

**External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of Jana Kijonkova**  
**“VALENTIE EN VOLGORDE.**  
**OVER PSYCH-VERBS IN HET HEDENDAAGS NEDERLANDS”**  
**Submitted in 2016 at the Ústav germánských studií**

**I. Brief summary of the dissertation**

The dissertation focuses on the valency of psych-verbs in Dutch sentences, approaching the subject matter from both a syntactic and a semantic point of view. With a corpus of 400 sentences and 16 respondents assessing the acceptability of these sentences, the author tested how psych-verbs behave in the middle field of a sentence. The results show that animacy is the most important factor to influence word order and that both subject and object lose their features under certain conditions.

**II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation**

The dissertation has a clear structure, is easy to read and constitutes a well-researched contribution to the understanding of how the valency of psych-verbs influences the word order in the middle field. It includes a comprehensive theoretical part (Chapter II), a detailed description of the corpus (Chapter III), an in-depth analysis of the results (Chapters III and IV) and thoughtful conclusions (Chapter V). The author has a good command of the Dutch language. Overall, I think this is a very good dissertation.

**III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects**

***1. Introductory comment***

For reasons of brevity, I choose not to present the details of the content of each chapter. Instead, I will focus on the general assessment only.

***2. Structure of the dissertation and the argument***

From the very beginning of the dissertation, the author makes it clear what the objectives of her research are. She then presents a comprehensive theoretical background, in which she includes all the basic terms the reader needs to be familiar(ized) with as well as a discussion on the principles that guide word order in Dutch. Next, the author goes in search for answers to her research questions. This part of the dissertation is divided into two stages (corpus, coding and analysis followed by hypotheses in Chapter III; questionnaires and analysis in Chapter IV). This step-by-step approach obviously facilitates achieving the main objective(s) and makes the dissertation reader-friendly.

In general the dissertation is clearly structured; however, I think it lacks a general introduction, in which the author could present not only the general objectives and the “steps of the research”, as she does now, but also a sort of lead-in to the theoretical background.

There are a few more words of slight criticism. To begin with, references to the important parts of the dissertation are sometimes missing. For instance, when presenting the hypotheses, the author could have pointed out that these would be elaborate on in Chapter V (pages 183-184). Also, it is not clear to me why the chapters are divided into 1-2, 1-3 and 1-6. It would be better if the first chapter was divided into 1.1/1.2/etc., the second chapter into 2.1/2.2/etc., and so on.

### **3. *Formal aspects of the dissertation***

The dissertation is visually well presented and graphically well formatted. The footnotes are also formatted correctly.

However, there do seem to be a few “mishaps:

- the list of abbreviations (p. 11) is not in the table of contents,
- there is no separate list of tables and graphs/diagrams,
- not much is translated from ‘smaller’ languages (examples, titles), the Greek example on p. 23 being a rare exception.

Also, I am not sure whether it is enough to give the references to graphs/diagrams only in the text. It might be better to give the references (also) in the caption that goes with the given graph/diagram, for example, Schema 1: Valentieschema volgens Vandeweghe (2013: 49).

I have no knowledge as to whether Charles University or the Faculty of Arts uses a particular style sheet, so I cannot say if, and then to what extent, the dissertation submitted by Ms Jana Kijonková follows all the guidelines of such a list. What *is* certain is that the author is quite consistent in all the references, footnotes, bibliography entries, and such like. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies in the bibliography, for instance:

- Haeseryn, W., W., K. Romijn, G. Geerts et al. *vs.* Lopatková, M., Žabokrtský, Z., Kettnerová, V. et al.
- Haeseryn, W., K. Romijn, G. Geerts et al. *and* Lopatková, M., Žabokrtský, Z., Kettnerová, V. et al. *vs.* Belle, W. Van, B. Lamiroy, W. Van Langendonck, K. Lahousse, P. Lauwers, I. Van Canegem-Ardijns & K. Van Goethem.
- Devos, F., Noël, D., Defrancq, B. & T. Colleman. *vs.* Devos, F., Noël, D., Defrancq, B.

- Rys, Jonah 2010. *Iconische woordvolgorde in het Nederlands* (scriptie bij Universiteit Gent) vs. Bergen, G. van. 2011. *Who's first and what's next. Animacy and word order variation in Dutch*. Proefschrift. Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.

And why 'Jonah' instead of 'J.' in the last example?

#### **4. Use of sources and/or material**

To put it straightforwardly, the methodology used for data collection and analysis is coherent, the individual steps in data analysis justified and well executed, the method of data collection and processing in line with the main research question or hypotheses tested and the interpretation of the results proposed by the author follows from the results of the empirical research or sources on which the work relies.

Also, Ms Kijonková seems to exploit all the relevant sources. Nevertheless, perhaps she could also have made use of an article by K. Fischer and V. Ágel entitled "Dependency grammar and valency theory" (to be found in *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis*, edited by Bernd Heine and Heiko Narrog) or other work by V. Ágel. On the other hand, she does refer to Czech (and Polish) linguists, which I see as "added value".

In the same vein, the author does not lose site of the different meanings of some of the verbs and, as a result, she investigates the concrete-abstract dichotomy throughout the dissertation as well.

I would also like to commend Ms Kijonková on the self-reflection presented in Part 2 of Chapter V.

Finally, I have a remark which does not necessarily have to be seen as criticism. As much as I appreciate the formulation of an own definition of psych-verbs (see 3.3 in Chapter II), I feel this is one of the very few less coherent parts of the dissertation, as it starts out as a continuation of 3.1, then it becomes more of a list of criteria, to then be elaborated on in Chapter III (1.1.1).

#### **5. Personal contribution to the subject**

The dissertation is NOT merely a compilation of information. On the contrary, the author proposes an original, organically formulated contribution to the field. This goes for all the important aspects covered in the dissertation, that is psych-verbs, word order in the Dutch language (with special focus on the middle field) and verbal valency. Thank you for that!

#### **IV. Questions for the author**

1. In Chapter IV, it says: "*Sommige zinnen komen uit het corpus en andere zijn zodanig*

*geconstrueerd dat ze de verschillende kenmerken weerspiegelen die potentieel belangrijk zijn voor de volgorde in het middenstuk.*“ (p. 104) Which ones are those ‘sommige’ and which ones the ‘andere’?

2. There were ‘only’ 16 respondents, which you yourself say is a regrettably lower number than you had wished for (especially because only 4 were speakers of Netherlandic Dutch; see p. 180). My questions are:
  - Why not more?
  - Why is there very little information about the respondents (education, background, etc.)?
  - How did they complete the questionnaires (for example, in one session or more)?

## **V. Conclusion**

The submitted dissertation meets the requirements for a doctoral dissertation thesis. I therefore recommend it for a public defence with the tentative grade of pass.

March 6, 2017

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