

Research interests

My research is inspired by the question 'what determines our grammar and its variation across languages?'. Formulating our thoughts in sentences is for a large part restricted by the syntactic rules of the particular language we speak. Another force that shapes our sentences, however, is the packaging of information: what is the most important bit of information, and how do I convey that to my interlocutor? This interface between morphosyntax and pragmatics, and particularly the crosslinguistic variation in this area, keeps fascinating me.

Key research terms: comparative morphosyntax, information structure, Bantu languages, grammaticalisation, formal typology

Academic employment

- 2016-2017 Lecturer on Linguistics, Harvard University
- 2011-2016 Research Associate at the University of Cambridge, on the ERC-funded project 'Rethinking Comparative Syntax'.
- 2012-2016 Research Fellow at Darwin College, Cambridge.
- 2009-2011 Post-doctoral researcher at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren (Belgium), on the Interuniversity Attraction Pole 'Grammaticalization and (Inter)Subjectification'.

Education

- 2004-2009 Ph.D. at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL); Ph.D. thesis 'Word order and information structure in Makhuwa-Enahara'; supervisors Lisa Cheng and Thilo Schadeberg.
- 2000-2004 M.A. in African linguistics at Leiden University; M.A. thesis 'Lusoga phonology'.

Publications

As can be seen on my website under 'Publications and presentations' I have published extensively in peer-reviewed journals (e.g., Journal of Linguistics, Lingua, Journal of African Languages and Linguistics), in addition to publishing book chapters and two edited books.

Invited lectures

future:

- (title to be chosen). 30 March - 2 April 2017. Invited speaker at the Annual Conference on African Linguistics. Indiana University.
- (title to be chosen). 6-8 September 2017. Invited speaker at Diachronic Generative Syntax (DiGS) conference, Stellenbosch University.
- The fundamental influence of information structure. 11 January 2017. Invited for the Colloquium Series, University of Leipzig.
- Beyond the cracks in the system: An alternative system of Case licensing in Bantu. 18 November 2016. Invited at the University of Minnesota.

past:

- Two reasons to be suspicious of surface form-meaning mapping in focus constructions. 5-8 July 2016. Invited at conference 'The semantics of African, Asian and Austronesian languages'. University of Tübingen.
- Idioms and Bantu syntax. Invited at workshop on idioms. 12-13 November. University of Potsdam.
- What you see is (not) what you get: on the interface between information structure and syntax. 5-6 November 2015. Keynote speaker at the Manchester Forum in Linguistics, University of Manchester.

- How to elicit information structure in fieldwork? An illustration from focus strategies in Luganda. 12 February 2015. Invited at the Fieldwork Forum, University of California at Berkeley.
- Disentangling focus constructions in Luganda. 5 February 2015. Invited at the Linguistics Society of Cambridge.
- Morphological marking of term focus. 28-29 March 2014. Keynote speaker at Workshop on information structure in head-marking languages, Max Planck Institute, Nijmegen.
- A typology of Bantu subject inversion (with Lutz Marten). 12-15 June 2013. Plenary lecture, Bantu 5, Paris.
- Structuring parameters in comparative Bantu subject inversion. 4 June 2013. Invited at University of Potsdam.
- Subordinate clauses and exclusive focus in Makhuwa: no independent information structure? 5 March 2013. Invited at the Institute for Linguistics and Language Studies, University of Manchester.
- Subordinate clauses and focus in Makhuwa. 15 February 2012. Invited at Newcastle University.
- Focus on conjugations: conjoint and disjoint verb forms in Bantu. 29 October 2011. Invited at the 6th South of England LFG meeting, London.
- Focus encoded in grammar: the case of Bantu verb forms. 3 August 2011. Invited at Nagoya University, Nagoya.

