

## II. Plain-language Project Summary *Maximum 200 words*

Grant funds will support the research conducted in the recently launched Corpus Pragmatics and Prosody Lab directed by the PI, which investigates the use of a variety of syntactic constructions in extended oral and written discourse. The 18 local and international lab members have been meeting on-line since February 2021 to share their current research projects and interests.

In November 2018, eight lab members submitted a co-authored paper on the dialogue functions of different subtypes English cleft sentences to an international conference. The grant will support the completion of that study and follow-up studies on the discourse functions in oral dialogue of clefts, copula sentences, and questions from a variety of languages. The proposed studies will analyze or re-analyze data already collected for corpus projects that have not yet been completed, mostly due to time constraints on the PI when Department Chair from 2015-2020.

Finally, the PI will consult with SFU Library to construct a detailed Data Management Plan that will support the organization, storage, and public access of her previously collected corpus data in the Canadian Federal Research Data Depository, and support the management of future data-collections.

### III. Project Description

#### Objectives:

1. Resume previous work on the development of a **copula semantics questionnaire** (Small SSHRC Grant 2015-2017), with questionnaires close to completion for Russian and Kinande and begun for Thai, Nsyilxcən Salish, Arabic and Tagalog: (a) Complete questionnaires for Russian and Kinande. (b) Develop questionnaires for Spanish, French, Italian, Mandarin, and Cantonese, and (c) begin conducting on-line survey experiments with larger groups of native speakers.
2. Continue ongoing work comparing **local and global discourse functions of cleft sentences**: (a) Extend the PI's previous research on the information structure of English clefts, pseudoclefts, and reverse pseudoclefts at the sentence-level to their rhetorical function at the global-level of extended discourse. (b) Compare focus marking constructions in other languages, beginning with Kinande, French, Spanish, and Mandarin.
3. Resume previous work examining the **dialogue functions of formal and intonational subtypes of questions** (Standard SSHRC Grant 2007-2011): (a) Reanalyze previously reported-on 400 yes-no questions and 200 wh-questions in light of recent theories of discourse semantics (QUD theory). (b) Analyze 150 other previously collected questions (alternative, declarative, tag, and negative polar questions). (c) Compare with work on the meaning of various questions and response expressions in Mandarin Chinese (Yifang Yuan, doctoral thesis in progress).
4. (a) Consult on and construct a detailed **Data Management Plan** for the Corpus Pragmatics and Prosody Lab. (b) Deposit data-sets collected for previous corpus study publications into the Canadian Federal Research Data Depository, including sound files of 750 questions, 100 clefts, 375 parenthetical verb clauses, and 50 contradictions, along with analysis spreadsheets and/or annotated transcripts.

#### Context and Methodology:

**Project 1: Copula Semantics Questionnaire.** English sentences containing a copula (a linking verb use of a form of *be*) are a very basic type of sentence. Higgins (1973) distinguished four types of copula sentences in English: predicational (*John is a teacher*), specificational (*The teacher is John*), identificational (*That is Mary Smith*), and identity (*Samuel Clemens is Mark Twain*). There is a great deal of theoretical controversy with regard to the syntactic and semantic analysis of the different types of copula sentence and to whether the typology can be simplified (e.g. Mikkelsen 2004, den Dikken 2006, Heycock 2012). Our research investigates how speakers of different languages respond to contexts that give rise to copula sentences in English. **Previous work:** Two conference posters on **Kinande** copula sentence (e.g. Hedberg & Schneider-Zioga 2015) were developed into a short journal-article submission which was invited for revision and resubmission. In 2017, ethics approval was obtained to administer a detailed questionnaire that had been developed with the assistance of an undergraduate **Russian** student. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses in contexts clearly distinguish the four Higgins-types of copula sentence, as well as sub-types. For example, in Russian sentences that equate two proper names, the role name is treated as a predicate in role-play sentences, hence permitting instrumental case in the past tense, as in (1a); while the alias name is treated as referential in identity-establishment sentences, hence requiring a demonstrative copula in the present-tense, as in (2b):

