In the functional-typological perspective, such as in e.g. Role and Reference Grammar, grammatical relations are instead defined on the basis of their functions, in terms of the generalized semantic roles that the argument NPs express (van Valin 2005). These perspectives therefore predict differences in the processing of grammatical relations, and whether the process of argument interpretation is logically dependent on syntactic parsing.

Here I present evidence for the functional-typological perspective of grammatical relations on the basis of an ERP-study of grammatical function reanalysis in Swedish (Hörberg et al. 2013). Grammatical function

reanalysis involves the revision of an initial interpretation of the grammatical functions of argument NPs in transitive sentences. In my study, I found that grammatical function reanalysis engenders an N400 response, an ERP component that is engendered by e.g. problems with thematic role assignment (e.g., Frisch & Schlesewsky 2005), rather than a P600 response, which is engendered by e.g. other types of syntactic reanalyses (e.g., Osterhout & Holcomb 1992). These results speak against an account of grammatical relations which assumes that they are defined on the basis of syntactic structure, as there is no evidence that grammatical function reanalysis involves a revision of the interpretation of the syntactic structure of the sentence.

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