



# SNUGLS

Sorbonne Nouvelle University Linguistics Symposium

## Programme

**May, 5th 2012**

Institut du Monde Anglophone  
5 rue de l'Ecole de médecine, 75006 Paris  
Grand Amphithéâtre

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## Program

### 9.40 Greetings from **SNUGLS, Vincent Hugou**

- 9.45 Stéphanie Caët *Reference to speaker and interlocutor: appropriation of the adult-system and creativeness in language acquisition*
- 10.15 Laurent David *The acquisition of the present perfect: a corpus-based study*
- 10.45 Marisa Patuto *Cross-linguistic influence in early bilingualism: the acquisition of subjects and the role of language dominance in German-Italian, German-Spanish and French-Italian children*

### 11.15 Coffee break

- 11.30 Justine Paris *The development of non-literal competence in L2 acquisition: preliminary observations on overextensions*
- 12.00 Emilie Riguel *Avoidance of phrasal verbs by foreign learners of English*

### 12.30 Lunch and feedback session (Room 12)

- 14.00 Marine Riou *Discourse markers and topic transition in conversation*
- 14.30 Yann Fuchs *Quotatives and repetition: “birds of a feather effect” or discourse strategy?*

### 15.00 Coffee break

- 15.10 Eric Mélaç *The interaction between epistemic modality and evidentiality in English and Tibetan*
- 15.40 Vincent Hugou *The British versus American issue: the case of phrasal verbs in UP and OUT*

### 16.15 Coffee break: feedback session and Best Presentation Award (Room 12)

- 17.00 **Keynote speaker:** Guillaume Desagulier, *The vagaries of frequency*

# Reference to speaker and interlocutor: appropriation of the adult-system and creativeness in language acquisition

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**Keywords:** Language acquisition, personal reference, input, usage-based approach, French.

Self-reference and the use of several selfwords has stimulated significant interest among scholars investigating children's verbal representations of the self (cf. Cooley's precursory work in 1908), their input computation (Bates et al., 1991) or their use of particular forms for specific communicative needs or "functions" (Budwig, 1995; Morgenstern, 2006). The current contribution adopts a usage-based, functionalist approach to 1) compare the development of form-function pairings in self- and interlocutor-reference in subject position; 2) analyse both child and child-directed speech, and question their interdependence.

Everyday interactions between a mother and her French-speaking daughter aged 1;0 to 3;6 were recorded for one hour on a monthly basis (26 hours total). Based on the videos and transcripts, the data were systematically coded for semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses first confirm that from 2 years onwards, each form the child has at her disposal is used in a specific context.

- She uses first names when she refers to physical representations of persons as well as when she gives directives to her mother.
- Structures with *moi* (*moi/ moi je*+predicate) are produced when the child expresses opposition.
- Predicates without grammatical subject or in *moi*+predicate structures all consist in modal verbs (such as *pouvoir* or *vouloir*) that refer to the child herself. When referring to the interlocutor however, modal verbs are produced with subject clitics.

Analyses of the adult-speech further suggest that the reconstruction of these form-function pairings is in part the result of the child's recognition of comparable pairings in her mother's speech, and in part the result of her own active reconstruction of the system. In fact, the mother makes comparable uses of the 3p and first names when she addresses her daughter.

*Moi je* is also used contrastively. Contrary to the child though, the mother always uses subject clitics even with modal verbs (which differs from oral English). This suggests that between 2;0 and 2;6, the child creates a verb category that works differently from other verbs and treats modals as inherently referring to herself or the speaker.

During their acquisition of language, children grasp linguistic forms in others' speech and actively (re)construct their pragmatic functions. Their productions thus reflect both specificities of the surrounding input and their own linguistic and cognitive analyses. Progressively, they discover additional linguistic tools to express these communicative intentions and their system resembles the system shared by their linguistic community.

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# The acquisition of the present perfect: a corpus-based study

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**Keywords:** First language acquisition, present perfect, grammatical aspect, oral corpus.

The linguistic system of the young English learner is not very sensitive to the concept of temporal location: only an event whose achievement is observable by the child allows him to encode the event in the past (Antinucci & Miller, 1976). Besides, it is around the age of 6 that the child seems to understand aspectual distinctions such as the perfective and the imperfective (Wagner, 2002). In the literature, linguists have sought to determine whether the child uses grammatical aspect only to indicate aspect or to indicate tense as well (Weist, 1991; Weist and al. 1991, 1997; Wagner, 2001, 2003). Time and aspect are morphologically embedded in the verb phrase but overlap on the pragmatic level, which complicates the capacity to express the aspectual differences and to study them.

