

Keynote talk: "German demonstrative pronouns in contrast"

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Abstract

German has two demonstrative pronoun series: the short form *der*, *die*, *das*, and the long form *dieser*, *diese*, *dieses*. Both forms can be used anaphorically and they differ from the personal pronouns *er*, *sie*, *es*, as they refer to an antecedent that is less prominent at that point in the discourse when various potential antecedents are available. In the presentation, I will present original results from corpus analyses, acceptability judgement tasks and eye-tracking reading experiments that challenge prevailing assumptions about the differences between these two demonstratives in their discourse function. I will argue that the demonstrative *der* is the unmarked form, while the demonstrative *dieser* expresses specific functions within the discourse structure. The results of the first series of experiments indicate that *dieser* exhibits a preference for contrastive antecedents and signals topic persistence. The findings from the second series of experiments demonstrate that *der* marks a sentence topic, while *dieser* serves as a shifter and marker of the discourse topic. These original results significantly contribute to our understanding of the multiple functions of demonstratives in discourse.