

## **Christiane v. Stutterheim**

### **Event unit formation under a cross linguistic and acquisitional perspective.**

Events are fundamental units in human perception and cognition. The definition of what event units are varies across disciplines. A core criterion is related to the fact of 'quality change over time'. This criterion, however, leaves room for variation across the dimensions of quality as well as time. In the presentation we will argue for the hypothesis that language is a major factor in event unit formation.

Languages differ with respect to the conceptual categories to which they attribute cognitive prominence on the basis of either grammaticalization or lexical differentiation. A language which requires obligatory marking of phases of an event by aspectual verbal categories, for example, forces its speakers to attend to these differences. A language which differentiates object specific features in the verbal lexicon of position verbs (*sitzen, stehen, liegen*) forces its speakers to attend to features of a visual input which provide the basis for selecting the respective verb. Cognitive processes which are motivated by linguistic structure in this sense are highly automatized, deeply entrenched in the course of first language acquisition.

Earlier cross linguistic studies on event construal and verbal representation of events have shown that speakers of different languages a) segment visual input at different break points into event units and b) select different components of the visual input for verbal representation (v. Stutterheim et al. 2012) So far these two aspects of event construal have not been investigated in their interrelation. Experimental cross linguistic studies in the domain of motion events are taken as evidence for the role of the linguistically packaged conceptual categories in event unit formation. Results will be presented from speakers of four different languages (French, Tunisian, German and English) and learner languages in both verbal and non-verbal tasks. Our hypothesis is supported by three findings: a) the cross linguistic differences found in segmentation patterns converge across the verbal and the non-verbal task. b) The cross linguistic differences in the selection of information representing the scenes correspond to typological differences at the level of grammaticalization and lexicalization patterns. c) Advanced L2 speakers follow principles of their L1 in event unit formation.

Stutterheim, Christiane von/Andermann, Martin/Carroll, Mary/Flecken, Monique/Schmiedtová, Barbara (2012): How grammaticized concepts shape event conceptualization in language production: Insights from linguistic analysis, eye tracking data, and memory performance. *Linguistics*, 50, 833-867.