

Dr Steven Frisson PhD

Lecturer

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Qualifications

- BA/MA University of Leuven (Belgium)
- PhD University of Antwerp (Belgium)

Biography

- Born: Genk (Belgium)
- UG/PG: University of Antwerp & University of Leuven (Belgium)
- PhD: University of Antwerp. For my PhD, I spent 3 years as a fellow of the Belgian Science Foundation at the University of Glasgow, under the guidance of Martin Pickering.
- Postdocs: As a fellow of the BSF, I spent 2 years at Umass, working with Keith Rayner, Lyn Frazier, Sandy Pollatsek, and Chuck Clifton. I then moved to New York City (NYU), where I worked in Brian McElree's lab.
- I moved to Birmingham in 2005.

Postgraduate supervision

- Chloé Corcoran (PhD candidate): Reading & Stuttering
- Helena Conde (PhD candidate): Figurative Language in People with Psychosis

In addition, I supervise several MRes students every year on projects that involve eye-tracking. Students can either choose a topic or propose one themselves and, if possible, we will design an experiment around one's own preferences. For example, at present I'm supervising a project on reading span in Arabic adults learning English as a foreign language, which was proposed by a student.

Research

My main area of interest is semantic processing. In particular, I'm interested in finding out how language users arrive at an interpretation of a word in context. While this seems like a very straightforward thing to do, especially since most of us do not experience much difficulty in comprehending natural language, it is in fact a remarkably complex process that involves decisions and interactions at many different levels.

For example, most words have many different interpretations (e.g., school can refer to a place or to an institution; Dickens can refer to a person or to his writings). How do we pick out the right one upon encountering these words? How and when do we integrate a word's meaning in the larger syntactic and semantic context? How do we get to a novel interpretation of a word? Is processing influenced by statistical properties between words? In order to investigate these, and related, questions, I mainly use the eye-tracking methodology as it allows us to detect what portions in a text require more cognitive effort to understand.

I also use eye-tracking to investigate a whole host of different questions. For example:

- orthographic and phonological overlap effects in reading, in collaboration with Keith Rayner & Nathalie Béranger (UCSD) and Linda Wheeldon (Birmingham)
- Theory of Mind processing, in collaboration with Ian Apperly (Birmingham) and Elisa Back (Kingston)
- semantic processing in ASD children, in collaboration with Joe McCleery (Birmingham)
- figurative language processing in people with psychosis, in collaboration with Helena Conde (PhD candidate, Birmingham)
- reading processes in people who stutter, in collaboration with Chloé Corcoran (PhD candidate, Birmingham)
- coercion processes in reading, in collaboration with Brian McElree (NYU) and Martin Pickering (Edinburgh)
- predictability in sentence processing, in collaboration with Denis Drieghe (Southampton) and Adran Staub (Umass)

Publications

(please contact me for reprints)

Frisson, S., & Wakefield, M. (2012). Psychological essentialist reasoning and perspective taking during reading: A donkey is not a zebra, but a plate can be a clock. *Memory & Cognition*, 40, 297-310.

Frisson, S., Pickering, M. J., & McElree, B. (2011). The difficult mountain: Enriched composition in adjective-noun phrases. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 18, 1172-1179.

Ganushchak, L., Krott, A., Frisson, S., & Meyer, A. (2011). Processing words and SMS shortcuts in sentential contexts: An eye movement study. *Applied Psycholinguistics*. Firstview Article, 1-17.

Bott, L., Frisson, S., & Murphy, G. L. (2009). Interpreting conjunctions. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 4, 681-706.

Frisson, S. (2009). Semantic underspecification in language processing. *Language and Linguistic Compass*, 3, 111-127.

Frisson, S., & McElree, B. (2008). Complement coercion is not modulated by competition: Evidence from eye movements. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 34, 1-11.

Frisson, S., Niswander-Klement, E., & Pollatsek, A. (2008). The role of semantic transparency in the processing of English compound words. *British Journal of Psychology*, 99, 87-107.

Harris, J., Pylkkanen, L., McElree, B., & Frisson, S. (2008). The cost of question concealment: Eye-tracking and MEG evidence. *Brain and Language*, 107, 44-61.

Frisson, S., & Pickering, M. J. (2007). The processing of familiar and novel senses of a word: Why reading Dickens is easy but reading Needham can be hard. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 22, 595-613.

Pickering, M. J., McElree, B., Frisson, S., Chen, L., & Traxler, M. (2006). Aspectual coercion and underspecification. *Discourse Processes*, 42, 131-155.

McElree, B., Frisson, S., & Pickering, M. J. (2006). Deferred interpretations: Why starting Dickens is taxing but reading Dickens isn't. *Cognitive Science*, 30, 115-124.

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Frisson, S. & Sandra, D. (2002). Determinanten van werkwoordfouten in de Nederlandse spelling: Een experimenteel onderzoek bij ervaren spellers en kinderen. [*Determining factors of spelling errors to Dutch verbs: An experimental investigation of proficient spellers and children*]. *Nederlandse Taalkunde*. 7, 127-141.

Frisson, S. & Sandra, D. (2002) Homophonic forms of regularly inflected verbs have their own orthographic representations: A developmental perspective on spelling errors. *Brain and Language*, 81 (1, 2&3), 545-554.

Sandra, D., Brysbaert, M., Frisson, S., & Daems, F. (2001). Paradoxen van de Nederlandse werkwoordspelling: Een confrontatie tussen taalkundige logica, problemen voor spellers en bruikbaarheid voor lezers, *De Psycholoog*, 36 (6), 282-287. [Paradoxes of the Dutch verb spelling: A confrontation between linguistic logic, problems for spellers, and usability for readers.]

Frisson, S. & Pickering, M.J. (2001). Figurative language processing in the Underspecification Model. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 16 (3&4), 149-171.

Sandra, D., Daems, F., & Frisson, S. (2001). Zoveel helderheid en toch zoveel fouten: psycholinguïstisch onderzoek naar werkwoordfouten bij ervaren spellers en implicaties voor het onderwijs. *Vonk*, 3, 3-20. [So much clarity and still so many mistakes: Psycholinguistic research of spelling errors by adult spellers and implications for teaching.]

Pickering, M. J. & Frisson, S. (2001). Processing ambiguous verbs: Evidence from eye movements. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 27, 556-573.

Brisard, F., Frisson, S., & Sandra, D. (2001). Processing unfamiliar metaphors in a self-paced reading task. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 16(1&2), 87-108.

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Sandra, D., Frisson, S., & Daems, F. (1999) Why simple verbs can be so difficult to spell: The influence of homophone frequency and distance in Dutch. *Brain and Language*, 68, 277-283.

Frisson, S., Sandra, D., Brisard, F., Van Rillaer, G, & Cuyckens, H. (1998). Flexible semantic processing of spatial prepositions. *Journal of Semantics*, 15, 191-214.

