

Sylvia Springorum & Sabine Schulte im Walde (University of Stuttgart):

### ***Contextual abstraction of particle meaning in German particle verbs***

We assume that particles in German particle verbs (PVs) –compositions of particles (P) and base verbs (BVs), such as *anstrahlen* ‘beam at’– represent concepts, which receive their meanings through the verbal context. Furthermore, we assume that a P concept is spatially grounded and therefore derived from concrete perceptions. For example, the P *ab* in spatial contexts introduces separation: *abziehen* ‘pull off’. In a more abstract communication context, separation is abstracted into a denial: *Sie spricht ihm diese Fähigkeit ab* ‘She denies his skill’.

Based on a data collection where experiment participants were asked to provide example sentences for systematically composed existing and non-existing PVs, we will demonstrate that such adjustments of spatially grounded P concepts are a common phenomenon. Furthermore, we will show that the compositional meaning of PV neologisms evolves in a non-arbitrary way, when combining the constraints provided by the constituents with the constraints provided by the contexts. For example, the sentence *Diese Idee werde ich ihm wieder abreden* ‘This idea I will talk him off’ including the PV neologism *abreden*, indicates that the abstraction of *ab*’s separation is defined through rules and contextual compatibility.