Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Seminar für Sprachwissenschaft

**Contrastive Dialogues Involving Ellipsis (?):  
A Pilot Study**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

This research co

Contents

1. Introduction 4

2. Literary review 5

3. Data and method 5

4. Findings 5

5. Discussion 5

6. Conclusions 5

7. References 7

8. Appendix 8

8.1 Abbreviations, symbols and other notational conventions 8

8.2 List of stimuli 9

# 1. Introduction

The pronunciation of a sentence holds significance, encompassing not only the stressed word but also the elements emphasized in the conversation, impacting the naturalness perceived by native speakers. This becomes particularly intriguing in dialogues that involve contrastive focus, as illustrated in the following example (1).

1. A: Where is John travelling from?

B: John is travelling with Mary from Africa.

C: No, Asia.

C’: No, to.

C’’: No, Susan.

C’’’: No, without.

From an intuitive standpoint, it seems that one would encounter any of speaker C’s responses unexpectedly. On one hand, it is evident that Speaker C is correcting a specific part of Speaker B's utterance, as *Africa* and *Asia* and *from* and *to*, etc. contrast. However, on the other hand, speaker C’s responses seem odd, as the reader, first, has to determine what the word contrasts with. This might be because the reader is not primed for the contrast. Instead, in dialogues, in which the contrasting words are orthographically marked (e. g. \**Africa\** and \**Asia\**), may be perceived more naturally by native speakers.

The present paper aims to determine the best medium for reliably obtaining judgments about such dialogues. That is, we tested whether dialogues such as (1) are rated more naturally if the contrasting words are marked and comparing the results to the verbal equivalents of (1), including stimuli with and without pitch accent on the contrasting words. We hypothesize that stimuli with orthographic marking or pitch accent, respectively, on the contrasting words are deemed more natural by native speakers. Moreover, we hypothesize that auditory stimuli are more likely to be accepted by native speaker than written stimuli. Regarding the contrasting words, we hypothesize that stimuli with content words in contrastive focus received higher acceptability rating than stimuli with functional words in contrastive focus and that stimuli with at-issue content in contrastive focus are rated more natural than stimuli with not-at-issue content in contrastive focus.

# 2. Literary review

Natural

Koev (2018) proposes to replace the former understanding of at-issueness according to which at-issueness includes the so-called main point of an utterance. Instead, he argues in favor of a differentiation between three notions of at-issueness. First, question-at-issueness

# 3. Data and method

The data used in

Data base: EF Cam Dat

Tool: CTAP

Measures: MLC, clauses per sentence (fewer measures are better)

Description of CTAP (see PhD example with Meurers):

“The Common Text Analysis Platform (CTAP) (Chen and Meurers, 2016b, see Chapter 2) developed by the author extends the functionalities of previous complexity analysis systems by adding modules for corpus management, feature selection, and results visualization. The system was implemented as a Web application with a friendly user interface that makes it easy to be used by linguists and researchers who are not familiar with computer programming or NLP technologies. The first release of the system provides over 170 lexical and syntactic measures. The integration of the full set of over 570 complexity measures listed in Appendix A is underway.“

# 4. Findings

Using t-SNE, the semantic

# 5. Discussion

Since fastText allows for an analysis that

# 6. Conclusions

This paper gives an overview of the

# 7. References

Baayen, R. H. 2008. *Analyzing linguistic data*: *A practical introduction to statistics using R*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# 8. Appendix

## 8.1 Abbreviations, symbols and other notational conventions

? questionable/marginal acceptability

\* unacceptable

**bold** pitch accent

FocP focused position

## 8.2 List of stimuli

*Insert stimuli here*

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby confirm that this paper and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others this is always clearly stated. All statements taken literally from other writings or referred to by analogy are marked and the source is always given. This paper has not yet been submitted to another examination office, either in the same or similar form.

Tübingen, December 6th, 2022



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