

LINGUISTICS AT WESTERN PRESENTS

**WESTERN  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
STUDENT SYMPOSIUM ON  
LANGUAGE RESEARCH**

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

March 15th • Saturday • 9:00 to 17:00

Conron Hall, UC, Western University, 1151 Richmond St, London, ON

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 Linguistics at Western



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# OVERVIEW

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## LOCATION & TIME:

Conron Hall & Zoom 8:55 - 17:00

8:55-9:00	Opening Remarks
9:00-10:10	Session 1
10:10-10:20	Break
10:20-11:30	Session 2
11:30-12:30	Poster/Info Session
12:30-13:00	Lunch
13:00-13:50	Keynote Presentation
13:50-14:00	Break
14:00-15:20	Session 3
15:20-15:30	Break
15:30-16:40	Session 4
16:40-16:50	Deliberations & Awards
16:50-17:00	Closing Remarks

# WISSLR 2025

## Presentation Schedule

Registraton	8:30
Opening Remarks	8:55
Presentation Session 1 (Online Presenters)	
<b>A Sociolinguistic Analysis of "Neurospicy"</b> Katelynne Shimkus ● KU Leuven	9:00
<b>Narratives of Resistance: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse and Multimodal Analysis of Indigenous Influencer-Activists on Social Media</b> Valentina De Brasi ● University of Naples "L'Orientale"	9:15
<b>The Role of the Turkish Modal Particle YA in Discourse Relations: An Experimental Study</b> Defne Bakirci ● University of Tuebingen	9:30
<b>On the Semantics of 'sozinho' ('alone'): anti-comitativity in Brazilian Portuguese</b> Elisa Anju Rodrigues ● Federal University of São Carlos	9:45
Break	10:10
Presentation Session 2 (In-Person Presenters)	
<b>Crossing Lines of Justice: An Analytical Comparison of Questions in Legal Cross-Examination</b> Maya Chawla, Paige Stickney ● Western University	10:20
<b>Discourses of Parental Rights and National Identity in Canada</b> Holly Scott ● Western University	10:40

## Schedule, continued

<b>How to be Sarcastic: A Guide for Robots</b> Robyn Berdan ● Western University	11:00
Poster Session / <i>Languages</i> Journal Info Session	11:30
<b>“I Associate, Like, The Masculinity With... Masculinity”: The Portrayal of Masculinity in Queer Women’s Discourse</b> Mar Pauls ● Carleton University	
Lunch	12:30
Keynote Presentation <b>Effective Teaching in Phonetics and Phonology</b> Dr. Nathan Sanders ● Associate Professor, University of Toronto.	13:00
Break	13:50
Presentation Session 3 (Online Presenters)	
<b>A sociopolitical linguistic (re-)examination of Francisation in Québec</b> Robin Turner ● University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	14:15
<b>A Feature-Based Analysis of Hyperraising</b> Corine Huang ● Yale University	14:30
<b>Examining strength of expectations in Tagalog word order processing using G-Maze</b> Shelby Suhan ● University of Toronto	14:45
<b>Exploring L2 Acquisition of Unaccusative and Psych Verbs in Turkish Learners: Influence of L1 Transfer or Default Transitive Template?</b> Burcu Boran ● York University	15:00

## Schedule, continued

Break	15:20
Presentation Session 4 (In-person Presenters)	
<b>Directional Verb Constructions in Hakka</b>	15:30
Irene Zhuang ● Western University	
<b>Analysis of Linguistic Features to Differentiate Between AI Chatbots and Human Communication</b>	15:50
Alaina Thuss, Tannei Sarker ● Western University	
<b>Stance taking and the construction of convergent and divergent identities and power dynamics of adult children of aging parents</b>	16:10
JP Stephenson ● Western University	
Break / Deliberations	16:40
Presentation of Awards, Closing Remarks	16:50

# Keynote Speaker

***Dr. Nathan Sanders***

Nathan Sanders (he/him) is an Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Toronto. He studied mathematics and linguistics as an undergraduate at MIT and earned his MA and PhD in linguistics from UC Santa Cruz, with a dissertation on phonology and sound change in Polish. He works on the phonetics and phonology of signed and spoken languages, historical phonology, linguistic typology, and innovative and inclusive teaching in linguistics. He is co-author of the second edition of the online textbook *Essentials of Linguistics* and co-editor of the book *Language Invention in Linguistics Pedagogy*.

## **Presentation Abstract: Effective Teaching in Phonetics and Phonology**

In this talk, I offer some reflections from my own experience concerning how instructors can be more effective when teaching phonetics and phonology. First, I discuss ideas to consider when developing course content, such as topic organization, applications of course concepts, and inclusivity. Second, I discuss innovative methods for supplementing traditional assessment, such as creative projects and alternative grading. Finally, I illustrate some tools I designed to support student learning: various educational games and a data set generator. My hope is that these ideas, methods, and tools may be as useful to other instructors as they have been for me.



# MDPI's *Languages* Journal: Information Session

**Sofia Zelko, Megan Taylor ● MDPI Canada Ltd.**

*Languages* is an international, multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed, open access journal on interdisciplinary studies of languages published monthly online by MDPI. *Languages* aims to present discussions and developments of multidisciplinary research, thereby generating broad and practical applications for the study of languages in the current world. Contributions from scholars and researchers working within the framework of any theoretical approach within linguistics are welcome.

A representative from their Toronto office will be providing an author training session during the conference. In this session, insights into academic writing, peer review processes, and best practices will be explored.

