

Evaluation of CLUNL

Report 2015 and 2016

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In order to prepare the 2015-2016 report, I only had at my disposal information concerning the LIFE Group, one of the four sub-units that constitute CLUNL and the one that directly corresponds to my area of expertise. I had not enough elements to comment on the three other teams, in particular on the *Cognition, Language and Multimodal Communication* group, whose creation undoubtedly was one of the marking scientific events of 2015, as far as CLUNL is concerned.

The research unit CLUNL is characterized by its organization into three (now four) groups, an internal structure that has been adopted a few years ago and has successfully maintained itself since then. There is no doubt that this division has shown its efficiency and that today, CLUNL, together with the *KRUse doctoral program* which is adjoined to it, is one of the most successful language science research units in Europe. The difficulty encountered today by the organization and the management of a linguistics research unit such as CLUNL is to ensure that the various components, usually dealing with quite different topics, with sometimes different and even opposite epistemological premises and methodological choices, nevertheless succeed in establishing a serene dialogue and exchanging points of view and results. It must be emphasized that people at CLUNL are quite aware of this potential difficulty and rise to the challenge *via* the organization of reading groups, summer schools, workshops and presentations made by doctoral students belonging to the various groups.

With regard to my area of expertise, which is that of formal and experimental linguistics, 2015 and 2016 witnessed the development of new topics and fields of research and the consolidation of previous, well-established ones. The group has continued to work on comparative morpho-syntax (including both synchronic and diachronic perspectives) and L1 and L2 language acquisition and development. A particularly stimulating aspect of this collective research endeavour is the work on Medieval Portuguese, concerned with nonfinite clauses, subordinate clauses, cleft and other patterns (and going along with the preparation of a Medieval Portuguese Language Dictionary). The identification of differences between the different stages of the language opens the way to a better understanding of the respective roles of the functional structure of clauses and interface considerations. With respect to first, second language and bilingual acquisition, the unit has looked for and identified crosslinguistic and developmental markers that can be used to identify language impairment areas, distinguishing between areas where language development is delayed and areas where

it is more vulnerable to crosslinguistic influences. This, I consider a very impressive result indeed.

A novel feature in CLUNL research concerns the reconsideration of the crosslinguistic differences in the attachment of relative clauses in the light of research on syntactic processing. LIFE researchers reach the conclusion that relative clause attachment ambiguity is largely dependent on whether or not a pseudo-relative interpretation is available, an outstanding result with many theoretical and empirical ramifications. This generalization suffices to establish that apparent crosslinguistic parsing preferences in fact reduce to plain grammatical factors.

But the group is also aware of societal challenges and intends to contribute to such social dimensions as the quality of education, the promotion of Portuguese as a heritage and a second language, the integration of populations at risk. The development of materials and instruments for teaching and assessment go into the same direction, as well as the development of a scientifically-founded approach to language-impairment. They show CLUNL's commitment to applied research.

The report mentions 17 publications for 2015, 33 publications for 2016, both on national and international media (the latter constitute the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the publication corpus each year). This testifies to the high level of excellence of the LIFE group, whose influence in the English-speaking and Romance-speaking scientific world is growing.

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