Formalizing expressive morphosyntax

How language organizes the expression of emotion through grammar

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   2. Signals the speaker's frustration about this state of affairs

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- ▶ But also to express emotions, such as frustration or endearment
- ▶ **Expressive meaning** was long considered not to be part of the grammatical system
- ▶ The way languages convey expressive meaning is **far more structured and systematic** than previously thought (Biberauer 2018, Corver 2016, Heim & Wiltschko 2016, Gutzmann 2019, Klamer 2002, Saab 2022, Wiltschko 2021)

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(2)   Expressive meaning is conveyed by marked morphology
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   ▶ MM refers to (functional) morphemes whose position
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      typically occupy

Introduction

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     They walk then nice.DIM-S to the school.head
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- ▶ *MM*: -*s* is a plural marker, normally occurring on nouns, not adjectives

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Use the MM-hypothesis on expressivity in language to illustrate:

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Aim of the talk

Use the MM-hypothesis on expressivity in language to illustrate:

1. the empirical dimension/comparative linguistics
2. a new, interdisciplinary method
3. the potential of generative linguistic theory re the formalization of expressivity in language

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

▶ I am exploring the MM-hypothesis by conducting a
targeted comparative study on MM in Dutch and Afrikaans

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Dutch

► Dutch is mainly spoken in The Netherlands and Flanders
  (Belgium)

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

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- ▶ But also in Suriname, Curaçao, Aruba and Sint-Maarten as an official language

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- ▶ But also in Suriname, Curaçao, Aruba and Sint-Maarten as an official language
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- ▶ It has around 22 million native speakers

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Afrikaans

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- ▶ But also in Patagonia, Argentina
- ▶ It has around 9 million native speakers
- ▶ It has a complex history:
  - ▶ A large part of its grammar and words is based on Middle and Early Modern Dutch
  - ▶ Many indigenous languages and other languages spoken in the Cape influenced the language (i.e. it is a creole)

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Comparative linguistics

▶ Comparing the grammatical features of two (closely) related languages is an ideal testing ground for linguistic hypotheses

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Comparative linguistics

- ► Comparing the grammatical features of two (closely) related languages is an ideal testing ground for linguistic hypotheses
- ► It is the closest linguists can get to a lab setting (Kayne 2005)

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Comparative linguistics

- ► Two reasons why exploring the MM-hypothesis is specifically interesting in Dutch vs Afrikaans

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Reason 1

- ▶ Afrikaans is a young language, whose structure strongly reflects its vernacular origins

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- ▶ Spoken varieties are exactly those varieties in which expressive meaning is prominently expressed
- ▶ Dutch, in contrast, has a long tradition of written language, standardization and normativity
- ▶ I.e. it allows for a comparison of expressive meaning in two related varieties with a very different diachronic development

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

Reason 2

- ▶ Both languages share a specific set of MM phenomena

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- ▶ Both languages share a specific set of MM phenomena
- ▶ This allows for a direct comparison of the expressivity of these MM phenomena (i.e. ideal lab setting)

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

MM phenomenon I: -*el* suffixation

(4) Zij **snuft** aan het brood.
    she sniffs at the bread
    'She smells the bread.'

(5) Zij **snuff**-***el***-**t** hier rond.
    she sniff.EL.3.SG here around
    'She is snooping around.'   (Dutch)

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

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The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

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   ▶ It signals a negative judgment by the speaker towards the
     described action

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

MM phenomenon I: *-el* suffixation

(6) Sy **snuf** die brood.
she sniffs the bread
'She smells the bread.'

(7) Sy **snuff-*el*** hier rond.
she sniff.EL   here around
'She is snooping around.'   (Afrikaans)

▶ The same is possible in Afrikaans

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

MM phenomenon II: *-jes/-tjies* suffixation

(8) Zij heeft alles **koel** geregeld.
     she has everything cool arranged
     'She has arranged everything calmly.'

(9) Zij heeft alles **koel-*tje-s*** geregeld.
     she has everything cool.DIM.S arranged
     'She just went ahead and organised everything (but shouldn't have).' (Dutch)

The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

MM phenomenon II: *-jes/-tjies* suffixation

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The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

MM phenomenon II: *-jes/-tjies* suffixation

(10) Sy het alles **koel** gereël.
      she has everything cool arranged
      'She has arranged everything calmly.'