The list of topics covered includes:

- A Brief Introduction to MDPI
- Choosing a Type of Article
- Finding a Journal with which to Publish
- Responding to Reviewers
- Using AI - Do's and Don'ts
- Publication Ethics
- Q&A



# Presenter Abstracts

## A sociolinguistic analysis of “Neurospicy”

*Katelynne Shimkus* ● KU Leuven

The adjective “neurospicy” emerged online circa 2017 (Know Your Meme 2024), synonymous with “neurodivergent” and “neurodiverse,” joining a tradition of neurodiverse online individuals creating new terminology for themselves (Dekker 1999; Chapman 2022, Botha et al 2024; ao).

My research began with an online survey gathering demographic information and experience with the adjective “neurospicy.” At this stage, the survey has yielded unexpected results: e.g., only 37.2% of respondents self-identifying as neurodivergent rated that aspect as highly important, and the most common response to level of participation in online discourse was “Never,” contradicting hypotheses expecting high correlations between these and use of “neurospicy.” Discourse & metalinguistic analyses of survey responses show a) even respondents reporting no encounters with “neurospicy” accurately define it, and b) varying stances (Du Bois 2007) towards the lexeme’s acceptability.

Planned further analysis includes logical regression to determine correlation (if any) between demographics related to linguistic change (cf Labov 1972) and the response variables USE, USE.SELF, and POSITIVE/NEGATIVE valence. I also aim to compare survey results with social media data gained through Zeeschuimer (Peeters 2022) and analyzed through DiscoverText (Schulman 2025).

“Neurospicy” might seem a meme-like internet nonsense coinage, but its adoption throughout (and outside of) online neurodiverse communities is indicative of ongoing tensions in the social model of disability, with implications for disability studies, shibboleth and dog whistles, and language change.

Botha, Monique, Robert Chapman, Morénike Giwa Onaiwu, Steven K Kapp, Abs Stannard Ashley & Nick Walker. 2024. The Neurodiversity concept was developed collectively: An overdue correction on the origins of neurodiversity theory. *Autism*, Vol. 28(6), 1591-1594. <https://doi.org/kuleuven.e-bronnen.be/10.1177/13623613241237871>

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Shulman, Stuart. 2025. DiscoverText. Textifier. [www.discovertext.com](http://www.discovertext.com) (28 Jan 2025)

## **Narratives of Resistance: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse and Multimodal Analysis of Indigenous Influencer-Activists on Social Media**

*Valentina De Brasi* ● University of Naples "L'Orientale"

In today's world, social media platforms have become a routine source of entertainment and information for most people and, for many marginalised communities worldwide, a tool for activism, providing new venues to share their voices and stories. In this digital landscape, Indigenous people have emerged as key figures, using social media as a means of colonial resistance.

This PhD project explores the discourses of Indigenous influencer-activists in Canada. Through a corpus-based critical discourse analysis (CDA) alongside a multimodal analysis, the study examines both textual and visual elements of social media content to understand how these Indigenous influencer-activists communicate, why their advocacy is innovative and how they share their ties to Indigenous culture and memories - both individually and collectively. The research will produce a specialised corpus of social media posts from platforms such as Instagram and/or TikTok, taken from several Indigenous influencer-activists' profiles. By analysing the discursive strategies and visual aesthetics employed, the study intends to uncover how Indigenous influencer-activists represent their cultural heritage and their digital identity on social media, how power dynamics are negotiated in a digital sphere that is both ductile and fragmented, and what strategies Indigenous influencer-activists adopt to engage with their audiences.

The expected outcomes of the project include a detailed portrayal of the discursive and visual elements of Indigenous digital activism, with a focus on the linguistic themes and styles emerging; a better understanding of the multimodal nature of social media communication; a critical assessment of the impact of digital platforms on Indigenous self-representation. The study also aims to highlight the dual role of Indigenous influencer-activists: using digital tools to resist colonial narratives, while also mixing advocacy with marketing.

Indigenous studies, social media studies, corpus linguistics, multimodal and discourse analysis are all areas where this PhD project aims to make a contribution. Its findings also aim to provide a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of Indigenous peoples' diverse and innovative approaches to digital communication, as well as to examine the impact of online platforms on this now prominent manifestation of the digital activism phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Indigenous communication; Indigenous cultures; Indigenous identity; influencer-activism; social media; corpus linguistics; critical discourse analysis; multimodal analysis.

## The Role of the Turkish Modal Particle YA in Discourse Relations: An Experimental Study

*Ali Can Cicek, Defne Bakirci* ● University of Tuebingen

This study examines the Turkish modal particle YA as a common ground (CG) managing operator in discourse, focusing on its role in re-mentioning propositions. Prior research has relied on informal analyses or corpus-based methods (e.g., Özbek, 1998; Ruhi, 2013), which face challenges such as limited control over contextual elements and labour-intensive annotation. This study employs an experimental approach to explore discourse conditions favouring YA and assess the effects of its absence, a dimension often overlooked. A comparison with the German particle JA also highlights cross-linguistic differences.

We propose that YA reminds interlocutors of a proposition *p*, aligning with C-at-issueness (Koev, 2018), and frequently appears in ancillary positions within asymmetric discourse relations, as outlined in Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann and Thompson, 1988). Specifically, YA may enhance the coherence of background relations, a role less critical in causal relations like justification or reason. To test this, we conducted an acceptability judgment task using a 2x2 factorial design with two independent variables: discourse relation (background vs. reason) and particle presence (present vs. absent). Test items in dialogue format allowed direct observation of YA's conversational function.

