



## Malay/Indonesian syntax from an Austronesian perspective: An introduction

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The articles in this issue of *Lingua*, with one exception, grow out of presentations at the Tenth International Symposium on Malay/Indonesian Linguistics (ISMIL 10), which was held at the University of Delaware in April of 2006.<sup>1</sup> In celebration of 10 years of ISMIL symposia, the organizers of the symposium invited specialists on the syntax of Austronesian languages **other than Malay/Indonesian** to make presentations centering around the following questions: What can Malay/Indonesian syntax learn from the study of other Austronesian languages? What can other Austronesian languages learn from Malay/Indonesian that will help us better understand the syntax of Austronesian languages in general? A broad question that motivated the choice of this theme for the symposium was whether the generative comparative approach to syntax, which has proved so productive with respect to Romance and Germanic languages, would lead to significant advances in the study of the Austronesian languages.

The idea that motivates the so-called “new comparative syntax” is that even in the relatively constrained theoretical environment of generative grammar, it is not sufficient to study the syntax of a single language in isolation, as was often the practice in the early days of generative syntax. The “hypothesis space” allowed in a contemporary generative grammar remains too large to constrain the range of analyses adequately, and it is frequently the case that the constraints that are found do not align with the properties of “exotic” languages like the Austronesian languages. In order to constrain the analyses to those that may help us to find the general limits on the human language faculty, it is desirable that the descriptive tools themselves should limit the range of

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<sup>1</sup> The exception is Mark Donohue’s article, “Malay as a Mirror of Austronesian: Voice Development and Voice Variation”.

variation that can be described to the variation actually found. In principle, the range of variation that should be encompassed is all and only the variation possible in a human language. Such a far-reaching goal, however, provides no assistance in getting from our current state of knowledge to one in which theory is more closely aligned with the facts of language. In practice, it has been useful to examine hypotheses that have a more modest goal, those that appear to be adequate for predicting key syntactic properties of a group of similar languages, e.g. Romance, Germanic, or, in our case, (a subset of) Austronesian languages. A particularly useful approach to syntax is to compare the seemingly minute details of dialects of a single language (so-called microparameters).

Within current generative grammar (e.g. Minimalism), syntactic differences among languages are often analyzed in terms of the presence of a different inventory of functional categories in different languages/dialects, or in terms of different features on a limited inventory of functional categories. This approach is to be contrasted with an approach that was widely accepted in the past, but which is now somewhat less popular, the parameterization of syntactic principles. According to the parameterization approach a single principle along the lines of [WH movement permitted] is set globally as plus or minus for the language. In contrast to the parameterization approach, in much contemporary research, the occurrence of WH movement would be taken as due to the presence of a feature on C matching a feature on a question word, while WH in situ would be due to the absence of such features. No parameterization of a principle of grammar would be required.

The parameterization approach has been criticized as constituting no more than a restatement of the facts found in the language in question, and, thus, as having no predictive power. This criticism does not, however, apply to Baker's (1996) use of macro-parameters. Baker proposed that there exist macro-parameters (e.g. the Polysynthesis Parameter) that determine many aspects of the structure of a language and not a single property such as whether WH moves or is in situ. With respect to Austronesian languages, this approach raises the question of whether a macro-parameter can be proposed that would account for many of the peculiarities shared by Austronesian languages in a principled fashion.

A recurring question, then, in comparative syntactic studies is whether the same set of functional projections and features or same macro-parameter is sufficient to account for the range of syntactic variation that actually occurs in the languages under study. An often more difficult task is to make a limited set of projections and features or a macro-parameter account for what is **not** possible. For instance, the question arises why certain Austronesian languages manifest WH movement for adverbial and prepositional phrases but not for DPs, while other languages and other grammatical categories allow or require WH in situ for these same categories. A simple parameter like [WH movement permitted] would clearly not be sufficient to account for the complexity of the facts.