(11) Sy het alles **koel-*tjie*-*s*** gereël.
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      'She just went ahead and organised everything (but
      shouldn't have).'   (Afrikaans)

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The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

MM phenomenon III: elative compounds

(12) Een ***bitter* -mooi** verhaal.
      a   bitter beautiful story
      'A bittersweet story.'

(13) Een ***poep* -mooi** verhaal.
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- ► Elative compounds are cases of MM, because the left hand member is a noun, which normally cannot occur in this position

- ► On top of that it does not add anything to the compositional semantics of the compound, which is unexpected

- ► It increases the expressivity of the utterance

MM phenomenon III: elative compounds

(14) 'n ***bitter*** -**mooi** storie.
      a bitter beautiful story
      'A bittersweet story.'

(15) 'n ***kak*** -**mooi** storiie.
      a poop beautiful story
      'A damn beautiful story.'   (Afrikaans)

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The empirical dimension/comparative linguistics

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1. The semantics of the *-el* suffix seems more opaque in Afrikaans
2. The *-tjies* suffix can also appear on adverbial constituents in Afrikaans, but not in Dutch (e.g. *netnoumaar-tjies* 'presently'

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- These morphosyntactic differences potentially effect the degree of expressivity of the phenomena in each language

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- These morphosyntactic differences potentially effect the degree of expressivity of the phenomena in each language
- This calls for a careful and systematic data collection of the morphosyntax of the phenomena and the degree of their expressivity in both languages

A new, interdisciplinary method

- In order to explore the MM-hypothesis, I combine
  1. large-scale questionnaires
  2. a novel, psycholinguistic tool
  3. exploratory statistical techniques

A new, interdisciplinary method

Large-scale questionnaires

► I am creating two language specific online questionnaires

A new, interdisciplinary method

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► Test items will be recorded (spoken)

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A new, interdisciplinary method

Large-scale questionnaires

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  1. the morphosyntax of the MM phenomena and their neutral counterparts
  2. the nature and degree of expressivity of MM phenomena and their neutral counterparts

A new, interdisciplinary method

The psycholinguistic tool

- ▶ I will use the Two-Dimensional Affect and Feeling Space (2DAFS) tool to measure:

A new, interdisciplinary method

The psycholinguistic tool

- ▶ I will use the Two-Dimensional Affect and Feeling Space (2DAFS) tool to measure:
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A new, interdisciplinary method

The psycholinguistic tool

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    - ▶ the nature (positive/negative) of expressivity of MM phenomena and their neutral counterparts
    - ▶ the degree of expressivity of MM phenomena and their neutral counterparts
- ▶ This tool will pop up when the informant has rated a given test item with a 3 or higher (i.e. as grammatical)

A new, interdisciplinary method
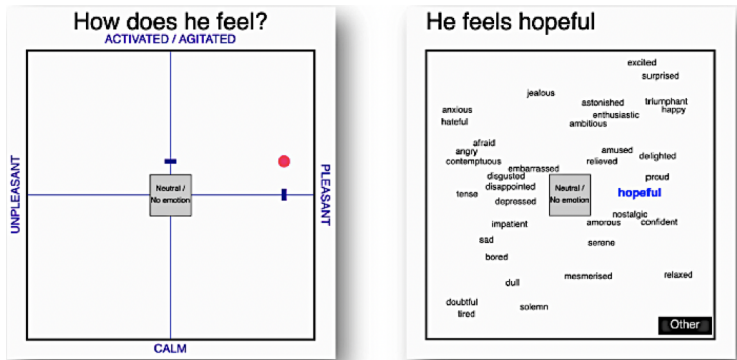
Figure 1: The two steps of the 2DAFS instrument (Lorette 2021: 5)

A new, interdisciplinary method

Exploratory statistical techniques

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- ▶ These techniques are ideal to explore patterns in highly complex data sets with inter- and intra-speaker variation
- ▶ And in which one wants to test correlations over a large set of variables

A new, interdisciplinary method

Exploratory statistical techniques

- **Correspondence Analysis**: to visualise the potential effects of unexpected morphosyntax on the nature and degree of expressivity of the MM phenomena

A new, interdisciplinary method

Exploratory statistical techniques

- **Correspondence Analysis**: to visualise the potential effects of unexpected morphosyntax on the nature and degree of expressivity of the MM phenomena
- **Hierarchical Clustering**: to investigate which cases of MM behave more similar or more different across the two languages with respect to the nature and degree of their expressivity