Academic activities

- 2006-present Peer reviewing for
Syntax, Linguistic Inquiry, Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, Lingua, Studies in Language, Africana Linguistica, Linguistics, Linguistic Variation, Journal of African Languages and Linguistics, Proceedings of ACAL, Studies in African Linguistics, South African Journal of African Linguistics, National Science Foundation, British Academy.
- 2015-2018 External project advisor for Leverhulme project 'Morphosyntactic variation in Bantu: typology, contact and change' (Principal Investigator Lutz Marten, SOAS).
- January 2015 Committee member for Adrian Research Fellowship competition, Darwin College Cambridge.
- 2014-2015 CAPREx collaborator for Saudah Namyalo.
- June 2013 Academic guest University of Potsdam.
- 2013-2014 Member of the Finance Committee of Darwin College Cambridge.
- Feb 2010 Academic guest of Tonjes Veenstra at the Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Berlin.
- 2009-2012 Editor of Africana Linguistica.
- 2007- 2008 Member of the University Council of Leiden University, and chairman of the PhD fraction.
- 2006-2008 Editor of the Leiden Working Papers in Linguistics.
- 2003-2004 Secretary of the Education committee of the African Linguistics department, Leiden.

Linguistics teaching

- Spring 2017 Ling 117 Fieldwork methods (graduate), Department of Linguistics, Harvard University.
- Spring 2017 Ling 156 Structure of Bantu languages, Department of Linguistics, Harvard University.
- Autumn 2016 Reading group on Focus (graduate), Department of Linguistics, Harvard University.

- Autumn 2016 Ling 148 Language universals (graduate), Department of Linguistics, Harvard University.
- Autumn 2016 Ling 102 Sentence structure (undergraduate), Department of Linguistics, Harvard University.
- 2012-2016 Examination undergraduate and MPhil dissertations, DTAL Cambridge.
- 2014-2015 Supervisions 2nd and 3rd year students for Li17 'Language Typology', DTAL Cambridge.
- Autumn 2014 Lectures Li17 'Language typology', DTAL Cambridge.
- Autumn 2014 Supervision first year students Li2 'Structures and Meanings' (Introduction to syntax), DTAL Cambridge.
- 2013/2014 Supervisions 2nd and 3rd year students for Li17 'Language Typology', DTAL Cambridge.
- Autumn 2013 Coordinator and lecturer of Li2 'Structures and meanings' (Introduction to syntax), DTAL Cambridge.
- January 2013 Lectures Li17 'Language typology', DTAL Cambridge.
- Autumn 2012 Coordinator and lecturer of Li2 'Structures and meanings' (introduction to syntax), DTAL Cambridge.
- 2012-2013 Supervisions 2nd year students Li17 'Language typology', DTAL Cambridge.
- Spring 2012 Supervisions 1st year students semantics/pragmatics, DTAL Cambridge.
- Spring 2012 Lectures in MPhil seminar on null arguments, DTAL Cambridge.
- Autumn 2011 Lectures Li2 'Structures and Meanings' (Introduction to syntax), DTAL Cambridge.
- August 2010 'Introduction à la structure informationnelle' (whole day for PhD and staff), Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren.
- Autumn 2007 Third-year course 'Vorm en betekenis' (form and meaning), focusing on information structure, Department of Linguistics, Leiden University.

Supervision

- Martha Wechsler MPhil dissertation 'Case assignment in applicative, causative, and double object constructions' (completed).
- Tim Bazalgette PhD dissertation 'Algorithmic acquisition of focus parameters', University of Cambridge (completed). Co-supervised with Ian Roberts and Theresa Biberauer.
- Rodrigo Ranero MPhil dissertation 'The syntax of dislocated objects in Luganda', University of Cambridge (completed).
- David Iorio PhD dissertation 'Subject and object marking in Bembe', University of Newcastle (completed). Co-supervised with Anders Holmberg.

Transferrable skills teaching

Over the last years (2012-present) I have developed, organised and taught the following workshops on themes that are relevant beyond linguistics:

How to write a good abstract

Discover the ingredients for capturing reviewers' and readers' attention finding out for yourself what works best in an abstract and what to avoid. (taught at DTAL for PhD and MPhil students)

Presentation skills

Find the ingredients of the worst presentation ever, turning that around to an effective presentation with appropriate visual support and without losing your audience. (taught various times at Darwin College, DTAL Cambridge PhD and MPhil training, and the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology Cambridge)

How to not procrastinate

Identify your own procrastinators, learn about 6 types of procrastinators and concrete techniques to manage it such as 4D prioritising and pomodoris. (taught various times at Darwin College, University of Cambridge training, Postdocs of Cambridge society, DTAL Cambridge PhD training, LAGB Summer School)

How to stay confident in academia

Understanding the reasons for feeling less confident in a highly competitive academic environment, the seven ways of recognising the 'impostor phenomenon' and discussing ways to thrive in spite of these thoughts. (taught at Darwin College)

Fieldwork

August 2014	Fieldwork Kampala and Masaka, Uganda.
2013	Data collection on Matengo at IoE, London.
March 2011	Fieldwork Ilha de Moçambique, Mozambique.
Jan-Feb 2008	Fieldwork Ilha de Moçambique, Mozambique.
Sept-Dec 2006	Fieldwork Ilha de Moçambique, Mozambique.
Apr-Sept 2005	Fieldwork Ilha de Moçambique, Mozambique.
Summer 2003	Fieldwork Jinja, Uganda.

