Keynote Abstracts
Head movement with no heads and no movement

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Usually simplification of a syntactic system leads to an increase in its expressive power, as the removal of restrictions widens the potential richness of representations. The proposal, within Minimalist Syntax, to reduce the structure building part of the grammar to the operation Merge, has led to an explosion in the kinds of derivations and representations admitted by the theory. We have External Merge, Internal Merge, Self Merge, Under Merge, Parallel Merge (and its cousin Sideways Move), Late Merge (and its big sister, Wholesale Late Merger), Morphological Merge(r), as well as an increase in the kinds of structure admitted, with Roll Up, Remnant Roll Up, and Head Roll Up. And the field hasn’t yet really got its hands on Pair Merge and various imaginable versions of that.

This lecture, points out the problem, and suggests two avenues to reduction of this richness. One is to impose a restriction on the design of the structure building system: syntax builds hierarchical structures that can be mapped to semantic interpretation with no loss of information. That is, the system does not have the capacity to change structure without semantic effect. The other avenue is to reduce the complexity of the structure building operation itself.

I then tackle head movement operations, showing that structures where head movement has applied do not feed more information to the semantics than those where it hasn’t applied: head movement phenomena are, as has been often noted, semantically vacuous. I also show that the word building capacity of head movement has to be separated from the positioning of a head with respect to other elements in structure. But this means the structure changing operation of head movement is needed neither for semantics, nor for morphology. I develop a system where head movement effects are firmly placed in the mapping from structure to pronunciation to account for this.
The quest for language universals: Multilingual computational results and methods

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The domain of language is distinguished by the complexity of the representations and the sophistication of the domain theory that is available. It also has a large amount of observational data available for many languages. The main scientific challenge for computational linguistics is the creation of theories and methods that fruitfully combine large-scale, corpus-based approaches with the linguistic depth of more theoretical methods. I report here on some recent and current work from our group, where large-scale, data-intensive computational modelling techniques are used to address linguistic questions about language universals, properties that apply to all existing languages, despite their well-documented diversity. On the one hand, we investigate the factors that govern one of the most apparent sources of diversity across languages: the order of words.

First we report on work that investigates whether typological frequencies are systematically correlated to abstract syntactic principles at work in structure building and movement. Then, we investigate higher level structural principles of efficiency and complexity: the availability of several large-scale treebanks allows us to ask this question in a novel way. In a large-scale, computational study, we confirm a trend towards minimisation of the distance between words, in time and across languages. On the other hand, much like the comparative method in linguistics, cross-lingual corpus investigations take advantage of any corresponding annotation or linguistic knowledge across languages. The third case study shows that corpus data and typological data involving the causative alternation exhibit interesting correlations explained by the notion of spontaneity of an event.
Abstracts Parallel Sessions
Post-verbal constituents in Turkish

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This study aims to discover the nature of post-verbal constituents in Turkish. For languages like Hindi, Korean and Japanese, where constituents also appear to the right of the verb contrary to verb-final nature of the languages, there have been different accounts proposed: some have argued that rightward movement involves two separate clauses and the constituents appearing to the right of the verb actually involve leftward movement in the second clause and deletion of the rest of the clause under identity (Abe 1999, Tanaka 2001).

In contrast, some other studies argue for a mono-clausal analysis and propose that post-verbal constituents appear to the right of the verb through a movement operation (Lee 2007, Ko and Choi 2009). The proposal in this study is that there is movement involved in post-verbal constituents and a mono-clausal analysis of rightward movement would suffice to explain the facts of rightward movement in Turkish. One of the most important arguments for a double-clause analysis of rightward movement come from the fact that the position that is assumed to be emptied by the post-verbal constituents in mono-clausal approach can actually be filled with an overt noun, as exemplified in (1) for Japanese from Tanaka (2001).

However, the Turkish counterparts of the sentences given in (2) prove just the opposite, which indicates that that position is occupied by the trace of the moved constituent. Thus, based on evidence from binding, quantifier scope, intonation and information structural features like topic, focus and background, it will be argued that post-verbal constituents in Turkish can best be analysed under a mono-clausal approach. It will also be claimed that the motivation of movement involved in post-verbal constituents is to check information structure features against the relevant head, which makes it compatible with the last resort principle of the minimalist program.
(1)  a. John-ga LGB-o yonda yo, LGB-o.
    NOM  ACC  read  ACC
    ‘John read LGB, LGB.’
   
b. John-ga ano-hon-o  yonda yo, LGB-o.
    NOM  the-book-ACC read  ACC
    ‘John read the book, LGB.’

(2)  a. *Ahmet kitab-ı  oku-du  LGB-yi.
    Ahmet book-ACC read-PAST ACC
    ‘Ahmet read the book, LGB’
   
    Ahmet ACC  read-PAST ACC
    ‘Ahmet read LGB, LGB’
Language balance and cognitive advantages in Frisian-Dutch bilingual children: a longitudinal study

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Previous research has shown that bilingual children outperform monolingual children on executive functioning (EF) tasks that require selective attention and inhibition (Engel de Abreu, Cruz-Santos, Tourinho, Martin, & Bialystok, 2012; Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008) and working memory (Blom, Küntay, Messer, Verhagen, & Leseman, 2014; Morales, Calvo, & Bialystok, 2013). In various studies (Bialystok & Barac, 2012; Blom et al., 2014; Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008; Poarch & Van Hell, 2012) it has been suggested that bilingual EF advantages are moderated by how proficient a bilingual is in both languages.

The aim of the current longitudinal study was threefold: (1) to replicate bilingual cognitive EF advantages in a new population, namely Frisian-Dutch bilingual children; (2) to investigate the role of balance by comparing two groups that differ in balance of Frisian and Dutch: balanced Frisian-Dutch bilingual children and Dutch-dominant bilingual children; (3) to investigate whether the cognitive effect changes over time. The groups were matched on age (at time 1 the children were 5- and 6-year-old, at time 2, 6- and 7-year-old), SES, IQ and Dutch language abilities.

Repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted on four cognitive tasks with time as within-subject factor and bilingual group as between-subject factor. The balanced group outperformed the Dutch-dominant group on selective attention and verbal working memory at time 1, but not at time 2. Interference inhibition and visuospatial working memory did not differ between the two groups. These results confirm that bilingualism enhances children’s EF development, but only at certain EF tasks and only at a certain age, i.e. age 5 and 6. Furthermore, they show that bilingual cognitive advantages are related to language balance and that the effect changes over time.

I will present the results for the 7- and 8-year-olds at time 3 as well, which are currently being processed and analysed.

References
The role of self-repair in semantic coordination
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One of the central findings in dialogue research is that interlocutors rapidly converge on referring expressions which become progressively systematized and abstract (Clark, 1996). This occurs for a wide range of referents, e.g. when referring to spatial locations (Garrod and Doherty, 1994), music (Healey, 2002), confidence (Fusaroli et al., 2012), and temporal sequences (Mills, 2011). Cumulatively, these findings suggest that interaction places important constraints on the semantics of referring expressions.

However, there is currently no consensus on which interactive mechanisms underpin convergence. The Interactive alignment model of Pickering and Garrod (2004) favours alignment processes, the Grounding model (Clark, 1996) emphasizes the role of positive feedback, while Healey (2002) demonstrates the importance of miscommunication.

To investigate in closer detail the development of referential coordination, we report a variant of the “maze task” (Pickering and Garrod, 2004). Participants communicate with each other via an experimental chat tool (Healey and Mills, 2006), which selectively transforms participants’ private turn-revisions into public self-repairs that are made visible to the other participant. For example, if a participant, A types:

A: “On the top square”

and then before sending, revises the turn

A: “On the top row”

The server automatically detects the revision and transforms it into a public self-repair, e.g.

A: “On the top square umm I meant row”

Participants who received these transformed turns used more abstract and systematized referring expressions, but performed worse at the task. We argue that this is due to two opposite effects: The artificial self-repairs have the beneficial effect of enhancing problem detection and recovery from error by amplifying naturally occurring miscommunication (cf. Healey et al, 2013). On the other hand, once these coordination problems are resolved, the public self-repairs have an opposite, deleterious effect by decreasing participants’ confidence in the referring conventions established during the task.
Politeness in American English and British English

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The study of differences in politeness between the American English and the British English involves dealing with issues like choosing how to define politeness and how to isolate both variations of the English language in a way that we can look for politeness indicators. A very well known theory in the area is Brown and Levinson’s (1978) politeness theory, which divides politeness into positive politeness and negative politeness. Danescu-Niculescu-Mizilz et al. (2013) analyzed the politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978), to obtain a rank of the most polite and the least polite politeness strategies, but this rank has not yet been used to assess politeness differences between speakers of British English and speakers of American English.

In the present work, I used the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English to search for general queries expressing different politeness strategies, as defined by Danescu-Niculescu-Mizilz et al. (2013). The goal was to discover if speakers of British English are more polite in conversation than speakers of American English. Results show that British speakers made more use of the most polite strategies in the experiment, but also of the least polite strategies, indicating that British speakers might worry more about politeness in general than American speakers do.

References

Lexicalization in advanced L1 Dutch learners of L2 English
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It is an undisputed fact that learning — and remembering — new words is key in successful second language acquisition (SLA). Yet little is known how precisely the remembering process takes place. From L1 learning we know that sounds can be “fast mapped” to meanings: in less than 14 minutes of passive listening to new words, neural responses emerge that mirror responses triggered by existing words (Shtyrov et al., 2010). The study by Gareth Gaskell and colleagues (Gaskell & Dumay, 2003) has shown that only after a certain period of time (usually including one night’s sleep) new lexical items become a part of one’s mental lexicon by entering the lexical competition with their lexical neighbours. It has also been suggested that the speed of lexicalization may depend on the number of languages a person speaks (Bakker et al., 2014). Thus, the current study is aimed to disentangle the features of the lexicalization processes in a person’s L1 and L2 by looking at Dutch advanced learners of English. 37 Dutch L1 students of English at the University of Groningen participated in two experiments (lexical decision, word recognition and free recall tasks on three different occasions over one week period of time) in their L2 (English) and their L1 (Dutch). The results obtained so far suggest the different patterns the lexicalization process follows in a person’s L1 and L2.

References
Testing the QUD approach: Children’s comprehension of scopally ambiguous questions

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Preschoolers and adults have been reported to differ in their interpretation of scopally ambiguous declarative sentences such as “Every horse didn’t jump over the fence” (Musolino 1998). One recent proposal locates the source of the difference entirely within pragmatics, and in particular, in the understood Question Under Discussion (QUD) in the context (Gualmini et al. 2008). On this approach, a given reading of a scopally ambiguous sentence is accessible (to adults and children) only if it constitutes a possible answer to the contextual QUD; children and adults are then said to differ only in how they handle and accommodate QUDs. If effects of the QUD are controlled for, children and adults should perform alike.

In an experimental study, we probed the role of the QUD in scope ambiguity resolution by eliminating the need for a QUD altogether. To do so, we conducted a study to test children’s and adults’ comprehension of scopally ambiguous questions containing two quantifiers, e.g. “A doctor took each pencil” presented in a context that makes relevant their inverse scope interpretation. Question were chosen over declaratives, as there is no clear way in which the interpretation of a question should be driven by another question.

We found that 4–6-year-old children and adults displayed the same rates of access to the inverse scope reading of such questions. The findings are consistent with the hypothesis that there is no grammatical difference in children’s and adults’ ability to access inverse scope readings; they perform alike once the QUD factor is set aside. Further research is needed to investigate whether the QUD approach could be extended to question interpretation: if it is assumed that each question is entailed by a broader superquestion (Roberts 1996), this superquestion could exert an influence similar to the one found for the QUD on declaratives.

