Abstract:

The aim of this project at the interfaces of natural-language meaning is a large-scale, exact, and sustainable corpus-based investigation of so-called decompositional markers over time. The background includes the larger question, in which ways exactly meaning representations can change. The empirical work includes representatives that are well-known in the synchronic literature, such as the adverbs 'again' and 'almost', but also their competitors and entirely distinct items at earlier stages and up to the present. By critically and systematically expanding the scope of earlier pilots, the implementation of the project aims at providing a threefold benefit for the linguistic community: 1) a theoretically informed and comprehensive inquiry geared towards modelling the transitions of distinct representations not only in structural but also in detailed contextual terms; 2) an investigation that can capture the system of the relevant markers as a whole to produce a predictive account as to when exactly an analysis is more appropriate than others; 3) an unprecedented database of potential decompositional items focused on conjoining structural testing with context-based information that is determined on the basis of high percentages of agreement between well-trained annotators after detailed textual work. Upon completion, the project will furthermore serve as a stepping stone in the systematic and long-term corpus-based investigation of the relationship between natural language structure and meaning.