

October 2016

STSM Scientific Report

Dear TextLink STSM committee

The STSM grant provided to me within COST Action Number IS1312 enabled me to visit Dr. Hannah Rohde at the university of Edinburgh from 4-30 September 2016. The activities undertaken during this visit allowed me to make significant progress on my PhD project, specifically on the part of my project in which I investigate the function of relative clauses at the discourse level. As was elaborated on in the proposal, the goal of this research visit was to set up a series of experiments exploring discourse-level inferences in the processing of relative clauses.

Within the time frame of the STSM, we were able to carry out a web-based story continuation task from beginning to near-finish: we designed the stimuli, put together the experiment, ran it using Amazon Mechanical Turk, and annotated the output. The continuations are currently being annotated by a second rater. In the story continuation task, we investigated the contribution of restrictive relative clauses to the discourse and examined whether people can infer causal or negative causal (concessive/denial of expectation) relations between restrictive relative clauses and their matrix clauses. Our preliminary results indicate that continuations of the discourse differed between the three types of relative clauses. This suggests that it is indeed possible that a restrictive relative clause can function as a discourse segment.

In addition to running the story continuation task, we laid the ground work for a self-paced reading task, also web-based, which is to be run in the near future. This follow-up experiment will look into the processing of different types of restrictive relative clauses. Specifically, it will compare reading time and verification speed of causal, negative causal, and descriptive relative clauses. We aim to publish the results of the continuation task and the reading time task as a journal article.

Running the story continuation task and setting up the self-paced reading task not only generated data that will help further my PhD project, but also helped me improve or develop several important skills, such as experimental design, using R for statistical analysis, and setting up a web-based experiment. All of these will be helpful in the remainder of my project and the rest of my academic career.

During my stay in Edinburgh, I had the opportunity to meet with several other researchers working in the field of discourse. I had interesting discussions with Prof. Bonnie Webber and James Reid (PhD candidate), both from the University of Edinburgh, as well as with Prof. Vera Demberg (Saarland University), Dr. Torggrim Solstad (ZAS Berlin), and Dr. Marta Andersson (Stockholm University), who were visiting in the time that I was there.

In conclusion, my STSM with Dr. Hannah Rohde has been extremely beneficial to my project. I am looking forward to presenting our results at one of the future TextLink meetings.

Sincerely,

Jet Hoek