References

Talk about it: Exploring the role of IC in safe sex behavior
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Even though college students are generally well informed about STDs, consistent condom use is not the norm in this group (Troth & Peterson, 2000). An important step in preventing STDs is talking more openly about safe sex. In the field of health communication, researchers increasingly focus on the influence of this interpersonal communication (IC) on health behavior. Health campaign designers are advised to focus on triggering IC (Van den Putte et al., 2011), even though the impact of IC on health behavior has not been established unambiguously (David et al., 2006; Helme et al., 2011). It is therefore important to look at what people say in these conversations, instead of merely looking at their occurrence (Southwell & Yzer, 2007; Hendriks et al., 2014).

In order to establish, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the effect of IC on safe sex behavior, we are currently conducting an experiment among 100 college students, consisting of three phases. In phase 1, participants fill in an online questionnaire about their beliefs, intentions and behavior regarding both talking about and having safe sex. In phase 2, participants watch a video about safe sex, after which they talk in dyads about this topic. These conversations will be analyzed qualitatively, in order to establish what was discussed. Furthermore, participants fill in a second questionnaire, similar to the questionnaire in phase 1, with which we can quantitatively establish the effect of the conversations. In phase 3, two weeks later, participants will fill in an online questionnaire about their actual behavior regarding both talking about and having safe sex. The results will be discussed in the presentation.

References
In this paper we present the results of our study on whispered speech in L1 and L2. We compare production strategies used by native Dutch and English speakers to distinguish between phonated and whispered voiced/voiceless final-obstruents of English words. In English, voiced final-obstruents are distinguished from voiceless final-obstruents by both the primary cue of voicing and secondary acoustic cues like preceding vowel length. Yet, in Dutch speech the primary cue of the voicing distinction between underlying voiced and voiceless final-obstruents is neutralized, as voiced final-obstruents are realized voiceless due to final devoicing (Ernestus & Baayen, 2003; Jongman et al., 1992). The question is to what extent native Dutch speakers make use of secondary cues of the voicing distinction in English. To investigate this, we used whispered speech, since voicing is impossible in whispered speech and only secondary cues can be used to create the voicing distinction (Raphael, 1971; Sharf, 1964).

To compare how native Dutch versus native English speakers distinguish between voiced and voiceless final obstruents in whispered English speech, we devised an experiment to test the production of final-obstruent voicing in phonated and whispered speech. Participants included twenty native Dutch speakers with “normal” exposure to English and eight native English speakers. Using English stimuli consisting of minimal pairs which differed only by the voicing specification of the final-obstruent (e.g. beat vs bead), we analysed recordings of both groups. Results indicate that, whereas native English speakers use the secondary cue in both phonated and whispered speech, Dutch L2 speakers of English do not as no significant vowel length difference was found between words with voiced and words with voiceless final-obstruents in either phonated or whispered speech. This seems to indicate that native Dutch speakers do not make use of secondary cues of the voicing distinction in English.

References

Embedded gaps as embedded fragment answers
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Neijt (1979:141) shows that gapping is subject to what she refers to as Tensed-S Condition (TSC), which posits that remnants must be clause-mates. This explains why a sentence like “Julia said that Rose speaks Russian and Matthew Polish” can only be paraphrased as “. . . and Matthew speaks Polish” and not “. . . and Matthew said that Rose speaks Polish”. Some languages (Spanish, Polish) have a construction which circumvents the TSC by uttering the finite complementizer between the two remnants. Thus, in these languages, one could say “Julia said that Rose speaks Russian and Matthew that Polish” meaning “. . . and Matthew said that Rose speaks Polish”.

I argue that in these constructions there is only one instance of gapping, mainly the matrix verb. The leftmost remnant is therefore the subject of the gapped verb, which correlates with the subject in the matrix antecedent clause (in our example, “Matthew” which correlates with “Julia”). The rightmost remnant is a clausal object, headed by the complementizer, which undergoes TP-ellipsis to the exception of the DP we see (Polish, in our example). “Polish” is therefore an embedded fragment answer (Merchant 2004, Weir 2014) and not a remnant of gapping. This analysis defends that embedded silent material cannot arise via gapping, strengthening Hankamer (1979)’s No Embedded Condition which states that neither gaps nor their antecedents can be embedded. Spanish is thus no exception to that.

In the talk I will show a number of interesting consequences for this analysis. For example, TP-ellipsis cannot occur if the (gapped) matrix verb that selects the CP is a factive verb. This restriction is observed for embedded fragments too (A: Who come to the party? B: I think/*regret Peter), as shown by de Cuba & Macdonald (2013) and Weir (2014).

References
Homophones and their frequency effects
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Jescheniak and Levelt (1994) and Jescheniak, Meyer, and Levelt (2003) showed that the naming latencies of low frequency (LF) words with a high frequency (HF) homophone differ from matched LF words where no homophone exists in that they show a so-called cumulative frequency effect and are named as fast as HF control words, having the same frequency as the sum of the frequencies of the homophones. The authors take this so-called frequency inheritance effect as evidence that words have two different layers, a so-called word form layer which is shared by homophones and the source of the frequency effect and a lemma layer that distinguishes between the different meanings.

Gahl (2008) on the other hand showed that English homophones differ systematically in their pronunciation in that LF homophones take longer to be pronounced than their HF counterparts using a huge corpus of natural conversations. The difference in duration is explained by frequency effects taking place at all representation levels of a word and not only at the word form level and by assuming separate word form representations including subphonemic details for homophones.

In a recent experiment we created sentences containing the German LF homophones used in experiment two of Jescheniak, Meyer, and Levelt (2003) and their HF counterparts. After reading the sentences silently 20 subjects had to read them aloud and then to retell them. In both conditions the duration of the LF homophones was significantly longer showing that the duration effect observed by Gahl (2008) in natural language use can also be elicited experimentally. As the two different frequency effects described above are found for the very same homophones, we are in need of a model that could account for both frequency dependent effects and not only either for the naming effect or the duration effect.

