

Event unit formation under a cross linguistic perspective

Christiane von Stutterheim and Johannes Gerwien, University of Heidelberg

Previous studies on event segmentation in language and cognition show that there is no 'natural' way of forming events units. While we know some of the criteria people draw on when forming events, such as *change of state of an entity* or *causal relations between states of affairs*, the challenging questions remain which factors guide a person a) when segmenting the perceptual stream in cognitively manageable packages and b) when selecting components to form a propositional unit, expressed in language, and c) whether and d) how these levels interact. It is the latter question which will be addressed in the presentation.

Motion events are taken as the domain of investigation. Typological differences between languages in the field of spatial cognition (verb framed versus satellite framed languages) are taken as starting point for our hypothesis on language specific principles of event unit formation. We will show that speakers of French and German follow different criteria in segmenting the continuous stream of visual perception and in selecting information for verbal representation. The methods used are a) verbal description of short video clips and b) a button-press task without overt language use. The results will be discussed in the context of the general question on principles of event segmentation across cognitive modes and across languages.