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When comprehending sentences, we tend to use various cues to attain the correct interpretation in the shortest time-span possible. When we are encounter semantically reversible sentences, the cues we normally use are rendered insufficient. So far, most of the research in this area has focused on the processing of declarative passive sentences. However, reversible relations are also observed in other sentence types such as comparative sentences, and locative sentences. The primary aim of this project is to understand the comprehension of reversibility in sentences regardless of sentence type. It uses neurostimulation (TMS) methods with healthy individuals, and behavioural methods with aphasic patients. Through this project, we hope to gain a better understanding of the various mechanism involved in such comprehension, and neural substrates underlying it. We also hope to gain a better understanding of how these impairments manifest in different types of aphasia.

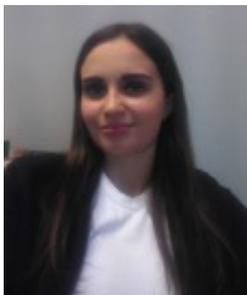
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**Nermina Čordalija**



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The Processing of Unaccusative Verbs

My PhD project is concerned with verb argument structure and a specific class of verbs - unaccusative verbs. Unaccusative verbs are a class of intransitive verbs that have unique syntactic and semantic characteristics. They have Theme as a subject and denote situations where there is no active engagement on the part of the subject (*fall, sink, appear*). Their Theme subjects are initially merged in the complement V position, postverbally, and then moved to the preverbal position ([Fell] [The girl] The girl fell.) The reason for this is case checking. The objective of this research is to investigate how these syntactic and semantic peculiarities of unaccusative verbs affect their processing. Since unaccusative verbs are structurally more complex compared to intransitive unergative verbs for example as their derivation includes an additional step – movement of a constituent, it is worth investigating whether due to this syntactic complexity they also necessitate more processing load compared to other classes of intransitive verb with a more straightforward syntactic structure. In my research, I also investigate if unaccusative verbs in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian show preference for (perfective) aspect. I plan to answer these questions by revisiting extensive literature about the processing of unaccusative verbs and designing three experiments using different techniques – Cross-Modal Lexical Priming (CMLP), Cross-Modal Picture Priming (CMPP), electroencephalography (EEG) and eye-tracking. Apart from bridging the gap between the theoretical and experimental linguistics and providing insights into language processing in real time, my research will also make an original contribution to the experimental investigation of a South Slavic language – Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian.

Supervisors:

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**Nathaniel Lartey**



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In cross-linguistic studies of aphasia, the comprehension and production of derived structures are known to be difficult for agrammatic speakers. Our project investigates how native Akan speakers with agrammatism comprehend and produce derived structures, comparing our observations with previous findings. Since Akan is a tone language, we also want to know the role tone plays in the processing of derived structures in the language. This project also provides an insight into how the phenomenon of co-referencing is processed by agrammatic speakers.

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**Juliana Andrade Feiden**



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Number agreement depends mainly on two kinds of information: one of a grammatical or syntactic nature and one of a conceptual or semantic nature. Even though number agreement depends on the interaction of both grammatical and conceptual information, generally they converge. Conceptual anaphors, conversely, present a number incongruence, as the antecedent and the consequent element do not agree in number and, in some cases, in gender. The understanding of conceptual anaphors is thus dependent on conceptual information. Therefore, my research investigates the role of conceptual number in coreference establishing, the processes and ERP components that are elicited when conceptual number is processed in relation to these different types of anaphors (grammatical x conceptual) and how overt and null pronouns are processed when related to conceptual number agreement.

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**Ana Murteira**



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Gesture has been used to promote communication and/or to facilitate language production, particularly when individuals suffer from word retrieval deficits (e.g., post-stroke aphasia). However, debate remain as to the nature of the link between gesture and language at both neural and cognitive levels. This project aims to examine the underlying cognitive and neural mechanisms by which gesture influences verb naming. The project will investigate these matters in both healthy individuals and people with post-stroke aphasia. It will use neuromodulation techniques in healthy participants, to analyse brain network interactions linking gesture and lexical processing. In addition, research with people with aphasia will investigate the implications of gesture-language interaction for verb impairment. We expect that our results will help to develop a better understanding of how gesture and verb systems are neural and cognitively integrated and how gesture can be advantageously used as a complementary tool in aphasia rehabilitation.

Link to website personal page:

<https://www.ccd.edu.au/people/profile.php?memberID=1322>

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IDEALAB

**Hui-Ching Chen**



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My research interests split into two fields, language acquisition and information structure. Therefore, my PhD project aims at unfolding questions of how children acquire information structure in a cross-linguistic perspective. German, English and Mandarin will be the target languages in my study. To reach my goal, I will apply experimental methods, such as the picture judgement task and eye-tracking.

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My main interest is sentence processing in healthy as well as brain-damaged individuals. The topic explored currently is how word order and syntactic frequency simultaneously affect sentence processing. Using EEG and behavioural measures, I am investigating comprehension and production by healthy and aphasic individuals in Standard Indonesian (SI). The aim of the series of investigations is to identify, to what extent, syntactic frequency may affect comprehension and production of sentences with derived word order (e.g. passives, object relatives, and object clefts), and whether this frequency effect can "protect" typically impaired structures in individuals with aphasia.