The general question considered by the contributors to this issue, then, is what is the range of variation among Austronesian languages with respect to core grammatical phenomena and how might that variation be explained? Do the solutions proposed for a particular phenomenon in one Austronesian language explain seemingly similar patterns in other languages? More specifically, to what extent are the facts in Tagalog and Malagasy the same as those in standard and non-standard varieties of Malay/Indonesian, and, to the extent that the facts are similar, do they have the same explanation in all the languages? In cases in which phenomena of Standard Malay/Indonesian display an evident similarity to Philippine languages and Malagasy, do these similarities carry over to non-standard varieties of Malay/Indonesian as well? What is the range of variation **within** Malay/Indonesian? Can the explanations necessary to explain the intra-Malay variation be of value in understanding the variations among Austronesian languages?

Certain patterns recur among Austronesian languages, and it is not surprising that these topics are prominent in this issue. Two related topics are voice systems and constraints on extraction. It has long been recognized that there are voice systems in Austronesian languages which, while similar in some ways to voice systems in European languages, have distinct properties not found in European languages. Our purpose here is not to review the vast literature on this topic. For recent overviews and collections of articles on this topic, see Arka and Ross (2005), Wouk and Ross (2002), and Austin and Musgrave (in press) among many others. What characterizes the voice systems in languages like Malagasy, Tagalog and Seediq (hereafter Philippine-type voice) is the existence of a symmetric voice system (Foley, 1998; Kroeger, 1998; Arka, 2002):

- All forms of the verb are marked for voice.
- In “passive-like” constructions, agents are not demoted to adjuncts, but rather are arguments of the predicate.
- There are a variety of passive-like voices, promoting nominals exhibiting different grammatical and semantic relations to surface subjecthood.

While there is no unanimity in the literature about how Philippine-type voice systems should be analyzed, there is a consensus that these voice systems differ in an important way from those in European-type languages. In European-type “passive-like” constructions the agent is not an argument of the predicate, but is either eliminated from the argument structure or demoted to adjunct status, while in Philippine-type voice systems the agent still behaves like an argument of the predicate.

Turning from Philippine-type languages to Malay/Indonesian, there is a general agreement (at least with respect to the standard language) that the voice system in Malay/Indonesian combines the properties of Philippine-type and European-type voice systems. In particular, work by Arka and Manning (1998) on Indonesian shows that there are two sorts of passive-like constructions found in Standard Indonesian, one largely aligned with the *di*- passive and the second largely aligned with the so-called second passive (P2).<sup>2</sup> In the *di*- passive the agent may be missing or is demoted to adjunct status, while in the P2 construction (referred to by Arka and Manning as Object Voice) the agent is shown to be an argument of the predicate.<sup>3</sup> Thus, both European-type and Philippine-type passive-like constructions exist in a single language, Standard Malay/Indonesian. As a result, Malay/Indonesian raises an important question for the analysis of voice in Austronesian languages. If this characterization of the facts is correct, what “parameterization” might account for the range of variation found?

Western Austronesian languages have a second, and, perhaps, related characteristic. In many of these languages, extraction (e.g. relativization) is restricted to subjects, at least in the case of arguments (Keenan and Comrie, 1977, 1979 *inter alia*). A variety of authors, perhaps starting with

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<sup>2</sup> See our article in this issue for a description of the properties of the two types of “passives”.

<sup>3</sup> This is a slight oversimplification. According to Arka and Manning, there is one case in which the agent is an argument in the *di*- construction, namely when the agent is the clitic pronoun *-nya*. We rechecked Arka and Manning’s data with speakers of Standard Indonesian in Jakarta. For our consultants, there was a clear distinction between P2 and the *di*- construction along the lines noted by Arka and Manning. We did not, however, find consistent judgments supporting the argument status of *-nya* agents in *di*- passives. The difference between our results and those of Arka and Manning may be due to peculiarities of Jakarta Indonesian affecting the Standard Indonesian of Jakarta speakers. In Jakarta Indonesian *-nya* cannot be cliticized to verbal forms. Thus, the use of *-nya* agents in *di*- passives may be unnatural for Jakarta speakers.

