

Elsi Kaiser
 Department of Linguistics, University of Southern California

Comparing pronominal and demonstrative anaphors in Finnish and Estonian

Fr 13.00 – 14.00

This talk investigates intersentential pronominal and demonstrative anaphors from a cross-linguistic perspective, focusing primarily on two closely-related non-Indo-European languages, Finnish and Estonian. I show that the division of referential labor between different anaphoric forms available in these two languages has implications for a number of existing approaches to reference resolution, and provides support for the *form-specific multiple-constraints approach*, which claims that anaphor resolution is guided by multiple constraints but that the constraints are not equally weighted for all forms (see Kaiser 2003, Kaiser & Trueswell 2007, i.a.).

Many researchers claim there is a correlation between the salience of a referent and the expressions used to refer to it: The most reduced referring expressions refer to the most salient referents, and fuller expressions to less salient referents (e.g. Givón 1983, Ariel 1990, cf. Gundel et al. 1993). This raises the question of what makes a referent salient, a good antecedent for a reduced form? Various factors have been proposed, including grammatical role and word order. Some argue salience is determined by a single factor, but others view it as resulting from the interaction of multiple factors (e.g. Strube & Hahn 1996 vs. Arnold et al. 2000, Badecker & Straub 2002). The Finnish and Estonian data indicate that multiple constraints play a role, and crucially also suggest that anaphoric forms can differ in their sensitivity to different constraints.

In Finnish, human antecedents can be referred to with the pronoun *hän* ‘s/he’ or the demonstrative *tämä* ‘this’. Estonian also has multiple options for reference to humans: the pronoun *ta* ‘s/he’ and its long form *tema* ‘s/he’, as well as the demonstrative *see* ‘this.’ The existence of multiple forms, combined with flexible word order, makes Finnish and Estonian well-suited for exploring the question of how different factors contribute to reference resolution.

Our experiments indicate that not all referential forms within a language are equally sensitive to the same salience-influencing factors. The interpretation of the Finnish pronoun *hän* seems to be driven primarily by the antecedent’s grammatical role (cf. Järvi­kivi et al. 2005), but the demonstrative *tämä* exhibits a sensitivity to both word order and grammatical role. Our work on Estonian *ta* and *see* also reveals a clear asymmetry in the referential properties of these two forms (e.g. Kaiser & Vihman 2006). However, there are differences between Finnish *tämä* and Estonian *see* suggesting that for a particular form, the relative contributions of word order and grammatical role can differ from language to language, a pattern which provides further support for a system of weighted constraints. Corpus work on the long form of the Estonian pronoun, *tema*, shows that it patterns very differently from Finnish *tämä* ‘this’, though they are historically related. Use of *tema* seems to be driven by contrast (see also Pajusalu 1997). I will discuss, by making reference to different kinds of relations between propositions, what it means to say that this form is used contrastively, how this relates to claims regarding salience, and what the implications are for the nature of the mapping between anaphoric forms and their antecedents.

As a whole, our findings support the form-specific multiple-constraints approach, and indicate that theories of anaphor resolution should be structured to allow for multiple factors, weighted differently for different forms.