

## The (not so) silent syntax of speech acts and their participants: A comparative perspective

Martina Wiltschko, University of British Columbia

In this talk I explore the syntax of speech acts from a comparative perspective. Taking Ross' 1970 performative hypothesis as a starting point, I show that there is indeed evidence for a layer of structure above the propositional structure (i.e., the CP layer). However, the classic performative hypothesis and its current instantiations (mostly based on the seminal work by Speas and Tenny) are only partly correct. First, I show that the Addressee argument must be higher than the speaker argument which runs counter standard assumptions according to which the speech act layer encodes something akin to "I give p to you" (which would have the speaker above the addressee). Second, I argue that speech acts are not primitives and hence there cannot be a dedicated speech act phrase. Instead I argue that we need to recognize at least two layers of structure: one of these layers (the grounding layer) is responsible for establishing the epistemic state of the speech act participants (who knows what) whereas the other (the response layer) is responsible for establishing what the speaker does with the utterance or else what s/he wants the addressee to do with it.

The analysis is couched within the Universal Spine Hypothesis (Wiltschko 2014) which allows us to establish a formal typology for linguistic expressions that are used for grounding and responding. Data will be drawn from several unrelated languages including Cantonese, German, English, Mandarin, Medumba, and Spanish.