Keenan and Comrie, have conjectured that this restriction on extraction is related to the richness of the voice system, especially the existence of a variety of passive-like voices in Philippine-type languages:

These languages—Toba Batak, Iban, Javanese, and Minang-Kabau (all Malayo-Polynesian)—all fail [to abide by the strong version of the Accessibility Hierarchy] in the same way: SU [subject] is relativizable, DO [direct object] is not, but some position lower than DO is. So 2a fails; furthermore, the failure is not random. . . .the way 2a fails in these languages is still, in a naive sense, supportive of the intuition behind the AHC [Accessibility Hierarchy Constraint]. All the languages in question have well-developed passive forms, which are much more central to their grammars than, e.g., those in typical Indo-European languages. Thus many syntactic constructions require passive verb forms (e.g. many verbs which take sentential complements in Batak, imperatives of transitive verbs in Maori, etc.; **the centrality of passives in this sense is characteristic of many groups of Malayo-Polynesian languages, e.g. Malagasy and Philippine languages.**) In all cases where RC's [relative clauses] formed on DO's were elicited, the natural response was a RC formed on the Subject of the passive verb. ([Keenan and Comrie, 1979](#), emphasis ours)

If the conjecture is correct, it can be taken to suggest that the connection between richness of voice and limited extraction possibilities may derive from the structures peculiar to Philippine-type voice systems. From the perspective of comparative syntax, the issue reduces to the question of how the mechanisms needed for voice might predict automatically the restriction on extraction. For instance, in one contemporary analysis, that of [Rackowski and Richards \(2005\)](#), the vP (where voice resides in their analysis) constitutes a phase, and phase impenetrability blocks the extraction of all constituents other than the one at the edge of the phase (specifier of vP/adjoined to vP). Voice has the effect of bringing a constituent other than the agent to the edge of the phase. Thus, the mechanism used to explain voice also provides an explanation for the restrictions on extraction. Such an approach answers some questions, but it raises many others. In such a system, how might the differences in voice between Philippine-type voice systems and Indonesian-type voice systems affect extraction possibilities?

Three papers in this issue deal directly with questions of voice, and, in some cases, with how extraction relates to voice. (Further below we shall look at a second approach to the extraction constraints.) The contribution of Edith Aldridge provides a phase-edge analysis of Standard Indonesian. As in Rackowski and Richard's work, Aldridge accounts for restrictions on extraction by providing a mechanism to guarantee that only the surface subject is able to escape from the vP. What is of particular interest is that Aldridge shows explicitly the implications of extending her analysis of Tagalog to Standard Indonesian. According to Aldridge's analysis, Tagalog is an ergative language and extraction restrictions are related to properties proposed to hold for ergative languages. For instance, the ungrammaticality of direct object relativization in *-um-* clauses in Tagalog like the following.

- (1) a. **B-um-ili**      *ang babae ng isda.*  
                   -INTR.PERF-buy ABS woman OBL fish  
                   'The woman bought a fish.'
- b. \**Ano ang b-um-ili*      *ng babae?*  
                   what ABS-INTR.PERF-buy ERG woman  
                   'What did Maria buy?'

is attributed to the absence of an EPP feature on *v*, which, for Aldridge, is an anti-passive construction.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the direct object, *isda* ‘fish’, cannot move to the edge of vP, and is, thus, not available for extraction. While Aldridge does not analyze Indonesian as an ergative language, the existence of restrictions on extraction similar to those in Tagalog is treated as the historical residue of an earlier ergative stage in the language. Thus, the ungrammaticality of extracting the object of verbs prefixed with the active voice marker *meN-* as in

- (2) a. Ali **mem**-beli buku.  
Ali ACT-buy buku  
'Ali bought a book.'
- b. \*Apa yang Ali **mem**-beli?  
what C Ali ACT-buy  
'What did Ali buy?'

is explained by analyzing *meN-* as lacking an EPP feature, the historical residue of an earlier anti-passive construction.

Donohue also examines Malay/Indonesian voice from a historical perspective. Donohue's primary concern is not with Standard Indonesian, but with the local varieties of Malay/Indonesian spoken across Indonesia. Despite the fact that most speakers of Malay/Indonesian have learned the local varieties as their native language and are less than fully fluent in the standard language, there has been relatively little attention paid to the systematic description of the local dialects. Donohue argues that the great diversity of voice systems found in the varieties spoken across Indonesia is largely reflective of the diverse non-Malay local languages spoken in the vicinity. In those cases in which the local variety of Malay differs from the non-Malay local language, Donohue argues that the properties of local Malay reflect properties of Universal Grammar à la [Bickerton's 1981](#) model of creole genesis.

