

## Non-canonical Grammar!?

The notion of *non-canonical grammar* is intimately tied up with the notion of *information structure* or *information packaging*, that is the manipulation of basic (or canonical) word order patterns to achieve specific effects in discourse. Most prominent are syntactic patterns that differ, more or less systematically, from “canonical” constructions, i.e. syntactic patterns that apply established constituent inventories and follow conventional constituent order(s), for example frontings, dislocations, cleft- and existential *there* constructions as contrasted with more established SVX type clauses.

Quite generally, *non-canonical grammar* may refer to two separate, but related concepts. On the one hand, it investigates how speakers employ such non-canonical sentence patterns in order to highlight information relevant in the ongoing discourse, to explicitly mark topics, create a contrast or change the current topic, or to put a particular discourse referent in focus. Since *non-canonical grammar* in this sense belongs to the realm of discourse (pragmatics), it is typically (but not exclusively) found in actual communicative interaction. However, while e.g. cleft and existential *there*-constructions occur just more frequently in spoken rather than written language, some forms such as the ‘hanging topic’-construction (e.g. *My work, I’m going crazy*) are considered ungrammatical in writing.

Thus, there is a second sense in which *non-canonical grammar* encapsulates phenomena that occur in less than conventional *shapes*, when compared to more “sanctified” alternatives. This perspective is based on the idea that established linguistic phenomena contrast with “non-canonical” forms and structures, which are not part of an accepted or codified standard. As such, *non-canonical grammar* may well exceed the boundaries of syntactic phenomena to include non-canonical morphological, semantic and other structures. This is probably the lesser understood perspective, since there are few studies that inquire into the theoretical status of non-canonical forms. Generally, this perspective investigates the ways in which linguistic phenomena acquire sanctification, and traces the origins of (perceived) non-canonical constructions.

We share the view that as a phenomenon rooted in discourse, non-canonical grammar can best be accounted for when adopting a broadly defined functional perspective. We invite papers that explore these two and other avenues of research in (non-)canonical grammar from a diachronic, variationist, pragmatic, or theoretical perspective. Next to papers that are concerned with concrete investigations of (non-)canonical phenomena in any field of linguistic research, we also hope to raise more theoretical questions concerning the boundary between the “non-canonical” and the “non-grammatical”, the status of non-canonical forms and structures in the language system (are they stable “outliers”?, do they form linguistic innovations? are they apparent time change phenomena?), and to inquire into the process of “sanctification” (i.e. the question whether non-canonical forms become canonical with time - and if so, how and why?). Please send abstracts for contributions to this section (ca 300 words, excluding references) to [claudia.lange@tu-dresden.de](mailto:claudia.lange@tu-dresden.de) and [tanja.ruetten@uni.koeln.de](mailto:tanja.ruetten@uni.koeln.de) until 15 November 2015.