Grants and awards

2016	LUCL grant Profile Area 'Language Diversity', Leiden University Centre for Linguistics.
September 2014	Societas Linguistica Europaea- Best presentation by a postdoctoral researcher, second prize.
Summer 2014	Alborada Trust grant for cooperation with Dr Saudah Namyalo (Makerere University, Uganda). Project 'The morphosyntax of information structure in Luganda'.
March 2011	Grant for a short stay abroad from Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Vlaanderen (FWO).
October 2008	Grant for conference travel from Leiden University Fund (LUF).

Conference organisation

June 2016	Initiator of workshop 'Bantu Objects and Object Marking' (BOOM!), at Bantu 6, Helsinki.
Sept 2015	Co-organiser of themed session 'Differential marking: implications for Case and Agree' at the 48 th meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Leiden.
May 2015	Co-organiser of the fourth Cambridge Comparative Syntax conference (CamCoS 4).
Jan 2015	Co-organiser of Comparative Syntax workshop with University of York (CoSy 3).
Nov 2014	Co-organiser of the workshop 'Syntactic Variation', Bucharest.
May 2014	Co-organiser of the third Cambridge Comparative Syntax conference (CamCoS 3).
Feb 2014	Co-organiser of Comparative Syntax workshop with University of York (CoSy 2).

- Dec 2013 Initiator and co-organiser of Comparative Syntax workshop with University of York (CoSy).
- October 2013 Co-organiser of workshop 'Comparative syntax of English', Darwin College, Cambridge.
- August 2013 Co-organiser of themed session 'Subtypes of thetic expressions in a comparative perspective' within Annual meeting of the LAGB.
- May 2013 Co-organiser of the second Cambridge Comparative Syntax conference (CamCoS 2).
- August 2012 Co-organiser of workshop 'Parametric variation in discourse-configurationality' within 45th meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Stockholm, Sweden.
- May 2012 Co-organiser of the first Cambridge Comparative Syntax conference (CamCoS 1).
- Sept 2011 Co-organiser of workshop 'Come and go off the beaten grammaticalisation path' within 44th meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Logroño, Spain.
- March 2009 Organiser of the workshop 'Inversion constructions in Bantu', Tervuren.
- March 2008 Co-organiser of the conference 'Movement and word order in Bantu', Leiden.

Language skills

(In approximate descending order of competence)

Dutch (native speaker), English, French, German, Portuguese

- Autumn 2010 Course 'French at work', level B1, training institute of the Belgian federal government (OFO/IFA, Brussels).
- February 2005 Intensive course Portuguese, University of Coimbra (Portugal).
- July 2002 Advanced course Swahili, Zanzibar (Tanzania).

Outreach

- March 2016 'Bantu objects and the arrogance hierarchy' - Linguistics Masterclass at Corpus Christi College Cambridge.
- Oct 2015 'The youths on the wheel' - interactive talk on Ugandan youth language, with Saudah Namyalo, Festival of Ideas, University of Cambridge.
- 2013, 2014 Posts on the Dutch blog 'Stemmen van Africa', on Bantu syntax.
- 2012, '13, '14 'Lingquitzics' with ReCoS at the Festival of Ideas, University of Cambridge - Family Fortunes, Who wants to be a millionaire and Blockbusters with linguistics questions.
- March 2014 'Puzzles and patterns in language' - interactive talk on English, Beja and Makhuwa, with ReCoS.
- Oct 2013 'Frontiers of linguistic fieldwork' - interactive talk on Bantu object markers, with András Bárány, at the Festival of Ideas, University of Cambridge.
- September 2008 Presentation about African languages at the 'Dag van de Talen' (Day of Languages).

Vita

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