

## Juryrapport scriptieprijs Anéla 2012

The Bachelor and Master's theses that the jury received this year, submitted by colleagues from both Anéla and VIOT, were all of very high quality. The members of the jury were impressed with the original research initiatives, readable reports, and thoughtful methodologies displayed in the 21 submitted theses. The theses originated from eight Dutch or Flemish universities, and were written in Dutch, English and even French. Against the background of the negative news that we heard last year about inadequate teaching programs, low student motivation, and radical political changes, these 21 theses mark the high quality of research that is supervised in Belgium and the Netherlands in the fields of applied linguistics and communication.

With the professional help of Catherine van Beuningen, each of the 21 theses was assigned to two members of the jury, who independently evaluated the research reports. In a first evaluation phase, five theses were unanimously selected by the jury, that consisted of Jac Brouwer, Nivja de Jong, Marjolijn Verspoor, and me. Here is, in alphabetical order, a summary of these theses:

- In television interviews, interviewers have to be critical but also polite towards their guests. **Frédérique van Breugel** analyzed how politeness was expressed by two prominent Dutch interviewers from the programs *De wereld draait door* and *NOVA/Nieuwsuur*. She took an original approach in analyzing their speeches from two perspectives: in the first place the well-known politeness model of Brown and Levinson, and in the second place the more contemporary, discursive approach by Watson. Her approach resulted in a very extensive corpus analysis of four interviews (two for each of the programs), investigating linguistic politeness strategies, turn taking, and the context in which the interview occurred. The analysis is multilayered, and rich, and clearly shows how both approaches lead to different views on how polite the two interviewers behave in interviews. The jury was impressed with the original perspective, the strong literature overview, and the fine-grained analysis that was conducted by Frédérique.

- The thesis by **Punya Hoek**, as one of the member of the jury stated, will turn the testing practice completely on its head. Punya investigated predicted item difficulty of multiple-choice questions from the state exam of Dutch as a second language by characteristics of the texts and of the questions. One might expect that linguistic aspects of the text, such as lexical and syntactic complexity, and use of signal words, have an impact on item difficulty. However, this is not what Punya's results point out. She showed that characteristics of the question such as plausibility of the distracter answers, and whether the correct answer could literally be found in the text, were significant predictors of item difficulty. In a concisely written thesis, Punya Hoek answers an interesting and extremely relevant question, using clever multi-level analyses. The implications of her research should not be underestimated, and the jury hopes that the suggestions of follow-up research will be taken up, either by herself or by others.

- Children from a non-Dutch background often lag behind their peers in linguistic abilities. One of the reasons, as recent research has shown, is that children who speak Dutch as a second language have received fewer input of what is called academic language. A solution that has been put forward is a so-called language-class for the second language children. **Charlotte Huigh** wanted to know whether the language use

by teachers of the language classes actually differed from the language use by teachers of regular classes. She recorded teachers' speech from primary education in the classroom: one recording from a teacher in a language class, and one from a teacher in a regular class. Charlotte found that the language used by these two teachers was indeed different. The teacher in the language class used lexically more diverse and syntactically more complex language. The jury was especially impressed with the clear writing of this thesis. If the accompanying form had not stated the thesis was at Bachelor level, the jury would probably not have noticed, which shows the exceptional achievement by Charlotte.

- **Goedele van Loon** investigated the notorious errors with *dt* in Dutch. Up to now this error was mostly examined in written text as a product and possible explanations came from variables as frequency, homophone dominance, and the distance between verb and subject. Goedele empirically investigated these variables in online writing processes, hoping to trace the cognitive processes involved in making these spelling errors. Goedele's first experimental study aimed to determine the intervals between the keystrokes in producing verbs susceptible to spelling errors. In a follow-up study, she explored the possibilities of eye tracking for a more thorough understanding of the pause behaviour and the cognitive processes involved. The writing in this thesis is very high quality, the studies are well embedded in the academic literature and the method is original and ingenious. The clear analyses deliver good starting points for further investigation that the jury underlines as most of the cognitive processes remain still unveiled.

- When Dutch-Turkish bilinguals talk to Turkish people in Turkey, they notice that the language spoken in that country is not exactly similar to what they speak in the Turkish immigrant community in the Netherlands. For her thesis entitled, **Yesim Sevinc** investigated the Turkish language of three generations of Turkish immigrants in an experiment that elicited free response data in a video description task, and in an interview. The video description data showed that 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrants produce more loan translations, and more unconventional Turkish structures, in particular with the Turkish dative and accusative case marking. The interviews showed that 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrants use less Turkish in their daily life, and feel more at ease talking Dutch. Yesim's thesis is a well-written and comprehensive piece of work that relates language contact theory and social factors to language change or language loss. The jury was very enthusiastic about the choice to consider both synchronic and diachronic dimensions of language contact, the clear presentation of the theoretical embedding, and the relevance of the research questions.

In a second phase, all five research reports were evaluated by all four jury members. We compared our four independent rankings, and dressed a shortlist of three theses. The thesis that we ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> this year was a thesis that reported on an original study with strong academic and societal impact: Yesim Sevinc. The thesis that the jury ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> this year was a thesis with a remarkably complex methodology handled brilliantly by the student: Goedele van Loon. Then, finally, the best thesis supervised in 2012 on a Belgian or Dutch university in the fields of applied linguistics and communication is a thesis that was written in a pleasant and academic style and was beautifully structured; a thesis, moreover, that reports on a complex phenomenon that the student mastered remarkably well, and that will be on the research agenda for years to come: Punya Hoek.

The jury congratulates Punya Hoek for her excellent work and supervisors Jan Hulstijn and Sible Andringa for their support.