

Does it ‘feel’ non-native?

Native-speaker perceptions of information-structural transfer in L1 Dutch advanced EFL writing

Myrte van Hilten and Sanne van Vuuren
Radboud University

Previous studies on information-structural transfer in texts produced by Dutch advanced learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have found that one of the defining features in learners’ writing is a marked use of initial adverbials. The present study investigates the effect of this hypothesized L1 interference on native speakers’ perceptions. In line with Rosén (2006), it was hypothesized that the frequency and contextual use of clause-initial place adverbials in L1 Dutch EFL writing would lead native speakers of English to judge texts to be less coherent, continuous, and native-like than texts written by native speakers. Our qualitative and quantitative empirical study demonstrates that native speakers are not necessarily aware of initial adverbials and are more concerned with other elements of the text that influence cohesion and flow. This new perspective on information-structural transfer forms a starting point for further research into the communicative effect of interlanguage features.¹

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Dutch, second language acquisition, information structure, transfer, writing, pragmatics

1. Introduction

The notion of information structure, as first identified by Halliday (1985), plays an important role in writing, because it facilitates the flow of communication (Krifka & Musan, 2012, p. 1) and contributes to the coherence of the text (Hannay & Keizer, 1993, p. 67). Information structure is a very subtle pragmatic principle that interacts with all linguistic levels of a language and it is an aspect of the target

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language that is usually problematic for (advanced) L2 learners (Callies, 2009, p. 2). Even those who have mastered near-native syntax and vocabulary often still have difficulties applying the grammatical forms they have acquired according to the L2 principles of information structure (Callies, 2009, p. 2).

One specific instance of information-structural transfer that has been studied in much detail by Verheijen, Los and De Haan (2013), Van Vuuren (2013), and Van Vuuren and Laskin (2017) is the use of initial adverbials in L2 English by Dutch learners, which has been hypothesized to result from syntactic and pragmatic differences between the two languages. Dutch is an SOV language with V2-movement in the main clause (Koster, 1975), which means that the grammatical subject can occur either pre- or post-verbally. The pre-verbal position is multifunctional, since it can also host objects and adverbials. English, however, is an SVO language with a much more rigid word order than Dutch: the subject is fixed in front of the verb and the use of pre-subject constituents is restricted and often pragmatically marked (Los, 2009). Dreschler and Hebing (2011) have demonstrated that English has significantly more subject-initial clauses than Dutch, at 77% against 54% of all declarative main clauses respectively (p. 64).

This present study is concerned with native speakers' perception of clause-initial place adverbials in EFL writing. In English, this category of adverbials has a strong preference for final position, which holds 90% of all place adverbials, while only 5% occurs in initial position (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finnegan, 1999, p. 802). Initial prepositional phrases are used more frequently in written registers than in conversation. Often they have a cohesive function by "using some information given in the previous discourse as the starting point for the next sentence" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 809), a function labelled 'local anchoring' by Los and Dreschler (2012). Van Vuuren and Berns (2017), however, found that native speakers of English only use 9% of initial place adverbials for this purpose, as opposed to 25% in Dutch learner English (p. 23). This high frequency is likely to result from information-structural transfer, since the multifunctional preverbal slot made available by V2 syntax facilitates local anchoring. English does not have a pre-verbal background domain like Dutch, and therefore relies more on 'global anchors' encoded by the grammatical subject to establish links over longer stretches of discourse (Los & Dreschler, 2012, p. 860).

The Dutch-to-English transfer effect is exemplified in (1). Dutch learners are likely to translate (1a) with an initial place adverbial which serves as a local anchor, like in (1b). In English, on the other hand, the subject tends to function as a neutral discourse link, as in (1c).

- (1) a. Fitzgerald's bekendste roman, uitgegeven in 1925, is *The Great Gatsby*.
In deze roman wordt de American Dream bekritiseerd.

- b. Fitzgerald's most famous novel, published in 1925, is *The Great Gatsby*.
In this novel the American Dream is criticised.
- c. Fitzgerald's most famous novel, published in 1925, is *The Great Gatsby*.
This novel criticises the American Dream.

