Statement on Research

In my research, I am interested in patterns of variation in natural language, and my approach tends to be historical. Taking a usage-based approach, I believe that experience and interaction are the foundations of linguistic structure, which is dynamic. Within the realm of variation and change, I have two main foci: 1) the quantitative study of the formation of grammar, or grammaticalization, and 2) the linguistic manifestations of unseen social and cognitive processes. I bring to my work not only my background as a linguist, but also as an anthropologist.

I am the author or co-author of fifteen refereed papers and one book chapter, and I have co-edited one volume. Since my arrival at the University of Florida, I have published ten papers, seven of these in peer-reviewed journals. My work can be found in several top-tier journals in general linguistics (e.g., *Linguistics*, *Language Variation and Change*, *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*) as well as in Hispanic Linguistics (e.g., *Spanish in Context*, *Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics*). My research is cited in 137 venues—with 113 citations since 2009—and appears on several graduate course syllabi in Hispanic linguistics and general linguistics throughout the United States and Canada.[1] I have also presented my work at dozens of conferences and events. Unfortunately, though I continued to teach, severe health concerns greatly limited my ability to travel or produce research between 2011 and 2013. Indeed, two of my recent publications (Aaron, forthcoming; Aaron & Fionda, 2014) were accepted for publication in 2011, just before the onset of my illness.[2]

Morphosyntactic evolution

My primary area of research has been the development of morphosyntax (Aaron, 2004a, 2006, 2007, 2010a; Aaron & Fionda, 2014). My dissertation examined the two main future tense forms in Iberian Spanish (*cantaré* and *voy a cantar*) since the thirteenth century. The first-ever quantitative, diachronic study of the Spanish future tense, this study's chief contribution was not the detailed description of the competition between the main future tenses, which offered concrete evidence of grammaticalization, but rather the methodological implications that emerged. Here, I examined the envelope of variation—i.e., the space in which these two forms overlapped—but I also included a quantitative analysis of the late stages of the development of the older form, *cantaré*, as a marker of epistemicity, or speaker attitude. This later function is not shared by *voy a cantar*, and so would generally be discarded in a study of variation. My findings revealed that this typically discarded context shed crucial light on the interaction between and the development of these two forms within the envelope of variation. This showed that the entire path of grammaticalization may profitably be taken into account in variationist studies, not just the parts of the forms' evolutionary paths that overlap. The published results of this study (Aaron, 2010a) are cited in major texts in the field, such as *Variationist sociolinguistics: Change, observation, interpretation* and *The Oxford handbook of sociolinguistics*.[3] This work is also

[1] Google Scholar. http://scholar.google.com/citations?user=IQrof-sAAAAJ&hl=en.
[2] Please see my CV for full references to my work.
[3] Tagliamonte, Sali A. (2011). *Variationist sociolinguistics: change, observation, interpretation*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell; Bayley, Robert, Cameron, Richard, & Lucas, Ceil. 2013. *The Oxford handbook of sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

required reading in Probabilistic Linguistics (a general linguistics course) at the University of Oregon, and in a course on grammaticalization in Spanish at the University of Colorado.

Another study in which I addressed methodological issues in the study of variation was in my study on *así* 'like this' and its nonstandard variants, some of which function as linguistic stereotypes (Aaron, 2009). My attempt to examine the frequency of these forms over the centuries relied upon literary texts. Oddly enough, these "archaic" forms appeared to experience a revival in the twentieth century, surpassing their relative frequencies (when compared to standard *así*) for any other time period. I found that the apparent resurrection of these moribund forms was due not to a true resurgence, but rather to a shift in the representation of nonstandard speech in literature in Latin America. These results highlighted the challenges inherent in the use of literature to characterize stigmatized forms.