A 1-7 Likert-type scale (1 = completely unnatural) was used with three repetitions per condition. A total of 127 participants successfully completed the task. Test items and fillers were distributed across four pseudo-randomized, counterbalanced lists using a Latin square design. Statistical analysis employed linear mixed-effects models fitted via maximum likelihood estimation. Results showed no significant differences across conditions for acceptability ratings, i.e., YA neither favours a relation nor significantly affects coherence when absent. These findings contrast with Döring and Repp's (2019) research on German JA, which showed a preference for background relations. Contrary to what was hypothesized, YA's absence, though, did not reduce coherence in background relations. This suggests that background relations may be more connected than assumed or that participants took additional time to construct meaning. A statistical analysis on response times have shown no significant difference, either.

In conclusion, this study examined how the modal particle YA interacts with varying discourse relations and how its absence affects the coherence; and shows that its presence or absence does not significantly impact discourse coherence or processing load. The study also underscores the value of synthetic data obtained via experimental approaches in examining modal particles, and discusses the limitations of corpus-based methods.

## On the Semantics of ‘sozinho’ (‘alone’): anti-comitativity in Brazilian Portuguese

*Elisa Anju Rodrigues* ● Federal University of São Carlos

The item ‘sozinho’ (‘alone’) in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), as well as its counterparts in other natural languages, is little explored in the formal semantics literature. In this work, our aim was to identify the interpretations of ‘sozinho’ in BP, and propose an analysis along the lines of the formal semantics and pragmatics of natural languages. To achieve our results, we used a hypothetical-deductive methodology and tested the sentences based on our intuition as native speakers. In our research, we identified at least seven distinct interpretations activated by ‘sozinho’: spatial, argument modifier, anti-causal, emotional, behavioral, mereological and autonomous. Based on the scope of ‘sozinho’, we regrouped these interpretations into three categories: individual, argument or event as scope. We also noticed that, for different levels of interpretation, the item ‘sozinho’ excludes some kind of companionship, be it a physical companionship in a given space, or the existence of arguments for a predicate or causes for an event. Our hypothesis for dealing with this item is that ‘sozinho’ is a modifier of anti-comitativity, i.e. a modifier that grammatically expresses the exclusion of a companion depending on its scope in the sentence. We also present in the presentation formalizations for the interpretations found for the item alone, such as the following one, which deals with “spatial ‘sozinho’”:  $[[\text{spatial\_sozinho}]] = \lambda I. \lambda x. \lambda t. (\text{loct}(x) \subset I \wedge \neg \exists y (R(y) \wedge \text{loct}(y) \subset I \wedge y \neq x))$ . The next step in this research is to investigate the combination of the interpretations found with intensifiers, such as ‘muito’ (‘very’) and ‘pouco’ (‘a little’), with the aim of assessing which of them are scalar, as well as comparing them with other modifiers in the language, such as ‘só’ (‘only’), and with the preposition ‘sem’ (‘without’), in order to deepen the description and understanding of anti-comitativity in BP.

Keywords: comitativity; semantics.

## **Crossing Lines of Justice: An Analytical Comparison of Questions in Legal Cross-Examination**

*Maya Chawla, Paige Stickney* ● Western University

In essence, the legal trial is a presentation of truth to the jury divided between the accounts of prosecution and defendant in pursuit of justice. It is the task of the lawyer to elicit and orchestrate this presentation through the questions they pose to witnesses on both sides of the case. Via direct and cross-examination, questions are the primary device through which these accounts are elicited. Thus, the questions guiding our research were as follows: how is power leveraged through questioning in cross examination, and how do these questioning tactics vary for witnesses of different societal status?

Transcripts of legal cross-examinations from the International Corpus of English of Canada (ICE-CAN) were analyzed (Newman & Columbus, 2010). Of seven cases, two were identified due to a striking contrast in witness' socioeconomic status; one being a psychiatrist (files S1B-067 & S1B-068 labelled "Psychiatrist") and the other being a convicted criminal, testifying to shorten his current sentence (files S1B-062[2] S1B-063, S1B-66[1] labelled "Knife").

Questions were classified according to Walker's (1987) typology outlining four main categories based on their preferred response and by extension, their coerciveness. The first being Wh-questions, with the subtypes Grammatical, Declarative, Imperative, and Cooperative; the second Yes/No/Wh-questions, with the subtypes Auxiliary and Yes/No-Any; the third Disjunctions, with the subtypes Wh-, List, and X or Y; and lastly Yes/No questions the subtypes being Grammatical, Declarative, and Tag (1987).

The most common question type in both cases was the Yes/No-Declarative, though the second most common question type for each case was different; Wh-grammatical being second most common in "Knife" and "Yes/No-Grammatical in Psychiatrist. Considering the progress of questioning and each witness' status, it appears the use of YN questions in "Psychiatrist" represented an attempt to hold the narrative power, and the more information-seeking questions in "Knife" leaves the witness to impeach their own testimony. This may be attributed to the psychiatrist's comparatively elevated socioeconomic status than the witness in "Knife"; the lawyer attempts to discredit the psychiatrist by using the most coercive question type. Given only these two cases, and lack of metadata, we assume that the socioeconomic status is correlated to the type of question used when cross-examining a witness. Since we only analyzed two cases, this could be incorrect. To fight the lack of data, we are currently analyzing the emerging patterns in more cases, in pursuit of the truth about our own postulations.

