

Cross-linguistic investigation of argument structure experimental and observational research

Elisabeth Verhoeven

While experimental studies can by now be judged as a standard technique in the study of individual grammars, their application in cross-linguistic and typological studies is a more recent development which has created a new paradigm of cross-linguistic research. This paradigm promises various advancements in our understanding of Between-Languages differences: (a) it increases the RELIABILITY of the compared observations across languages; (b) it allows for precise estimations of GRADIENT PHENOMENA, such as word order preferences or effects of context. This seminar focuses on the investigation of argument structure with a focus on psych-verb grammar: our current knowledge relies on fine-grained intuitions about word order preferences, binding possibilities, compatibilities with indicators of aspectual categories, etc. These phenomena involve gradience that cannot be precisely estimated without the use of exact quantitative methods. Moreover, a part of the assumed variation between languages is certainly due to the variation between grammarians, since this type of judgments frequently varies between authors (also within the same language). Hence, the use of exact data-gathering methods and the development of experimental and corpus designs is crucial for understanding the effect of argument asymmetries on the grammatical phenomena relevant in this field. The present course discusses empirical evidence from three different methodological paradigms on the same grammatical phenomenon, thereby highlighting the potential contribution of each method to language comparison.