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Evaluation of the Master's Thesis:

The Effect of Linguistic Context on Conceptualization of Motion Events

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This MA thesis concerns the question of how different language systems may affect preverbal processes involved in language planning, most importantly the conceptual planning process of information selection and organization. It places the focus on a factor that has not received much attention in previous research: “linguistic context” – a term the author uses to capture the context that triggers the activation of one language in cases where speakers have several languages at their disposal, i.e. bilinguals. An eye tracking study is conducted to measure visual attention allocation of speakers during the conceptualization of motion events in Czech or English while either simultaneously hearing Czech or English in the background, which results in two congruent (Czech-Czech, English-English) and one incongruent conditions (Czech-English). Results show no clear effects of the language combinations at the population level, but some weak potential effects at the individual level are observed, most importantly an effect of Age of Acquisition (AoA).

The thesis consists of three main parts. The first part is on the relevant theoretical background. This includes the *linguistic relativity* and the *thinking-for-speaking* hypothesis, which is what the current study is ultimately based on. The author further provides a good evaluation of selected previous studies, which sketch the questions asked and methods applied appropriately. This part is well done. The candidate then also addresses the locus where speakers who speak more than one language decide which language to use in a given context. Based on the literature in the domain this is claimed to be at the conceptual level. However, research on language activation in bilinguals does not exclude the possibility that the target language may be activated at different levels, i.e., later in the production process, which could have been made more explicit in the thesis. Apart from that, this first part provides a great summary of the state-of-the-art.

The second part is on the experiment that was conducted, including the generation of the stimulus materials, the task, and the cohort tested. This section includes a brief description of how Czech and English differs in the domain of aspect marking and the expression of motion events. The decisions made regarding the stimulus material, the participants and the experiment design as such are well motivated. Overall, the study is

labelled as a pilot experiment. As piloting is an important step in the empirical study of language and language use, reporting the challenges and problems during experiment design is of great importance and value for future studies. This is also true for the report of the results, which, in the current study, includes measures that reflect how much attention is allocated and when attention is allocated. The main focus here is on attention allocation to a potential endpoint that the moving entity may approach (as in previous studies), as this has been claimed to be indicative of the process of event conceptualization in previous work. Overall, no clear patterns emerge in the analyses of attention allocation as such at the group level. However, at the level of the individual, there was an apparent, although weak correlation with the self-reported AoA, that is, a measure that captures when a speaker had acquired English as a second language and when the speaker felt comfortable using that language.

The third part provides a discussion of the (absence of) results. Here it becomes clear that many factors may have contributed to the outcome. The stimuli and the unreliability of the measures of linguistic competency, as well as the heterogeneity of the participants seem to be identified as the main sources of the inconclusive results. The author then provides well-motivated suggestions for future research.

Overall, this thesis fulfills all requirements, both at the level of argument presentation and in terms of formal aspects. The structure of the thesis is well-thought out, the literature review is solid, everything related to the experiment design, data collection and the analyses and presentation of the results is sound. Of course, a reflection on why an experiment did not yield the results that would be expected based on previous work could always include more ideas, but in this case the selection of ideas presented provides good ideas for future work.

I evaluate the thesis with **výborně** (A).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo. Gerwien', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PD Dr. Johannes Gerwien