## Discourses of Parental Rights and National Identity in Canada

Holly Scott ● Western University

In recent years, there has been much public debate related to the affirmation of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities in both Canadian and American public schools. Controversial legal policies such as New Brunswick's Policy 713 and Saskatchewan's Bill 137 require parental consent for a teacher to use an alternative name and/or pronouns for a student under the age of sixteen. Such policies have been criticized as being anti-2SLGBTQIA+ and in violation of children's rights (Benchetrit 2023). Conversely, proponents of this legislation have voiced support for the way that these policies recognize and safeguard parental rights, that is, the parental authority to raise one's child in accordance with the values and ideologies that the parent(s) deems to be in the child's best interest. I present a critical analysis of Canadian English-language discourses of parental rights in the context of public education and the relationship of these discourses to a Canadian national imaginary. My multimodal data set includes national news media, organizational websites, social media, and public signs and symbols photographed in London, Ontario. I show how individual and collective imaginaries coalesce to project a vision of Canadian society that constructs heteronormativities as superior, while resisting accusations of bigotry. I suggest that, through the use of discursive strategies which construct national identity (Wodak et al. 2009), 2SLGBTQIA+ people are at once assimilated and dissimilated in this particular national imaginary. This discourse thereby represents a negotiation of values and norms related to the inclusion/exclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in an imagined and idealized Canadian society.

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## How to be Sarcastic: A Guide for Robots

*Robyn Berdan* ● Western University

With the recent surge of artificial intelligence (AI) improvements led by advancements in deep learning, extensive research has been invested in natural language processing (NLP). Many NLP tasks, such as part of speech (POS) tagging or natural language generation (NLG), have improved dramatically, yet NLP algorithms involved in pragmatics still fall short of achieving acceptable proficiency. Among the more challenging problems in this domain is sarcasm detection, which has attracted the attention of many academics. Current studies claim to propose models with improved accuracy, however tests on unbiased corpora demonstrate that their advancements to the field are minimal, if at all. One could argue that such failures suggest the need for improved algorithms or corpora, but the true solution is far more complex. While recently proposed algorithms indeed appear to be satisfactory, they all demonstrate symptoms of being overfitted to the corpus on which they are trained. As a result, enhancing the corpora is a prerequisite to enhancing the model. Sadly, the requirements to create an improved corpora are additionally demanding. The definitions of sarcasm employed by each corpus are heavily contradictory to each other, thus academics cannot rely on inter-corpora testing as an efficient measure of efficiency. Moreover, the corpora themselves achieve a high rate of disagreement among annotators, thus the intra-corpora testing cannot be trusted either. This paper proposes that any quantifiable improvement to the task of sarcasm detection would require computational capabilities that are impossible by the standards of this era. Such a pessimistic take is not to say that academics should abandon sarcasm detection, but rather a paradigm shift is necessary. Rather than solving the task as a whole, research should instead adopt a bottom-up approach. The presence of sarcasm is inherently ambiguous in numerous utterances, and as such they should be excluded from corpora as to preserve quality. To address this concern, this paper proposes a formally tractable partition that categorizes utterance based on their sarcastic ambiguity. Progress in sarcasm detection, under this view, is to conquer increasingly many achievable categories, rather than treating the task as one problem. This approach would enable the development of applications that utilize the partial sarcasm detectors only on portions of sarcasm which are achievable, genuinely assisting individuals with pragmatic incompetencies.

Keywords: Sarcasm; Pragmatics; Corpus; NLP;



## **“I Associate, Like, The Masculinity With... Masculinity”: The Portrayal of Masculinity in Queer Women’s Discourse**

*Mar Pauls* ● Carleton University

This article expands on previous work regarding the existence of subgroup identities based on gender expression within the queer community (Queen, 1997). This study considered gender as socially constructed and performative in line with Butler’s (1990) performativity theory.

Previous analyses that explore the language of queer women explore this gender expression-based divide and its manifestation as butch and femme identities amongst lesbians (Jones, 2012). These identities have been shown to exist along a continuum, and draw on stereotypical ideologies of gender (Bailey, 2020). Gender-based social differentiation has focused on older lesbians (Jones, 2012) and speakers in the United Kingdom (Koller, 2013). This project aims to amplify all queer women’s experiences by examining the portrayal of these subgroup identities within Canada to answer the following research question: How do feminine queer women portray masculine queer women through discourse?

This study uses a focus group transcript from a previous pilot project wherein to self identified feminine queer women describe masculine queer women. This data was selected to expand on themes that arose in the previous study and to refine methods for my master’s thesis. Using the discourse historical approach as an outline for the analysis of language and identity (Wodak et al., 2009), the transcript was analyzed to identify all social actors and all instances of nomination and predication that included queer women. Finally, all argumentation schemes relating to queer women were identified and grouped according to theme.

I found that queer women were the only actors identified only by their gender expression. I also identified two key argumentation schemes, the topos of comparison and name interpretation (Wodak et al, 2009; Blackledge, 2005). Feminine queer women in this text described masculine queer women based on their gender expression, and ascribed heteronormative ideologies of masculinity as a result, portraying them as overt, assertive, and predatory. I also found that these feminine queer women positioned themselves in opposition to masculine queer women, describing themselves as traditionally feminine and passive. This paper interprets this with van Dijk’s (2011) ideological squaring to explore the ways in which this gender divide creates a binary between feminine and masculine queer women. This analysis suggests potential insight into how heteronormative ideologies of gender may be perpetuated in the queer community in Canada today encouraging future research into the ways in which queer Canadians define themselves.