Apart from establishing a more neutral discourse link, (1c) adheres to the English principles of information structuring by placing the new information in the sentence in post-verbal end-focus position. Pragmatically infelicitous patterns like in (1b) can result in incoherence and a disruption of continuity in L2 texts (Baker, 1992, p. 120–133).

Previous studies on information-structural transfer in L1 Dutch advanced EFL writing have looked at the use of adverbials in clause-initial position in L1 Dutch EFL texts as compared with texts written by native speakers of English. Verheijen et al. (2013) concluded that information-structural differences present “the final hurdle” for advanced Dutch EFL writers: even if their texts are perfectly grammatical, they often “feel non-native” (p. 92). Van Vuuren (2013) found that transfer of information structure leads learners to “overuse clause-initial adverbials of place as well as addition adverbials that refer back to an antecedent in the directly preceding discourse” (p. 173). Van Vuuren and Laskin (2017) found that Dutch learners mainly stand out in their use of initial adverbials for discourse linking purposes, i.e. linking adverbials and adverbials used for local anchoring, as exemplified by (1b).

Van Vuuren and De Vries (2017) and Van Vuuren and Berns (2017) demonstrate that frequent use of clause-initial adverbials for local anchoring in L1 Dutch EFL writing is likely to be a sign of L1 interference. The idea that this feature makes texts recognizably Dutch, however, has been made by linguists familiar with L1 Dutch writing, which means that they are very much aware of typically Dutch writing and its syntactic and information-structural features. The communicative effect of frequent use of initial place adverbials on native speakers has not been studied yet.

A similar issue was explored by Rosén (2006), in her study of information-structural transfer in L2 German texts written by advanced L1 Swedish learners. This transfer is the opposite of what occurs in Dutch EFL writing; Swedish learners exhibit a marked *overuse* of the subject in initial position and an *underuse* of other pre-verbal constituents in their German (see Bohnacker & Rosén, 2007; Rosén, 2006). Rosén (2006) tested native-speaker perceptions of information-structural transfer in L2 German by asking 60 native speakers of German to each judge two German texts written by advanced Swedish learners who studied German in higher education. The informants were asked to read the texts and then to write down their spontaneous and most intuitive answers to questions related to the

coherence and continuity of the text. They all shared the impression that the texts were choppy and incoherent, noticing an exaggerated use of the subject and dummy pronouns in initial position. When asked to improve parts of the text, they proposed using “kontext-anknüpfende Adverbien”, i.e. local anchors, to establish cohesion between the sentences.

The present study partially replicates Rosén (2006) in order to explore native-speaker perceptions of L1 Dutch EFL writing with regard to the overuse of clause-initial place adverbials. It aims to answer three research questions:

1. Is the use of clause-initial place adverbials in L1 Dutch advanced EFL writing perceived as non-native by native speakers of English?
2. Does the use of clause-initial place adverbials have an effect on native speakers' perception of coherence and continuity?
3. Are native speakers able to explicitly identify non-native-like use of clause-initial place adverbials in Dutch EFL texts?

It was hypothesized that native speakers would perceive the frequent use of clause-initial place adverbials in L1 Dutch advanced EFL texts as less native-like, coherent, and continuous than texts written by native English writers that contain fewer adverbials in initial position. In line with Rosén (2006), it was also hypothesized that native speakers would be able to explicitly identify a high frequency of clause-initial place adverbials in Dutch EFL texts.

2. Method

2.1 Testing native-speaker perceptions of non-native English

Previous studies on native-speaker perceptions of non-native language use have focused on language errors, such as pronunciation or grammar. This present study, however, is concerned with a subtler aspect of language use, which is a matter of pragmatic felicity rather than error. It therefore calls for a method that can capture native speakers' most intuitive responses.

The first method used is the judgement task, as employed by Hultfors (1986) in his study of the perceived gravity of errors in texts produced by L1 Swedish users of English. Hultfors used five-point scales with bi-polar adjectives like ‘native-like – foreign’ to measure native speakers' responses to erroneous sentences (p. 37–38). This method elicits unconscious attitudes of native speakers towards non-native language use.

