

Grammaticalized Concepts and Event Conceptualization in Language Production

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The area under focus in the present study relates to the concept of temporal *aspect*, i.e. the perspective under which temporal properties of an event are presented in language. The study investigates language-specific differences in patterns of attention in language production when temporal concepts are expressed by grammatical means, in contrast to languages that express similar concepts by lexical means. Focus is placed on the phase of *conceptualization* (Levelt, 1989) in language production, i.e., the phase in which speakers prepare information for expression. The findings show that message preparation is language-specific and linked to concepts that are grammaticized (v. Stutterheim & Nüse, 2003; Carroll, v. Stutterheim & Nüse, 2004). Language-specific patterns in event conceptualization are in evidence not only in information intake and direction of attention (eye tracking) but in memory performance as well (v. Stutterheim & Carroll, 2006; v. Stutterheim et al., in prep.).

The approach taken in the current framework uses dynamic live-action stimuli (video clips) showing everyday events. The role of grammaticized linguistic means in directing attention in language production was explored in this framework in an eye tracking study on motion events. The comparison covers speakers of typologically different languages (Arabic, Czech, Dutch, English, German, Spanish, Russian) and looks at differences in processing the relevant visual input when asked to view the clips and tell what is happening (v. Stutterheim et al., in prep.): The extent to which endpoints of motion events are attended to, verbalized, and remembered correlates with the extent to which aspectual concepts (progressive, imperfective) are used to describe the events. Speakers of languages that have grammaticized means to express the concept of ongoingness (e.g. be +*ing*, in English) scan the scenes differently and fixate the endpoint of the motion event less often than speakers of languages that do not encode this aspectual concept in grammatical terms.

The current study is carried out in the same framework and looks at how speakers of English, German, Dutch and Italian proceed when talking about *causative events* (e.g. *knitting a scarf*). Eye tracking data indicate that direction of attention to particular elements of the events

(agent of the action; the affected/effected object) varies depending on the linguistic system and the means available to express the temporal perspective of progressive aspect. The languages selected differ with respect to the degree of grammaticization for this domain. English provides a highly grammaticized marker for progressive aspect (*-ing*) which is used by all speakers when referring to the events. Although German provides lexical options to express ongoingness, this perspective is not used by native speakers when describing the same events. Italian and Dutch are interesting in this context: Both languages have grammatical forms that express progressive aspect (*stare + gerund*; *aan het X zijn*), however, Italian and Dutch speakers need not necessarily adopt this concept when verbalizing the event (see also Flecken, to appear). This contrast with English can be attributed to the stage of grammaticization of the means available. Our study investigates the use of eye tracking as a tool in exploring subtle differences in patterns of visual attention and cognitive processing in languages in which use of a given concept is subject to differing constraints.

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