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LANGUAGE IS A USAGE-BASED DYNAMIC COMPLEX-ADAPTIVE SYSTEM. BUT HOW DOES SUCH A SYSTEM ACTUALLY WORK?

Vortrag am 22.5.19 um 18 Uhr c.t.
in Raum S004 / Schellingstraße 3 (VG)

Languages are complex-adaptive systems *par excellence*. Like animal flocks, economic markets or ecosystems, languages are ultimately driven and shaped by the intentional actions of speakers. Linguistic conventions such as words, constructions or rules and the linguistic system at large emerge from this interaction and feed back into it. What we tend to objectify as *linguistic structure* or *the linguistic system* emerges from the interaction among speakers and constantly feeds back into it by means of self-reinforcing feedback loops. This explains why languages are subject to situational, social (incl. regional) and individual variation and on-going historical change.

It is one thing to claim that languages are complex-adaptive systems, but it is quite another to actually model such a system, especially if the full range of structural, use-related, social and cognitive aspects of language are to be taken into consideration. To the best of my knowledge, a unified complex-adaptive model of language integrating all these aspects has not been proposed so far.

In my talk I will present such a model. Its core elements date back to an unsuccessful proposal for funding submitted by a large group of LMU linguists, psychologists and sociologists in 2009. Over the past ten years, I have developed these ideas further into what I refer to as the *Entrenchment-and-Conventionalization Model* (cf., Schmid 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, and Schmid and Mantlik 2015). In its latest version (cf. Schmid in print), this model aims at detailing how the interaction between usage activities, cognitive entrenchment processes, social conventionalization processes and a range of forces bring about, sustain and adapt what we call *the linguistic system* and in which ways this interaction contributes to the persistence, variation and change of linguistic structure.

The talk will focus on the main components of the model and on how it explains structure, persistence and various types of language change.

References

- Schmid, Hans-Jörg (2014). 'Lexico-Grammatical Patterns, Pragmatic Associations and Discourse Frequency', in Thomas Herbst, Hans-Jörg Schmid, and Susen Faulhaber (eds.), *Constructions Collocations Patterns*, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 239-293.
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- Schmid, Hans-Jörg (2018). 'Ein integratives soziokognitives Modell des dynamischen Lexikons', in Stefan Engelberg, Henning Lobin, Kathrin Steyer, and Sascha Wolfer (eds.), *Wortschätze. Dynamik, Muster, Komplexität*, Berlin/ Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 215-232.
- Schmid, Hans-Jörg (in print). *The Dynamics of the Linguistic System. Usage, Conventionalization, and Entrenchment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmid, Hans-Jörg and Annette Mantlik (2015). 'Entrenchment in Historical Corpora? Reconstructing Dead Authors' Minds from Their Usage Profiles', *Anglia* 133(4): 583-623.