Semra Kızılkaya (04.11.2026)

Modulating illocutionary force across socio-economic layers: Syntactic and lexical variation in requests

The talk explores diastratic variation in the realization of request speech acts in German, asking how speakers modulate illocutionary force through morpho-syntactic and lexico-grammatical choices. Assuming that social constellations and habitus shape orientations to face-threat in interaction, upgrading and downgrading strategies of the head act are investigated. This includes variation in head-act strategy choices, i.e., contrasting conventionally indirect requests of the *Can you VP* type (*Can you bring me a coffee?*) to direct imperative forms, like *Bring me a coffee!*. Findings of a first case study using discourse completion tasks with 83 participants suggest that socio-economic layers but also micro-social variables like social distance or age influence the uptake of specific resources such as head act atrategy, syntactic downgraders, i.e., subjunctive mood, or lexical mitigation, i.e., *bitte* ‚please'.