Call for Papers

Marginal grammar at the semantics-pragmatics interface (Workshop at DGfS 2025)

Organizers: Rita Finkbeiner & Charlotte Eisenrauch (JGU Mainz)

Since the notion of Marginal grammar ("Randgrammatik") was first introduced by Fries (1987), the interest in infinite, verbless, insubordinate (Evans 2007), or otherwise "non-canonical" syntactic patterns with an own speech act potential – including notions such as "minor clause types" (Siemund 2018), "Non-sentences" (Stainton 2004), and "Block language" (Aarts 2014) – has considerably increased, particularly within functional frameworks such as Construction Grammar (e.g., Lambrecht 1990, Kay & Fillmore 1999). A basic insight from functional approaches is that the particular grammatical properties of marginal syntactic patterns can be motivated by their specialized discoursal functions (e.g., Östman 2005, Auer 2010).

However, the guiding principles and the systematics behind these highly specific form-function correlations are still not fully understood. On the one hand, as marginal patterns often are syntactically reduced and semantically underdetermined, a great deal of their interpretation must reside in pragmatics. On the other hand, it is a matter of controversial debate in modern research into semantics and pragmatics which aspects of meaning belong to semantics and which to pragmatics (Finkbeiner 2019). From a semantics-pragmatics interface perspective, it is crucial to take into account not only conventional semantics and conversational pragmatics, but also borderline areas such as "truth-conditional pragmatics" (Recanati 2010) and "use-conditional semantics" (Gutzmann 2015) in order to comprehensively account for the form-function correlations in marginal constructions. However, not only is there very little interaction between recent functional approaches to marginal grammar and modern research into the semantics-pragmatics interface. What is more, there is a significant lack of comprehensive empirical work that both covers the broad variety of marginal phenomena in various languages and systematically relates them to particular discourse or activity types as well as to specific kinds of interpretational processes at the semantics-pragmatics interface.

Against this backdrop, the aims of this workshop are twofold. With respect to linguistic theorizing, it aims at fostering the interaction between functional approaches and modern notions from the semantics-pragmatics interface in order to enhance our understanding of the complex interpretational processes tied to marginal grammar. With respect to empirical substantiation, it seeks to bring together studies on marginal phenomena across languages and

discourse types in order to gain a more differentiated picture of the variety of marginal syntactic patterns and their pragmatic purposes.

Relevant functional areas to be examined include, e.g., instructional, expressive, appellative, and regulative action types, as represented in genres such as, e.g., usage manuals, public signs, internet memes, billboards, advertisements, headlines, exclamations, interjections, swearing, and many more. Studies exploring new marginal patterns, testing new methodologies, or refining existing theoretical notions of meaning with respect to these patterns are very welcome, as are studies from the perspectives of multimodality, language change, language acquisition, contrastive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and experimental linguistics.

Questions that will be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Which particular marginal patterns, or minor clause types, can we distinguish in various languages, and how can we systematize them? What are their specific syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties?
- How are particular marginal patterns related to particular speech act types, discourse types, or genres? Are these relations conventional or context-dependent, or something in-between?
- Which different kinds of conventional and inferential meaning aspects, to be located within which (borderline) areas of the semantics/pragmatics interface, are involved in the interpretation of different marginal patterns?
- Which functional areas or activity types are especially prone to attract marginal patterns, which aren't, and why? Which role do multimodal aspects play for the meaning constitution of marginal patterns?
- What can the "margins" teach us about the "core"?

Invited speaker: Peter Siemund (University of Hamburg)

Abstract submission:

We welcome abstracts on any of the topics listed above and beyond. Abstracts (PDF, 12pt font, one page; examples and references may appear on a second page) should be submitted via email to finkbeiner@uni-mainz.de by August 31, 2024.

Important workshop information:

The workshop is part of the 47th annual meeting of the German Linguistic Society (DGfS 2025) to be hosted by Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, which will take place between 5-7 March 2025. Please note that the regulations of the German Linguistic Society (DGfS) do not allow workshop participants to present two or more papers in different workshops.

Important dates:

Deadline for abstract submission: August 31, 2024

Notification of acceptance: September 2024

Workshop: 5-7 March 2025

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