Cole, Hermon and Yanti's article is similar to that of Aldridge in that they attempt to explain the similarities and differences between the voice system found in Malay/Indonesian and that in Philippine-type languages. Like Aldridge, a phase-edge analysis of the extraction possibilities is presented. This contribution is like that of Donohue in presenting a description of voice in previously undescribed Malay dialects, a number of traditional Malay dialects spoken in Sumatra and the urban dialect spoken in the city of Kuching. The paper makes two major points. First, the restrictions on extraction differ from dialect to dialect. The differences among dialects, as well as the different constraints on extraction seen in a comparison of Malay with European-type languages, suggest that the extraction constraints can best be described in terms of morphological incompatibilities rather than solely in terms of principles of Universal Grammar. Secondly, as the voice system changes from dialect to dialect, predictable changes in restrictions on extraction occur. For instance, in a subvariety of Kuching Malay the etymological voice prefixes have been reanalyzed as part of the verb stem. In this variety, the extraction constraints break down completely, illustrating the interaction between voice and limitations on extraction.

There is a second approach to the limitations on extraction that is prominent in the Austronesian literature. This approach connects extraction possibilities to the typology of word order. [Massam \(2001\)](#) made the influential proposal that languages differ with respect to whether the constituent

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<sup>4</sup> Scholars who analyze Tagalog as a nominative/accusative language treat (1) as an active rather than as an anti-passive.

that moves to the specifier of TP position is a noun phrase (what becomes the surface subject) or a verb phrase. When it is the VP that moves, the result is a superficial VOS structure. (It is assumed that the agent is generated as specifier of vP and, thus, is not contained within the VP that undergoes fronting. Voice rules may also adjoin noun phrases other than the agent to vP thereby allowing those noun phrases to be extracted.) On the widely held assumption that the moved VP would be an island for extraction, it is predicted that, subsequent to the fronting of the VP, the only constituent accessible to extraction is the specifier of vP or some other noun phrase that has escaped from VP prior to fronting. The VP fronting hypothesis is shown by Chung (2006) to have wide applicability in explaining the properties of VOS, and, to some extent, VSO languages. Along these same lines, Cole and Hermon (*in press*), show that many of the peculiarities of Toba Batak can be derived from such an analysis. What is particularly of note with respect to Toba Batak, is that it is argued that even superficially SVO sentences in the language involve VP raising.<sup>5</sup>

A natural question, then, is whether superficially SVO sentences in Malay/Indonesian are in fact instances of covert VOS sentences. That is, are the restrictions on extraction in Malay/Indonesian connected to a covert VP raising in the derivational history rather than to voice? This question is addressed directly by Sandra Chung, who shows that the covert VOS analysis is inferior to an analysis of standard Indonesian in which SVO clauses are derived by simply raising the subject to the specifier of T. Evidence is also presented that in some varieties of standard Indonesian, but not others, verb-initial clauses are derived by raising VP to an even higher specifier than the specifier of TP. Overall, the article serves to highlight some of the empirical considerations that can be brought to bear on “abstract” analyses of clause structure like the covert VOS analysis, and to constitute indirect evidence that the constraints on extraction in Malay/Indonesian are more likely to be due to voice than to a putative VOS derivational history.

Lisa deMena Travis takes a different approach to the relationship among voice, clause structure and the possibility of extraction. Travis argues that there is a Baker-style macro-parameter that distinguishes Philippine-type languages from European-type languages. The macro-parameter is based on Massam’s proposal that languages differ with respect to whether the specifier of T is occupied by a DP or by VP. In European-type languages (Type A languages for Travis), T attracts DPs and V<sup>0</sup>s. Thus, the subject DP moves to specifier of T and V adjoins to T by head movement. In contrast, Travis argues that in Philippine-type languages (Type B for Travis), VP moves to specifier of TP (yielding VOS word order) and N adjoins to T by head movement. The existence of this macro-parameter is argued to explain a variety of typological differences between European and Philippine-type languages.

