

Discourse phenomena as a window to the interfaces

This talk explores the idea that discourse phenomena (parentheticals, ellipsis, root phenomena and information structure related issues, among others) constitute one of the best empirical domains to study the relationship between syntax and its interfaces (PHON and SEM, but also pragmatics, assuming the latter encodes ‘point-of-view’ notions). I will reflect on the methodological problems that concern both the collection and the interpretation of the data (i.e. how to isolate the different factors affecting an acceptability judgment or the existence of potentially paradoxical notions, like “X is acceptable ungrammatical”). As we know, this kind of data tends to be messy, especially because, more often than not, a specific intonational pattern or pragmatic context (or both) is needed to license a given syntactic phenomenon. In the view I will embrace, these difficulties can be a perfect opportunity for linguists on different subfields to do joint research. I will defend the idea that we should abandon purely syntactico-centric approaches to discourse phenomena and put some of the burden on the interfaces and, ideally, on 3rd factor principles instead.