The Present Perfect (PP) acquisition, whose study and interpretation are concerned with temporal semantics and modal pragmatics (Portner, 2003), appears to be a pertinent field of research. I am trying to understand how the construction of the four values of the PP operates (Comrie, 1976) in the child's mind, what the nature of this construction is (nature vs. nurture debate), influence of the input and of the extralinguistic context, acquisition by context-depending structures) and what can be deduced for the understanding of the English language conceptualisation.

I am working on an oral corpus taken from the Child Language Data Exchange System (Mac Whinney, 2000 – <http://chilides.psy.cmu.edu/>):

- Lara (Rowland, C.F. & Fletcher, S.L. (2006), English child, dense longitudinal corpus of 120 hours collected from the age of 1 year and 9 months to 3 years and 3 months.
- Thomas (Lieven, E., Salomo, D. & Tomasello, M. (2009), English child, very dense longitudinal corpus collected from the age of 2 years to 5 years.

A certain amount of quantitative data can be collected and studied thanks to the CLAN programs (<http://chilides.psy.cmu.edu/clan>), numerous occurrences of the PP can be found from the age of 3 for Thomas and from the age of 2 years and 8 months for Lara. If the quantitative data is not very difficult to handle, several questions inherent to the corpus-based investigation emerge as far as the qualitative data is concerned: does the dialect of the corpus (British English) constitute a biased approach? To what extent is it possible to connect the abundant theoretical stances to the results obtained from the corpus? Do we have to consider the theoretical background as a starting point or the corpus as the primary source of interest? Finally, how to integrate the audio data to aim at a multimodal analysis?

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# Cross-linguistic influence in early bilingualism: The acquisition of subjects and the role of language dominance in German-Italian, German-Spanish and French-Italian children

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**Keywords:** early bilingualism, cross-linguistic influence, language combination, language dominance, (non-) null subject language.

Recent research on early bilingualism highlights the fact that target-deviant subject realizations in null-subject languages are interpretable in terms of cross-linguistic influence in the sense that inappropriate pragmatic decisions about subjectless environments are made (cf. Patuto, 2008, 2011; Schmitz, 2007; Serratrice & Sorace, 2003; Serratrice, Sorace & Paoli, 2004; Serratrice, 2007; Sorace & Filiaci, 2006 among others). This result is replicated for eight longitudinally studied German-Italian, two German-Spanish and two French-Italian bilinguals. The empirical analysis compares bilingual and monolingual child data and reveals statistically significant differences between monolingual and bilingual acquisition. Additionally, the comparison is not limited to the monolingual peer group but is also extended to the bilingual population. Since not all language combinations show the same degree of influence, it is plausible to assume that language combination matters for the occurrence and the extent of cross-linguistic influence (cf. Müller & Patuto, 2009).

The present work is compatible with the view of cross-linguistic influence proposed by Hulk and Müller (2000) and Müller and Hulk (2000, 2001) according to which interface phenomena are affected by cross-linguistic influence and therefore delayed in acquisition (cf. Paradis & Genesee, 1996; Patuto, Repetto & Müller, 2011). The principal aim of this contribution is to determine whether cross-linguistic influence is a result of syntactic representations or linked to the processing load (cf. Sorace & Serratrice, 2009). In this vein, the empirical investigation demands a syntactic and cognitive interpretation of the longitudinal data which will be evaluated against a predominant interpretation of language dominance in early bilingualism (cf. Gildersleeve-Neumann, Peña, Davis & Kester, 2009).

Moreover, it will be discussed whether the bilingual language development is interpretable in terms of syntactic priming, since it is still debated on whether syntax is separate or shared in bilinguals (cf. Hartsuiker, Pickering & Veltkamp, 2004).

Additionally, the analysis is based on a precise syntactic analysis of the involved target systems. Controversy in the literature on whether strong pronouns and pro occupy the same syntactic position leads to the assumption that the involved null-subject languages may differ syntactically (cf. Cardinaletti 1997, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, Ordóñez & Treviño 1999, Poletto 2000, Carminati 2002, Alonso-Ovalle, Fernández-Solera, Fernández-Solera, Frazier & Clifton 2002, Suñer 2003). Even if Italian and Spanish share the null-subject property, the data support the hypothesis of an underlying syntactic difference.

