

**The Department of Linguistics  
is pleased to present**

***Josefina Bittar***

**UC Santa Cruz**

**speaking on**

**Differential Object Marking and Middle Marking in Guaraní**

**Friday, October 29, 2021**

**1:20PM**

**Room: HUM 1 - 210**

**Abstract:**

This presentation addresses the following question: Are grammatical constructions (in the sense of Goldberg 2006) borrowed independently from the elements contained in said constructions? To answer this question, I analyze two features of Paraguayan Guaraní that were presumably borrowed from Spanish: differential object marking (DOM), and middle marking (MM). For both analyses, I use a 40-hour corpus of sociolinguistic interviews conducted in Paraguay. More specifically, I explore factors that favor the occurrence of locative/dative *-pe* as a human direct object marker, and those that predict the use of the reflexive/passive prefix *je-* as a middle marker. Overall, I have found that *-pe* suffixes to loan nouns more frequently than to native-origin nouns, and that *je-* functions as a middle marker more frequently with loan verbs than with non-loans.

Thus, I propose that the Guaraní locative/dative marker *-pe* and the reflexive/passive marker *je-* underwent contact-induced grammaticalization (Heine and Kuteva 2003) to become an object marker (LOC/DAT > DOM) and a middle marker (REFL/PASS > MID), respectively. Both grammaticalization processes were triggered by loans, which entered the language as parts of larger constructions. In turn, these borrowed constructions, whose slots were initially favored by loans, became more productive over time and started recruiting native-origin elements. Moreover, these findings support the hypothesis that terms that are frequently used together in the donor language (constructions) will be borrowed together by the recipient language (Backus 2013), and that grammatical replication originates in everyday communication (Heine and Kuteva 2010).