The second method that was employed is the operation task (Quirk & Svartvik, 1966), which serves to reveal readers' subconscious reactions. Subjects are asked to

perform various tasks on language samples, such as repeating erroneous sentences or changing the samples in order to improve them. This measures the informants' intuitive behaviour towards a non-native language sample.

2.2 Procedure

2.2.1 Respondents

The survey was filled out by 30 native speakers of British English, of which 10 were male, 19 female, and 1 unspecified. Eight respondents were younger than 20 years old, 19 respondents were aged 20–30, 2 were between 40 and 50 and 1 was between 50 and 60 years old. Their educational backgrounds are unknown. They were recruited via contacts at various British universities. They had no (known) previous experiences with assessing written texts. The respondents were only allowed to participate in the survey if they met the following conditions:

1. They are native speakers of British English.
2. They have never studied language or linguistics in higher education.
3. They do not speak more than one foreign language.
4. They do not suffer from dyslexia or any other reading disability.

Rosén (2006) did not specify to what extent the German informants had knowledge of linguistics, even though the fact that they were asked to comment on 'syntactic patterns' (p. 113) as well as their use of sub-technical linguistic vocabulary suggests that they might not have been completely linguistically naïve. For this study, we ensured that the respondents had never studied linguistics or any foreign languages in higher education, in order to elicit intuitive responses that are not based on linguistic knowledge.

Finally, to ensure that the respondents filled out the survey with care and attention, they were asked to work in a quiet environment where they could concentrate. To guarantee the quality of their answers, they were told that correctly filling out the survey would give them the chance of winning a £ 25 gift card.

2.2.2 Survey

The respondents filled out a digital version of the survey at home via the internet. A pre-test of the survey established that it took around 20 minutes to fill out. The survey consisted of four sections, each presenting the respondent with an English text of around 200 words. Three of these texts were written by advanced Dutch EFL writers. Unlike Rosén (2006), we also presented the respondents with a native-speaker control text alongside the EFL texts. Section 2.2.3 elaborates on how these texts were selected.

Each text was followed by three scaled questions, asking the respondent to rate the text on coherence, continuity, and nativeness (judgement task) as follows:

How did the text (as a whole) come across to you? As...

Coherent o o o o o Incoherent

What did you think of the general “flow” of the text? It was...

Continuous o o o o o Choppy

What overall impression did the text make? It seemed...

Native-like o o o o o Foreign

The quantitative data these questions yielded were used to answer research questions 1 and 2.

The respondents were then asked to “comment on the writing style and the flow of information in the text by providing explanations to your answers above”. These qualitative data were used alongside the quantitative data to answer research questions 1 and 2.

Finally, the respondents were asked to re-read the text and perform an operation task. The question was worded as follows: “Are there any sentences or passages you would change in order to make the text more native-like, coherent and continuous? If so, please write down your improvements below”. These qualitative data were used to answer research question 3.

2.2.3 *Texts*

The three L1 Dutch EFL texts are essays on topics related to British and American literature, taken from the Dutch component of the Longitudinal Database of Learner English (LONGDALE, cf. Meunier, 2015). They were written by Dutch first-year students of English Language and Culture at Radboud University Nijmegen whose OOPT (Oxford Online Placement Test) scores correspond to levels C1-C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (cf. Van Vuuren & De Vries, 2017). The control text, a literature essay written by a native speaker of British English at university level, was selected from the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS), made available by the Centre for English Corpus Linguistics (CECL) at Université catholique de Louvain (Granger, 1996). The LOCNESS essay is similar to the LONGDALE texts in terms of its topic and the educational background of its author.

The first one or two paragraphs were selected from each of the four texts.² These introductory sections of around 200 words were suitable because they form a coherent whole and do not contain any quotations or references. The

2. The four excerpts can be found in the Appendix.

non-native-speaker texts each contain 3–4 clause-initial place adverbials, one of which is used for local anchoring. The native-speaker text does not contain any clause-initial place adverbials.

