

Project B01: Coercion as a creative mechanism in compositional interpretation

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Project Summary

B01 studies the implicit creation of meaning in sentences involving complement coercion (begin a book, enjoy a movie). Complement coercion has played an important role in semantics and psycho-linguistics as a window into compositional processes in real-time comprehension and the flexible interplay between composition and pragmatic inferencing. The primary research question of this project is **whether coercion should be viewed as an integral part of the compositional system and/or whether it constitutes a (creative) repair mechanism augmenting linguistic productivity.**

While most experimental studies on coercion have focused on a rather limited range of cases – mostly of the kind begin the book standardly interpreted as reading or writing the book – the present project will include cases and inferences not typically investigated. These cases involve less frequent, yet interpretable complements and actions as well as combinations that are seemingly limited to more particular and even creative contexts. For this purpose, the present project will combine the study of **online processing** via eyetracking during reading and **formal modelling** of lexical semantics in composition with extensive **crowd-sourcing experiments**. This will put us in a position to systematically study the interplay between a wide range of verbs with different kinds of complements and subjects as well as the wider discourse context. By studying which cases of coercion are possible and which are beyond interpretability, as well as how their felicity can be altered given an appropriate context, the project will consider both the mechanisms and principles ensuring interpretive flexibility, as well as the limits of this flexibility.

The project has two open PhD positions. While PhD position 1 will carry main responsibility for the crowd-sourcing experiments and the (formal) modelling of the data collected therein, PhD position 2 will mainly involve experimental semantic/pragmatic experiments using eye-tracking during reading.

Open Positions

PhD position 1 (65%)

Profile: The successful candidate should have a Master's degree either in psycholinguistics, theoretical or computational linguistics, and a good background in one of the other areas, respectively. Since the experiments will be conducted in German and involve subtle lexical semantic properties, a very good command of German is highly desirable. Experience with statistical methods (frequentist or Bayesian mixed effects regression modeling) and programming skills are de-

sirable.

Main research focus within the project: The PhD student's tasks include the planning and conduction of crowd-sourcing experiments and the statistical analysis, formal modelling and presentation of the experimental results. The successful candidate is also expected to prepare a PhD thesis in this domain.

PhD position 2 (65%)

Profile: The successful candidate should have a Master's degree in psycholinguistics, and a good background in theoretical linguistics. Experience with eye-tracking and/or ERP research and statistical methods (frequentist or Bayesian mixed effects regression modeling) is a prerequisite. A good command of German is desirable.

Main research focus within the project: The PhD student's tasks include the planning and conduction of experiments applying eyetracking during reading as well as the statistical analysis and presentation of the experimental results. The successful candidate is also expected to prepare a PhD thesis in this domain.

For further information please contact the project leaders:

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