

## **In linguistics, theories come and go, but facts are in short supply**

*Hubert Haider, Dept. of Linguistics, Univ. Salzburg*

- "He is an example of a theoretician as should never be existing; the same as Hegel was for philosophy. So much the worse for the facts if they don't fit." (Max Planck, in a letter to Wilhelm Wien, dated 27 Feb. 1909. Translated by J. L. Heilbron. 1986. *The Dilemmas of an Upright Man: Max Planck as Spokesman for German Science*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press (p.8).
- "It does not make any difference how beautiful your guess is. It does not make any difference how smart you are, who made the guess, or what his name is - if it disagrees with experiment it is wrong." "In that simple statement is the key to science." [Richard Feynman. 1964].

It is generally overlooked that Generative Grammar (to name just one of several camps suffering from the same malady) is desperately wanting reliable *data assessment* methods and even more *data generalization assessment* standards. *Methodologically*, grammar theory is about a century behind other branches of cognitive science. The disrespect for data generalization standards paired with a debonair attitude towards data coverage & explanation (theory building and testing) is the best way for persistently marginalizing and ridiculing grammar theory within the ensemble of cognitive sciences.

I shall demonstrate that Generative Grammar has been successful in characterizing quite a few properties of VO languages. However, contrary to widely shared practices, these properties must not be elevated to the rank of universal properties. It will be shown that this approach principally fails for OV languages, and for languages of a hitherto unnoticed *third* type, represented for instance by the Slavic languages.

### ☛ **Recommended preparatory reading:**

Haider, Hubert 2010. *The Syntax of German*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (ch. 1)

Haider, Hubert 2013. *Symmetry breaking in syntax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (ch. 9)

Haider, Hubert & Luka Szucsich. *Scrambling and V-positioning in Slavic languages – exceptionally VO or regular T3?* (to appear in: Kristine Bentzen / Roland Hinterhoelzl / Augustin Speyer / Luka Szucsich eds. Berlin: de Gruyter). Downloadable.