
Connectives as processing instructions across languages.

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A large body of literature has shown that connectives influence discourse processing. However, Blumenthal-Dramé (2021, henceforth: BD) found the facilitative effect of a connective to be larger in German than in English. This might be due to the typological nature of the two languages: words in synthetic languages (like German and Polish) tend to provide less information compared to more analytic languages (like English), forcing speakers of the latter type of language to rely more on contextual information, rather than on the connective. In the current study, we aim to replicate and extend this finding by investigating (a) whether there are cross-linguistic differences in the effect of connectives on on-line processing and if so, (b) whether these effects can be attributed to differences in the degree of analyticity of the language. We will present the findings of two studies, each comparing English with Polish and German.

In a sentence continuation task, native speakers read small texts. The final sentence of the text ended in either the underspecified connective ‘and’ only or an additional causal connective (i.e. ‘and so’). The continuations were annotated for whether or not it is causal. In a self-paced reading study, participants will read 20 small texts containing a target sentence pair that is causally related. This causal relation was again either marked by a causal connective or not. An extract is presented below:

- (1)
- a. Lisa was very tired [and so]_P [she fell asleep early]_T [and I]_S
 - b. Lisa war sehr müde [und ist deshalb]_P [früh eingeschlafen]_T [und ich]_S
 - c. Julia była bardzo zmęczona [i dlatego]_P [zasnęła wcześniej]_T [i ja]_S

We will examine the effect of condition and language on reading times of the target (T) region and the spill-over (S) region. We expect that these regions are read faster in sentences with a causal connective than in those without. Crucially, this effect is hypothesized to be larger in Polish and German, compared to English, as would be shown in an interaction between language and condition.

By investigating cross-linguistic differences in coherence marking, the present contribution will shed more light on how structural differences between languages affects which sources of information - lexical or contextual - readers draw on when processing language.

References: • Blumenthal-Dramé, A. (2021). The Online Processing of Causal and Concessive Relations: Comparing Native speakers of English and German, *Discourse Processes* 58(7), 642-661.