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Department of Language and Linguistic Science

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Giuseppe Longobardi
Professor

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Profile

Biography

Giuseppe Longobardi studied formal grammar and comparative philology in Pisa and Paris with special focus on Romance, Germanic, and Classical languages, and spent considerable time as a visiting scholar at MIT in the 1980s. He has published extensively on the syntax/ontology relation in the domain of nominal expressions. He is also interested in quantitative approaches to language comparison and historical linguistics, and is active in interdisciplinary work across theoretical syntax, phylogenetic linguistics, and genetic anthropology. He taught at Pisa, Venice, Trieste and was a Visiting Professor at Vienna, USC, Harvard, Paris, UCLA, before taking up an Anniversary Chair at York in December 2012.

Career

‣ Academic degrees from Università di Pisa and from Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa: 1978

‣ Postgraduate Fellow, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa: 1979-81

‣ Researcher, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa: 1981-87

- Associate Professor, Università di Venezia: 1987-94
- Professor, Università di Venezia: 1994-97
- Professor, Università di Trieste: 1997-
- Anniversary Professor, University of York: 2012-

Research

Overview

Giuseppe Longobardi has primarily done research in theoretical and comparative syntax, focusing on the study of the grammar/meaning interface, e.g. on the distributional properties of WH-variables, negative quantifiers, and proper names.

For the past ten years he has contributed to design three more innovative research programs (Topological Mapping theories, Parametric Minimalism, and the Parametric Comparison Method).

First, he has especially pointed out the relevance of structural position for the mapping of nominal elements to their ontological correspondents (Topological Mapping), deriving the application of classical analytic notions like reference, generality and quantification from DP-internal configurations.

Then he has initiated the study of a restrictive format for parametric theories of grammatical diversity (Parametric Minimalism), and is developing an original method for formally comparing overall syntactic systems (Parametric Comparison Method).

The latter approach is meant as a tool to be used for purposes of phylogenetic reconstruction and comparison with the results of independent disciplines (e.g. archaeology and population genetics), but also, more generally, for grounding historical linguistics within the framework of modern cognitive theories and in the explanation style they strive to import from natural sciences.

Grants

Longobardi is the Principal Investigator of the ERC Advanced Grant 'Meeting Darwin's last challenge: toward a global tree of human languages and genes' (2012-2017).

The project plans to build up the first phylogenetic tree of languages based on syntactic evidence and potentially aiming to global scope, and to compare it to the

molecular-genetic representation of corresponding populations.

External activities

Editorial duties

Editorial board member

- Past: *Rivista di Linguistica, Rivista di Grammatica Generativa, Natural Language Semantics, Linguistic Variation Yearbook*
- Current: *Studi e Saggi Linguistici, Iberia*, OUP Series *Studies in Diachronic and Historical Linguistics*

Invited talks and conferences

Keynote or plenary invited talks (last 10 years)

- 2013
  - Incontro di Grammatica Generativa, Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia (with G. Barbujani).
  - Conference on Language, Cognition, Semiotics, Planning, and Education, Université Mohammed V, Rabat.
  - Workshop on the History of German, Universität Bamberg.
  - ACED 15, Universitatea Bucharest.
  - Workshop *Advances in Biolinguistics*, 19th International Congress of Linguists, Geneva.
- 2011
  - International Workshop on Proto-Indoeuropean Syntax and its development, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki.
  - GLICE (Generative Linguistics in Central Europe) Conference, Budapest.
- 2009
  - Conference *Variation and Change in the Romance and Germanic NP/DP*, Universiteit van Amsterdam.
  - Eleventh Diachronic Generative Syntax Conference, Universidade de Campinas, Brazil.
  - International Conference for Historical Linguistics, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.
- 2007
  - 3rd International Conference on Modern Greek Dialects and Linguistic Theory, Nicosia, Cyprus.
  - Società Italiana di Glottologia, Conference *Lingue, ethnos e popolazioni: evidenze linguistiche,*

biologiche e culturali, Verona.

- 2006
  - Guest lecture, Glow Summer School, Stuttgart.
  - Sociedad Española de Linguïstica, Madrid.
- 2005
  - Conference *The structure of parametric variation*, University of Newcastle.
- 2004
  - Going Romance Colloquium, Universiteit van Leiden.
- 2003
  - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft, Universität München.