

Grammatical variation

In language, we often have two (or more) ways to express one and the same thing. We could for example say *Maureen has two kids* or *Maureen has two children*, both meaning that Maureen is a mother of two. Variation does not just affect the lexical level – we also find it in grammar. We could for example say *He said he was going to leave* or *He said that he was going to leave*, *He is going to visit his friends in Austria this summer* or *This summer, he is going to visit his friends in Austria*. Even though grammatical variation is a rather well-researched phenomenon, there is considerable disagreement as to which factors influence variation, with proposed determinants ranging from stylistic choices to processing efficiency. The class is structured as follows: We will start out with a closer look at various variation phenomena and analyses thereof. At the same time, we will discuss different research methods in grammatical variation research. In the second half of the seminar, students will work in groups to conduct small-scale empirical projects on grammatical variation and present the projects to class in the two final sessions of the seminar.

Requirements Studienleistung: Active participation in class and in-group activities, empirical research project & presentation

Requirements Prüfungsleistung: Term paper based on research project

Prerequisites: Since we will be dealing with grammatical variation, students will need basic knowledge of syntax (constituency + phrase structure).