



Philosophische Fakultät



**CCLS/SFB 1252: Martina Penke & Judith Schlenter (Cologne)**

*Does case marking influence the description of transitive events in German? – Evidence from sentence production and eye-tracking*

Monday, 11 January 2021, 2.00 p.m., Zoom

This talk addresses an open question in sentence production research to date, that is, whether case marking on noun phrases influences speakers' syntactic choice and sentence planning in scene description tasks. We will present two experiments that examined how German speakers described event scenes where the patient of the event was 'cued' by means of an explicit perceptual cue, a red dot at the position the patient was to appear in the event scene (Experiment 1) and a picture of the patient (Experiment 2). Prior research has shown that effects of attention manipulation on syntactic choice display cross-linguistic variation with notable differences between languages that have morphological case marking on noun phrases and English that lacks such marking. For example, while English speakers showed an increase in the production of passives after patient-cueing, patient-cueing seemed less effective in eliciting non-canonical structures in languages such as Finnish or Russian that also allow object topicalization. Since in German nominative subject case and accusative object case are unambiguously marked on masculine nouns but not on feminine nouns, it provides an ideal testing ground to investigate how explicit, unambiguous and ambiguous case marking affect sentence production. In the present study we not only analyzed speakers' syntactic choices (active SVO, active OVS, passive), but also sentence onset latencies and speakers' eye gaze, enabling us to make inferences about speakers' planning strategies.