### References

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## **A sociopolitical linguistic (re-)examination of Francisation in Québec**

*Robin Turner* ● University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

A mandate of the Ministry of Immigration, Francisation, and Integration is to coordinate and offer French language courses for adults through the *Francisation Québec* program to foster their participation in Québec society, promising a variety of course modalities and pedagogical materials that support any lifestyle. The program even offers financial assistance to encourage immigrants to enroll in full-time French courses. With the passage of Bill 96—whose official name is ‘An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec’—immigrants must receive government services exclusively in French for six months once they arrive in Québec. Prime Minister François Legault made the linguistic integration of immigrants in the province a top priority as part of a larger campaign for the protection of the French language, which is not a discourse unfamiliar to other parts of the francophone world.

Although the *Francisation Québec* program and Bill 96 were designed to “correct” the decline of the French language in Québec, the people of Québec have endured a domino effect of negative impacts ranging from diminishing economic opportunities, discouragement of academic prosperity, and an alarming new wave of emigration to other provinces of Canada. The program itself is a hurdle for immigrants as it falls short of its promises to accommodate working schedules and the waitlist for enrollment continues to span up to 4-6 months. This presentation examines the contemporary situation of *Francisation Québec* and its tensions with the multilingual reality of the province.

## A Feature-Based Analysis of Hyperraising

Corine Huang ● Yale University

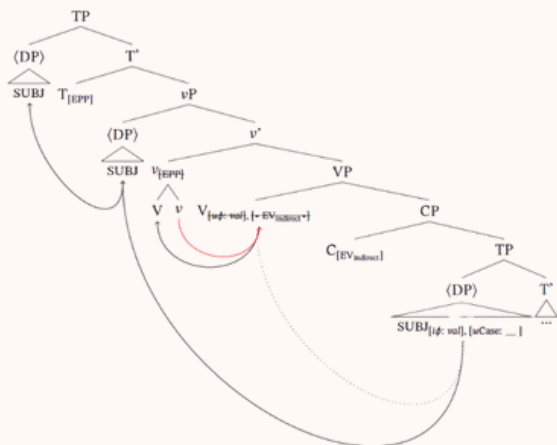
Hyperraising refers to a phenomenon in which subjects or objects of an embedded clause occur in matrix position. An example of hyperraising-to-subject in Cantonese is shown in (1) (Lee & Yip 2024:1531):

- (1) Hoenggong tenggong waa hou ngaihim  
 Hongkong hear COMP very dangerous  
 'It is heard that Hong Kong is dangerous.'

While empirical evidence shows that hyperraising is derived through movement (Alboiu & Hill 2016; Lee & Yip 2024; Lohninger et al. 2022; Zyman 2023), any movement-based analysis must explain how DP constituents can escape the embedded CP domain without violating widely accepted locality constraints (Chomsky 2001). This study discusses two analyses of hyperraising: (1) a phasehood-deactivation analysis in which an Agree-relation between the embedding verb and embedded CP “deactivates” the embedded CP so that it is no longer a domain, allowing the constituent to raise out of the embedded CP in one fell swoop and arrive at a matrix subject or object position (Lee & Yip 2024) and (2) a defective phase analysis in which certain embedding verbs can select for defective C-heads that do not form phases, allowing long-distance A-movement of the embedded DP to matrix position (Nunes 2008). I combine the featural considerations of Lee & Yip (2024) with the structural approach of Nunes (2008) to present a defective-C analysis of hyperraising that is motivated by evidentiality features on the embedding verb and CP.

Crosslinguistically, hyperraising only occurs out of *indirect-evidential* embedded clauses, which indicate the speaker conveys reportative or inferential information. Indirect evidentiality is encoded by embedding verbs and complementizers (Alboiu & Hill 2016; Lee & Yip 2024; Martins & Nunes 2010). Following Lee & Yip (2024), I assume that the indirect evidentiality of a CP is encoded by the feature  $[EV_{indirect}]$  on the C-head. I propose that C-heads encoding indirect evidence are defective and cannot form phases, so embedded DP subjects are available to agree with matrix V, which prompts DP to move into matrix Spec,vP. For hyperraising-to-subject, the DP then proceeds to matrix Spec,TP. A schema for hyperraising-to-subject is in (2):

- (2) Schema for hyperraising-to-subject



For hyperraising-to-object, the movement follows the same schema but stops at matrix vP.

Key for trees: black arrows = movement, red arrows = feature donation, dotted line = agreement

This schema can also derive related phenomena, such as copy-raising in English, suggesting that the indirect evidentiality-hyperraising link can be broadened to a universal relationship between indirect evidentiality and subject displacement across CPs.

Selected References:

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## Examining Strength of Expectations in Tagalog Word Order Processing Using G-Maze

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Expectations play an important role in sentence processing. Theoretical accounts propose that comprehension involves cycles of generating and revising expectations based on input. While robust expectation-based effects have been observed across languages, some studies question their prevalence. Investigating understudied linguistic structures provides an opportunity to refine our understanding of these processes. This study examines expectation-based effects in Tagalog, a verb-initial language with flexible word order.

