



CONFERENCE

Tuesday September 6 2016, 6 p.m.
Facultad de filosofía y letras, seminar room (3rd floor)

“NATIVE AND SECOND-LANGUAGE SENTENCE PROCESSING: EFFECTS OF READING SPEED
AND FIRST-LANGUAGE WORD ORDER”

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A hotly debated issue in the second-language (L2) processing literature is how L2 sentence processing is different from native (L1) processing, and why. According to processing deficit accounts, L2 learners are less automatic and slower in accessing lexical and other information. In addition, they need to inhibit their native language. This shortage of resources and potential interference from the native language may have repercussions at the level of sentence processing. According to the Shallow Structure Hypothesis (Clahsen & Felser, 2006), on the other hand, L2 sentence processing is qualitatively different from L1 processing. In this view, differences between L2 and native sentence processing cannot be attributed to resources, processing speed, or properties of the native language. Two critical questions in this respect are then (1) What is the effect of reading speed on L2-sentence processing?; and (2), Are L2-learners affected by the word order in their native language while processing the L2? To address these questions, we compared advanced Dutch L2 learners of English and native English speakers on a self-paced reading task. Learners read overall faster than native English speakers. Controlling for differences in reading speed, learners were as sensitive to grammaticality manipulations as native English speakers. On-line reading times did not reflect any effect of cross-language conflict in the learners. Results from an end-of-sentence verification task showed a stronger bias towards a subject-object order in the cross-language conflict conditions in speed-matched learners, but not in learners who read faster than native speakers. Results are compatible with hypothetical differences in resource allocation between second and native language processing.

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