Annual report ACLC 2018
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1. Introduction

The present annual report describes the scientific profile of the ACLC and records the research highlights from 2018.

In 2018 the ACLC took part in the 6-yearly national assessment of its research in October 2018. This assessment was a combined effort of one committee and 4 research centres that are all partners in LOT, the national research school of Linguistics. In 2018 we worked on the self-evaluations in close collaboration with Leiden, Nijmegen and Utrecht.

Paul Boersma
Director ACLC

2. Mission statement

The scientific goal of the ACLC is to discover the underlying systematicity in verbal as well as nonverbal human communication and in spoken as well as signed language. Accordingly, ACLC researchers combine evidence from generalizations about data obtained from direct or indirect observation or elicitation, evidence from behavioral experiments executed under controlled conditions, and support from explicit abstract modelling and computer simulations. The societal goals of the ACLC are to improve the successful acquisition and use of language, to improve communication abilities in the population, and to develop better language and communication technologies.

3. Organization of research in the ACLC

Whereas many comparable institutes in the Netherlands are organized by method (e.g. theoretical versus experimental linguistics), such an organization would not be appropriate for the ACLC, which strongly encourages investigation of subject matter from multiple angles (see "Scientific Profile" below). All ACLC research is therefore organized in **research groups**. Research groups exist for the duration of the research program they carry out, and cease to exist when the program is completed. Proposals for new research groups can be submitted continuously and are evaluated by the ACLC director and the Advisory Board. The ACLC director also actively explores opportunities for new groups.

Research groups are the hubs around which research is carried out: the members typically organize a meeting every week. For the individual researchers, the major benefits of membership are therefore the stimulating research environment, the learning environment for junior members, and sharing of activities. For the ACLC as a whole, the organization in well-defined groups makes it possible to present activities clearly to the outside world (as in the annual reports) and to stimulate the multiple-angled profile among the researchers. Once a year, the ACLC organizes a meeting for all members; in April 2018 this was a meeting where the ACLC discussed the topical issue of Open Access and Open Data. Specialists from the University Library gave us the most up-to-date information on these very quickly evolving subjects.

The research group is also the level on which the ACLC collaborates with other parties. Some groups contain members of the ILLC, or of other universities (such as the VU), or of other institutions (such as the Netherlands Cancer Institute NKI).

The formal tasks of the research groups are the following.
- Each research group is committed to writing an annual report, which contains the group description, lists the members and projects, and highlights the major research findings and societally relevant activities of that year.
- Each group chooses a "coordinator" from among its members, who will be the group's point of contact for the ACLC director and management.
- The coordinator represents the group during the ACLC board meetings, which take place approximately six times a year, thus ensuring the group's influence on the policies of the ACLC.

- The coordinator represents the group during the annual selection round of PhD proposals, thus ensuring the group's influence on appointments within the ACLC.

In 2018 the ACLC consisted of the following groups (the coordinators are mentioned here; see the websites for details):

Adventures in Multimodality (coordinated by Charles Forceville)
Amusia and Language (coord. Silke Hamann)
Argumentation and Rhetoric Group Amsterdam (coord. by Francisca Snoeck Henkemans)
Bidirectional Phonology and Phonetics (coordinated by Paul Boersma)
Language Learning (coord. by Sible Andringa)
Comparative Slavic Verbal Aspect (coordinated by René Genis)
Cross-Linguistic Semantics (coord. by Lotte Hogeweg [ACLC] and Maria Aloni [ILLC])
Functional Discourse Grammar (coord. Kees Hengeveld; discontinued in January)
Grammar and Cognition (coord. Judith Rispens)
Iconicity (coord. Olga Fischer)
Institutional Discourse (coord. Anne Bannink)
Language Description and Typology (coord. Eva van Lier)
Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of Translation (coord. Eric Metz)
Metaphor Lab Amsterdam (coord. Gerard Steen)
Oncology-Related Communication Disorders (coord. Rob van Son)
Revitalizing Older Linguistic Documentation (coord. Liesbeth Zack)
Sign Language Grammar and Typology (coord. Roland Pfau)
Talking about Learners (coord. Enoch Aboh; discontinuing after 2018)

Since 2009 the ACLC has participated in the interfaculty research priority area *Brain and Cognition*, co-ordinated by the *Cognitive Science Center Amsterdam*, now together called *Amsterdam Brain and Cognition* (ABC). The contribution made by ACLC researchers concerns the issue of *Learnability*.