Tagalog verbs are morphologically marked for voice, determining the syntactically prominent nominal (the pivot). For example, *tawag* 'to call' is marked with <-um-> in agent voice (AV) [1,2] and <-in-> in patient voice (PV) [3,4]. In AV, the agent argument is the pivot, marked by *ang*, while the non-pivot patient argument is marked by *ng*. Conversely, in PV, the patient argument is the pivot, marked with *ang*, while the non-pivot agent argument is marked with *ng*. Both AV and PV allow agent-first [1,3] and patient-first [2,4] word orders:

[1] T<um>awag ang mekaniko ng tsuper.  
call<AV> PVT mechanic NPVT driver  
'The mechanic called the driver'

[2] T<um>awag ng mekaniko ang tsuper.  
call<AV> NPVT mechanic PVT driver  
'The driver called the mechanic'

[3] T<in>awag ng mekaniko ang tsuper.  
call<PV> NPVT mechanic PVT driver  
'The mechanic called the driver'

[4] T<in>awag ang mekaniko ng tsuper.  
call<PV> PVT mechanic NPVT driver  
'The driver called the mechanic'

Previous Tagalog studies using traditional reading methods have failed to detect strong expectation-based effects. Thus, we used G-Maze: an alternative reading method known for eliciting localized effects. Fifty-eight adult Tagalog speakers read 32 declarative sentences with semantically reversible verbs and two animate noun arguments. Voice (AV, PV) and word order (verb-agent-patient/VAP, verb-patient-agent/VPA) were crossed in a 2x2 design.

We tested two hypotheses: (1) comprehenders generate detailed expectations based on verb and voice morphology at the first nominal marker (PV-VAP most expected, AV-VAP and AV VPA equally expected, PV-VPA least expected), and (2) comprehenders revise expectations at the second nominal marker, resulting in no differences across conditions.

Results supported our first hypothesis: reaction times at the first noun marker reflected probabilistic word order preferences informed by voice morphology, demonstrating robust expectation-based effects. However, our second hypothesis was not supported. Reaction times at the second nominal marker were influenced by grammatical constraints interacting with voice, with a preference for PV. These findings highlight the utility of G-Maze in capturing finer grained expectation-based effects in Tagalog comprehension.

## Exploring L2 Acquisition of Unaccusative and Psych Verbs in Turkish Learners: Influence of L1 Transfer or Default Transitive Template?

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The acquisition of unaccusative and psych verbs has been a focal point in L2 acquisition research, often revealing patterns of overpassivization and underpassivization (see (1) and (2)) (e.g., Can, 2009; Hahn, 2011; Ju, 2000; Montrul, 2001; No & Chung, 2006; Oshita, 1997; Tanyer & Deniz, 2019). With the Dyadic Template Hypothesis, Montrul (1997, 2001) attributes these errors to the incorrect mapping of intransitive verbs onto a default transitive template. More specifically, L2 learners, like L1 learners, are found to resort to a default transitive template provided by UG when they do not know the lexico-semantics of the relevant verbs yet. Although learners typically overcome default mapping effects for non-alternating unaccusatives as proficiency improves, morphological marking differences between L1 and L2 continue to affect their performance with alternating unaccusatives and psych verbs, even at advanced levels.

This study investigates the L2 acquisition of English unaccusative (alternating and non-alternating) and psych verbs by Turkish learners. Unlike English, Turkish morphologically marks both alternating unaccusatives (see (3)) and psych verbs (see (4)), potentially shaping L2 learners' performance. While previous research (e.g., Montrul, 2001) has documented overpassivization of unaccusatives and underpassivization of psych verbs among low-intermediate Turkish learners, little is known about whether these patterns persist at higher proficiency levels. To address this gap, the current study investigates whether Turkish learners exhibit developmental errors in the L2 acquisition of these verb types, specifically by examining the role of the default transitive template and the influence of L1 morphological patterns.

47 Turkish learners of English residing in Canada (pre-intermediate (n=11), intermediate (n=17), and advanced (n=19)) participated in a Grammaticality Judgement Task (GJT) and a Translation Task. The tasks tested whether participants accepted or used the incorrect overpassivized unaccusatives or underpassivized psych verbs (see (5), (6) and (7) for example test items). Results show that while learners were accurate at accepting the correct forms across all verb types (alternating and non-alternating unaccusatives and psych verbs), they had trouble rejecting the incorrect forms, particularly for alternating unaccusatives (see Table 1). Their performance on non-alternating unaccusatives and psych verbs improved with proficiency, but alternating unaccusatives continued to pose problems for learners even at advanced levels (see Table 2). A detailed analysis highlighted that errors were especially pronounced with verbs that are morphologically marked in Turkish, suggesting an interaction between L1 morphological patterns and L2 acquisition (see Table 3). That is, learners preferred to accept the incorrect forms more when the verb required an overt morpheme in Turkish. However, these results cannot be attributed solely to L1 transfer as learners showed evidence of default mapping effects even for verb types that are morphologically similar in both languages (i.e., non-alternating unaccusatives). These findings support Montrul's (2001) proposal that L2 learners initially rely on a default transitive template when acquiring unaccusative and psych verbs. While reliance on the template diminishes with increasing proficiency, L1 morphological patterns persistently influence learners' performance with alternating unaccusatives at all levels.

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**Example items sampling overpassivization and underpassivization errors**

- (1) \*The eruption of Sakurajima Island was occurred. (Yip, 1990)
- (2) \*The people surprised at the news. (Hahn, 2011)

**Example items sampling Turkish and English unaccusatives and psych verbs**

- (3) Alternating Unaccusatives:
    - a. *Hırsız pencere-yi kır-dı.*  
thief window-ACC break-PAST  
"The thief broke the window."
    - b. *Pencere kır-ıl-dı.*  
window break-PASS-PAST  
"The window broke."
  - (4) Psych Verbs:
    - a. *Aslan avcı-yı kork-ut-tu.*  
lion hunter-ACC fear-CAUS-PAST  
"The lion frightened the hunter."
    - b. *Avcı kork-tu.*  
hunter fear- PAST  
"The hunter was frightened."
- (Examples were adapted from Montrul, 2001, p. 149-152)