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# The development of non-literal competence in L2 acquisition: preliminary observations on overextensions

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**Keywords:** non-literal language, conceptual competence and performance, second language acquisition, lexical overextension, language development.

Significant research has shown that metaphor pertains to our way of thinking (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff and Turner, 1989) as well as to cognition (Gibbs, 1995 and 2006). Its comprehension and production is also thought to be highly dependent on relational and pragmatic knowledge (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995; Carston, 2000; Gentner et al, 2001). In this context, I examine implications for the process of learning metaphorical language by adult second language learners. It's been pointed out that a major difficulty of late second language acquisition (SLA) is squarely developing a successful command of the L2's conceptual system and figurative aspect (Irujo, 1986; Danesi, 1992, 1995; Cooper, 1999; Andreou et coll., 2009). Still, little is known about adult second language learners' actual metaphorical performance.

Given adults' pre-existing pragmatic and cognitive abilities, which contrast with children acquiring their L1, I explore these subjects' difficulties in mastering the L2's figurative aspect. Here, I concentrate more on adult individuals, therefore primarily on the second language learning outlook of my study. Preliminary observations on the use of non-literal sequences by French intermediate learners of English will be presented. Two groups of thirty students – majoring in French literature and Communication Studies – were asked to write essays as part of an English course requirement. I first provide an in-depth overview of these essays by focusing on the learners' non-literal performance. Six types of non-literal sequences have been identified and are initially reviewed. Then a special focus on word overextension is given (cf. "we loose people who could be our friends" for miss out on, or "je déshabille la banane" for éplucher; Duvignau, 2002: 142). These refer to a particular trend which consists in using a word to refer to items, actions or concepts beyond their usual scope of denotation or «for a broader range of referents than is conventional in [adult] usage» (Rescorla, 1979: 321). They relate to the learners' sheer language manipulation and, therefore, to the learners' idiosyncrasy. What is the nature of these word extensions? What are their linguistic, conceptual and cultural characteristics? What function(s) do they serve? And, above all, can they be treated as preliminary signs of non-literal competence? The results revealed that their concentration in the learners' essays was quite high, and that they were largely used to respond to a growing or developing lexicon and difficulties to put it into use. This is in line with previous observations and research studies on early language development (Bassano, 2000; Duvignau, 2002; Clark, 1993). An interesting parallel between L1 acquisition, both from theoretical and methodological perspectives, will thus be drawn.

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# Avoidance of phrasal verbs by foreign learners of English

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**Keywords:** phrasal verbs, language proficiency, idiomaticity, teaching practices, first and second language acquisition.

The present study comes within the scope of my thesis which deals with phrasal verbs: usage, acquisition and teaching. Phrasal verbs are considered a typical feature of the English language (Fraser, 1976). Many linguists and researchers (Klein, 1989; Folse, 2004; Wood, 2004) have recognized the importance of multiword expressions as they attest to mastery of English. Thus, phrasal verbs can assess the level of English language proficiency (Cowie, 1993; Cullen and Sargeant, 1996). However, learners of English tend to avoid them, preferring using single-word verbs of Latin origin. Indeed, phrasal verbs are often unpredictable and they can be difficult both to understand and to remember for non-English speakers in the current language experience. How can this “under-representation” (Levenston, 1971) of phrasal verbs by foreign learners of English be explained and how can it be solved? After exploring various studies carried out by researchers throughout the world (Dagut and Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989; Laufer and Eliasson, 1993) and demonstrating this strategy of avoidance adopted by learners - taking into account the learner's first language, the influence of proficiency and the semantic properties of phrasal verbs (literal versus idiomatic) - I will then focus on the main difficulties phrasal verbs represent, such as idiomaticity, polysemy or degree of synonymity, which prompted Sinclair (1996) to call them “the scourge of the learner.” By combining theoretical and applied linguistics, this work also aims to propose new practices - e.g. classifying phrasal verbs according to the meaning of particles (Bolinger, 1971; Lipka, 1972; Side, 1990), creating a list of phrasal verbs for “active mastery” and another for “passive recognition” (Cornell, 1985) and the Lexical-Chunk approach (Lewis, 1993) - for a more effective and beneficial teaching, learning and acquisition of phrasal verbs. These new methods could thus pave the way for the improvement of language teaching. As an extension of this work, I would also like to focus on the idea that the acquisition of one's mother tongue is based on active and passive knowledge of chunks (Tomasello, 2003). Lexical chunks can therefore help to narrow the gap between learners and native speakers. To explore this possibility, I will examine longitudinal data from the spontaneous oral speech of Naima (Providence Corpus), an English-speaking girl from CHILDES (MacWhinney, 2000), between ages 0;11 and 3;10 (years;months). From a first language acquisition point of view, I will thus analyze the emergence and usage of phrasal verbs by Naima in order to see whether she is aware that verb-particle constructions work as whole units. Within the framework of my thesis, I will also study the possible correlation between the most frequently used phrasal verbs (COCA) and the earliest constructions acquired by Naima.