The intangible: social, psychological, and cognitive factors

My second primary research concern has been the measurement of the effects of notoriously intangible factors. My goal in this work has been to provide empirical evidence regarding the role of the powerful yet elusive social and cognitive forces that shape the way we use language, as well as how our language changes over time. Several of my published works examine how sociocultural power differences have become embedded in everyday language (Aaron, 2004a, 2009, 2010b, 2014; Aaron & Hernández, 2007). In an early example (Aaron, 2004a), I showed how, over four centuries of Mexican Spanish, *salirse*, a form in variation with Spanish *salir* 'go out,' has encoded beliefs about gender norms into the morphology of the language. A quantitative, historical analysis reveals that the physical meanings of *salirse*, such as 'to spill out unexpectedly,' have been given social meaning, such that it is used significantly more often to refer to the actions of women. It is argued that this reflects the historical tendency for Mexican women to be seen as stepping outside the tight bounds prescribed to them within (colonial) Mexican society. This work, published in *Language in Society*, appears on the MA reading list for Spanish sociolinguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne and is assigned as required reading in courses in Hispanic Linguistics at the University of Arizona, SUNY Geneseo, and the University of Western Ontario.

Another study in which I explore the linguistic impact of social perceptions is in my diachronic analysis of English *lame*, published in the *Journal of English Linguistics* in 2010. In an examination of the terms and contexts associated with *lame* since the early 20th century in *TIME Magazine*, I show how the perceptions—and social consequences—of disability in the early twentieth century, including uselessness, humiliation, femininity, and stupidity, formed the basis for the development of *lame* into an adjective that refers to undesirable, awkward people. As far as I am aware, this is the only corpus-based examination of disability-related language carried out by a linguist, offering a unique contribution not only to the field of linguistics, but also to disability studies, which has generally relied upon qualitative and cultural analyses of the representation of disability. Once again, an historical, corpus-based approach illuminated connections that were otherwise inaccessible to speakers and linguists alike.

The linguistic effects of social difference are observed perhaps most easily in situations of language or dialect contact. As I have spent the past years along the southern edge of the United

States, where Spanish and English rub shoulders, my scholarly interest in social forces has naturally converged upon contact phenomena (e.g., Aaron 2004b, 2009, 2014; Aaron & Torres Cacoullos, 2003). My 2013 invitation as a panelist in *Celebrating Varieties of New Mexican Spanish* demonstrates my growing prominence in contact scholarship. In this work, I have aimed to uncover how local forces show themselves within processes of language contact, such as language mixing. For instance, to what extent do bilingual speakers' identities and beliefs shape the structure of their language(s)? José Esteban Hernández and I (Aaron & Hernández, 2007) show that the sociolinguistic power exerted by Mexicans in Houston, Texas, has led Salvadoran speakers to shift their own phonological patterns and pronoun usage toward the more prestigious Mexican dialect. Similarly, in my study of non-standard forms of *así* 'like that' in New Mexican Spanish (Aaron, 2009), I show that the highly frequent nonstandard *asina* is being replaced by standard *así*, likely due to contact with standard varieties of Mexican Spanish. Most recently, in "Lone English-origin nouns in Spanish: The precedence of community norms" (Aaron, 2014), I demonstrate the importance of local norms in determining the linguistic patterns in bilingual communities. I find that English-origin nouns surrounded by Spanish are most likely to be used in particular discourse contexts and semantic fields, like kinship, including *dad* and *grandma*, but not, notably, *mom*. In all of these cases, we see how everyday interaction in a highly social world influences the choices speakers make and, eventually, the future of the language.