In spite of the high proficiency level of the L1 Dutch learners, their writing is likely to contain elements other than information structure that can be perceived as non-native by native speakers of English. This would mean that a variable other than the use of clause-initial place adverbials could alter the outcome of the study. This problem was addressed by posing the questions in such a way that the respondents are guided in the direction of pragmatic felicity (how does the text 'feel') rather than grammatical or idiomatic errors (what is 'wrong'), using words and phrases like 'the text as a whole', 'the general flow' and 'overall impression'. Moreover, the open questions all specifically asked for comments on or improvements of the coherence and continuity of the texts rather than their grammar or vocabulary.

2.3 Data analysis

The results of the judgement task were quantified by giving each answer a score from 1 to 5, with 1 being the left end of the scale (native-like, coherent, continuous) and 5 the right end (foreign, incoherent, choppy). The data were statistically analysed by means of a repeated measures ANOVA and tests of within-subject contrasts.

3. Results

3.1 Nativeness

3.1.1 Quantitative analysis

A repeated measures ANOVA was performed on the scores for nativeness. The overall effect was significant ($F(3, 87) = 3.642, p = .016, \eta^2 = .112$). Figure 1 visualises the differences between the individual texts. Text 1 ($M = 2.47, SD = 1.11$) and text 2 ($M = 2.37, SD = 1.22$) scored higher (i.e. less 'native-like') than the native control text ($M = 2.00, SD = 1.20$). The mean score of text 3 ($M = 1.73, SD = 0.91$), however, was lower than the control text. Helmert tests of within-subjects contrasts found that the difference between the non-native-speaker texts (averaged) and the native-speaker control text was not significant ($F(1, 29) = .710, p = .406$). Simple tests of within-subjects contrasts revealed that the difference between text 1 and the control text was significant ($F(1, 29) = 3.359, p = .046$), while the differences between text 2 and the control text ($F(1, 29) = 1.696, p = .203$) and between text 3 and the control text ($F(1, 29) = .912, p = .348$) were not significant.

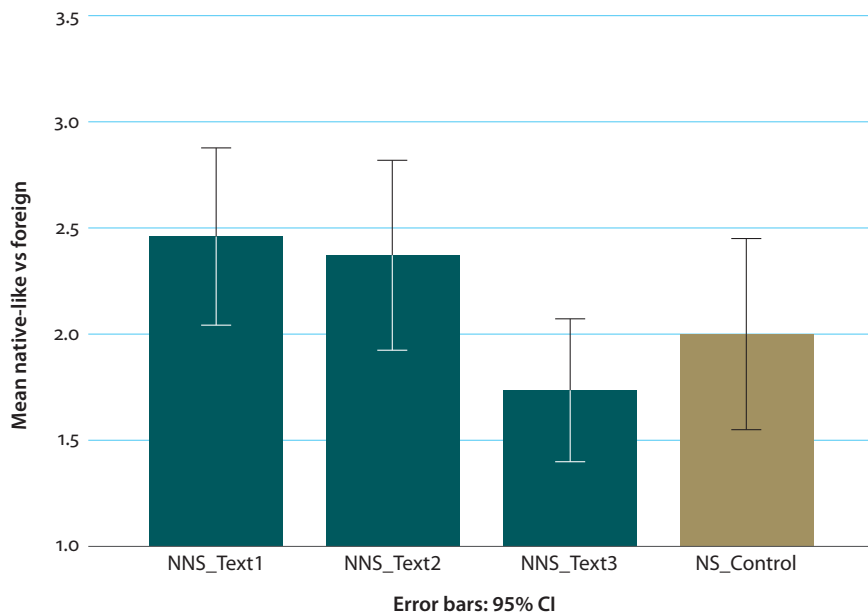


Figure 1. Mean scores: native-like (1)–foreign (5)

3.1.2 Qualitative analysis

The respondents commented that text 1 contained clumsy sentences, lacked basic grammar and seemed too simplistic for an academic essay. The sentences in text 2 were perceived as ‘awkward’ and it was often unclear what the author was referring to. Text 3 was perceived as easy to understand and the respondents thought it sounded native-like. Although the respondents did observe a few grammatical errors, they were most positive about this text. The control text also received very positive comments: many said it had a perfect style of writing and that it sounded very native-like. None of the comments contained anything related to sentence beginnings or overuse of clause-initial adverbials in the non-native-speaker texts.

