Leonie Cornips: Bridging Sociolinguistics and Parallel Architecture?

Abstract

This talk will address four questions which, from my perspective, are needed in order to bridge sociolinguistics and Parallel Architecture (Cornips and Corrigan (eds) 2005):

1. Does sociolinguistics need a grammatical theory?

2. What does sociolinguistics need from Parallel Architecture?

3. What should be the bridge between grammatical theory and sociolinguistics?

4. How can Parallel Architecture refine its model by taking sociolinguistic theory and findings about syntactic variation and change into account?

This talk will focus on syntactic variation in Dutch that shows social and geographical distribution in natural and elicited speech (word orders in verbal clusters), inter- and intraindividual variation (verbal clusters) and variation that seems more 'reflective' in nature i.e. adjective flection and 'agentive' i.e. grammatical gender of the definite determiner. The aim of this talk is to emphasize that there are two crucial issues regarding linguistic complexity i.e. variation in natural occurring speech that must be tackled when converging the grammar and usage debate: the issue of idiolectal or intraspeaker variation, and the complex and multi-layered relationships between the individual and the society that bring about mutual effects on the individual and group grammar. In my opinion it is at the level of individual speaker where we can examine at best the locus and limits of syntactic variation. Here we encounter the maximal size of the boundaries of syntactic variation and if, why and how speakers cross these boundaries.