Experimental Investigations into the Interpretation of Perspective-Sensitive Items

Thomas Weskott (Universität Göttingen)
joint work with Johanna Klages and Anke Holler

Accounts of perspective sensitivity from philosophy of language and linguistic semantics seek to unify the interpretive properties of expressions that exhibit it, e.g. by recourse to a notion of a “judge” from whose perspective these expressions have to be evaluated. In this talk, we show that the class of perspective-sensitive expressions is less homogeneous than this search for a unified semantics presupposes. Starting from Lasersohn’s (2009) account of a semantics enriched by a judge parameter, we will present some theoretical arguments and evidence from two experiments for systematic differences between two large classes of expressions: predicates of personal taste (like tasty, boring), and relational locative expressions (e.g., to the left of).