

LINGUISTICS COLLOQUIUM

Friday September 25 at 2 pm

“The Variability of ‘There’-BE-Existentials with Participial Codas”

Dr. Min-Joo Kim
Texas Tech University

Abstract:

‘There’-BE-existentials with participial codas such as those in (1) have drawn a great deal of attention in the literature.

- (1) a. There were [people]pivot NP [studying Gothic]part. coda [at the party] PP-coda.
- b. In Duffy’s bar, there was [a man]pivot NP [shot by the police]part. coda.
(taken from Milsark 1974: (44) and (45), pp.184-5)

Much of the contention has been on the constituent structure of the pivot NP + participial coda string. Currently, there are three competing analyses: (i) the bare NP analysis (e.g., Williams 1984); (ii) the depictive adjunct analysis (e.g., McNally 1997, Hartmann 2008); and (iii) the small clause analysis (e.g., Stowell 1978, Safir 1982, Chomsky 1995, Kalluli 2008).

The three analyses are constantly being disputed over: numerous works are being produced about this topic but absolutely compelling arguments to choose one analysis over the other(s) are hard to come by.

This talk aims to help settle this debate by suggesting a non-monolithic approach. I show that ‘there’-BE-existentials with participial codas can be potentially ambiguous, as was first observed by Milsark (1974), and therefore we need all three analyses in order to properly capture their semantics. I offer supporting arguments for this claim by drawing on the results of the *wh*-extraction experiments I recently conducted on the construction.

Friday, September 25 at 2 pm in the Physics Conference Room
(3rd floor)