A new, interdisciplinary method
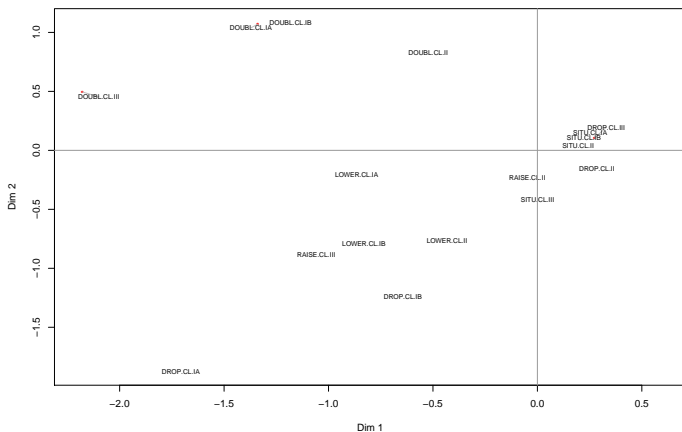
Figure 2: Example Correspondence Analysis plot (Cavirani-Pots 2020)

A new, interdisciplinary method

Figure 3: Example Hierarchical clustering plot (Cavirani-Pots 2020)

The potential of generative linguistic theory

► The formalization of expressive meaning has recently been approached from different angles within generative grammar (Corver 2016, Heim & Wiltschko 2016, Biberauer 2018a, Biberauer 2018b, Gutzmann 2019, Wiltschko 2021)

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- ▶ The formalization of expressive meaning has recently been approached from different angles within generative grammar (Corver 2016, Heim & Wiltschko 2016, Biberauer 2018a, Biberauer 2018b, Gutzmann 2019, Wiltschko 2021)
- ▶ This framework proposes precise formalizations of syntax and its interfaces (e.g. with morphology and pragmatics)

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Corver (2016)

- ▶ Corver (2016) proposes the MM-hypothesis: marked morphology leads to marked meaning

The potential of generative linguistic theory

Corver (2016)

- ► Corver (2016) proposes the MM-hypothesis: marked morphology leads to marked meaning
- ► I.e. expressive meaning comes about when a morpheme does not abide by the usual morphosyntactic rules and is thus unexpected

The potential of generative linguistic theory

Speaker Addressee layer(s)

▶ Another set of studies explores the possibility of representing the speaker/hearers perspective at the left edge of the clause (see Wiltschko 2014 for an overview of work since Speas & Tenny 2003)

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- ▶ These works build on Ross' (1970) Performative Hypothesis, in which every sentence has a structural domain for Speaker and Addressee (SA-domain)

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- ▶ Biberauer (2018 et seq.) expands this idea to all phase edges

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- ▶ I.e. each phase edges has a dedicated domain for the signalling of the speaker's perspective on the utterance

The potential of generative linguistic theory

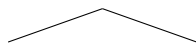The peripheral Speaker Hearer Hypothesis (Biberauer 2018)

(16)   Speaker-hearer perspective is formally encoded at the edges of phasal domains, where phasal domains are independently signalled, realizationally (PF) and interpretively (LF) privileged structural domains, the precise identity of which differs from language to language
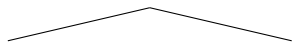
The potential of generative linguistic theory

The peripheral Speaker Hearer Hypothesis (Biberauer 2018)

(17) **Design template of a phase**

speaker-hearer encoding

Phase head (e.g. *v*, C, *n*, D)

contentful complement (e.g. V, T, Num, N)

The potential of generative linguistic theory

The peripheral Speaker Hearer Hypothesis (Biberauer 2018)

▶ 'Phase edges constitute points of particular significance in language change, contact and acquisition by providing **a way in for elements that have not been (fully) formally integrated into the projecting structure** (Biberauer 2018: 4)

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- ▶ The -*el* suffix and the diminutive suffix already have a function in both Dutch and Afrikaans, as to the left hand members of elative compounds
- ▶ but have been recycled in a different morphosyntactic position to convey expressive meaning

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Conclusion

- I have presented three MM phenomena in Dutch and Afrikaans which together form an ideal empirical domain to investigate how languages can morphosyntactically express emotion

- I have illustrated how an interdisciplinary method is required to optimize data collection and analysis

- I have shown that the generative framework offers several promising hypotheses on how expressive meaning can be formally encoded

Dankjewel! Baie dankie!