

---

## Exploring the sensitivity to alternative signals of coherence relations: The case of French-speaking teenagers.

---

Ekaterina Tskhovrebova<sup>1</sup>, Sandrine Zufferey<sup>1</sup> & Pascal Gygax<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universität Bern, <sup>2</sup>Université de Fribourg

ekaterina.tskhovrebova@unibe.ch, sandrine.zufferey@unibe.ch,

pascal.gygax@unifr.ch

While the use and comprehension of connectives have been studied in different categories of speakers (see e.g., Cain & Nash, 2011), less is known about the functioning of alternative signals of coherence relations (but see e.g., Scholman et al., 2020), especially in younger populations. Moreover, there is even less evidence about how different alternative signals of coherence relations interact with connectives (but see Hoek et al., 2019). It is not clear, for instance, whether alternative signals are strong enough to generate an inference of a certain coherence relation even in the presence of connectives.

In the current study, we assessed the sensitivity of French-speaking teenagers ( $N=149$ ,  $M_{\text{age}}=14.33$ ,  $SD=1.75$ ) to the alternative signals of a list relation (words such as *plusieurs* ‘several’ and *différents* ‘various’), combined with connectives varying in frequency and signalling two types of coherence relations (addition: *en plus*, *en outre*; consequence: *donc*, *ainsi*). In addition, we contrasted the results obtained by teenagers with those of a group of adults ( $N=63$ ,  $M_{\text{age}}=28.62$ ,  $SD=9.98$ ).

The results revealed that both groups of participants were sensitive to list signals, as they produced more continuations expressing a list relation when one of the alternative signals was present in the task. However, teenagers' receptiveness to list signals was inferior to that of adults. The inference of list relation was, however, not significantly increased when an alternative signal was combined with the more frequent additive connective *en plus*. As for the combination of an alternative signal with the less frequent additive connective *en outre*, it inhibited the inference of list relation. In contrast, the consequence connectives *donc* and *ainsi* almost completely hindered the production of list continuations.

**References:** • Cain, K. & Nash, H. M. (2011). The influence of connectives on young readers' processing and comprehension of text. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103, 429–441. • Hoek, J., Zufferey, S., Evers-Vermeul, J. & Sanders, T. J. M. (2019). The linguistic marking of coherence relations: Interactions between connectives and segment-internal elements. *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 25(2), 275–309. • Scholman, M. C. J., Demberg, V. & Sanders, T. J. M. (2020). Individual differences in expecting coherence relations: Exploring the variability in sensitivity to contextual signals in discourse. *Discourse Processes*, 57, 844–861.