

Meeting on language change and linguistic analysis

University of Göttingen
Käte-Hamburger Weg 3
Medienraum SDP 1.245

11th July 2022

14:00–14:45	Lieke Hendriks Apparent time diachronic research
14:45–15:30	Maik Thalmann An experimentalist's perspective on corpus data
15:30–16:00	Zeqi Zhao Re-examining the grammaticaliza- tion path of <i>dou</i> : From universal quantifier to sensitive operator
16:00–16:30	coffee break
16:30–17:15	David Herting The collapse of the Latin case system and an attempt at a diachronic Word and Paradigm Morphology
17:15–18:00	Andrea Matticchio Relaxed V2 languages in corpora
18:00–18:30	Katja Friedewald Discourse markers: How to deter- mine their arising in diachrony?

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Abstracts

Lieke Hedriks:

Apparent time diachronic research

Historical data is available in fragments both timewise and geographically. Trying to infer changes out of these fragments is not ideal although perhaps the next best thing. Whereas it may be hard to “fix” this problem for historical data of early/earlier stages of language, investigating diachrony for contemporary language(s) comes with more opportunities. One way to circumvent the problem would be to investigate language change diachronically in apparent time. This means that we could collect data synchronically across generations to obtain diachronic data. This method has proven itself to be fruitful before, and should thus be taken to be a good way of approaching diachrony regarding contemporary language(s).

Maik Thalmann:

An experimentalist’s perspective on corpus data

In this presentation, I will like to discuss various issues surrounding corpus data, mostly guided by my own (experimental) perspective of what makes good data. On the interpretation side, I will argue that corpus data differ from experimental data in important respects, which should modulate both the kind of inferences we draw and the strength of our conclusions. On the statistics side, I will engage with an interesting discussion in the literature where authors — among them Koplein (2019) — ponder the question of whether inferential (as opposed to descriptive) statistics are an appropriate tool for corpus data in the first place, and what alternatives exist. Time permitting, I might briefly touch on the perils associated with inferences resulting from modelling temporal data with non-temporal methods.

Zeqi Zhao:

Re-examining the grammaticalization path of *dou*: From universal quantifier to sensitive operator

As a particle that possesses multiple logical functions, Mandarin *dou* is semantically more complicated than other prototypical universal quantifiers such as the English “all”. Cross-linguistic evidence suggests that Mandarin is the only language where the universal quantifier – scalar marker polysemy can be observed. In this talk, I will re-examine the widespread two-*dou* claim and present evidence that the unrelated functions of *dou* share the same semantic source. Through a scrutiny of *dou*'s diachronic development, it is proposed that the scalar use of *dou* could be the result of subjectivisation in its grammaticalization process.

David Herting:

The collapse of the Latin case system and an attempt at a diachronic Word and Paradigm Morphology

Over the course of its history, the Latin language lost its case system. This system was by and large replaced by prepositional phrases taking over the functions that were formerly expressed by synthetic case forms. This language change is trivial and typologically rather common. In the case of Latin, the explanation was for a long time thought to be found in the *phonetic erosion* of final syllables, rendering a lot of case forms indistinguishable. However, recent analyses (e.g. Ledgeway) tend to abandon this explanation and view the Latin case system as basically functional until late into the Late Latin period or further. There seems lack a tool for evaluating the functionality inflectional systems. Word and Paradigm Morphology (Blevins 2016) proves to be a useful synchronic model for the internal organisation and interdependencies of such systems. It will be tried to apply the methods of Word and Paradigm Morphology onto the diachronic evolution of the Latin cases.

Andrea Matticchio:

Relaxed V2 languages in corpora

Some languages display word order phenomena that are reminiscent of a V2 grammar, although they allow for some violations of the canonical V2 pattern. To account for this fact, scholars have introduced the concept of “relaxed V2 languages”, trying to capture a continuous microvariation between strict V2 and non-V2. In this presentation, I will focus on the case of Old Romance varieties. Because they are only attested in corpora, there is crucially no access to judgements of ungrammaticality; nonetheless, strong conclusions have been drawn about the nature of V2 grammars from the study of such corpora. The choice does not come without peril, and I will discuss the question what kinds of phenomena make a language worth being considered potentially V2.

Katja Friedewald:

Discourse markers: How to determine their arising in diachrony?

When we investigate on earlier language states, sometimes going back various centuries in time, out of necessity we have no choice than working with corpora of exclusively written material. However, when we look at phenomena like the emergence of discourse markers, we are confronted with a problem: How do we know that the expression in question has not been used as such way before it appears in written documents? In fact, we can even expect that these kinds of phenomena start of developing in the spoken domain before being integrated into the written one. Is there a way, maybe via generalization of observations on other kinds of grammaticalization processes, to guess how long it takes for an expression to be integrated in the written (but in general still proximity) language? The problem addressed above will be illustrated focusing on the evolution of *voilà* in Middle French and can then be followed up by a discussion.