

Tereza Sloupová: The Effect of Linguistic Context on Conceptualization of Motion Events

MA thesis review

Tereza Sloupová's MA thesis examines the seeing for speaking hypothesis in Czech-English bilingual speakers. The main research question is whether a linguistic context may influence the conceptualization of motion events.

Thesis conception

The thesis is divided into four main sections. The first three introduce the concept of linguistic relativity and focuses primarily on the thinking for speaking hypothesis. Previous studies in this domain are reflected and one section is also devoted to conceptualization patterns in bilinguals. This theoretical part of the thesis is then followed by a section presenting Tereza Sloupová's own study. The thesis as such is thus coherent and does not contain unnecessary or otherwise unrelated parts. What I am missing are explicitly stated hypotheses and at least basic predictions of the study. The design of the experiment is not well argued for, I believe (see the next part of the review).

I rate this aspect of the thesis between an **A** and a **B**.

Methodology and data analysis

I have to say that the type of study which Tereza Sloupová chose is a very ambitious and demanding one, especially in the context of a MA thesis. To get solid results which would allow for reasonable generalizability, the sample would need to be much bigger than 19 speakers with whom the author worked in the end. Therefore, I understand the presented study as a pilot one which I find fully sufficient for the purposes of a MA thesis. My comments below are thus meant more as an inspiration for further work and not as fundamental criticism.

I have some doubts about the sensibility of the design chosen for this study. First, the order of the Czech and English blocks should have been counterbalanced. Otherwise, task adaptation effects may have a heavy impact on the results. I find the argument that the Czech block was presented first because the participants were native speakers of Czech rather weak.

Second, I am not sure to what extent does it make sense to call the background noise as "linguistic context". My interpretation is that the participants had to overcome (or simply ignore) the interfering speech unrelated to the task, because they themselves had to produce reasonable speech to fulfil the task. My prediction is that such design causes a slowdown in the naming latencies and possibly also some qualitative differences in what people actually say (perhaps shorter descriptions?). It would have made sense to contrast the blocks using the background noise with blocks without such noise. Without that, it is unclear what the presence of unrelated speech actually does.

Third, I am missing the information about what the linguistic content of the background noise was. What was the proportion of the perfective and imperfective aspect? Could it prime the use of the verb forms in the given languages? Could there be any unintended relation between the background speech and the content of the video (maybe not the motion as such, but the general scene, depicted weather...)? There are many potential confounds which come to mind and I do not find much information on this in the thesis.

Fourth, the sample is very small, especially for testing individual differences, such as language proficiency or age of acquisition. The author is aware of some problems with the sample studied, but I would probably expect to stress the limitations of the sample more, especially because it may be the case that the null results acquired may be a result due to a Type II error.

Nevertheless, it has to be stressed out that the author is aware of various methodological shortcomings of her experiment (see part 5.3.7.) which I value highly.

I rate this aspect of the work as a **B**.

Working with previous literature

The author has familiarized herself with the existing literature on the topic, reflects it well and uses it appropriately.

I rate this aspect of the work as an **A**.

Formal aspects

The work is at a very high formulaic and generally formal level.

Overall, I rate the formal level as an **A**.

Overall rating

Although I expressed certain concerns about the methodology and study design, I believe that Tereza Sloupová's thesis generally exceeds the demands placed on MA theses within the framework of the CUFA, and I therefore propose to rate it with a grade of **excellent**.

Prague, 10th June 2024



doc. Mgr. Jan Chromý, Ph.D.
thesis opponent