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# Discourse markers and topic transition in conversation

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**Keywords:** discourse markers, conversation, topic transition.

Discourse markers are considered to be cues to the discourse structure by many authors (Schiffrin 1987, Redeker 1991, Lenk 1998, Fraser 1999). It thus seems relevant to ask whether discourse markers can have a role in signaling the topical structure of a conversation. Do speakers tend to signal with a discourse marker that they are willing to change the topic under discussion? The term “topic” corresponds here to “Discourse-Topic”.

This study will use a small corpus (approximately 35 minutes) of everyday conversations taken from the *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English* (Du Bois and Englebretson 2005) to establish whether discourse markers tend to cue topic transitions in conversation.

It will also be asked whether the type of topic transition has an influence on the production of discourse markers. When conversationalists want to change the topic under discussion, they can change it abruptly, which is a disjunctive topic transition (DisjTT), or they can end up talking about a different topic without having drawn a clear-cut topic boundary, thus performing a stepwise topic transition (StepTT) (Maynard 1980, Traverso 1999). Do StepTT and DisjTT respectively entail the production of a specific set of discourse markers?

This study intends to show that a topic transition is not necessarily marked by a discourse marker: it can be marked by other linguistic devices that will be briefly mentioned, such as questions, topic initial elicitors (Button and Casey 1984), figurative expressions (Holt and Drew 2005) and prosodic cues (Nakajima and Allen 1993). However, when there is a discourse marker in that specific context, then the selection of a discourse marker is constrained by the type of topic transition that is performed: StepTT and DisjTT do not select the same set of discourse markers. If introduced by a discourse marker, StepTT tends to be introduced by discourse markers such as AND, OR, CAUSE, or SO, while DisjTT prefers discourse markers such as OH, HEY, YOU KNOW, and SO. This study will provide an analysis of such differences while specifically focusing on the exclamative discourse markers that can be used to mark a StepTT, such as OH, HEY and GEEZ, with an insight from prosodic data (Morel 1995, Zellers and Post 2009).

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# Quotatives and repetition: « birds of a feather effect » or discourse strategy?

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**Keywords:** quotatives, priming effects, variation, conversational English, corpus linguistics.

GO and BE LIKE were first attested as quotatives in the early 1980s (Butters: 1980; 1982). Their addition to the quotative cohort has made for a new variety, thus broadening the choices available to speakers for the introduction of direct speech in spoken English.

Recent studies have shown that quotatives may vary according to pragmatic and interactional factors such as content of the quote and presence or absence of mimetic performance (Buchstaller, 2001b), or may serve as a participant tracking device in dialogue (Buchstaller: 2004 ; Fuchs: to appear).

However, in many cases, quotatives do not vary along speech segments of considerable lengths, as the same marker is used throughout. Several linguists have analysed repetition of the same marker in conversation as a particular case of priming effect, namely « *birds of a feather effect* » (Pereira Scherre & Naro: 1991 ; 1992), more specifically with the use of quotatives across languages (Cameron: 1998 ; Buchstaller: 2001a ; 2001b). While some of them chose not to go further than mere acknowledgement of the existence of repetition in conversation, others analysed it as a segmental consequence of a strong contextual influence which may overpower other potential extralinguistic constraints.

This study is an attempt at showing that repetition, in the case of quotatives, is more than a mere contextual “effect” independent of a speaker’s pragmatic choices, but that it may actually be part of a whole set of discourse strategies. It was carried out on an original corpus of oral conversations collected in 2010 and 2011, and transcribed and aligned using CLAN and the CHAT format. Informants were young British English speakers filmed in oral interaction. Quotatives were analysed with respect to both variation and repetition in the case of reported dialogues.

Results show that, when quotatives do not vary, repetition of the same marker in conversation may endorse such discourse and interactional functions as those observed by Tannen (1987) in terms of comprehension, connection and cohesion, thus partaking in building the coherence necessary to verbal interaction. Ultimately, these findings support Johnstone (1987)’s claim that “discourse phenomena are always the result of a variety of factors,” and that it is the analyst’s duty to “see how general patterns create contexts for individual choices” (50).