3.2 Coherence and continuity

3.2.1 Quantitative analysis

A repeated measures ANOVA was performed on the coherence scores of the four texts. The overall effect was significant ($F(3, 87) = 4.380$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .131$). Although text 1 ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.02$) and text 2 ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.11$) scored higher (i.e. less ‘coherent’) than the native-speaker control text ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 1.14$), text 3 ($M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.63$) scored lower (Figure 2). Helmert tests of within-subjects contrasts revealed that the difference between the non-native-speaker texts (averaged) and the control text was not significant ($F(1, 29) = .012$,

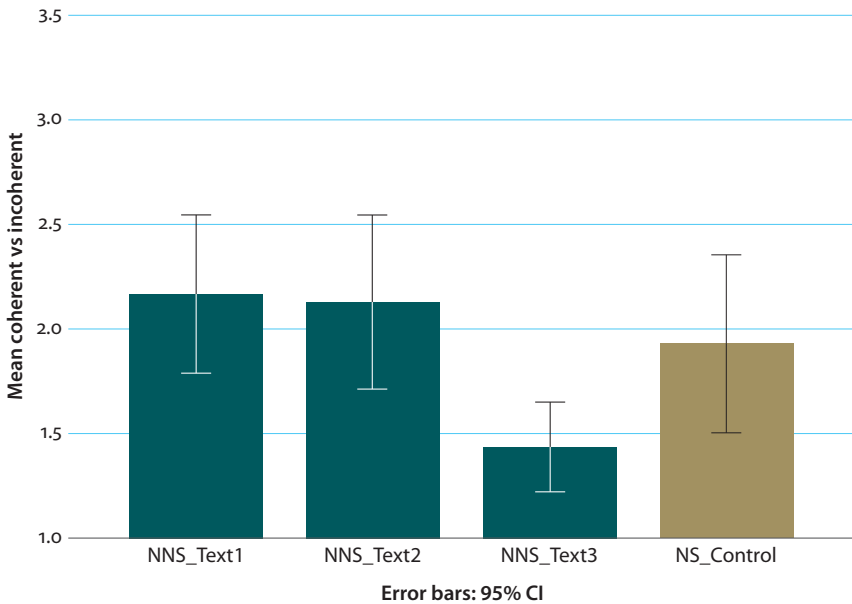


Figure 2. Mean scores: coherent (1)–incoherent (5)

$p = .913$). Simple tests of within-subjects contrasts revealed that the differences between text 1 and the control text ($F(1, 29) = 1.092, p = .305$) and between text 2 and the control text ($F(1, 29) = .554, p = .463$) were not significant. The difference between text 3 and the control text was significant ($F(1, 29) = 5.241, p = .030$), although the direction of this effect is opposite to that predicted by the hypothesis (i.e. text 3 was judged to be more coherent than the native-speaker text).

The overall effect of the continuity scores was significant ($F(3, 87) = 12.937, p < .001, \eta^2 = .308$). While text 1 ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.16$) and text 2 ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.00$) scored higher (i.e. less 'continuous') than the control text ($M = 2.13, SD = 1.20$), text 3 ($M = 1.53, SD = 0.78$) scored lower (Figure 3). Helmert tests of within-subjects contrasts revealed that the difference between the non-native-speaker texts (averaged) and the control text was not significant ($F(1, 29) = .379, p = .543$). Simple tests of within-subjects contrasts showed a significant difference between text 1 and the control text ($F(1, 29) = 12.140, p = .002$). The difference between text 2 and the control text was not significant, however ($F(1, 29) = .055, p = .816$). The difference between text 3 and the control text was significant ($F(1, 29) = 5.674, p = .024$), but again in the opposite direction, contradicting the hypothesis.

