Left and right peripheries in discourse: Theoretical and empirical perspectives across languages

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The goal of this workshop is to investigate the left and right peripheries in spoken and written discourse across languages, focusing on their internal structure from both theoretical and empirical perspectives.

The left and right peripheries of discourse units have received considerable scholarly attention across languages over the past few decades. While peripheries have been largely ignored in traditional accounts of grammar, recent discourse-oriented approaches to grammar acknowledge the important role that the left periphery (LP) and the right periphery (RP) play for the structuring of discourse. Research on LP and RP has so far focused on various issues from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, including considerations as to the nature of the unit in relation to which LP and RP can be defined (see, e.g., Degand & Crible 2021), as well as investigations of specific linguistic elements occurring in LP and/or RP and the various discourse functions that these elements (have come to) fulfil across languages (see, e.g., Beeching & Detges 2014; Van Olmen & Šinkūnienė 2021).

There is general agreement among scholars that the peripheries of discourse units can be occupied by a wide range of linguistic categories such as discourse markers, comment clauses, vocatives, question tags, dislocations etc. These peripheral elements have been characterized by a number of formal and functional features, including prosodic and syntactic non-integration, positional mobility, semantic non-restrictiveness and non-truth conditionality. However, numerous studies across languages have shown that not all characteristic features apply to all peripheral elements to the same extent, which leads to the assumptions that (i) some linguistic elements occurring in LP/RP are more peripheral than others, and (ii) the boundary between peripheral elements and elements belonging to the 'core' of discourse units is fuzzy (see also Traugott 2015). One aim of this workshop is to test these assumptions on the basis of empirical data within and across languages.

While the internal structure of LP and RP has been modelled in different ways in various languages such as German (e.g. Vinckel-Roisin 2015), French (e.g. Degand 2014) or Dutch (Van der Wouden & Foolen 2015), the co-occurrence of peripheral elements and their sequencing behaviour within LP and/or RP have received relatively little attention in the literature (see, e.g., Crible & Degand 2021; Haselow 2019; Lohmann & Koops 2016). Therefore, a second aim of this workshop is to provide more insight into the sequential ordering of left-peripheral and right-peripheral elements (and the effects thereof) across languages.

Call for Papers:

This is a call for papers for a workshop proposal for the 56th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE 2023), Athens, 29 August - 1 September 2023.

We invite submissions that may address, but are not limited to, the following questions relating to the internal structure of LP and RP within and across languages:
- According to which formal and functional criteria can linguistic elements occurring in LP and/or RP be classified?
- To what extent can some elements occurring in LP and/or RP be conceptualized as being more peripheral than others?
- How can the boundary between 'core' and 'periphery' be defined and conceptualized?

- Which structural slots do LP and RP consist of?
- To what extent does the internal structure of LP and the internal structure of RP differ from one another?
- How can the co-occurrence and sequential ordering of elements in LP and/or RP be conceptualized?
- To what extent is the sequential ordering of elements in LP and/or RP constrained by different factors?

We invite submissions adopting theoretical and/or empirical (e.g. experimental and/or corpus-based) approaches. Any of the questions mentioned above may be addressed by investigating one specific language or by comparing several languages, and by taking into consideration possible variation in terms of the internal structure of LP and/or RP across spoken and written discourse as well as across discourse genres.

Abstracts (max. 300 words, excluding references) should be sent to the workshop convenors by 8 November 2022:
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Feedback on abstracts will be provided by 15 November 2022, and the workshop proposal will be submitted to the organizers of SLE 2023 by 20 November 2022.

We will be notified by 15 December 2022 if our workshop proposal for SLE 2023 has been accepted. If approved, authors must submit a revised and extended abstract of 500 words (excluding references) according to the SLE guidelines by 15 January 2023.

References:
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