4. ACLC management and support

In 2018, prof. dr. Paul Boersma was the academic director of the ACLC. In this function, he is a member of the Research Council (Onderzoeksraad) of the faculty. This council consists of the directors of the six Research Schools and the AIHR director; together they develop research policies and ensure their implementation. Boersma was supported by ACLC coordinator Marten Hidma, who was succeeded by Brigit van der Pas in August 2018, and by office manager Marijke Vuijk.

4.1. ACLC BOARD

The director consults with the ACLC Board on all important matters. These include research strategy, evaluation of research group proposals and the selection of PhD candidates. The ACLC Advisory Board consists of the coordinators of the research groups, a post-doc representative chosen by the post-doctoral researchers for a period of one year (in 2018 this was Roosmaryn Pilgram), and a PhD candidate representative elected by the PhD candidates also for one year (Merel van Witteloostuijn until September 2018, and Marieke Olthof from October 2018).

The ACLC has an external committee, the Scientific Council, consisting of three members. This council has the task of advising the ACLC Management and Advisory Board on general questions of policy, quality control, staff development etc. In 2017 the Scientific Council consisted of Prof. Richard Gerrig, prof. Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm and prof. Bencie Woll. In September 2018 the members of the Scientific Council visited Amsterdam to meet with ACLC researchers and to prepare for the national research assessment.

5. Scientific profile:
"Constraints on Variation in Language and Communication"

5.1. Variation. Human language and communication exhibit huge variation. All language communities maintain their own inventories of sounds or signs, their own systems for word and sentence structures, their own ways of conveying meaning. Every genre of communication maintains its own types of text elements and language varieties, and its own contextual system of appropriate use.

5.2. Constraints. On the other hand, languages and communication systems also show remarkable degrees of similarity. The variation among languages and among genres of communication is heavily constrained. The causes of these restrictions lie in human biology (anatomy of speech and signing organs, the human ear and eye, mammalian brain structures, language-faculty-specific cortical structures, human-communication-specific cortical structures), and, at a higher level, in human psychology (cognitive limits on processing capacity) or human social interaction (the need to classify important human relations). ACLC researchers work together to identify the many sources of these constraints.

5.3. Evidence. The ACLC acknowledges at least two equally valid methodological sources of evidence for variation and constraints: generalizations about spontaneous data observed and elicited in the field, and behavioral experiments executed under controlled conditions. Observations of naturally occurring language involve the study of the acquisition of language and appropriate communication by children and adults, the study of diachronic changes in language and communication systems, the comparative study of language structure and communication systems across the world (typology), the study of the relations between language and social context, and the description of typologically "different", often underdocumented and endangered, languages. Behavioral experiments are performed in the lab, in schools and sometimes in the "field". The ACLC emphasizes the fact that, in the end, the evidence from all sources must be compatible.

5.4. Modeling. The long-term scientific goal of the ACLC is to discover (the causes of) systematicities behind human language and communication. As in other sciences, sets of theories may be found that individually make sense in a particular sub-area. Ultimately, however, those theories will have to account for all sources of evidence at the same time, and also be compatible with each other. These unifying theories will probably be quite

different from, but probably also share some aspects with, all current theories. As long as the correct set of theories still has to be discovered, various theoretical approaches with partly overlapping empirical coverage will continue to coexist in the ACLC, such as generative grammar, functional discourse grammar, usage-based approaches, optimality theory, cognitive grammar, construction grammar, pragmadialectics and interaction grammars. Meanwhile, the main measure of progress in our field is the success achieved by explicit models that simultaneously account for as many sources of evidence as possible.