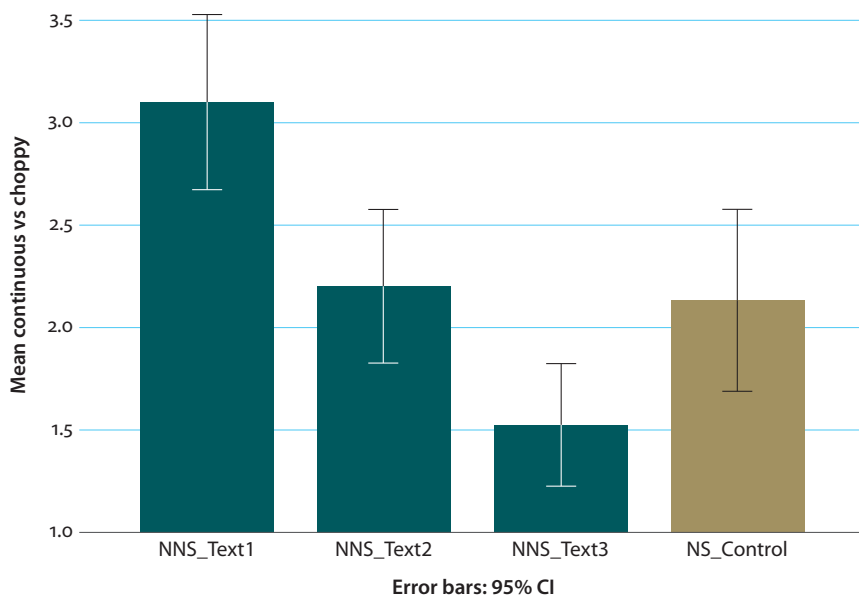


Figure 3. Mean scores: continuous (1)–choppy (5)

3.2.2 Qualitative analysis

Most of the respondents noted that short sentences, overuse of full stops, and lack of connectives made text 1 very choppy. They said it “bounced from point to point” and that the text “came across as very abrupt and not natural”. Some respondents mentioned the text seemed to have been written in conversational English. Text 2 was considered to be difficult to read and confusing at times. Respondents said the text came across as “jumbled” and “choppy”, mostly due to unnatural placement of commas and overly complex sentence structures. There was one respondent who pointed out the infelicitous use of a clause-initial place adverbial: “in the narrative Shooting an Elephant’ doesn’t flow as a sentence, it would read better as ‘the narrative voice in Shooting an Elephant’”. There were also some positive comments: seven respondents thought the text flowed well. Text 3 was perceived as well-structured and easy to understand. The respondents commented that it was “well-paced” and that the text flowed well because the sentences were well-connected. Negative comments mostly related to punctuation: some respondents thought it disrupted the flow of the text. The control text was also positively evaluated. Respondents thought the text was “well laid out” and “[seemed] to be in good order”. Seven of the respondents thought the control text had a good flow of information, with complex sentences connecting well. However, there were also twelve respondents who thought the text was choppy due to a lack of commas, overuse of full stops, and too many short sentences. Except for the one comment on text

2, none of the respondents commented on sentence beginnings or the overuse of clause-initial place adverbials in the non-native-speaker texts.

3.3 Operation task

The respondents made 170 improvements in total: 69 on text 1, 39 on text 2, 36 on text 3, and 26 on the control text. 128 of these improvements involved an aspect other than sentence structure and/or initial place adverbials, such as vocabulary, spelling, or grammar, which are not relevant to this study. The remaining 42 improvements were divided into three categories:

- A. Respondent changed the sentence structure, but did not add or omit any clause-initial place adverbials.
- B. Respondent changed the sentence structure by adding a clause-initial place adverbial.
- C. Respondent changed the sentence structure by omitting a clause-initial place adverbial.

Improvements of type A occurred 37 times and on all four texts, with the highest frequency on text 1. They mostly involved omitting and adding punctuation and inserting conjunctions to connect sentences. Some of these changes were made to sentences that contained a clause-initial place adverbial, but the respondents did not change any sentence-beginnings.

Only two instances of type B improvements were observed, both for the native-speaker control text and both made by respondent 29. Perhaps surprisingly, two clause-initial place adverbials were added to sentences that originally started with the subject, as exemplified by (2).

- (2) A. One should simply help others and live in reality within ones limited knowledge.³
- B. In the book *Candide*, Voltaire believes that one should simply help others and live in reality within ones limited knowledge.