Given this theoretical perspective, Indonesian presents an interesting puzzle. Indonesian shares some properties with the Philippine-type languages, others with European-type languages, and yet other properties seem to vary between the two language types. Travis proposes that despite appearances to the contrary, there is a single macro-parameter that distinguishes Philippine-type languages from European-type languages. Indonesian differs from both types in that Indonesian chooses different values of the parameter depending on the syntactic domain. The VP domain has the European-type value of the parameter, the CP domain has the Philippine value of the parameter, while the IP domain varies between the two settings.

Travis’s approach brings a number of questions to mind. The proposed macro-parameter relies on a parameterization of principles of grammar rather than, as in much recent research, on differences in feature content for functional heads. Could Travis’s analysis be incorporated into a

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<sup>5</sup> Cole and Hermon argue that the constituent that is fronted is VoiceP rather than VP.

framework in which principles are invariant and seeming parameterizations are due to differences in the feature content of functional heads? Would such a “translation” of her analysis make the same empirical predictions? A more empirical question is whether Travis’s macro-parameterization can be extended to provide an adequate account of the more nuanced variation found in studies of Malay/Indonesian dialects like those of Donohue and Cole, Hermon and Yanti. It is unclear whether or not a macro-parametric approach can be adapted to explain micro-variation of this sort, or whether this variation is more readily explained in terms of differing sets of features on functional heads.

No topic other than that of voice/clause structure/extraction possibilities attracted the attention of more than one author. William Davies compares the facts and analysis of bound anaphora in Malay with the situation found in Madurese. His article addresses the question of whether or not Madurese contains a form that can be identified unambiguously as a reflexive anaphor. Examination of the grammatical properties of the most likely candidate, *aba’na dibi*, indicates that, unsurprisingly, this form shares many properties with reflexive-like forms in Malay/Indonesian. As in Cole and Hermon’s (1998, 2005) analysis of Standard Malay/Indonesian *dirinya*, he concludes that reflexivity is only one of a number of meanings expressed by the Madurese form and that it is not a true reflexive anaphor. What is of special interest in the Madurese facts is that unlike Standard Malay/Indonesian, Madurese appears to lack **any** form that is unambiguously a reflexive or any form that is unambiguously a third person pronoun. While *aba’na* is often interpreted as a pronoun, there are contexts in which it can be used with a c-commanding clause internal antecedent. Thus the situation in Madurese is similar to that reported by Cole et al. (2007a) regarding a variety of traditional Malay dialects (actually Malayic languages) spoken in the Malay heartland of Jambi Province, Sumatra, in which no exclusively reflexive or exclusively pronominal form occurs.<sup>6</sup> This is in contrast with Standard Malay/Indonesian and Javanese. In Standard Malay/Indonesian there are three forms, a pronoun, *dia*, that does not permit a local c-commanding antecedent, a reflexive, *dirinya sendiri*, that requires such an antecedent and what Cole, Hermon and co-authors have referred to as a pseudo-reflexive, *dirinya*, that can occur in the union of the environments in which the pronoun and the reflexive are possible (see the description in Cole et al. (2007b)). In the Pribumi (ethnically Javanese) Javanese of Yogyakarta, two forms are found, a dedicated pronoun, *dheweke*, which does not permit a local c-commanding antecedent, and the form *dheweke dhewe*, literally, *he + self*, that can be interpreted either as a single reflexive ‘himself’ or as an intensified pronoun ‘he himself’. What is of note is that Standard Malay/Indonesian and Standard (Pribumi) Javanese have in their lexicon words that are explicitly pronouns and others that are explicitly reflexives (in addition to indeterminate forms). In contrast, in both Madurese and in the Malayic languages/Malay dialects spoken in Jambi Province there is no lexical form that can be considered to be a pronoun or a reflexive. Instead, all forms can be used with both local and non-local antecedents.

Davies’s description of Madurese anaphora raises the question of whether earlier Malayo-Polynesian languages were similar to Standard Indonesian in having in their lexicon the familiar inventory of pronouns and reflexives, or whether the proto language was like the traditional Jambi dialects and Madurese in containing only a generic anaphor that did not appear to be subject to the Binding Theory.

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<sup>6</sup> Many of the so-called Malay dialects spoken in central and southern Sumatra are not mutually comprehensible with either Standard Indonesian or with each other. Thus, by normal tests they should be considered to be separate Malayic languages.

