

The English Dept. (School of Communication & Culture; Aarhus University) is pleased to announce two guest lectures:

Liliane Haegeman (Ghent University)

<https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/liliane.haegeman> & https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liliane_Haegeman,

1. Styling the characters, setting the scene - Subject omission in Agatha Christie

Wednesday, April 30, 2025, from 14:15 to 15:45, room 1483-444

2. Analysing subject omission in English finite clauses - Lumping or splitting?

Thursday, May 1, 2025, from 14:15 to 15:45, room 1483-444

abstracts:

1. Styling the characters, setting the scene - Subject omission in Agatha Christie

(Based on joint work with Lieven Danckaert, Lille)

Finite sentences in English require an overt subject. However, English allows subject omission in some registers such as colloquial speech, as in *Don't know what you're talking about*.

This talk will discuss subject omission in speech representation in Agatha Christie's work. Based on four stories and focussing on *4.50 from Paddington*, it will be shown how in addition to the description of their outward appearance and behaviour, Christie uses grammar, and in particular subject omission, to style characters. In these stories, subject omission is a function of the interplay of at least the following factors: education/social class, gender, familiarity, (in)formality of speech setting (cf. Cote 1996).

The final part of the talk explores how Agatha Christie uses grammar to style the character of Hercule Poirot.

2. Analysing subject omission in English finite clauses - Lumping or splitting?

(Based on joint work with Lieven Danckaert, Lille, and Andrew Weir, Trondheim)

English allows for a restricted set of subjectless finite clauses. (1a) illustrates a missing subject in the second part of a coordination (subjectless second conjunct - SSC), (1b) illustrates a missing subject in diary style writing, (written subject omission - WSO), and (1c) illustrates a missing subject in informal speech (spoken subject omission - SSO).

- (1)
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|--------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. SSC | I saw Mary last week but ____ | haven't heard from her since. |
| b. WSO | Saw Mary last week. ____ | Haven't heard from her since. |
| c. SSO | Saw Mary last week. ____ | Haven't heard from her since. |

The talk will examine whether the three identical strings (*haven't heard from her since*) in (1) can be lumped together and analyzed as surface manifestations of one grammatical phenomenon, the relaxation of the subject requirement; or whether in spite of their superficial identity, they are actually manifestations of distinct grammatical phenomena, with SSC (1a) set apart from WSO (1b) & SSO (1c), and the latter two either lumped together as manifestations of one grammatical pattern or split up as two distinct patterns.