

Ondene van Dulm

The grammar of English- Afrikaans code switching

A feature checking account

This dissertation focuses on structural aspects of code switching between South African English and Afrikaans. Specifically, the main aim is to investigate the merit of an account of intrasentential code switching in terms of feature checking theory, a theory associated with minimalist syntax. The hypothesis is that feature checking theory and its related principles and operations provide an adequate framework within which to characterise and explain structural aspects of English-Afrikaans intrasentential code switching. A number of word order differences between English and Afrikaans, specifically involving verb position, are analysed within the framework of feature checking theory, where the movement of lexical items is proposed to be driven by the need to check strong uninterpretable features associated with functional heads. The constructions include constructions with adverbs, focalisation and topicalisation constructions, embedded *that* and *wh* clauses, and *yes-no* questions. On the basis of the feature checking analyses, predictions are made regarding the well-formedness of constructions of these types in which code switching between English and Afrikaans occurs.

The predictions are tested on the basis of data elicited from 30 fluent English-Afrikaans bilingual participants by means of (i) judgments of the relative well-formedness of visually-presented sentence pairs, (ii) judgments of the relative well-formedness of auditorily-presented utterance pairs, (iii) sentence construction, (iv) video clip description, and (v) magnitude estimation of the relative well-formedness of visually-presented sentence sets. The results indicate support for some of the predictions, but uniform support for the hypothesis is not evident. Further linguistic factors playing a role in participants' performance are discussed.

This dissertation is of interest to scholars in the field of bilingualism, particularly those interested in the application of syntactic theory to bilingual phenomena, and in experimental techniques tapping bilingual processing.

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