TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT DRESDEN

Call for Papers

NoCaSynE –

International Symposium

New Perspectives on Non-Canonical Syntax in English

2-3 September 2017

TU Dresden (Germany)

The term *non-canonical syntax* is maybe one of the most controversially debated terms in linguistics. Some understand it to describe syntactic constructions like negative inversion, article deletion, or subject-verb discord which deviate from the 'canon' of Standard (British or American) English, i.e. the set of constructions deemed correct or acceptable by prescriptive grammars (cf. e.g. White-Sustaita 2010) or listed in descriptive grammars like the *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk et al. (1985; cf. e.g. Rozycki / Johnson 2013). The adjective *non-canonical* is thus clearly used synonymously with *non-standard*, *incorrect*, *defective*, or *faulty* and the respective constructions are often associated with spoken, informal language (or the *code parlé* according to Koch / Oesterreicher [2]2011). Other linguists (cf. e.g. Ward / Birner 2004), by contrast, use the term to subsume syntactic constructions like topicalization, clefting, or extraposition which, while being part of the accepted standard set of constructions available in formal and/or informal English, are relatable to a more basic, canonical sentence structure. These constructions deviate from the simple unmarked SVX pattern or established combinations of sentence constituents and have the effect of foregrounding certain elements in the reader/listener's cognition, while backgrounding others. The term *non-canonical*, in this sense, thus inevitably entails considerations of the influence of these constructions on information packaging or information structure.

Linguistic research so far has shown that the usage of non-canonical constructions – according to both of the above understandings of the term *non-canonical* – depends critically on a multiplicity of situational as well as textual factors, such as the point in time, the variety of English, the medium of language use, the degree of formality, the register, or the text function. Considering current trends in the development of the English language, we can predict that research on non-canonical syntactic constructions according to both definitions will become increasingly relevant in the future. On the one hand, in modern English the *code parlé* gains ground even in written and traditionally formal registers, especially with the rise of modern communication

technologies. Thus, both syntactic constructions deemed non-standard or faulty by prescriptive grammars and syntactic constructions facilitating information processing due to a clearer progression from given to new information might increase in frequency. On the other hand, the continued contact of the English language with various other languages in the course of migration and the development of new contact varieties, such as multiethnolects (especially among youngsters) or pidgins, might have an influence on language use and the frequency of certain non-canonical syntactic constructions.

Sources:

Koch, Peter; Wulf Oesterreicher (^{2}2011): Gesprochene Sprache in der Romania: Französisch, Italienisch, Spanisch. Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Quirk, Randolph et al. (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language.* Harlow: Longman.

Rozycki, William; Neil H. Johnson (2013). "Non-canonical grammar in Best Paper award winners in engineering." *English for Specific Purposes* 32, 157-169.

Ward, Gregory; Betty Birner (2004). "Information Structure and Non-canonical Syntax." In: Horn, Laurence; Gregory Ward (Eds.). *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* Malden: Blackwell, 153-174.

White-Sustaita, Jessica (2010). "Reconsidering the syntax of non-canonical negative inversion." *English Language and Linguistics* 14/3, 429–455.

The symposium on Non-Canonical Syntax in English intends to investigate how studies indebted to either of the two understandings of the term *non-canonical* as well as focusing on non-canonical syntactic constructions in specific forms of English can benefit from each other.

We invite submissions approaching non-canonical syntax according to one of the two above definitions from an empirical or theoretical perspective, such as:

- Synchronic or diachronic studies of non-canonical syntax
- Comparative approaches to non-canonical syntax in English and languages other than English
- Non-canonical syntax in one or several (native or non-native) varieties of English
- Non-canonical syntactic constructions in one or several (spoken or written, formal or informal) registers

The format of presentations will be a 20-minute talk followed by a 10-minute discussion.

The aim of the symposium is to establish a long-term collaboration between researchers who have a permanent or major interest in non-canonical syntax. We aim at enhancing and promoting discussion and exchange on different approaches to non-canonical syntax. Thus, we explicitly encourage young scholars to submit work-in-

progress reports and intend to concede additional time in the programme of the symposium to discussion intervals.

300-words abstracts (in English, excluding references, in PDF format) should include the title of the paper, the name of author(s) and his/her/their affiliation, postal address, and email address. Abstracts should be sent to the following address by **14 July 2017** (11:59pm, CEST):

ncsyntax@mailbox.tu-dresden.de

The first 10 people who are accepted as participants will receive a fully paid stay at the TU Dresden guest house (very close to the venue) for the duration of the symposium. Furthermore, all participants will receive financial support for travelling costs (50€ for participants from Germany and 100€ for participants from other countries).

Prof. Dr. Claudia Lange (TU Dresden, Germany)

Sven Leuckert (TU Dresden, Germany)

Dr. Teresa Pham (Vechta University, Germany)