# ZEFIS

## EINLADUNG ZUM KOLLOQUIUM

### Prof. Dr. Bernd Kortmann
(Universität Freiburg)

### Measuring the complexity of grammars: morphosyntactic variation in the Anglophone world

This will be a report on recent research in collaboration with Benedikt Szmrecsanyi (for an overview see Szmrecsanyi/Kortmann 2012) on various metrics for measuring absolute and relative morphosyntactic complexity (including analyticity and syntheticity). These metrics, inspired by Greenberg (1960), will be applied to a wide range of non-standard varieties of English around the world, with representatives from each of the following variety types: high- and low-contact L1 varieties, L2 varieties, and English-based pidgins and creoles (for the two largest and most recent data surveys on morphosyntactic variation across these variety types, see Kortmann/Lunkenheimer 2011 and 2012). The relevant complexity and simplicity notions are the following four: (i) system complexity (more specifically, irregularity-induced, so-called *ornamental rule complexity*); (ii) outsider complexity (more specifically, L2-acquisition difficulty); (iii) transparency (more specifically, token frequencies of regular grammatical allomorphs); and (iv) grammaticity (token frequencies of synthetic or analytic grammatical markers).

The results presented are taken to contribute to the complexity debate (e.g. Dahl 2004, Miestamo et al. 2008, Sampson et al. 2009), on the one hand, and the debate, especially within the World Englishes community, concerning different degrees of complexity or simplicity inherent in different types of varieties, on the other hand. Relevant in the latter respect are, for example, McWhorter's claim (2001) that creoles have the simplest grammars, and Trudgill's view (2009) that the grammars of high-contact varieties of English, including Standard English, are all characterized by simplification vis-à-vis low-contact varieties. Among other things, it will be shown that variety type is a good predictor of observable morphosyntactic complexity and simplicity, and that our data from varieties of English clearly challenge the so-called equi-complexity axiom, i.e. the assumption that the grammars of all languages are equally complex. Ultimately, it should also emerge that large-scale comparison across the varieties of a single language can be a very useful testing ground for large-scale cross-linguistic comparison as is characteristic of language typology.

### Mi., 23. Januar 2013, 18:15 Uhr, Raum K1

Prof. Dr. Monika Rathert & Prof. Dr. Jarek Krajewski
http://www.sprachforschung.uni-wuppertal.de/