Type C improvements are most relevant to the question whether or not native speakers are able to explicitly identify non-native like use of clause-initial place adverbials in Dutch EFL texts. Improvements of this type occurred three times, all on text 1, by two different respondents. The clause-initial place adverbial was either moved to final position (3) or omitted altogether (4).

3. A = original sentence, B = improvement.

- (3) A. In The Yellow Wallpaper, Desiree's Baby and How I found America, one can see how the American women from the mid-twentieth century had to behave and how they felt about that.
- B. Several books focus on how American women [...] during the mid-twentieth century, including *The Yellow Wallpaper, Desiree's Baby and How I Found America*.
- (4) A. The role of women has shifted a lot during the centuries. In stories, one can always see how women were supposed to behave and it sometimes becomes clear how they themselves felt about the role they had to fulfil.
- B. The role of women has shifted considerably during the ages and this is best illustrated by the literature of the day where expectation of women's behaviour, their social role and their own feelings about this are explored.

Although we cannot draw conclusions about the motivation behind these alterations, it is noteworthy that only two out of thirty respondents have suggested changes that serve to remedy the frontal overload of the adverbial in (3) and the emphasis conveyed by initial placement of the adverbial in (4).

4. Discussion

The data provide no evidence that clause-initial place adverbials negatively affect native speakers' perception of Dutch EFL writing with regard to nativeness, continuity, and coherence. The comparisons between the native and non-native texts revealed no significant differences. Taken together, the non-native-speaker texts were not perceived as significantly less native-like, coherent, and continuous than the native-speaker text. The comparisons between the individual texts did not support the hypotheses either. Only text 1 was perceived to be significantly less native-like and continuous than the control text and text 3 even contradicted the hypothesis.

The qualitative data reveal that the respondents do find that the coherence and flow of the L1 Dutch EFL texts could be improved. Most of the respondents' comments relate to connectives, sentence-length, and punctuation rather than sentence-beginnings. This observation can be interpreted in two ways: first, it might be that native speakers, regardless of whether they have noticed the relatively frequent use of initial place adverbials, do not find them particularly disruptive. This would reject the hypotheses. Another possible explanation is that other textual flaws stood out more, which is why the respondents did not remark on the use

of clause-initial place adverbials. On this account the hypotheses can neither be rejected nor confirmed.

Similarly, the results of the operation task show that native speakers do not perceive the Dutch learners' frequent use of clause-initial place adverbials as particularly problematic. The high frequency of type A improvements reveals that the respondents were, again, more concerned with connectives, punctuation, and sentence-length. Type C improvements occurred with such low frequency that there is insufficient evidence to support the idea that native speakers can explicitly identify Dutch EFL learners' use of clause-initial place adverbials as non-native-like.

As this study is a partial replication of Rosén (2006), it is striking that the outcomes are not equally unambiguous. Rosén did not specify the level of the L2 German learners, who might not have been as advanced as the EFL learners in this study. Moreover, Rosén's native-speaker respondents might not have been as linguistically naïve as the respondents in this study. The fact that our respondents were more concerned with connectives, punctuation, and sentence length may be due to the fact that evaluating the syntax of a text is too advanced a skill for linguistically naïve readers. Moreover, the results of this study have to be interpreted with caution due to the fact that the respondents' evaluation of the texts may have been subject to variables other than information structure.

Future research with a larger scope, e.g. a larger variety of texts, more respondents, and longer texts, might yield more straightforward and reliable results. Another interesting avenue for future research would be to employ methods like eye tracking or EEG, in order to also account for processing effects that language users might not be able to verbalise.

5. Conclusion

This study has revealed that a demonstrable difference between native-speaker and non-native-speaker texts in the use of clause-initial place adverbials is not necessarily picked up on by native speakers. While future language professionals could of course benefit from an awareness of the information-structural transfer that might occur in their L2 English (cf. Verheijen et al., 2013 and Van Vuuren, 2013), the present study has also demonstrated that the communicative effect of Dutch learners' frequent use of clause-initial place adverbials should not be overstated, since it does not seem to be immediately apparent to linguistically naïve native speakers.

