

Universal Grammar and Linguistic Diversity

Workshop

30. – 31. March

The idea of Universal Grammar has dominated the field of linguistics in the last decades, while at the same time having undergone various reformulations, particularly in the writings of Chomsky. Chomsky's idea of Universal Grammar has been developed in the framework of generative linguistics and entails the concept of an innate and universal faculty of language which allows infants to grasp the universal principles and patterns that structure phrases of any possible human language. Despite the prominence of this idea in the field of contemporary linguistics, it has been abundantly criticised and is still a bone of contention in linguistics, cognitive science and philosophy.

While various types of critiques have been leveled against this idea, such as its lack of conceptual clarity and falsifiability, or its false assumption regarding an innate modular faculty of language, this workshop will focus on one particular critique, stemming primarily from linguistic typology, which highlights *the absence of any linguistic universals which can be empirically observed*.

Among others, the following questions will be addressed:

- Is the alleged absence of any linguistic universal (Evans & Levinson 2009) sufficient for delegitimising the idea of Universal Grammar? Couldn't we invoke instead two distinct investigation levels (Ludlow 2011) which might not be incompatible?
- Can the idea of Universal Grammar be adjusted to the latest developments in linguistic typology (Baker 2011) or are the epistemological methods of linguistic typology and generative linguistics fundamentally incommensurable (Xie 2023)?
- Are the results from linguistic typology, particularly which deny the universality of recursion (Pullum 2020; Futler et al. 2016; Everett 2012), based on an indisputable methodology?
- What is the explanative value of the idea of Universal Grammar? Shouldn't linguistic diversity rather than its supposed unity be explained (Dąbrowska 2015)?

This interdisciplinary workshop will gather linguists, philosophers and cognitive scientists.