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Emory College
Language Center

presents

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4:00 pm

Modern Languages Building Room 201

“Connecting linguistic complexity to semantic complexity of advanced literacy contexts: Implications for fostering advanced language use in FL curriculum construction and pedagogy”

This lecture presents an approach to linguistic complexity that foregrounds its function, rather than its form. In line with the systemic functional (SFL) model of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), linguistic complexity is conceptualized as expansion of the meaning-making potential via a move from more direct typical or congruent realizations of meanings into wordings to the more indirect, incongruent and metaphorical construals. This process is typical of verbal action and interaction in academic, institutional, and professional contexts and is captured in SFL by the concept of grammatical metaphor (GM) and its most typical linguistic realization through nominalizations and abstract nouns. Application of such conceptualization of complexity is illustrated in an analysis of a high-rated FL learner writing task. This analysis demonstrates how complexity manifested through the use of GMs can be explored semantically as an ability for conceptual refiguration of experience and configuration or development of concepts in texts. The second part of the talk discusses the implications of such an approach to complexity for fostering advanced literacy in FL curriculum construction and concludes with specific suggestions as to how GM as a resource for complex meaning making called for in advanced literacy discourses can be a useful construct for FL instructors and their students at different levels of language acquisition.

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