VIDI Research Program

The Conversation Frame: Linguistic Forms and Communicative Functions in Discourse

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Summary

Starting from the assumption that language is intimately related to interaction, the main question this project addresses is: how is the structure of interaction reflected in language structure and language use? That is, what forms does the basic interactional pattern of turn-taking take in grammar and discourse? Moreover, the communicative functions of interactional structures embedded in discourse are investigated. Finally, the processing and communicative effectiveness of such grammatically integrated interactional patterns are explored.

The project focuses on 'fictive interaction' (Pascual 2002), a cognitive phenomenon that reflects the interactional structure of conversation, and is manifested in language structure and use (e.g. dialogic monologues, rhetorical questions). The project focuses on intra-sentential conversational structures, which are often introduced by direct speech (e.g. an attitude that says '*what's in it for me?*'", "a '*what's in it for me?*' attitude").

The project addresses the following questions: (i) since factual interaction is a fundamental aspect of language use, is fictive interaction also a fundamental linguistic structure in different languages and discourse genres? And (ii) does the use of fictive interaction provide processing and communicative advantages to language users?

In order to address the linguistic structure question, a corpus study will be undertaken, examining are intra-sentential conversational structures in different discourse genres of written and spoken language, in language accompanying gesture and in sign language(s). To address the communicative effectiveness question, the communicative effects of fictive interaction will be explored in relation to: (i) the argumentative power of fictive interaction (in criminal trials); (iii) the use of fictive interaction as conversational strategy (by speech-impaired individuals with Broca's aphasia); and (iii) the reception of fictive interaction (processing, memory, comprehension and emotional affect).

The hypothesis is that embedded fictive interaction is essential in different languages and discourse genres, and can be used for a variety of communicative functions. A further hypothesis is that the use of fictive interaction can render a discourse communicatively more effective, as compared to its descriptive alternative.

KEYWORDS: Fictive interaction; communicative effectiveness; legal argumentation; Broca's aphasia; gesture; sign

Research team

Projects	Subprojects	Researchers
Structure	Forms & Functions	Kashmiri Stec / Esther Pascual
Strategy	Legal Argumentation	Esther Pascual
	Aphasia Conversation	Rimke Groenewold
	Reception	Kashmiri Stec / Rimke Groenewold