

Grammatical gaps: Definition, typology and theory (GrammGaps@DGfS43)

(43. Jahrestagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft 2021 in Freiburg)

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General Linguistics; Syntax; Morphology; Historical Linguistics; Linguistic Theories; Typology

Call Deadline: 31 August 2020

The 43rd Annual Conference of the German Linguistic Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft, DGfS) will be held at the University of Freiburg (Breisgau), Germany, from 24-26 February 2021. The overarching topic “Modelling and Evidence”/“Modell und Evidenz” is an invitation to reflect on the manifold productive tensions between theoretical/conceptual innovation and new ways of acquiring, annotating and analyzing empirical data. DGfS Annual Conferences have established themselves as an attractive forum for linguists from all over the world to present and discuss their current research. The conference will feature keynote talks by internationally renowned experts in their fields (Geert Booij, Leiden University; Martine Grice, Universität zu Köln; Eitan Grossman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Marianne Mithun, University of California Santa Barbara; Devyani Sharma, Queen Mary University London) as well as 15 thematic sections. This workshop will be one of the thematic sections.

Workshop organizers:

Thomas Strobel and Helmut Weiß (Goethe University Frankfurt)

Invited speakers (confirmed):

Marga Reis (University of Tübingen) and Andrea Sims (The Ohio State University)

Every language’s grammar exhibits systematic gaps and rule conflicts, i.e. grammars do not fully and/or consistently determine all logically possible constellations (or in Sapir’s famous words: “Unfortunately, or luckily, no language is tyrannically consistent. All grammars leak”). This fact has to be taken into consideration by “realistic” grammar theories (Reis 2017).

In this exploratory workshop, we want to address the topic of structural gaps or defectiveness from a definitional, descriptive-typological and explanative-theoretical perspective (Strobel & Weiß 2019):

- Despite some delimitation problems, the concept of morphological, especially paradigmatic gaps or inflectional defectiveness (Sims 2015) seems to be quite clear, referring to expected (and often predictable) but non-existent forms of certain lexemes. For syntax, though, it is far less obvious what should be understood as a gap in this sense and if this should be determined contrastively by language comparison

(e.g. the absence of relative clauses in some languages) or purely system-inherently (verb agreement with complex or coordinated subject noun phrases).

- Which cross-linguistic generalizations can be drawn with respect to common areas of defectiveness, which parts of grammar, e.g. syntactic categories, are affected (most), and which areas seem to be immune instead?
- (Semantically) expected gaps (e.g. the lack of plural forms for mass nouns) can be distinguished from arbitrary gaps. By which (non-general) principles can the latter be explained historically and/or systematically (phonological/phonotactic, morphological, syntactic, pragmatic causes)?
- Which mechanisms are used to (potentially) fill synchronic gaps or eliminate defectiveness (suppletion, periphrases, borrowing etc.), which ones instead operate on system-immanent and thus irremediable conflicts (in syntax e.g. syncretisms, leading to 'grammatical illusions')?
- Can the concept of gradience in grammar (gradient/relative grammaticality, vague grammaticality judgments etc.) be taken over to gradient defectiveness?

References:

Reis, Marga. 2017. Grammaticische Variation und realistische Grammatik. In Marek Konopka & Angelika Wöllstein (eds.), *Grammatische Variation. Empirische Zugänge und theoretische Modellierung*, 255-282. Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter.

Sims, Andrea D. 2015. *Inflectional Defectiveness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strobel, Thomas & Helmut Weiß. 2019. Von sprachlichen und nicht-sprachlichen Lücken. In Gerrit Kentner, Frank Kügler, Beata Moskal & Stavros Skopeteas (eds.), *Tweets 'n greets for Caroline Féry on the occasion of her farewell from Goethe-University Frankfurt*, 111-117.

URL: https://www.linguistik-in-frankfurt.de/blog/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Tweet-n-greets_CarolineFery.pdf.

Call for Papers:

We invite submissions for 20-minute oral presentations (+ 10 minutes discussion) in English or German. We are equally interested in theoretical and empirical contributions with evidence from all languages or dialects as well as from all morphological and syntactic frameworks. Contributions on related topics such as Ineffability, grammatical doubts or uncertainties (which, among others, can be explained by gaps or conflicts) and grammatical illusions are also warmly welcome.

Abstracts should clearly state the research question(s), the methodological approach as well as the (expected) results and should not exceed 1 page length (A4, Times New Roman, 12 point, single-spaced), excluding references. The deadline for submission is 31 August 2020; notification date is 30 September 2020. Please submit your abstract anonymously to: <https://easychair.org/cfp/GrammGaps-DGfS43>.