Narratives and causal connectives: Experimental and corpus analytic research into persuasion

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Research in the PI-group Persuasive Communication addresses the question of how communication can influence people's beliefs, opinions, and behavior. In this colloquium, we will present two lines of research that are currently being pursued within the group. First, the micro analysis of coherence devices like coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in natural language has shown that conjunctions differ in the degree of subjectivity that they express, and that these differences vary somewhat over different genres and registers. We will present some findings of those analyses and we will discuss the way we can extend such analyses using language technology tools. Second, research has shown that (fictional) stories can influence people's beliefs and opinions. In our research, we aim to find out under which conditions, and along which mechanisms, stories have this persuasive impact. We will present a number of experiments addressing this issue.