Final report for the AVT- Anéla Dissertation Prize 2022

The AVT and the Dutch Society for Applied Linguistics (Anéla) annually rewards a dissertation prize in the area of linguistics. The jury for the AVT-Anéla dissertation prize for 2022 consists of Ad Backus (Tilburg University), Mike Huiskes (University of Groningen), Maarten Kossmann (Leiden University), Nicoline van der Sijs (Radboud University), and Beyza Sumer (Chair, University of Amsterdam). The jury was supported by Eva van Lier (on behalf of AVT) and Gudrun Reijnierse (on behalf of Anéla).

The jury received a total of twelve dissertations, all of which were of high academic quality and covering a range of topics in linguistics and for different languages such as investigation of gender mismatches in French and German, exploring debates as a tool for second language learning of English by Dutch speaking students, and the phonological acquisition and variation in a sign language, which was Kata Kolok.These dissertations were also from a range of universities in the Netherlands.

All jury members have read at least the first chapter, the last chapter and the summary of each of the 12 dissertations during the first selection round. The jury used the following criteria to evaluate the dissertations: Scope, Methodology, Craftsmanship, Originality, Impact, and Clarity of Reporting. The jury then decided on a top three nominees, who also explain their research in the videos to be presented later. These nominated top three dissertations are (by the alphabetical order of the authors):

- Daan Hovens (Maastricht University): Power Dynamics at Work: An Ethnography of Multilingual Metal Foundry in the Dutch-German Borderland
- Alex Reuneker (Leiden University): Connecting Conditionals: A Corpus-based Approach to Conditional Constructions in Dutch
- Sybren Spit (University of Amsterdam): Awareness and Instruction When Kindergarteners Acquire Grammar

In the second stage of selection, all jury members read the three nominated dissertations in their entirety and described them in a short report. The jury was impressed by the quality of these three dissertations, all of which focus on timely matters and contribute to the current debates in the field of language studies by their in-depth theoretical analyses combined with the use of state-of-the-art methods. All these dissertations were very clearly structured and written in such a manner that all jury members read them with great pleasure. Below is a brief description of the three nominated dissertations.

Daan Hovens investigates the language use and how it is influenced by power dynamics in a multimodal work environment, namely a metal foundry in Limburg on the border with

Germany. He spent 6 months in this environment to understand how and to what extent multilingualism in companies would hinder efficient communication between employees. Considering the highly multilingual nature of the Netherlands and the increasing number of the migrants coming to work here, the jury has found the research questions asked in this dissertation to be very important and relevant for various stakeholders such as local and national governments, policy makers, and academics working in language studies. In this ethnographic work, Dr. Hovens has been able to collect a substantial amount of data on interaction patterns between workers, but also on workers while interacting with machines, which is another crucial aspect of this work. His findings present interesting insights on the nature of the problems experienced by the labour migrants and the local employees.

Alex Reuneker provides an in-depth linguistic analysis of conditionals in Dutch. He conducts an exhaustive overview of classifications of conditionals, then a corpus-based overview of the distribution of their grammatical features in Dutch and, finally, an application of different types of cluster analyses to determine whether there is a relationship between clusters of grammatical features and the categories of conditionals distinguished in the literature. The thesis is exemplary in its scope and breadth, combining different methods by using a bottom-up approach, and different theoretical frameworks. It is well argued and presents a systematic, hallmark analysis of conditionals, which is a topic of great importance both in logic and language studies. In this work, Dr. Reuneker also discusses all his findings in a very mature way as if he had been working on this topic for a great many years.

Finally, Sybren Spit explores the role of awareness and instruction on grammar acquisition by kindergarteners in the Netherlands. In this extremely well-written dissertation, Dr. Spit taps into challenging issues such as measuring awareness and furthermore measuring it in young-aged children. He conducted a very coherent and well-argued for set of experiments and used the opt-out paradigm for the first time to address these issues, which contributes to the novelty of his dissertation. In the discussion, the results are thoroughly linked to the literature and the implications are discussed with a clear eye for the limitations of the research as well. Dr. Spit has succeeded well in spreading knowledge about language acquisition in an interdisciplinary and innovative way.

All these three nominated dissertations are all of a very high quality, and the jury did not have an easy job choosing a winner. Yet, due to the theoretical depth, the breadth of methods used, the maturity and the crystal-clear way of writing, the jury has unanimously decided to award the AVT/Anéla dissertation prize 2022 to Alex Reuneker (Leiden University).