References
Resumption typology of Slavic relative clauses
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To use a paraphrase of McCloskey (2005, p. 26), resumption is the appearance of a pronominal element in a position where a gap would otherwise be expected. In Slavic languages, resumption is typically found in relative clauses (RCs) introduced by a complementizer, as illustrated in (1).

(1) Poznam človeka, ki so ga iskali. [Slovene]
    know.1SG man C. REL AUX.3PL he.ACC.CL searched
    ‘I know the man they were looking for.’

I investigate the properties of Slavic (Slovene, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, and Polish) RC resumption within the typology established by Chao & Sells (1983) and Sells (1984). It is shown to belong to the ‘true’ type rather than the ‘intrusive’ type, since: (i) the construction is not considered degraded as to grammaticality, (ii) the presence of resumption cannot be used to improve island violations, and (iii) a quantified expression can bind the resumptive pronoun.

However, contrary to the situation in a true resumption language such as Irish, typically analysed as involving a null operator merged directly in the CP domain (McCloskey 1990, 2002, cf. also Shlonsky 1992 for Hebrew), Slavic RCs are sensitive to islands intervening between the left periphery and the relativization site. I demonstrate that they are in fact derived by movement.

Resumption can also appear in RCs introduced by a relative pronoun. While it superficially resembles the resumption found in complementizer RCs discussed above, I show that it has distinct properties and constitutes a novel type of resumption. This type is driven by processing considerations and facilitates the formation of the long distance relative dependency by explicitly marking the wh extraction site, which I confirm by experimental findings.

The paper thus decisively demonstrates that resumption is not a uniform phenomenon even within a single language, and that its presence does not necessarily signal the absence of movement.

References
The common denominator in cases of FAS
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Foreign Accent Syndrome (FAS) is a rare speech disorder leading to a perceived presence of a new accent in the speaker. FAS is seen as a compensation strategy in relation to an underlying form of Apraxia of Speech (AoS), a neurological deficit in speech programming. Some of the AoS speakers speak slow and use segmented and scanned speech. This leads to the perception of a foreign accent in listeners. In this presentation, we will provide an overview of the 62 described cases of neurogenic FAS. What is striking about these cases is that the perception of the accent goes in similar directions: languages such as English or Dutch are perceived as spoken with accents of Romance, Germanic, Eastern-European or tonal languages. Furthermore, different accents are ascribed to the same speech sample by the listeners, dependent on what aspect a listener focuses on.

We assume that all accent changes relate to an increase of force of articulation in the speech of a FAS speaker. This may lead to accent changes from stress-timed to syllable-timed languages, from weight-sensitive stress systems to weight-insensitive systems, and within these language families from languages characterized by, for example, relatively more reduction and assimilation processes to languages with relatively less lenition.

We have put our hypothesis to the test with the cases that have been described until now. From the 62 cases, 82% show a perceived accent in the expected direction. From the remaining 9 cases, 6 were changes within the same type of language. Only 3 cases did not support our hypothesis. Nevertheless, also in these three case descriptions we were able to find several aspects of speech with more force of articulation, such as hyper-articulation, staccato rhythm, and the lengthening of vowels.
Parlez-vous franglais? French attitudes towards English loanwords

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France is a monolingual country with a traditional view on language, as its strong language policies testify. The French government and official institutions like the Académie française feel the need to protect the French language from any foreign elements. They try to maintain the ‘purity’ of the French language and limit the invasion of foreign words by implementing language laws and by proposing French equivalents for (mainly) English loanwords (Bogaards, 2008; Thody, 1995).

Although the attitudes of the defenders of the French language are widespread, there is a lack of research on the language use and language attitudes of individual members of the French speech community at non-official level. Therefore, we investigated what young French speakers (age between 17 and 25) think about English loanwords in their language. In an online questionnaire, French university students (N=606) were asked to rate sentences containing English loanwords and to give their opinion on a number of statements about English loanwords. We wanted to find out whether they made a distinction between relatively new and older loanwords but also more commonly used loanwords. We included three types of loanwords in the sentence-rating task, differing in their degree of acceptance in the language.

The results of the study show that, in general, young French speakers have a quite positive attitude towards English loanwords. The majority of the respondents rejected the statement that English loanwords were a threat to French. Overall, the French speakers made a distinction between the different types of loanwords: higher ratings were given to more integrated and accepted loanwords. Still, the less integrated loanwords were judged quite positively. These results imply that there is a discrepancy between the language policy implemented by the French government and the linguistic reality in France.

References


Gray matters: Age-related differences in context-dependent idiom processing
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Background
How does age-related cognitive decline affect context-dependent idiom processing? When people grow older, their cognitive functions decline. Compared to younger adults, elderly adults show impaired cognitive inhibitory skills (Hasher, Stoltzfus, Zacks, & Rypma, 1991) and reduced working memory capacity (Van der Linden et al., 1999). In the processing of idioms, such as the Dutch in de soep lopen, literally meaning “to walk in the soup” but figuratively “to fail” cognitive inhibition helps us in suppressing the idiom’s literal meaning in order to reach its figurative interpretation. Furthermore, working memory enables us to use contextual information to predict an upcoming idiom, facilitating activation and interpretation of its intended, non-literal meaning.

Methods
Age-related changes in context-dependent idiom processing were investigated in an EEG study examining two groups of elderly (n=28, 62–75 years of age, m=68) and younger adults’ (n=28, 18–28 years of age, mean=23) brain activation while they read idiomatic sentences. The present study is a partial replication of the study of Rommers, Dijkstra, and Bastiaansen (2013), extended by a context manipulation consisting of a highly constrained or neutral context sentence preceding each item. Differences in amplitude and latency of the event-related potentials (ERPs) components N400 and P600 are linked to off-line measures of working memory, cognitive inhibition, and verbal fluency.