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**Assunta Süß**



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Syntactic agreement between subject and verb, like the -s in “she works”, is found in a large number of languages and needs to be acquired in order to produce grammatically correct sentences. Certain syntactic information – so called features of the subject, like person and number – are expressed on the finite verb, typically through an affix. The verb inflection paradigm varies from relatively easy ones (like in English) to more complex ones (German for example), yet the underlying process is the same. Although it takes children years to fully interpret this information in their language input, they seem to be sensitive to it at a very early age. This sensitivity has been shown in French and Dutch at ages younger than two years. Using eye tracking, we want to detect Subject-Verb Agreement in young German speaking children and relate it to their general language development.

**Supervisors:**

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**Inga Hameister**



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A single event can be perceived in various ways: Is someone *pouring water into a glass* or is he/she *emptying a bottle*? Describing a real life situation like this requires us to transform our general thoughts about an event into a form that we can express as a verbal message – this is known as ‘conceptualisation’. My research investigates the processes underlying conceptualisation and the nature of conceptualisation deficits in individuals with language impairments following stroke (aphasia) or as a result of a degenerative disease (primary progressive aphasia). I will use behavioural measures and eye tracking to examine the link between thinking and speaking in a picture description task. Moreover, I aim to identify general characteristics of a conceptualisation deficit to facilitate the development of better targeted diagnostic and treatment methods for language impairments.

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**Ella Creet**



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Research has shown that targeted treatment can improve word retrieval for people with aphasia. However, the precise mechanism by which this improvement occurs and for whom it is likely to be successful for remains unclear. The main focus of this project is to explore the underlying mechanisms that enable (or prevent) improvements in word retrieval for individuals with aphasia. Currently I am investigating why some people with aphasia are able to improve independently of treatment. Can repeated attempts to name items cause these same items to be retrieved more easily in the future, despite not being treated? I am also investigating why some people fail to improve their naming abilities in response to treatment. I plan to investigate the rate of decay of priming effects and the impact of varying the interval between repetitions of the same item on priming.

Supervisors:

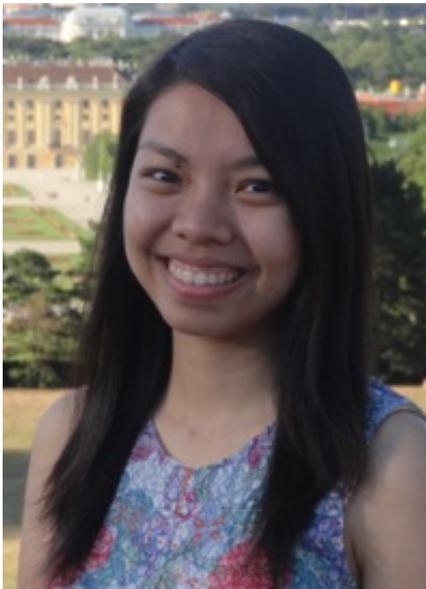
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**Rowena Garcia**



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My main interest is the acquisition of Tagalog, a verb-initial language from the Philippines. In particular, I am investigating thematic role assignment, as well as speakers' word order preferences. I am currently using behavioral measures (i.e., self-paced listening) to identify whether or not children rely on a word order strategy, and at what age they can correctly use the verb and noun morphology for assigning thematic roles.

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**Hanh Nguyen**



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My main interest is exploring the role of a reader's prior knowledge in paragraph comprehension in healthy readers and readers with aphasia. Prior knowledge can be manipulated through the presentation of contextual information (for example, pictures and titles) to the reader prior to reading. Using both behavioural and eye tracking data, we will examine if there are any significant differences in comprehension accuracy, reading time and eye movement depending on the extent and type of prior contextual information provided. For example, we will examine the effect of presenting a text with a highly relevant or less relevant picture or with a highly informative versus less informative headline. Understanding the influence of prior knowledge on text comprehension will provide more insight into the reader's cognitive processing, and it can also help to develop more suitable reading materials and therapeutic strategies for people with aphasia.

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**Jakolien den Hollander**



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The aim of my project is to identify the impaired process of speech production underlying apraxia of speech (AoS). AoS is diagnosed based on symptoms in the speech. Many of these symptoms can also be present in the speech of individuals with aphasia, which often co-occurs with AoS, and dysarthria. In this project electroencephalography (EEG) and lip electromyography (EMG) are used to identify the processes of speech production and to differentiate the impaired speech production process(es) underlying AoS, aphasia and dysarthria. This project should result in a protocol that can be used to diagnose apraxia of speech using EEG.

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**Alexa von Hagen**



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Developmental dyslexia and second language learning

Children identified with developmental dyslexia often struggle when learning a second language, besides presenting difficulties in acquiring literacy skills in their native language. Although existing work has focused on how children with dyslexia learn to read and write in a second language, little evidence is available to describe other domains of second language learning, such as speech perception and production and vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, due to the heterogeneity observed in dyslexic children's first language profile, it seems necessary to investigate the relationship that can be established between first and second language performance. Findings will serve as a evidence base to orientate parents, teachers and clinicians about dyslexic children's second language education.

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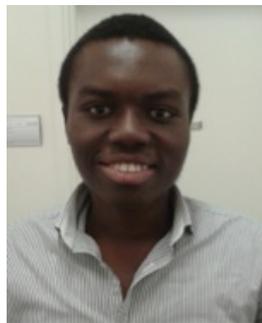
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