5.5. How this profile helps choosing research projects

The ACLC profile plays a guiding role in decisions about future research projects and directions. It is the yardstick for internal research applications and staff appointments. Ideally, a research proposal should investigate a particular subject matter from more than one of the angles mentioned above. To give an example: a proposal that aims to study the "DP" (Determiner Phrase) has a better chance of being supported by the ACLC if it aims to find the tree structures to represent the DP, *and* investigates how children and second-language learners acquire the DP, *and* investigates how the DP changes over the generations, *and* investigates what kinds of DP are processed fast and which ones slowly, *and* compares the DP across a variety of languages, *and* compares the success of various possible models of the DP, *and* performs computer simulations with these models.

5.6. How this profile influences the organization into research groups

The ACLC's multi-angled approach leads to an organization of research groups by subject, rather than by method. Thus, there is no research group called "Psycholinguistics", because the phonologists use psycholinguistic (as well as many other) methods to discover e.g. the processing of the English /æ/~/ɛ/ contrast, and the syntacticians use psycholinguistic (as well as many other) methods to discover e.g. the processing of the DP. Neither is there a research group called "Historical Linguistics", although many ACLC researchers investigate language from a diachronic perspective, usually with the goal of answering typological questions.

5.7. Learnability (part of the UvA Zwaartepunt of Brain and Cognition).

Linguists of the ACLC collaborate successfully with psychologists and child development researchers on the topic of *Learnability*, which has been the ACLC's implementation of the UvA Zwaartepunt of *Brain and Cognition* since 2008. Learnability offers explanatory relations between the observational sources of evidence mentioned in 5.3. Possible directions and sequences of diachronic change can help constrain typological variation (if change has a bias against a certain feature, that feature will become rare or non-existent); possible acquisition paths and modes of interaction may constrain both the possible changes (the order of features acquired may influence the end result of acquisition) and the typology directly (if a feature is representable in the brain but no acquisition path leads to it, the feature will never appear in adult language).

5.8. Maintenance of the profile.

The multi-angled profile of the ACLC is strengthened by all ACLC-wide activities, because members will interact in discussing methods and viewpoints outside their direct area of expertise:

- The ACLC seminars, which take place every two weeks on Friday afternoons.
- The "NOAP-dag" in December, combining the previously known "NAP-dag" and "OAP-dag". During this event, both PhD candidates and senior researchers present their work.
- The "juniorenoverleg", a six-weekly meeting of the PhD candidates (see §8).
- The ACLC board meetings, six times a year.
- The annual round of PhD applications (December through March).
- The annual meeting of the research groups.
- The "Uitje", the cultural and social event in June.
- The SMART lectures, as far as the **Learnability** profile is concerned.

6. Societal challenges

As it always has, the world keeps on changing. Present-day changes in language use and communication follow from a new wave of globalization. For instance, whereas a hundred years ago, the two languages that most people spoke in the Netherlands were the local dialect and the standard language, new migration streams into this country have again created a culturally and linguistically more diverse population, and the demands of international business, trade and education have created a new need for multilingualism, with English as a new lingua franca with a ubiquity that Latin or French never received. Modern social media tend to be faster than letters sent by coach, so the types of personal communication have changed. Language users and communicators ask us questions about how to proceed in this changing environment, and the ACLC helps answering them by applying outcomes of research to solving concrete societal demands. Institutions, too, require support in this changing society. This holds for schools, institutions that treat children with language and communication disorders, hospitals that treat patients with throat cancer, and so on. The ACLC collaborates with many such institutions.

The ACLC communicates the societal relevance of its research through the tab "Societal relevance" on its website.

7. Quality control

The ACLC monitors the progress of each of its PhD candidates through a series of meetings that take place roughly every ten months. These meetings are attended by the PhD candidate, his or her advisor(s), and the director of the ACLC or his delegate (typically, one of the ACLC's full or associate professors). Before the meeting, the PhD candidate writes a standardized progress report on publications, conferences, education, aspects of their work environment, supervision and plans for future careers. One of the advisors writes a report on the meeting, noting especially the agreements ("afspraken") that the candidate or her advisors or the ACLC committed themselves to during the meeting. The first of these meetings takes place approximately 9 months after the start of the project; at this point the candidate receives a "go or no-go" decision about whether they are allowed to continue the project (fortunately, a "no-go" is very rare) on the basis of a written paper.

