

Workshop 2

Research designs for using VARBRUL to study interlanguage variation,
grammaticalization, and word order variation

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Abstract

This workshop aims to provide the nuts and bolts of research design for investigating a variety of topics, using the VARBRUL program for statistical analysis. We begin by demonstrating how to study Chinese English interlanguage variation, drawing on the design of a phonological study on the voiceless interdental fricative (th) and a syntactic study on dative alternation of “give”. The second topic, grammaticalization, is illustrated with examples of Chinese discourse markers “ranhou” and “suoyi”. The third topic is word order variation, drawing examples from two Austronesian languages in Taiwan. The goal is to show what works and what does not work in studies like these, and why. This workshop is conducted in a discussion format, which encourages reflection on and critique of the examples given, and questions of how to conduct similar studies.