

Talks of SFB632

Project: D2

Speaker:

Stefan Baumann (Universitäten Saarbrücken and Köln)

Time: Thursday, 13.NOV, 2005, 15pm-17pm

Place:

University of Potsdam, Golm Haus: 24, Raum: 1.54

Title: Degrees of Givenness and their Prosodic Marking

Abstract:

The notion of ‘givenness’ has been attributed in the literature to different levels. They apply either to the cognitive states of discourse referents relating to the notions of ‘identifiability’ and ‘activation’ or to the pragmatic role of a discourse referent in a proposition, expressed by the distinction between ‘focus’ and ‘background’. We are particularly interested in the potentially continuous level of activation and the prosodic correlates of referents displaying different activation states or degrees. Our proposed model is based on production data as well as perception experiments in German. While overall results show a relation between pitch accent type H* and newness, and between lack of accent and fully given referring expressions, the intonational marking of semi-active or ‘accessible’ information is not as clear-cut. Different types of accessibility (e.g. denoting different semantic relations) demand different accent types as linguistic markers. Moreover, there is evidence that a range of accent types (including deaccentuation) can be mapped onto the gradient scale of activation degrees, with the pitch height on the lexically stressed syllable of the referring expression being the determining factor. Such a mapping suggests a somewhat iconic use of pitch height, which is compatible with Gussenhoven’s (2002) ‘Effort Code’.