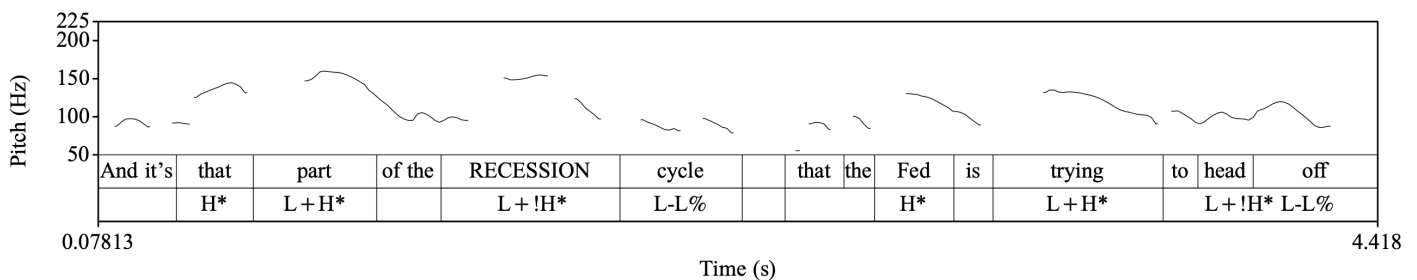
- (1) a. Hamlet-{NOM/INSTR} byl Sergej Bezrukov b. Lenin-{NOM/\*INSTR} byl Vladimir Ul'janov  
 (2) a. Hamlet {—eto/Ø} Sergej Bezrukov b. Lenin {—eto/\*Ø} Vladimir Ul'janov

**Proposed work:** The language expertise of the present team will enable the refinement of the questionnaires for Russian and Kinande, and the development of questionnaires for **Spanish, French, Italian, Mandarin** and **Cantonese**. We will also develop a method for on-line administration of the questionnaire to native speakers of these languages, and in the future, to speakers of other languages.

**Project 2: Local and Global Discourse Functions of Clefts and Pseudoclefts. Previous work.**

Clefts are traditionally taken to be focus-marking constructions which structure the information they convey into a *focus* expressed in a main clause copula complement which answers an open *background* question expressed in a subordinate clause. For a previous corpus study (Hedberg & Fadden 2007), we extracted 100 tokens of three subtypes of clefts from a television news discussion program and concluded that the clefted element sometimes conveys contextually-given *topical* information rather than contextually new, *focal* information. But we could not explain why the three syntactic subtypes of clefts convey their characteristic information structure functions, nor how speakers make a selection when contextual requirements for one or more than one cleft construction are met. **Proposed work:** We now seek to answer such questions by exploring the global-level discourse functions of our 100 cleft tokens within the recent QUD (Question Under Discussion) model of discourse structure (Carlson 1983, Büring 2003, Roberts 2012, Brunetti et al 2016, De Kuthy et al 2018, Riester 2018), which views discourses as structured hierarchically as underlying question-answer dialogues. One promising hypothesis is that in topic-comment it-clefts such as (3), a piece of just-mentioned information is used to answer a previous QUD, in contrast to what happens in focus-background clefts where a piece of brand-new information being used to answer the most immediate QUD. If so, then a unified account is obtained where by all clefts answer a QUD. Thus the cleft in (3) employs information obtained from the answer of a current QUD (A-4') to answer the preceding QUD (Q-8):

- (3) Q8[M] {Why did Green span cut interest rates?}  
 A8-1[M]... prevent layoffs.... A8-2[K] ... reverse investment decline...  
 A8-3[C]... restore himself as master. A8-4[C]... restore consumer confidence  
 A8-4'[K]: Spending is lagging. It's an important point... Investment goes down first, then production, and then consumer spending, as the unemployment rate goes up.  
 A8-4'+Q8'[K] And it's that part of the recession cycle that the Fed is trying to head off.





## V. Bibliography

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