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# The interaction between epistemic modality and evidentiality in English and Tibetan

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**Keywords:** epistemic, evidentiality, corpus, English, Tibetan.

Epistemic modality and its interaction with evidentiality have been extensively debated in linguistic literature. Some linguists consider evidentiality a subtype of epistemic modality (Papafragou, 2006), others posit that evidentiality is clearly distinct from any type of modality (Aikhenvald, 2004) and others are interested in evidentiality as a parameter shedding light on the epistemic paradigm (Nuyts, 2001). There have been a number of studies on evidentiality but most of them adopt a typological perspective and therefore rely on languages only available to the researcher through secondary data. This study is a contrastive analysis of evidential and epistemic markers in English and Tibetan based on the researcher's first-hand knowledge of the two languages and a specialized corpus collected in England and Tibet.

The corpus was specially collected for this study and the same methodology was adopted for Tibetan and English. Ten pairs of native speakers in Cambridge and Lhasa asked each other questions involving different modes of access to information and designed to elicit a great number of epistemic markers. These questions related to distant and recent memories, second-hand information, opinions, emotional stories and dreams. The corpus also includes three activities: inferring what some mysterious pictures represent, identifying sounds and describing a story told in a comic strip.

The analysis of this contrastive corpus has revealed fine nuances in the use of evidential and epistemic markers in English and Tibetan and has confirmed the intricate relationship between the two notions in English. Some English lexical constructions that are typically described as evidential markers proved to be closely associated with epistemic modality whereas Tibetan evidentials are obligatory and maintain the full force of the assertion.

The analysis of the corpus also led to a refinement of the English epistemic paradigm presented by Nuyts (2001) by probing into the parameter of evidentiality in contrast with the semantic nuances offered by the Tibetan evidential system. It has revealed that the use of a modal ('must'), an adverb ('certainly') or a mental state predicate ('I think') is partly motivated by very fine evidential distinctions. Considering the mode of access – first hand, indirect, general knowledge, assumption and inference – and the time of access to the information from which linguistic expression emerges is particularly relevant when discussing the semantic and pragmatic behaviour of the full paradigm of English epistemic markers.

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# The British versus American issue: the case of phrasal verbs in 'up' and 'out'

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**Keywords:** American English, British English, phrasal verbs, up and out, mutual intelligibility, analogical syntax.

Differences between British English and American English rarely affect mutual understanding. If need be, English learners and native speakers can turn to dictionaries and the abundant literature which provide detailed typologies. However, these approaches are far from perfect (Algeo, 1989; Tottie, 2002). A corpus search (COCA and BNC) also reveals that differences are not so clear-cut as they might seem. Further, native speakers are not always sure of what is specific to their own variety (Tottie, *ibid.*). So what and who should we rely on? Dictionaries? Native speakers? Corpora? Are speakers merely tolerant of alternative linguistic usage? Or could it be that some of the differences that dictionaries are prone to pinpoint are not so deeply rooted in the native speakers' minds?

The case of phrasal verbs in 'up' and 'out' offers a particularly interesting situation: the two most common particles in English (Quirk *et al.*, 1985) have been studied extensively by Lindner (1983), Tyler & Evans (2003), among others. Dictionaries and the literature (Algeo, 2006) also remind us that they are a source of British/American differences: syntactic differences (*catch sb up*, GB vs. *catch up with sb*, US), alternative particles (*stink out a room*, GB vs. *stink up a room*, US), different verbs with the same particle (*bottle out*, GB vs. *wuss out*, US), etc.

We first want to determine whether the choice of one 'alternative' over another is really an issue for the speaker. An American perspective is preferred as British speakers are more likely to understand and use American English than the reverse (Kövesces, 2000). We wonder, for example, how an American speaker conceptualizes the scene when s/he encounters *stink out a room* instead of *stink up a room* and whether this difference goes unnoticed or not. We also want to demonstrate, within the theoretical framework of Analogical Syntax (Hampe & Schönefeld, 2003), that comprehension is facilitated thanks to the presence of syntactic and semantic 'hints' in variety-specific phrasal verbs. Those hints enable speakers to retrieve more general patterns which are common to both varieties. For example, *share something out* may sound odd in American English but should be immediately understood thanks to context and also to the more general phrasal verb on which it is patterned: *give something out*. Some cases are more tricky, however. Recourse to informants and to corpora (COCA and BNC) helps shed some light on this hypothesis.

