

Ad Hoc Constructions. Syntactic innovation as synchronic phenomenon

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The topic of this talk is the exploration of a consequence of the widely assumed frequentist approach to grammaticalisation: there might be syntactic innovations that occur too rarely to induce language change. Consequently, these innovations need to be treated as synchronic phenomena. I will show with a case study from German verbal complexes that this slightly paradoxical idea may help to improve our understanding of particular syntactic phenomena which occur rarely, but nevertheless systematically. Wider implications of such an account - for instance for the debate on the poverty of the stimulus - will also be touched.