Hypotheses
Due to their cognitive decline, elderly adults are hypothesized to benefit less from rich contextual information to facilitate idiom processing compared to younger adults. Therefore, the context effect, indexed by a reduced N400 amplitude in the highly constrained context condition (Kutas & Federmeier, 2000), is expected to be weaker in elderly adults. Furthermore, where figurative processing is hypothesized to be facilitated in the highly constrained condition in younger adults, reflected by a reduction in the P600 component, this effect is expected to be weaker in the elderly group. Finally, age-related differences in the N400 and P600 component are expected to be negatively correlated with off-line cognitive measures.
References
Object definiteness effects in Germanic wh-extraction

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In Dutch, the presence or absence of er ‘there’ in subject extraction contexts is a well known but not yet fully understood source of variation. For example, in sentences such as (1), some Dutch speakers need er to be present, whereas others do not (Den Dikken 2007; Klockmann & Wesseling 2015).

(1) Wie denk je [dat er een boek koopt]?
   who think you that there a book buys
   ‘Who do you think is buying a book?’

In this talk, I will show that the properties of the embedded object, which tend to be overlooked compared to the subject, can give valuable insight into the variation of er’s presence. As can be seen in (2a), in sentences with an indefinite embedded object, the presence of er is fine. When the embedded object has a high degree of definiteness (definite DPs, personal pronouns) however, the presence of er becomes less acceptable (2b-c).

(2) a. Wie denk je [dat er een boek koopt]?
   who think you that there a book buys
   ‘Who do you think is buying a book?’

   b. ?Wie denk je [dat er het boek koopt]?
   who think you that there the book buys
   ‘Who do you think is buying a book?’

   c. ??Wie denk je [dat er hem plaagt]?
   who think you that there him teases
   ‘Who do you think is teasing him?’

Interestingly, the reverse pattern also holds. In sentences with a personal pronoun or definite DP as object, er’s absence is fine, whereas the combination of er’s absence and an indefinite object is much less acceptable. I will give a syntactic analysis for these data and will furthermore compare them with data on subject wh-extractions in English and Icelandic.
References

Klockmann, H. & Wesseling, F. 2015 Variation in the distribution of er in present-day Dutch wh-questions, Talk presented at NoSLiP Conference, University of Tromsø.
Differences between comprehension of irony and white lies in children with and without autism

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Background
Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often have difficulties with the comprehension of figurative language. The present study focuses on the figurative language white lies and irony. Several studies show that children with ASD have problems with understanding irony compared to typically developing (TD) peers (e.g., MacKay & Shaw, 2004; Martin & McDonald, 2004). Furthermore, previous research suggests that the understanding of irony and performance on second-order ToM are related (e.g., Happé 1993) and children with autism tend to perform more poorly on second-order ToM tasks than TD children (e.g., Happé, 1994). However, not much is known about their comprehension of white lies and its relationship with ToM. Therefore the current study examined whether children with ASD have more difficulties with the comprehension of irony and white lies than TD children. Additionally this study investigated how these abilities relate to ToM.

Method
Twenty children with ASD and twenty TD children (age 6–12) were included. The children completed an irony, white lies and ToM task. Understanding of irony and white lies was measured by a task that was developed based on items used in a study by Scholten, Engelen, Hendriks, Ghosh and Szymanik (2015). Both tasks consists of stories with either and ironic statement/white lie or a sincere statement. Children were asked whether the statement matched the story context and why the person stated this. ToM abilities were measured using a task based on the Picture Stories non-verbal ToM-task of Brüne (2005).

Results
Although at the time of writing not all results are analysed, preliminary results show that children with ASD are able to understand both irony and white lies although it seems to be the case that children are better at detecting white lies than irony. ToM abilities were associated with understanding irony but not with understanding white lies.

References


Projecting complementizers

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Rosenbaum (1967) analyzed complement clauses as sentences dominated by a NP node, thus attributing them a nominal status. This exocentric structure is actually compatible with Chomsky’s (2013) account of labeling projections. More precisely, if complementizers like that, have a nominal formal feature (see Manzini 2010, Franco 2012, Baunaz 2015, a.o.), then the label of their projection can be determined on the basis of this feature, rendering them equivalent to NPs. This is compatible with their distribution as arguments (nominals). On the other hand, a complementizer like whether modulo its wh-feature can occur in an argument N position with the interpretation of a (selected) embedded interrogative.

This approach has a number of implications. First, it can be shown to reduce Grimshaw’s (1979) c- and s-selection to c-selection. Second, it accounts for the development of declarative complementizers out of wh-elements, as is the case with how in English (1) (Legate 2010, Nye 2013):

(1) I’ve heard [how the tooth fairy doesn’t really exist].

Similar patterns are attested with Greek pos (how) and pu (where) — both corresponding to that apart from being wh-words, and with the Romance complementizers of the che/que (that-what)-type. Finally, it extends to other elements such as like that may acquire a complementizer function, in (2), or a discourse (quotative) marker function, as in (3) (Andersen 1998, d’Arcy 2005, a.o.):

(2) It seems like Firefox is not responding (vs. It seems that Firefox is not responding).

(3) I am like: “You must be joking!”

In (3) it is in a predicative position, while in (2) it qualifies as an argument embedding a clause. It is shown that both aspects relate to the N feature. Further data are provided by Greek mipo which occurs as a complementizer with certain predicates or a discourse marking adverbial in root clauses.

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Reality versus thoughts: the understanding of Theory of Mind and mental language in TD adolescents and adolescents with ASD or SLI

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Comprehension of mental state verbs and sentential complements are argued to relate closely to Theory of Mind (ToM) both in typically developing children (TD), and in children with specific language impairment (SLI) or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Astington & Baird, 2005; Miller, 2004; Ziatas et al., 1998). However, up until now it is unknown whether both factors still show a relationship with ToM after childhood, more specifically during adolescence (13 until 18 years). Furthermore, literature shows that there are clear differences between TD children and children with ASD or SLI on ToM understanding. In this case, children with ASD or SLI perform significantly worse on ToM tasks. With this study we also aim to find out whether these differences are still present in adolescence.