As noted, my concern with the linguistic impact of social pressures is coupled with—and at times overlaps with—an interest in the impact of psychological and cognitive factors. Topics such as certainty, subjectivity, and analogy are critical to our understanding of the basic nature of language, but our ability as linguists to provide empirical evidence regarding their function is hampered by their very nature. We cannot enter into the hearts and minds of speakers. How, then, can we tease out the experiences and processes these evoke? Much of my work represents an ongoing attempt to do just that. I first became involved in these questions with my work on *salirse*. Not only did its patterns reveal something about the social beliefs of the speakers, but they were also the result of an historical process of subjectification. In this process, the attitudes of the speakers become part of the mental representation of the form; that is, social attitudes become cognitive schemas. My first stab at tackling the question of the quantification of subjectivity, a follow-up of my earlier work on *salirse* (Aaron 2003b, 2004a), was published in *Cognitive Linguistics* (Aaron & Torres Cacoullos, 2005). More recently, in an article in *Linguistics* (Aaron & Fionda, 2014), I explored the role of subjectivity and psychological distance in the variation in the expression of ongoing actions, such as *sigo cantando* 'I keep singing,' in eighteenth- through twentieth-century Spanish. My long-term work with the future tense in Spanish (Aaron 2006, 2007, 2010a, forthcoming) has also afforded me the chance to explore empirical measures of psychological factors, such as in my forthcoming article on the role of certainty in variation in the expression of future in Spanish.

Future projections

My research trajectory demonstrates my fascination with the relationship between the micro and the macro. How do our everyday interactions, perceptions, prejudices, and affiliations become integrated into our language—a structure in flux that is both greater than any one of us and nothing without us? How much can studies of natural language use show us about our cultures,

societies, and minds? I have worked, and will continue to work, with an eye toward systemic, probabalistic patterns embedded in real-world social interactions and cultural productions. Because I am interested in the interplay between the macro and the micro, cross-linguistic and diachronic studies are particularly attractive to me, as it is through grander comparisons that we may reach a more solid sense of what it is that we share as speakers of language, and as human beings. This approach will inform my future research.

In one strand of work (Aaron, in preparation), I examine another unseen mental process: analogy. Usage-based models of language have proposed a dynamic, organized system based on analogy, or the recognition of similarity. The potential role of analogy between different forms or constructions in language change, however, is not generally discussed. The tendency to illustrate grammaticalization through one construction at a time—without assessing the relationship *between* constructions—has made it difficult to verify the universality of the proposed paths of change. My interest in such interactions was inspired, in part, by my earlier methodological revelations regarding forms' behavior outside the variable context, as I noted that forms did, indeed, affect one another (Aaron, 2010a). This most recent paper is based on four forms in variation in Spanish today: *altamente* 'highly,' *enormemente* 'enormously,' *extraordinariamente* 'extraordinarily' and *extremadamente* 'extremely.' If paths of change are in fact uniform, as proposed in Grammaticalization Theory, then these four forms should show similar patterns of development, despite different moments of genesis. However, both their unique origins and analogical processes between forms have affected their development. These findings point to the intricacy of the relationship between structurally similar grammaticalizing forms that overlap in their use, with implications for the universality of grammaticalization paths. Not only do forms compete with each other, sometimes pushing one another out of functional territory, but they also may lean on each other, perhaps even "borrowing" the path another has taken.

In 2014 and beyond, I will bring my focus on contact linguistics home through pilot studies with Spanish-speaking communities in north-central Florida. The results of these studies will form the basis for a grant proposal to build a database of recorded Floridian Spanish that can be used by faculty and students. I will also continue my examination of similarity, analogy, and universality in grammaticalization through a series of related studies. First, I will explore more areas within Spanish in which similar forms have developed side-by-side. This will help answer questions regarding the extent to which what already exists in a language affects that which can be (or the rate at which new changes can occur). Second, I will explore similar constructions in other Romance languages. My studies in Brazilian and French literature have prepared me to delve into the histories of these languages as well. For example, did the Present Perfect form in French (e.g., *j'ai chanté* 'I have sung/I sang'), which now functions as a general past, follow the same path as that being taken by Spanish *he cantado*, which is becoming a more general past in Iberian Spanish? Such cross-linguistic work has been the focus of my grant-funded graduate course on grammaticalization in Romance, entitled Family Resemblances, and I have guided several graduate students through promising work in this area. I believe that comparative perspectives will offer both breadth and depth in our search for evidence for universals of linguistic change, as the micro builds, reproduces, and transforms the macro.