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ON THE DIACHRONY OF CONTRAST MARKERS, WITH FOCUS ON ITALIAN 'ANZI' "ON THE CONTRARY"

Vortrag am 29.11.17 um 18 Uhr c.t.
in Raum S227 / Schellingstraße 3 (VG)

The diachronic investigation of discourse markers has proven challenging since its inception in the late Eighties. Their context-dependency and frequent association with informal, colloquial usage have raised methodological, as well as theoretical, questions, as historical work has to rely on written texts, which record speech with varying degrees of accuracy, and provide no access to prosodic cues.

This talk focuses on the evolution of contrastive markers, with focus on Italian. Using Old to Present Day Italian databases, in particular the Opera del Vocabolario italiano and the Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli, the talk details the evolution of discourse marker 'anzi' "on the contrary" from spatial and temporal uses to its Present Day contrastive-corrective function, by focusing on the role of the comparative structure in the shift. On the basis of this case-study, some key questions in the diachrony of discourse markers will be addressed, viz. their tendency to acquire (inter)subjective values, to shift from content-level to context-level items, and from clause-internal to clause-external positions. The role of different types of contexts and genres will be discussed, for instance Old Italian volgarizzamenti, translations or adaptations (or both) of Latin prose originals into vernacular versions, where the rendering with 'anzi' can be compared to the original item in the Latin source text.