We tested 22 TD adolescents, 23 adolescents with SLI and 21 adolescents with ASD on a mental state verb comprehension task, a sentential complement comprehension task and a verbal first-order and second-order ToM task. Results showed that adolescents with SLI performed worse on the mental state verb task in comparison with the two other groups. No group differences were found on the other two tasks. Moreover, no strong correlations were found between mental state verb comprehension, sentential complement comprehension and ToM understanding. Based on these results, it was suggested that there is no strong relation between mental state verb comprehension or sentential complement comprehension and ToM in adolescence. Developmental differences that were present in childhood seem to disappear in adolescence.
Particles, disjunctions and inquisitivity in Avar

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This paper discusses a previously neglected disjunction strategy in Avar (NE Caucasian), whereby each disjunct is accompanied by a morphologically complex disjunction marker =nigi yet the disjunction is not interpreted exclusively (1).

(1) wacas=nigi jacał=nigi habila heb.
    brother.ERG=or sister.ERG=or do.FUT that.ABS
    ‘Brother or sister will do it.’

The disjunction marker is exponentially identical with the particle attaching to indefinites and turning them into polarity items: shib=nigi ‘what=POL (ie someting/nothing)’ as well as the marker of concessivity that attaches to verbs.

In this paper I will attempt to unify the approach to particles developed by Wiltschko (2016) with the analysis of particle float in Avar (Rudnev 2015). I will also argue that the semantic core uniting all these uses of the particle =nigi is inquisitively.
Stereotyping Muslims, Christians and Jews

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The repeated appearance of certain words in the nearby context of others in the discourse of a community has an important impact on the construction of cultural stereotypes due to what Baker (2010) calls the incremental effect of discourse. Frequently, Muslims have been characterized as belonging to a separate community, with no values in common with other cultures, inferior to the West, and with a violent political ideology (Mohideen & Mohideen, 2008). Several corpus analysis studying how Muslims are typically represented in media agree that the words terrorist, fanatic and extremist are frequently used to refer to the members of Islam. Nevertheless, to the extent of our knowledge, little has been studied about how Christians and Jews are commonly stereotyped in the west.

Our study aims to explore how the contemporary representation of Muslims in the U.S. may contrast from the one of Christians and Jews. At hand with other corpus studies, collocations have shown to be useful in offering hints about how particular concepts or groups may be positioned in the mind of a discourse community. A collocation analysis using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) have revealed important differences between the stereotypical constructions of these three religious groups in the U.S. While Muslims are perceived as a radical sect in violent opposition to the ‘West’, Christians are conceived of as a broadly heterogeneous group akin to the ‘West’, and Jews as a prosperous community which has suffered persecutions and is scattered through the ‘West’. The results of the present study may be used to raise awareness on the fairness and implications of the manner different religious groups are stereotyped and represented in the west.
On the non-incremental processing of negation: a pragmatically licensed sentence-verification study with Italian adults

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The present study aimed at contributing to the broad debate on the incremental vs. non-incremental processing of negation through an ERP investigation with Italian adults. A sentence-picture verification task was used. Auditory presented sentences were followed by a picture depicting two characters and two different activities, one of which corresponding to the one mentioned in the previous sentence. In the case of true sentences, the picture complied with the situation described in the sentence; for false sentences, the picture contradicted it.

A similar ERP study with German subjects (Lüdtke et al., 2008) found evidence that, at the early stages of verification, the sensitivity of the N400 is not indexed by the presence of negation. In Lüdtke et al.’s (2008) study, however, only one of the possible worlds related to the sentence were depicted in the picture. Moreover, the setting by Lüdtke et al. (2008) allowed participants to develop strategies of solution that are independent from a full interpretation of the sentence. For this reason, our paradigm extended this study to a more complex and pragmatically licensed situation.

The analysis of the behavioural data confirmed the well-known gradient of difficulty between the conditions: True Affirmative > False Affirmative > False Negative > True Negative. The overall pattern of EEG results, on the other side, is in line with two-stage based accounts of negation processing. In particular, a prolonged N400-like effect starting about 400ms and lasting until 1200ms from the onset of the picture was reported. As in Lüdtke et al., the effect showed initial insensitivity to the presence of negation and it was mainly determined by the match of both affirmative and negated sentence meaning with the picture, with larger N400 for mismatching conditions (i.e., false affirmatives and true negatives) than for matching conditions (i.e., true affirmatives and false negatives).

References

Addressing intersubjective understanding with oh-prefaced yes/no interrogatives

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Understanding is at the heart of social interaction: “if understanding isn’t there, then nothing much is going on” (Sacks, 1992, vol. II: 140). But despite its importance, understanding mostly takes place under the surface. Participants in talk-in-interaction show in their utterances — in their behaviour — how they understood their interlocutor, but they typically do not formulate their understanding in so many words. As long as there is no evidence to the contrary, participants in talk-in-interaction assume that they understand and are being understood (Robinson, 2014; Schutz, 1967). Because understanding is mostly done implicitly, formulating understanding explicitly is a sign that something has possibly gone wrong.

In this talk, we will discuss one particular practice participants use in Dutch talk-in-interaction to address and formulate how they understand their interlocutor: oh-prefaced yes/no interrogatives (YNIs). Specifically, we will show that oh-prefaced YNIs are used by speakers to index that the interlocutor treated some information as shared, when in fact this information was either new to the speaker or even contradicted the speaker’s background assumptions. While oh-prefaced YNIs are used in a way similar to oh-prefaced yes/no declaratives (Seuren et al., in press), they differ in two crucial aspects. First, oh-prefaced YNDs are produced in environments where problems with understanding have already come to the surface. That is, they are used to show that the speaker now understands and that an understanding problem has been resolved. Oh-prefaced YNIs on the other hand provide the first clue that there might be an understanding problem. Second, while oh-prefaced YNIs request confirmation and elaboration, in the form of an account, oh-prefaced YNDs, as they demonstrate that the speaker now understands, make relevant only confirmation as a next action.