Maria Polinsky and Eric Potsdam's article examines the syntax and semantics of the verbs *mau* and *ingin* 'want' in Standard Indonesian. The Indonesian verbs *mau* and *ingin* look like typical control verbs. When they are followed by a passive predicate however, an additional, unexpected interpretation arises. The sentence *Siti mau/ingin di-cium oleh Ali* means 'Siti wants to be kissed by Ali' but also 'Ali wants to kiss Siti'. Polinsky and Potsdam call the latter interpretation Crossed Control. In Crossed Control, the wanter is not the surface subject of 'want' but an oblique element in the complement clause, and the surface subject is the theme of the embedded predicate and not an argument of 'want'. For the syntax of Crossed Control, the authors consider and reject clause union and backward control analyses and propose that 'want' in this construction is an auxiliary/raising verb that does not assign an external thematic-role. They argue that the control interpretation is encoded in the lexical semantics of the auxiliary. 'Want' takes a propositional argument, but forces the volitional participant in this event to be construed as an experiencer of wanting. It is hypothesized that this approach can be extended to volitional constructions in other languages.

Peter Slomanson examines the structure of a Malay variety that has undergone massive changes as a result of contact with neighboring languages possessing a structure that is quite unlike that of Malay. Sri Lankan Malay (SLM) has been in close contact with Sri Lankan varieties of Tamil (Dravidian) and with Sinhala (Indo-Aryan), in that order of importance, for a period of over 350 years. That contact has yielded a language which has shifted typologically from a highly analytic SVO Malay grammar with post-nominal adjectives, prepositions, no morphological case, post-nominal relativization, and no tense morphology, to a southern South Asian predominantly SOV language with postpositions, post-nominal case markers (developed from postpositions), prenominal relativization, and bound tense morphology. The question examined in this paper is how a temporal system involving unbound (adverbial) aspect markers can be reorganized as a system with bound contrastive tense (and aspect) morphology.

Slomanson shows that SLM reanalyses *su* (derived from *suda* in earlier Malay) as a bound tense marker, thereby introducing considerable complexity into the morpho-syntax of the language. For some younger speakers a further change has taken place. These speakers are simplifying the SLM perfect construction, and this may lead to lasting changes in the temporal system. Assuming that these changes persist, it is argued that they will bring SLM closer to Muslim Tamil in terms of affix order, since they involve post-verbal as opposed to pre-verbal past tense morphology. This, however, will take SLM away from Muslim Tamil in terms of complexity.

Slomanson draws a number of lessons from this historical scenario. First, the introduction of inflectional and other structural complexity in language contact situations is not necessarily a slow process, provided that certain conditions are met. The L1 of the demographically stronger population of learners (native Muslim Tamil speakers in this case) is complex in similar ways and access to that language is persistent. The grammar of that L1 must be comparable to the new grammar in the types of complexity that it manifests. It is most important that the influence of the more formally complex language (the Muslim Tamil L1 in this case) was not lost through language shift, and that the convergence and second language acquisition contexts were perpetuated cross-generationally. It is not necessary for semantic salience to be a motivating factor in grammatical convergence in bilingual and trilingual communities; however, it is to be expected that the morphosyntactic accretion will, minimally, serve some pragmatic function that is familiar to learners from their L1, such as temporal event stacking generally found in the languages of Sri Lanka.

We would like to end this introduction by thanking those who made this special issue of *Lingua* possible. First and foremost, we would like to thank the speakers at ISMIL 10, who

enthusiastically embraced the idea of a conference and journal issue emphasizing the examination of Malay/Indonesian syntax from a pan-Austronesian perspective. The conference received funding from the Provost of the University of Delaware, the Dean of Arts and Sciences of the University, the Department of Linguistics of the University, as well as generous support from Yale University. The Delaware Linguistics Department not only contributed to the funding of ISMIL 10, but it also provided funding for the copyediting of this special issue. A major contribution to this ISMIL (and to all ISMILs so far) was made by the Department of Linguistics of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. As in other ISMIL meetings, much of the organization of the conference program was carried out by the Standing Committee, consisting of Peter Cole, David Gil and Uri Tadmor. The students in the Delaware Department of Linguistics took on the major role in organizing the conference itself.

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