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### **Corpora**

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) available at: [corpus.byu.edu/coca/](http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/)

British National Corpus (BNC) available at: [www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk](http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk)

# The vagaries of frequency

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Frequency is a versatile concept in contemporary linguistic theories. One such theory, Cognitive Linguistics, is a usage-based approach to language that makes no principled distinction between language use and language structure. In Cognitive Linguistics, the more frequently speakers encounter a linguistic unit, the more that linguistic unit is entrenched, i.e. established as a cognitive routine (Langacker, 1987).

First-generation usage-based grammars are theory-driven (Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 1987, 1991). They make extensive reference to the role of repetition in the establishment of linguistic conventions (Bybee, 1985, 2006, 2010; Bybee & Hopper, 2001; Langacker, 1999) but do very little in the way of empirical methods. More specifically, usage-based approaches rely on a definition of frequency that is both intuitive and abstract. According to them, what is decisive to assess entrenchment is not so much the frequency that linguists can measure, but the frequency that speakers perceive in linguistic experience.

Recently, a small yet growing community of cognitive linguists have begun to realize that the implications of their own theoretical framework were essentially empirical (Geeraerts, Kristiansen, & Peirsman, 2010; Gibbs, 2007; Glynn, 2010a; Gries, Hampe, & Schönefeld, 2005). Since corpus-linguistics provides a comprehensive array of methods to capture context and knowledge, it has expectedly become central in the investigation of cognitive patterns of usage (Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2006). Traditionally, corpus linguistics explores frequencies of occurrence, frequencies of co-occurrence, and measures of dispersion. More precisely, it makes a monofactorial use of frequency data: one dependent variable is correlated with the behavior of one dependent variable.

This is too simple if we approach language holistically and admit that the structure of meaning is based on human experience, and that meaning “involves both conceptual content and the construal of that content” (Langacker, 2008, p. 44). Given that just about anything in language is influenced by several factors at the same time, one challenge that corpus-based Cognitive Linguistics has to address is whether quantitative analysis is possible for the study of usage-based semantics. In this lecture, I address that challenge.

I first review recent works that use new usage-based methods to capture semantic relations between near-synonyms (Divjak, 2006a, 2006b, 2010; Divjak & Gries, 2008; Glynn, 2010b) before presenting my own case study. I investigate the use of two English intensifiers: *quite* and *rather*. When *quite* and *rather* modify attributive adjectives, they can occur in pre-determiner position, an idiosyncratic behavior that other intensifiers do not show:

- (1) *I know it's a fairly / \*fairly a difficult question.*
- (2) *That's proved to be a quite / quite a difficult question to answer.*
- (3) *That is a rather difficult / rather a difficult question to answer.*

Allerton (1987) observes that, depending on whether the adjective that *quite* modifies is scalar or absolute, some restrictions apply, a sign that pre-determiner position is more than just a matter of style or formality:

- (4) *I mean this is quite a good idea / ??a quite good idea actually.*
- (4') *This is ??quite an excellent idea / a quite excellent idea.*

The question that naturally arises is whether there is any difference in meaning between the pre-determiner and pre-adjectival positions of *quite* and *rather*. Another question is whether these two intensifiers are synonyms.

My working hypothesis is that *quite* and *rather* have a semantic component paired with a syntactic component over and above their specification of degree. To test this hypothesis, I propose an original method that combines analytical and multivariate statistics. First, I extract

all <*quite/rather* + adjective> combinations from the 100M-word British National Corpus (World Edition). Then, I implement a technique known as multiple distinctive collexeme analysis (Gries & Stefanowitsch, 2004) to determine which adjectives are most distinctively attracted to each intensifier depending on the syntactic construction. Finally, I use the frequencies of distinctive adjectives as input for correspondence analysis (Benzécri, 1984; Greenacre, 2007), a multifactorial approach that provides a low-dimensional map of the data by calculating matrices between the rows and the columns of a contingency table using the  $\chi^2$  test.

My results show that:

- i. adjectives cluster differently depending on (a) the intensifier that modifies them, (b) the syntax of the intensifying construction where they occur;
- ii. *quite* constructions and *rather* constructions cluster differently depending on their syntactic profiles (pre-determiner position vs. pre-adjectival position; intensifier + attributive adjective vs. intensifier + precative adjective);
- iii. *quite* and *rather* attract semantically distinct adjective classes and are not, as expected, exact synonyms.

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