

Abstract “The information structure of discontinuous expressions”

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Discontinuous expressions, expressions in which two or more subparts of an expression are separated in phrase structure (e.g. an adjective and a noun), have been widely discussed in the literature on non-configurational languages, starting with Hale’s (1983) work on Warlpiri. They are attested in a number of morphologically rich languages, namely certain Australian languages (e.g. Warlpiri, Wambaya) and certain Indo-European languages (e.g. Latin, Russian, Polish). In all of these languages, word order is largely determined by information structure. In this talk I specifically address the role that information structure plays in discontinuous nominal expressions, especially in comparison to equivalent contiguous nominal expressions. It appears that information structure is a determining factor in creating discontinuity, leading to the subparts of the same semantic unit having different information structural status. This has been established for discontinuity in certain Australian languages (Schultze-Berndt & Simard 2012), and it is expected that the same assumption is valid for other languages.

References:

Hale, Kenneth L. 1983. Warlpiri and the grammar of non-configurational languages. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 1.1, 5–47.

Schultze-Berndt, Eva, & Simard, Candide. 2012. Constraints on noun phrase discontinuity in an Australian language: The role of prosody and information structure. *Linguistics*, 50, 1015–1058.