The category adverb is described as the „most problematic major word class“ (Haspelmath 2001:16543), and the same applies to adverbials on the level of syntactic functions. Furthermore both concepts are connected in the sense that adverbs typically function as adverbials. Even though there should be a clear distinction between adverbs and adverbials since they represent different levels of syntactic analyses, adverbs are often confused with adverbials due to this interrelatedness.

The interrelatedness becomes evident when phrases that are frequently used as adverbials unify into one word, cf. the English adverb *always*, which can be related to the Old English phrase *ealne wēg* (‘all the way, the whole way’) (OED, s.v. alway) and which obtained its modern meaning supposedly via the metaphorical chain [the whole way] → [everywhere] → [always]. In Middle High German a similar word, *alle-wëc* (‘everywhere’, ‘on all ways’, ‘always’) existed (Lexer, s.v. alle-wëc). So why and how do these adverbial phrases become words and when is a specific form to be considered a word?

The relation between adverbs and adverbials becomes also apparent in cases where elements modify the verb. In English and other Indo-European languages a subclass of adverbs (manner adverbs) typically perform the task of modifying the verb and they are built by adding a certain suffix (e.g. –ly in English) to an adjective. It is unclear however, whether this suffix really is a derivative suffix and causes an adjective to become an adverb, or whether it can be interpreted as an inflectional suffix with the consequence that the part-of-speech category does not change and that the adjective is merely used as an adverbial. The situation is more pointed in New High German and Dutch where there is no suffix added to derive a manner adverb from an adjective (e.g. *Sie fährt langsam/She drives slowly*) as a result *langsam* is classified as an adjective (e.g. cf. Helbig/Buscha 2007) or as an adverb (e.g. cf. Eisenberg 2006).

A useful approach in this regard might be the assumption that adverbs or rather parts-of-speech in general display characteristics of prototypical categories (cf. Rauh 2002, Ramat/Ricca 1994 regarding adverbs). This can offer an explanation as to why we find fuzzy boundaries between adverbs and other parts-of-speech. However the question remains what should be considered as the prototypical adverb (cf. Cuzzolin/Putzu/Ramat 2006). Furthermore it is unclear which criteria actually form the base for a division of words in part-of-speech categories. Is it a mixture of morphological, syntactic and semantic criteria or something completely different? And relating to that we also have to ask whether parts-of-speech are lexical and/or syntactic categories or whether these categories are distinct from each other.
The aim of the workshop is to bring together researchers from different fields (e.g. historical linguistics, English linguistics and general linguistics) to discuss fundamental questions concerning the category adverb and the syntactic function adverbial from a variety of perspectives. Possible topics include but are not limited to the emergence of the lexical category adverb, the relationship between adverbs and adverbials as well as a cross-linguistic definition of adverbs and adverbials.

References