**Example test items from Grammaticality Judgment Task**

- (5) Alternating unaccusatives:
  - a. The automatic door closed immediately after the man walked through it.
  - b. \*When we sneeze, our eyes are closed instantly.
- (6) Non-alternating unaccusatives:
  - a. He suddenly appeared in the doorway.
  - b. \*A woman was appeared at the far end of the street.
- (7) Psych verbs:
  - a. He was embarrassed because he could not speak English.
  - b. \*The teacher embarrassed because she made a mistake

**Table 1.** Correct responses on the Grammaticality Judgment Task

Verb Types	Grammatical		Ungrammatical		Total (%)
	%	N/Total N	%	N/Total N	
Alternating Un.	84	237/282	34	97/282	59
Non. alternating Un.	88	497/564	55	310/564	72
Psych Verbs	95	269/282	71	199/282	83
Distractors	90	678/752	65	486/752	77
Total (%)	89		58		

**Table 2.** Distribution of correct answers by determined proficiency levels

Verb Types	Proficiency	Grammatical		Ungrammatical		Total (%)
		%	N/Total N	%	N/Total N	
Alternating Unaccusatives	Low	80	53/66	12	8/66	46
	Medium	85	87/102	31	33/102	59
	High	85	97/114	52	59/114	68
Non-alternating Unaccusatives	Low	86	114/132	23	31/132	55
	Medium	82	168/204	42	85/204	63
	High	94	215/228	84	192/228	89
Psych Verbs	Low	91	60/66	20	13/66	55
	Medium	96	98/102	76	78/102	86
	High	98	112/114	95	108/114	96
Distractor	Low	82	145/176	36	64/176	59
	Medium	88	240/272	64	173/272	76
	High	96	290/304	82	250/304	89

**Table 3.** Distribution of correct responses across morphologically different verbs.

Note that *change, freeze, boil* and *burn* are morphologically unmarked whereas *break* and *close* are morphologically marked in Turkish

Verb Types	Grammatical		Ungrammatical		Total (%)
	%	N/Total N	%	N/Total N	
<i>Change, Freeze, Boil, Burn</i>	90	169/188	37	70/188	64
<i>Break, Close</i>	72	68/94	39	27/94	51



## Directional Verb Constructions in Hakka

Irene Zhuang ● Western University

In the modern varieties of Chinese, a directional verb construction (DVC) consists of a concatenated series of verbs that is commonly used to encode movement in motion events. The construction typically consists of a main displacement verb, non-deictic directional verb, and deictic directional verb (come/go) that indicates movement of a theme object towards or away from the speaker. In agentive motion events, the DVC can be used to express the movement of the theme object (DP) caused by a semantic agent, as in (1).

### (1) Hakka Chinese

佢	搬	長凳	落	樓	來。
ki	pan	ts <sup>h</sup> ɔŋ ten	lɔk	leu	loi
3SG	transport	bench	descend	stairs	come
	V1 <sub>dis</sub>	DP	V2 <sub>dir</sub>	LOC	V3 <sub>deic</sub>

'He moved the bench down here (towards the speaker, from upstairs).'

There has been some debate regarding the terminology used to refer to DVCs in the literature. DVCs in Mandarin and Cantonese have previously been analyzed as compounds, grammaticalized 'serial units', and serial verb constructions (SVCs). However, few studies have focused on other Sinitic varieties such as Hakka. As such, the aim of the current study is to provide an account of the directional verb construction used to encode agentive motion events in Hakka Chinese. I assess the status of the construction with respect to criteria outlined for SVCs from cross-linguistic (Aikhenvald 2006, 2018; Bisang 2009) and language-specific perspectives (Bisang 2001, Paul 2022).

I conducted elicitation sessions with a native speaker of Hakka to collect the data presented in this study. The relevant structures in the informant's dialect of Hakka were elicited through various tasks and compared to other dialects of Hakka spoken in Guangdong, China. The aspect markers elicited in this way differed from other Hakka dialects commonly reported in the literature. The directional verb constructions used to encode agentive motion in Hakka may include locational objects introduced by a preceding directional or deictic verb. Like SVCs, Hakka DVCs are monoclausal and share features for tense, aspect, and polarity. However, there are many examples where the same surface representation may indicate separate underlying structures, which complicates their potential analysis as serial verb constructions. Further explorations of DVCs in Hakka and related Chinese varieties may contribute to our understanding of verb serialization strategies and their functions in encoding motion events.

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## **Analysis of Linguistic Features to Differentiate Between AI Chatbots and Human Communication**

*Alaina Thuss, Tannei Sarker* ● Western University

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) develops, it becomes more and more prevalent in every aspect of life. This includes relationships, as people turn to chatbots like *Replika* and *C.AI* for their platonic friendships, romantic lives, and more. A popular utilization is having the AI pretend to be a fictional or celebrity crush. While this phenomenon has been considerably studied, there is a gap in linguistics research on this topic. This study aims to find what linguistic features can differentiate a relationship with an AI chatbot as opposed to real human communication. Samples of real conversations from celebrities and influencers will be collected from publicly available online sources such as *Youtube*, and then an AI imitating the genre of the source will attempt to have a similar conversation. Analysis will be conducted using a mixed methodology inspired by discourse analysis and statistics to compare linguistic features in multiple different genres of conversation. These genres will include professional, casual, argumentative, and romantic conversations. The discrepancies will be quantified to determine the statistically greatest differences within the social contexts. Hopefully this study can further the understanding of the linguistic aspects of forming a relationship with AI. The potential differences in AI and human conversation can be a foundation in studying the social effects of engaging in AI relationships. As well as, in determining identifiers to help people avoid AI generated scams and false information.

