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Acquisition of intensifying constructions in Dutch and English by French-speaking CLIL and non-CLIL learners

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"Acquisition of intensifying constructions in Dutch and English by French-speaking CLIL and non-CLIL learners"

Hendriks, Isa ; Van Goethem, Kristel ; Hiligsmann, Philippe ; Van Mensel, Luk

Abstract

The poster describes a pilot-study on the acquisition of intensifiers by comparing a native corpus of English (LOCNESS) and a corpus of learner English (ICLE). This study is a first step of a the broader ARC project "Assessing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): linguistic, cognitive and educational perspectives".

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Acquisition and use of intensifying constructions in English and Dutch by French-speaking CLIL and non-CLIL students

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	INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS	DUTCH	ENGLISH	FRENCH
SYNTAX	ADVERB	<i>heel ziek, diep ontgoocheld, verschrikkelijk moeilijk</i>	<i>very bad, deeply ashamed, highly successful</i>	<i>très malade, profondément déçu, extrêmement froid</i>
	ADJECTIVAL REDUPLICATION	?	?	<i>rouge rouge, joli joli</i>
	AS X AS X CONSTRUCTION	<i>zo groen als gras, zo trots als een aap</i>	<i>as gentle as lambs, as fast as possible</i>	<i>fort comme un Turc, bête comme ses pieds</i>
MORPHOLOGY	PREFIX	<i>overgelukkig, aartsmoeilijk, supermodern</i>	<i>hypersensitive, ultraconservative, extra-large</i>	<i>superpuissant, surdoué, ultramoderne</i>
	COMPOUND	<i>beresterk, doodmoe, bloedmooi</i>	<i>ice-cold, brand-new, stock-still</i>	?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & HYPOTHESES

- Construction Grammar approach to language acquisition
 - cognitive and usage-based
 - “constructions” → fundamental units of language production and acquisition (Ellis & Cadierno 2009; Goldberg 2010; Ellis 2013; Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013)
 - SLA more complex than L1 acquisition because of competition between L2 constructions with L1 constructions (Ellis & Cadierno 2009: 112)
- overuse of the L1 constructions by “constructional transfer”
- Different means of intensification in French and in target languages (Dutch, English) impact upon acquisition intensifying constructions target languages
 - In French intensification typically at syntactic level
 - In Germanic languages frequently at morphological level
- Hypotheses:
 - French-speaking learners of Dutch/English underuse specific Germanic intensifying constructions (compounds) and overuse adverbial/prefixal modification
 - overuse of most “neutral” (i.e. context-independent) intensifiers E.g. *heel hard* ‘very hard’ versus *keihard* ‘stone-hard’

PILOT CORPUS STUDY

METHOD

- Comparison of a learner corpus (ICLE) and a native English corpus (LOCNESS)
- Essays of Belgian French-speaking learners of English and native British students

RESULTS

- Significant association between the semantic type of the adjectives and their intensifiers in both the ICLE corpus ($X^2(2) 35.73, p .00$), and in the LOCNESS corpus ($X^2(2) 28.87, p .00$). Effect size (Cramer’s $V = 0,275$) in both corpora

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEMANTIC TYPE INTENSIFIER AND MODIFIED ADJECTIVE

	LOCNESS (Natives)		ICLE (Learners)	
	Relative Adjectives	Absolute Adjectives	Relative Adjectives	Absolute Adjectives
MAXIMIZERS	16,6%	31,8%	15,8%	36,0%
BOOSTERS	81,2%	56,7%	80,1%	55,4%
OTHER INTENSIFIERS	2,2%	11,4%	4,1%	8,6%
	TOTAL: 382 intensified adjectives		TOTAL: 542 intensified adjectives	

MORPHOLOGIC TYPES INTENSIFIERS	Freq. LOCNESS	Freq. ICLE	MOST FREQUENT INTENSIFIERS			
			LOCNESS	Freq.	ICLE	Freq.
Adverbs	89,0%	86,7%	<i>very</i>	40%	<i>very</i>	38%
Prefixes	6,8%	2,2%	<i>quite</i>	5%	<i>so</i>	10%
Compounds	2,09%	5,7%	<i>so</i>	4%	<i>quite</i>	8%
Lexicalised forms	1,3%	2,0%	<i>highly</i>	4%	<i>well</i>	5%
As x as x constructions	0,8%	3,3%	<i>rather</i>	4%	<i>really</i>	4%

CONCLUSIONS/ DISCUSSION

- Similar preference in both corpora:
 - Relative adjectives typically intensified by boosters
 - Maximizers proportionally more used with absolute adjectives
 - More lexical variation in native English (LOCNESS) than in learner English (ICLE)
 - Type/Token ratio intensifiers LOCNESS corpus = 0,14; ICLE corpus = 67/542 = 0,12
 - Hypotheses are not entirely confirmed**
 - Learners use more compounds than natives
 - More *as x as x constructions* by learners than by natives
- Explanation:** higher education level of the learners in the ICLE corpus (university students)

ARC PROJECT

Assessing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): Linguistic, cognitive and educational perspectives

Multidisciplinary

- Linguistic
- Cognitive
- Socio-affective



Longitudinal

- 5 measuring moments over 2 years

Comparative perspective

- Native English / learner English
- Native Dutch / learner Dutch
- Native French

Do CLIL students use more specific Germanic intensifying constructions than non-CLIL students?

- Collect data in 15 classrooms in French-speaking Belgium CLIL and non-CLIL schools (150 pupils)
- Collect data in 3 classrooms in Dutch-speaking Belgium (60 pupils) and 3 classrooms in the UK (60 pupils)

Production and perception tests

Production test

- For example “Describe what happens in the following cartoon” / “Convince a possible client of the qualities of an invention you made”

Perception test

- For example “Choose between the different intensifiers in following sentence: “The kitchen is... (*very, super, brand*) dirty”