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Appendix. Survey texts⁴

LONGDALE texts (NNSs)

C09yr1t3 RAD0944g

The role of women has shifted a lot during the centuries. *In stories*, one can always see how women were supposed to behave and it sometimes becomes clear how they themselves felt about the role they had to fulfil. *In The Yellow Wallpaper, Desiree's Baby and How I found America*, one can see how the American women from the mid-twentieth century had to behave and how they felt about that. *In The Yellow Wallpaper* it becomes clear that John is a very controlling husband, he patronizes her and feels superior to her. He is a physician and thinks logically and with science, while women are emotional and imaginative according to him. He thinks he knows what is good for her, because he is a man and she is a woman. The position of women was different from now. They had to be obedient and be the perfect housewife; they had to take care for their husbands and their children. Appearance was also very important. No matter how tired and worn-out they were, one was not supposed to see that. *In the story*, one can clearly see that she is tired of this role. She is forced to be someone who she does not want to be.

C11yr1t1b RAD1102c

It is difficult to attribute meaning to a text by looking at its actual author, because it is never sure whether the author put a meaning in his text intentionally or unintentionally. For example, *in the narrative Shooting an Elephant by George Orwell*, it is not sure whether Orwell wishes to state a point about imperialism, or if he merely wants to let us read a good story. The perspective of the reader can change if he or she puts too much emphasis on the meaning of the text. Then there is also the difference between the real author and the narrator. *In the case of Shooting an Elephant*, the real author is George Orwell. The narrator however, is the person who tells the

4. *Italics* = clause-initial place adverbial, underlined = local anchor

narrative, which is in this case the main character. *In this narrative* an implied author, the image you get from the author when you read a text, is present. So while reading *Shooting an Elephant*, one could think the author is a man, who dislikes imperialism and who does not feel he belongs in Burma. This is not true of the real author, but it could be an image a reader has.

C10yr2t2 RAD0003i

In the traditional rendering of war fiction, war is often being described as a testimony of heroism, where the protagonists display certain virtuous qualities such as courage, resolution and leadership. *In The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien*, however, this mode of war depiction has undergone a metamorphosis. The violent nature of war, which is mostly represented by the description of the bloody battle field in the conventional war narrative, has changed to the detailed explanation of the 'things' that soldiers carry on their shoulders. These things are of various kinds, but roughly they can be divided into two categories: physical and emotional/moral. *In the first category* there is a list of military equipment such as the steel helmets, machine gunner or malaria tablets, etc. which are purely intended for the military duties. But there are also items the characters/soldiers carry that are of emotional importance, for instance, Ted Lavender's marijuana, which he uses to reduce the pain of war and Jimmy Cross's love letters from his girl friend, which serves as the distraction for his fear for the inexpressible horror of war.

LOCNESS text (NS)

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Candide is a humorous tale of a young man who is completely innocent and is in search of his ideal. However this wit does not swamp the undertones of the serious point Voltaire makes about philosophical optimism. The book is very much the mirror image of Voltaire's life as he doesn't believe in optimism. One should simply help others and live in reality within one's limited knowledge. He therefore sets out to prove these points in *Candide*.

Voltaire's character Pangloss is the mouthpiece for philosophical optimism and what happens to him serves to denounce optimism. Pangloss believes in divine providence, what happens happens for a reason and for the good of society. It is at this point that Voltaire ridicules this idea. Pangloss contracts syphilis which when you follow it back to its origin comes from the crew of Christopher Columbus's ship when he brought chocolate back from one of his voyages. Pangloss however claims that he doesn't mind having syphilis because otherwise people wouldn't have known what chocolate was. The reader obviously laughs at this theory of optimism and Voltaire has succeeded in proving what a stupid unethical theory it is. The fact that Pangloss remains adamant in his belief of philosophical optimism could also demonstrate Voltaire's low opinion on those who believe in it.

Authors' addresses

Myrte van Hilten
Radboud University
Department of English Language and Culture
Postbus 9103
6500 HD Nijmegen
m.hilten@student.ru.nl

Sanne van Vuuren
Radboud University
Department of English Language and Culture
Postbus 9103
6500 HD Nijmegen
s.v.vuuren@let.ru.nl