

Syntactic representations in the multilingual mind: Methodological approaches

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Workshop description

Within the framework of usage-based cognitive approaches, representations of language are seen as the result of internal and external speaker variables like age, educational background and most of all language input. The interdependency of such factors determines how language in general and syntactic constructions in particular emerge and are stored in the multilingual* mind.

Methodologically, there are different ways to reconstruct the development and interaction of syntactic constructions in multilingual speakers. While psycholinguistic methods try to assess the representation of syntax based on processing principles (e.g., Ellis et al. 2016), corpus-driven analyses often focus on the corpus-to-cognition-principle (cf. Schmid 2010). A combination of both methodologies is less common. Despite this variety of methodological approaches, little is known about 1) how specific methods shape our understanding of syntactic representations within the multilingual mind and 2) how this understanding can contribute towards validating theoretical usage-based assumptions. The latter question is particularly challenging since the methodologies mentioned are also employed to support opposing theories.

The aim of the workshop is to disclose the possibilities and limitations of different methodological approaches and thus to contribute to the further development of central theoretical assumptions within the framework of usage-based models. Contributions approaching the question of syntactic representation within multilingual speakers from an experimental perspective are as welcome as corpus-based work and studies linking the two methodologies. Our aim is to contribute to a better understanding of how theoretical assumptions about multilingualism and different methodologies are mutually dependent.

* *Multilingualism* here refers to both genetically different languages as well as varieties within one standard language.

References: Ellis, N. C., Ute Römer & Matthew Brook O'Donnell (2016). *Usage-Based Approaches to Language Acquisition and Processing: Cognitive and Corpus Investigations of Construction Grammar*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. Schmid, H.-J. (2010). *English Abstract Nouns as Conceptual Shells. From Corpus to Cognition*. Berlin: De Gruyter.