References

On the structure of NPs in Uzbek

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One of the most debated topics in the literature has been Universal DP hypothesis (UDPH), which argues that DP is a universal projection, and all languages regardless of the fact whether they have articles or not, possess overtly or covertly realized DP. According to this view, the difference between languages such as English, which use overt articles, and languages such as Serbo-Croatian, Japanese, or Turkish, which lack articles, is only phonological. That is to say, even languages that lack articles realize a D head at the syntactic level, but unlike English, it is phonologically null.

This argument is supported by Progovac (1998) and Basic (2004), who provide argument in favor of UDPH in Serbo-Croatian. On the other hand, authors like Zlatic (1997), Boskovic (2005, 2008), and Despic (2011) argue for the lack of DP in languages that do not have articles/determiners, and that these languages have traditional NP projections instead. Based on cross-linguistic evidence, Boskovic (2005, 2008a, 2009a, 2010a) argues that this variation between languages with and without articles is not random, but rather parametric and systematic. Boskovic (2008) and (2012) proposes generalizations regarding NP/DP languages based on tests that check alignment in the structure of NP languages on one hand, and DP languages on the other.

This paper tests Uzbek, a language that lacks articles, on the basis of NP/DP generalizations by Boskovic, and shows that Uzbek patterns with NP languages. The difference between NP and DP languages is more profound than just phonological, and involves syntactic and semantic phenomena as well. The analysis is based on c-command tests, linear order, and ellipsis of elements within NP.
Preaspiration in Faroese-accented English
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Faroese is an Insular Scandinavian language with approximately 50,000 native speakers in the Faroe Islands. A striking phonetic feature in the language is the use of preaspiration of voiceless stops /p, t, k/ after short vowels (Helgason 2003, Thráinsson et al. 2004). Exploratory work on Faroese-accented English (í Hjøllum 2011, í Hjøllum & Mees 2012) suggests that preaspiration is transferred into L2 English. In this paper we analyse this transfer in more detail.

Previous research has shown crosslinguistic influence in voice onset time (VOT) systems, but native-like L2 VOT systems can be acquired (e.g., Flege 1991, Flege et al. 1992, Simon 2010). The focus in the literature has predominantly been on the transfer of voicing and post-aspiration of stops; our study on preaspiration adds another, crosslinguistically extremely marked (Silverman 2003) type of VOT system to this research.

We recorded L1 Faroese and L2 English speech from seven secondary school students in two settings: a careful reading task and a more colloquial picture description task. Three recordings were selected for further analysis based on their sound quality. The quality and duration of the aspiration segment in relevant contexts were then measured acoustically using the methodology developed by Nance & Stuart-Smith (2013) for Scottish Gaelic.

The recordings show transfer of preaspiration from Faroese into English for all voiceless stops, but there is remarkable intra- and interspeaker variation in both the L1 and the L2 as well as between the two languages. We attempt to account for this variation with reference to phonetic factors (e.g., vowel quality) and L2 acquisitional factors (e.g., category formation).

References
Annotation of text and pictures in health care instructions
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Instructions are ubiquitous in modern life. For instance, in health communication we use instructions when we apply a sling, take medication or operate an automated external defibrillator in an emergency. These instructions often contain text and pictures. While the benefit of including pictures in such multimodal instructions (MIs) has been well established, the design of text and pictures and the relations between them have not been researched in a systematic manner. We present a corpus-based annotation scheme that allows for a methodical investigation of the use and functions of textual and pictorial information in MIs.

To develop our annotation scheme, we analysed a corpus of 227 health care instructions encoded by 13 annotators in main categories for function, text, pictures, and the relationship between text and pictures with respectively 4, 13, 10 and 3 subcategories. A theoretical evaluation of the scheme prompted some changes in definitions and names of categories. For instance, the label ‘affordances’ in annotating pictures was replaced with the more concrete and transparent label ‘presence of human body parts’. In an evaluation of the annotated corpus, 12 of the 30 categories were found to be not sufficiently reliable. For instance, annotators differed in the number of acts they discerned in the instruction. In those cases, the definition and/or the annotation process were reformulated for increased precision and specificity.

The result of these adjustments and specifications is an improved annotation scheme and a manual with examples for all categories to ensure a systematic description of MIs by multiple annotators. Such a description will support empirical investigations of the effectiveness of text-picture combinations in a context of use, as well as computational modeling for annotating and generating multimodal health care instructions.
Unraveling the effects of literature on Theory of Mind
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This study investigates the effect of literary fiction on Theory of Mind (ToM): the capacity to identify and understand others’ mental states. Kidd & Castano (2013) found a positive effect of reading literary fiction on ToM compared to reading popular fiction or nonfiction. Why exactly this effect was obtained is not currently clear, however. We hypothesize that the distinct stylistic characteristics of literary texts make readers work harder to understand author and character intentions and thereby stimulates their ToM.

To test this hypothesis, participants completed two ToM tasks after being presented with one of four texts: an unadapted literary fiction text, an adapted text in which the literary stylistic characteristics had been wholly or partially removed, or a non-fiction text. In contrast to previous research, participants exposed to different text types did not differ in their ToM performance. However, the results do show a positive relationship between ToM ability and general frequency of exposure to fiction and the extent to which the participant was transported into the literary text.
“Who wants to say something about this?” Teachers’ invitations during whole-class discussions on the basis of texts

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History lessons in Dutch upper primary school typically consist of reading texts and answering accompanying processing questions. Since skimming and retrieving text fragments often suffice to answer this kind of simple comprehension questions, ‘real’ text comprehension is seldom necessary (Beck & McKeown 2001). Therefore, students tend to deal with texts only very superficially and do not attain deeper levels of text and subject matter comprehension.