PhD candidates are also expected to meet approximately four times a year with each other and with the ACLC director and coordinator in the so-called "juniorenoverleg". For details see below in "PhD candidate community".

Each post-doctoral researcher has a yearly meeting with the director of the ACLC (or his delegate), organized in much the same way as the 10-monthly meetings with the PhD candidates. Either by the ACLC director (or his delegate) or the supervisor (for instance in the case that the post-doctoral researcher works in a larger project) writes a report of the meeting.

Most faculty members have approximately 40 percent pure research time; a further 2 to 9 percent is allocated for "other research tasks"; the supervision of PhD candidates is funded by a separate 300 hours, to be divided among the supervisors. Faculty members are funded by the ACLC, whose director speaks every year with the relevant department chairs ("afdelingsvoorzitters") about the research output and quality of the ACLC members who belong to those departments ("vlootschouw"). If any problems occur, the ACLC and the department can take joint action, by adding comments in the report of the person's yearly evaluation interview with the department chair ("functioneringsgesprek") or by organizing a meeting with the ACLC director.

8. PhD candidate community

The ACLC hosts about 40 PhD candidates, among whom a number of external PhD candidates. The PhD candidates organize a three-monthly meeting ("juniorenoverleg"), in which they discuss the latest news and developments within the institute (the director and the coordinator of the ACLC are present) and in which they can bring up matters that are relevant to themselves and to their peers. The meeting is concluded with round-table questions. PhD candidates are expected to attend, and they take turns in chairing and preparing minutes. In 2018, there were four meetings, in, March, June, October and December. Attendance varied around 15 people.

Some topics on the agenda: PhD skills training, ACLC evaluation, Organisation LOT Winterschool, PhD appointments.

- PhD candidates: updates on research projects:
  - Seven PhD candidates successfully defended their dissertations in 2018:
    - Maja Ćurčić (1 February)
    - Tiffany Boersma (9 March)
    - Caroline Roset (18 May)
    - Jeroen Breteler (30 May)
    - Tessa Spätgens (20 June)
    - Anna Pytlowany (24 October)
    - Hanneke Pot (30 November)
  - Four new PhD candidates started their projects at the ACLC in 2018:
    - Bence Halpern
    - Kyra Hanekamp
    - Darlene Keydeniers
    - Saskia Leymann

- Education: GSH and LOT courses
  - Both the Graduate School of Humanities (of our Faculty of Humanities) and LOT (the National Research School in Linguistics) organize courses for PhD candidates. The GSH focuses on practical courses, e.g. to train academic writing and presentation skills, or to provide tips and tricks on how to write a postdoc proposal. LOT offers academic courses twice a year during winter schools (in January) and summer schools (in June), which last two weeks each. The locations of these schools alternate between the participating universities: Groningen, Nijmegen, Tilburg, Utrecht, Leiden, Leuven, Amsterdam VU and Amsterdam UvA.

Participation in both GSH and LOT courses is expected of new PhD candidates, and experiences with them are shared in every PhD meeting.

PhD candidates in the greater scheme of things:

- The PhD candidate pool supplies organisers and representatives for several occasions and organisational bodies. In 2018, the following people made contributions:
  - Graduate School representatives: Merel Witteloostuijn, Marieke Olthof.
  - LOT Winterschool 2019: all ACLC PhD candidates helped with preparations and during the winter school.
  - Mailing list coordinator: Jelke Bloem
  - NOAP-dag organizers: Andreas Finsen, Marieke Olthof, Ulrika Klomp and Kiki Renardel de Lavalette
  - PhD mentor: Sybren Spit
  - PhD representative on the ACLC advisory board: Merel van Witteloostuijn, Marieke Olthof.

9. Post-doctoral researchers

The post-doctoral researchers during 2018 were Vadim Kimmelman, Roosmaryn Pilgram, Lotte van Poppel, Margreet van Koert, Josje Verhagen, Camilla Horslund. They were represented in ACLC meetings by Pilgram.