## **Stance Taking and the Construction of Convergent and Divergent Identities and Power Dynamics of Adult Children of Aging Parents**

*J.P. Stephenson* ● Western University

The analysis of discourse between various parties can reveal much about the relationships between those parties and the ways in which they use language to navigate those relationships. These relationships include elements of identity and power.

In this paper, I argue that repeated acts of stance taking establish distinct identities and that these identities can signify power imbalances, both between the speakers as well as others outside the conversation.

To demonstrate this argument, I present a dialogue between a married couple regarding the care of their elderly parents. I select key passages in the conversation to demonstrate my thesis.

I show that the identity of the speakers is influenced by societal roles (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and personal narratives (Ochs and Capps 2001), while “power is always being constructed and adjusted through discourse” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

My analysis includes the role played by interactional sociolinguistics, including discourse markers and constructed speech. I also apply a Critical Discourse Analysis filter to identify how the “global” discourse facilitates construction of stance and identities among individuals in conversation.

I conclude by showing that divergent identities created by stance taking are indicative of divergent power of the speakers, with regard to each other and with regard to others beyond the conversation.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**WISSLR is made possible by the generous assistance and support of the following departments and organizations:**

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Canadian Linguistics Association

MDPI's *Languages* Journal:  
Editorial Office, Caitlyn Xi, Lumi Xie, Sofia Zelko

Western University, including support from:  
Western Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies  
Society of Graduate Students  
Western Research  
Department of Anthropology  
Department of French Studies  
Department of Languages and Cultures  
The Master of Arts Program in Linguistics  
MA Program Director Dr. Jacques Lamarche

Our presenters for their participation  
with a special thanks to Keynote Speaker  
Dr. Nathan Sanders

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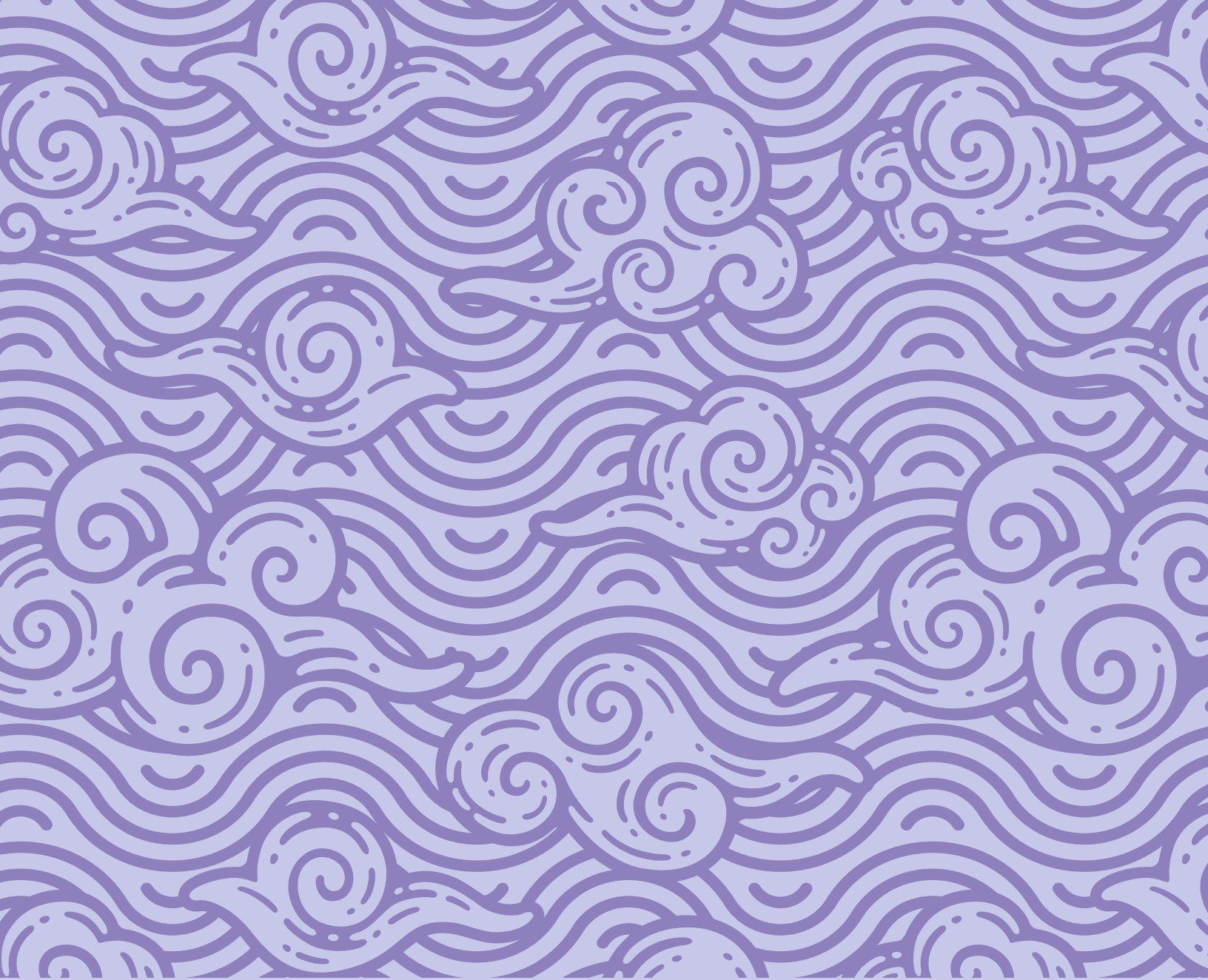
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