Discussions (whole-class or in peer groups) have great potential for education and can be especially valuable in lessons in which texts play an important part (e.g. Beck & McKeown 2001; Reznitskaya et al. 2009; Damhuis 2011), such as history. For, discussions offer the opportunity to deal with texts on a deeper level and to provide students with context.

Over the past few decades, quite a number of approaches for classroom discussions about text have been developed (c.f. Murphy, Soter, Wilkinson, Hennessey & Alexander, 2009), but there is little empirically-based knowledge about how exactly these discussions should be fostered in order to bring reasoning to the surface and reach deeper comprehension levels (c.f. Reznitskaya et al., 2009). Teachers are, for example, encouraged to ask open-ended questions to give their students the freedom to contribute to the discussion with their own ideas. However, there is no clear insight in how these open-ended questions should be formulated exactly and, subsequently, if they do indeed promote the desired interaction.

This study focuses on the — often seemingly — open invitations (e.g. “who wants to say something about this?”) that teachers use to encourage their students to participate in the discussion. The research material consists of 6 video-recorded dialogical history lessons, transcribed and analyzed by means of Conversation Analysis. In my presentation, I will address the forms and positions of these (seemingly) open invitations and the kinds of student contributions they evoke.

References


Interactional consequences of overt and covert production of chat messages
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According to a recent survey (Pew, 2015), text-based instant messaging is the most prevalent and the most preferred mode of communicating between teenagers in the USA. However, despite the increasing ubiquity of instant messaging, it is currently unclear to what extent instant messaging resembles spoken conversation. One central difference is that instant messages are formulated privately, obscuring the turn-production process, including self-repair. However, psycholinguistic research on spoken dialogue has shown that interlocutors use information from turn-revision as cues that assist comprehension (Clark, 1996; Brown-Schmidt et al., 2011).

In order to investigate the putative importance of public turn-construction in instant messaging, pairs of participants played a version of the maze game (Pickering and Garrod, 2004) which required solving 12 mazes (maximum 5 mins per maze). The visibility of the turn-construction process was manipulated by comparing two different interfaces. The covert interface is analogous to existing instant messaging applications which enforce private turn-formulation (e.g. Skype, WhatsApp, WeChat). The overt interface enforces public turn-formulation by transmitting each character as soon as it is typed (similarly to historical messaging apps such as Unix talk). Participants alternated between using these two different interfaces on successive mazes. This within-subjects design was chosen to control for large interpersonal differences.

The results showed that participants who could see what their interlocutor was typing produced fewer overlapping turns, suggesting that this additional information was used by participants to coordinate on the timing of their contributions. However, no other significant differences were found (measures included task-success, number of game moves, number of text-turns, number of turn-revisions, type and length of referring expressions). We suspect that this (non-)finding stems primarily from the within-subjects design: since turn-formulation cues are only available on alternating trials, this discourages participants from making full use of these cues to assist comprehension.
Is overt recursion necessary for second-order beliefs?

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Children generally master first-order theory of mind (ToM) (the ability to attribute beliefs to others) well before second-order ToM (the ability to attribute beliefs about beliefs to others). It has been argued that second-order beliefs are fundamentally different from first-order beliefs in that second-order beliefs must be represented using an overt recursion device such as sentence embedding (Hollebrandse & Van Hout, 2015; Roeper, 2007).

We investigated this claim in a comprehension experiment with Dutch adults (n=29). For sequences of three unembedded clauses (e.g., Candy is healthy. Mary thinks that/this. The dentist knows that/this.), participants were asked to choose between three answer possibilities (corresponding to a second-order, a first-order and a not-mentioned belief) as the reference of the second demonstrative pronoun. The participants selected the second-order belief (the dentist knows that Mary thinks that...) in 50.8% of the cases, and more often when the two pronouns differed in form (this vs. that). We conclude that second-order beliefs can be represented by unembedded clauses and do not require sentence embedding.

References


Taboo words, hot concepts and expressive clusters

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Words referring to religious, sexual or physical taboo notions can be used with expressive meaning in a wide range of constructions that have no descriptive link to the original taboo meaning (part of what Postma 1995 calls ‘zero semantics’, see also Napoli & Hoeksema 2009). Sodemieter ‘sodomite’, for instance: geen sodemieter ‘not a thing’, sodemieteren ‘fall, throw’, besodemieteren ‘to deceive’, opsodemieteren ‘go away’, arme sodemieter ‘poor person’, op z’n sodemieter krij-gen ‘get a beating’, sodemieters blij ‘very happy’, ...

Each of these constructions typically allows for many more taboo words, forming expressive clusters, like the imperative combination with op (Coussé & Oosterhof 2012): opdonderen, opflikkeren, oplazeren, oppleuren, oprotten, optiefen, ...

In order to understand how taboo words can develop such expressive uses and lead to expressive clusters, I will follow Potts (2007) and Gutzmann (2013) (among others) in assuming an expressive dimension of meaning (roughly speaking, the speaker’s ‘heightened emotional state’) on top of the descriptive dimension of meaning (formalizable in type-theoretic terms). This allows us to get a handle on semantic operations on taboo words: (i) ‘projection’ of expressive content from the descriptive content, (ii) deletion of the descriptive content, (iii) application to the resulting expressive root by one of the many constructions that require lexical material to give voice to the expressive dimension of the underlying ‘hot concepts’ (of extreme degree, indifference, violence, etc.). These constructions (like the imperative with the particle op) are derived by (lambda) abstracting over the expressive root (drawing on insights from lambda grammar, Muskens 2003). In this way, we can start to relate the rich empirical domain of taboo words and expressive constructions in Dutch to a multi-dimensional conception of linguistic signs.

References