10. ACLC funds

In 2018 the ACLC strategic budget ("beleidsbudget") was 29,000 euros, of which approximately 2,500 euros was reserved for sponsoring conference organization; compared to the year before, the budget increased by 11,000 euros. In 2018, the ACLC offered incentive grants (700 euros) to help support four ACLC applicants in preparing their proposals for the NWO PhDs in the Humanities programme. It also offered a few small research funds for student assistants to help ACLC members to complete research projects.

ACLC sponsored the LOT Winter School 2019, by contributing to the cost of two student assistants. It also sponsored the ACLC journal *Linguistics in Amsterdam* and the science popularization website *Kennislink* (through the national linguistics research school LOT). Other expenses included bonuses for PhD candidates finishing within four years or publishing their theses in the LOT series, the annual ACLC-wide cultural and social event in

June, travel costs for the ACLC Scientific Council to visit in preparation of the ACLC evaluation, and travel costs for speakers at ACLC seminars.

11. ACLC seminars

Nearly every other Friday afternoon the ACLC organizes a seminar. During these sessions, researchers from all over the world (including Amsterdam) present their work. In 2018 these were the following:

1/2   prof. dr. Paola Dussias (Penn State University)
Can learning a second language change syntactic processing in the native language?

14/2   prof. dr. Leonie Cornips (University of Maastricht and Meertens Institute KNAW)
Cité Duits, a polyethnic miners' variety

23/2   Jan Willem van Leussen MA (ACLC, UvA)
Learning French liaison in multilevel constraint grammars

2/3   Guilherme Moreira Fians MA (University of Manchester)
Hoping for the language of Hope: activism, ways of engagement and conceptions of time among Esperanto speakers

9/3   dr. Hennie van der Vliet (VU University)
DIY lexical and combinatorial analysis of special language

23/3   dr. Jenny Audring (University Leiden)

6/4   Prof. dr. Enoch Aboh (ACLC, UvA)
Lessons from a 'damaged brain': language without executive functions

4/5   Prof. dr. Diane Lillo-Martin (University of Connecticut)
American Sign Language pronouns and their acquisition

18/5   Pablo Romero Velasco MA (University of Valladolid / VU University)
Humor, identities, ideology and conflict: a multidisciplinary approach

25/5   Prof. dr. Giuliana Giusti (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Partitivity in Italian. A protocol approach to a tripartite phenomenon

1/6   Klaas Seinhorst MA (ACLC, UvA)
Complexity and regularization of phonological patterns

15/6   dr. Catrinel Haught Tromp (Rider University, Lawrenceville New Jersey)
Do constraints inhibit or facilitate creative communication?

22/6   Hernán Labbé Grunberg MA (ACLC, UvA)
Using the MMN response to probe lexical memory traces: a study about lexical and morphosyntactic processing and representation

6/7   Prof. dr. Donna Jo Napoli (Swarthmore College (PA), USA)
Influence of predicate sense on sign order: intensional and extensional verbs

21/9   Mirjam de Jonge MSc (ACLC, UvA)
Origin of asymmetry: what we do and do not know about directional differences of the Mismatch Negativity

12/10 Professor Paul Pietroski (Rutgers)
Meanings, Most, and Mass

19/10 Professor Gerard Steen (ACLC, UvA)
Taking metaphor from language to communication and back

26/10 Dr Beyza Sümer (Radboud University/UvA)
Different effects of iconicity in sign language acquisition

2/11   Professor Janet Grijzenhout (Leiden University)
One mouth, different languages

16/11 Dr Charles Forceville (ACLC, UvA)

The affordances and constraints of genre: visuals and visuals-and-words in unusual traffic signs and 'traffic signs'

30/11 Dr Jakub Szymanik (ACLC, UvA)
Ease of learning explains semantic universals

21/12 Dr Peter Bakker (Aarhus University)
Genderlects: a survey and attempt at explanation for societies where men and women speak categorically differently

12. Research highlights

The highlights of the research in the ACLC research groups in 2018 are described in an accompanying document called "Annual Reports ACLC Research Groups 2018", and are publicly available on the websites of the groups.