



Workshop on Agreement in Discourse

Venue: University of Bamberg, Chair of General Linguistics
Website: <http://bamling-research.de/Vorlage/agreement.html>
Date: 1-2 February, 2013
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Confirmed speakers: Balthasar Bickel, Universität Zürich
Johanna Nichols, UC Berkely
Greville Corbett, University of Surrey
Andrej Kibrik, Institute of Linguistics of the Russian
Academy of Sciences and Moscow State University
Christian Lehmann, Universität Erfurt
Michael Cysouw, Universität Marburg
Dmitrij Ganenkov & Natalia Bogomolova, Russian
Academy of Science
Stefan Schnell, La Trobe University, Melbourne
Geoffrey Haig, Universität Bamberg

The concept of agreement has played a key role for various domains of linguistic theory (morphology, syntax, semantics), and there are a number of different approaches to modeling it. However, there is still no generally accepted explanation of its function: Why should languages so often develop agreement in their grammars?

In his seminal work on agreement, Corbett (2006: 274-275; see also Lehmann 1988, Levin 2001: 21-27, Kibrik 2011) proposes four possible functions of agreement, among which the most important are:

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- I. Agreement provides additional redundant (repeated) information to facilitate understanding for the hearer.
- II. Agreement helps the hearer to keep track of the different referents in a discourse.

Remarkably, the two central claims (agreement is redundant, and agreement is referential) continue to be repeated in the literature, despite the fact that, with very few exceptions, neither has ever been subjected to more rigorous testing (cf. Siewierska 1998, Bickel 2003), and both clearly admit counter examples.

Questions to be addressed at the workshop are, among others:

- What does ‘rich agreement morphology’ mean?
- Does agreement fulfill primarily syntactic functions, or is it rather used to serve as referential device?
- Which methods can be used to potentially demonstrate the referential function of agreement or its correlation with word order (Siewierska 1998)?
- Which methods do we have in order to count agreement markers in natural texts?
- What can cognitive approaches tell us about the function of agreement?
- How can we explain differences in referential density (Bickel 2003)?
- Is it possible to prove a correlation between referential density and agreement morphology?

Guests are welcome to attend, and there is no registration fee. However, we request that guests register at least two weeks in advance so that we can plan the rooms accordingly. In order to register please send an email to diana.forker@uni-bamberg.de.

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References

- Bickel, Balthasar. 2003. Referential density in discourse and syntactic typology. *Language* 79, 708-736.
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- Kibrik, Andrej A. 2011. *Reference in discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lehmann, Christian. 1988. On the function of agreement. In Michael Barlow & Charles A. Ferguson (eds.) *Agreement in natural language*, 55-66. CSLI, Stanford.
- Levin, Magnus. 2001. *Agreement with collective nouns in English*. (Lund Studies in English 103). Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Siewierska, Anna. 1998. Variation in major constituent order: A global and a European perspective. In Anna Siewierska (ed.) *Constituent order in the languages of Europe*, 475-551. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
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