One of the basic insights of on-line syntax is that constituents which from a non-emergent, structuralist perspective appear to be of the same type, have entirely different processing, functional and interactional characteristics once their status within the unfolding syntactic project is taken into consideration. This is particularly evident when constituents are analyzed that can occur both ‘to the left’ and ‘to the right’ of another constituent. From the point of view of on-line syntax, their occurrence in these two slots is never just a matter of different surface arrangements of the same underlying structure; rather, they emerge under completely different conditions and therefore have different status. Examples easily come to mind:

- In many languages, phrases can be ‘moved’ in the front or towards the end of an independent syntactic unit; while the terminological distinction between “left-“ and “right-dislocation” implies that one of them is a mirror construction of the other, it is obvious that prolepsis and expansion play a very different role from a pragmatic and interactional point of view, and also behave differently when analysed syntactically.

- In many languages, subordinated clauses (such as causal, conditional, concessive or temporal clauses) can precede or follow the main clause. Again, a huge amount of evidence makes clear that these two possibilities are not the same (such as quantitative preferences, ‘natural’ serialisation, differences in syntactic behaviour such as the possibility to use V2 syntax in the subordinated clause in German). Slightly different is the case of complement clauses in subject position which are often moved from the pre-verbal position into a later position (“Gesetz der wachsenden Glieder”) but may also, under certain circumstances, be produced in the unmarked, initial S-position.

- The fundamental distinction between VS and SV serialisation is often considered to be a typological distinction; however, many languages allow both serialisations, with one of them taking on more specific pragmatic and semantic functions (and therefore being marked). For instance, VS may have special functions in narratives in languages that are otherwise counted as SV.

- On a phrasal level, head-modifier and modifier-head serialisation can alternate in some languages (i.e. adjectives may be placed before or after the head noun with different semantic effects in many languages, adpositions may alter between pre- and postpositional use, etc.).

- Discourse markers may occur before or after the larger syntactic unit which is in their scope, with different functions.

The symposium aims at discussing left-right asymmetries of this type from the point of view of on-line or emergent syntax. This includes a focus on spoken language and an analysis of syntax within its ‘natural habitat’, i.e. natural interaction. Contributions will be corpus-based, but not necessarily quantitative, and they will take into account the sequential and dialogue context in which an utterance is produced. A variety of languages will be considered, i.e. German, English, Cantonese, Finnish, Swedish, Hebrew and French.
Participants:

Peter Auer (FRIAS)
Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen (Helsinki)
Holger Diessel (Jena)
Susanne Günthner (Münster)
Paul Hopper (Carnegie Mellon)
Ritva Laury (Helsinki)
Per Linell (Göteborg)
Yael Maschler (Haifa)
Simona Pekarek Döhler (Neuchatel)
Sandra Thompson (Santa Barbara)
Wei Zhang (City University, Hong Kong)