

Pronouns, Presuppositions and Hierarchies:

Papers by Eloise Jelinek

Edited by Andrew Carnie and Heidi Harley

Eloise Jelinek (CV attached) was a leading authority on syntactic and semantic theory, information structure and several Native American languages (including the Salish language, Lummi; the Uto-Aztecan language, Yaqui; and the Athabaskan language, Navajo.) She was one of very few generative linguists who brought the theoretical implications of the properties of typologically unusual and understudied languages to the forefront of mainstream generative thinking.

Jelinek originated the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis – the idea that many languages restrict realization of their arguments to pronouns. Full NPs in these languages are adjunct clarifications and comments on the predicate and its pronominal arguments. This hypothesis made strong and wide-ranging predictions about the relationship between the pronominal argument property and a wide variety of syntactic and semantic phenomena in “non-configurational languages”, including, but not limited to, nonconfigurationality itself, the absence of determiner quantification, and the information-structure sensitivity of most such languages. The particular version of information structure theory adopted by Jelinek encodes information structure in terms of hierarchical tree structure, and again, she was at the forefront of the development of now-mainstream theories about the interaction of information structure and syntax.

In other work, Jelinek investigated a broad range of morphological, syntactic and semantic phenomena in understudied and endangered languages, including clitic orders, predicate initial order, person based ergative/absolutive splits, and animacy effects in double object constructions. Besides the theoretical value of that work, it was instrumental in providing sophisticated semantic and syntactic documentation for such languages, where description is typically limited to the basic morphophonology and morphosyntax, as well as texts, that form the core of most descriptive work. She devoted a great deal of time to the Yaqui language, where she had a long-time collaboration with a native-speaker linguist whose work she mentored, and a very significant part of what is known about the amazing and theoretically challenging structural properties of Yaqui is due to her work on the language.

Eloise Jelinek passed away in 2007, but her work continues to be very influential. In this volume, we pull together 13 of her most important papers, together with a 14th which was in manuscript form at the time of her death and has not previously been accessible to other scholars. Each paper in this volume will be preceded by a 1-2 page discussion written by the volume editors. These introductions will outline the major points of each paper and provide it with the context for the work and the reasons for its subsequent influence. The volume as a whole will provide an overview of the development of Jelinek’s ideas about her most influential proposals, and of the range of data and argumentation she brought to bear on them from many different languages.

The book will begin with a short (15-20 manuscript pages) introduction to the work of Jelinek authored by the editors. This introduction will outline Jelinek's major contributions to linguistic theory, and to our knowledge of the grammatical properties of previously unstudied languages. Each paper will be preceded by a short (1-2) page introduction by the editors providing the context for the paper and outlining the paper’s contribution to the discipline. The volume will be about 150 000 words (approximately 400 printed pages)