

INTENSIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE DIASYSTEM OF BELGIAN FRENCH-SPEAKING LEARNERS OF DUTCH AND ENGLISH

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Cognition



Education



Linguistics



Outline

1. Introduction
2. Research questions
3. Method
4. Results
5. Discussion
6. Conclusions

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research project on CLIL

A multidisciplinary study:



A large-scale and longitudinal study:

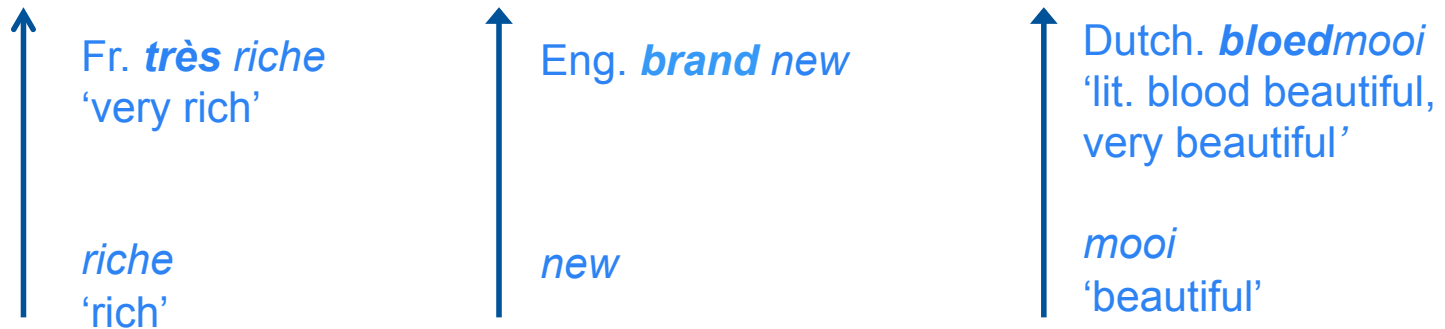
- 13 primary schools, 9 secondary schools
- 928 pupils
- followed during two school years (2015-2016 and 2016-2017)

| | CLIL Dutch | Non-CLIL Dutch | CLIL English | Non-CLIL English |
|-------------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------|------------------|
| Primary school pupils (455) | 175 | 71 | 103 | 106 |
| Secondary school pupils (473) | 141 | 114 | 104 | 114 |

1.2. The acquisition of intensifiers

- **Definition:**

- Intensifier: “a **scaling device**... which co-occurs with a gradable adjective” (Quirk et al. 1997: 445)
- Intensifier as amplifier – “upward scaling” (Lorenz 1999)



- **Intensifiers may be difficult to acquire by foreign language learners:**

- Subject to rapid change (De Clerck & Colleman 2013; Foolen 2015; Lorenz 1999)
- Stylistic specialisation (Hoeksema 2012; Foolen, Wottrich & Zwets 2012)
- Not often subject to explicit instruction in foreign language teaching

1.3. A constructional approach

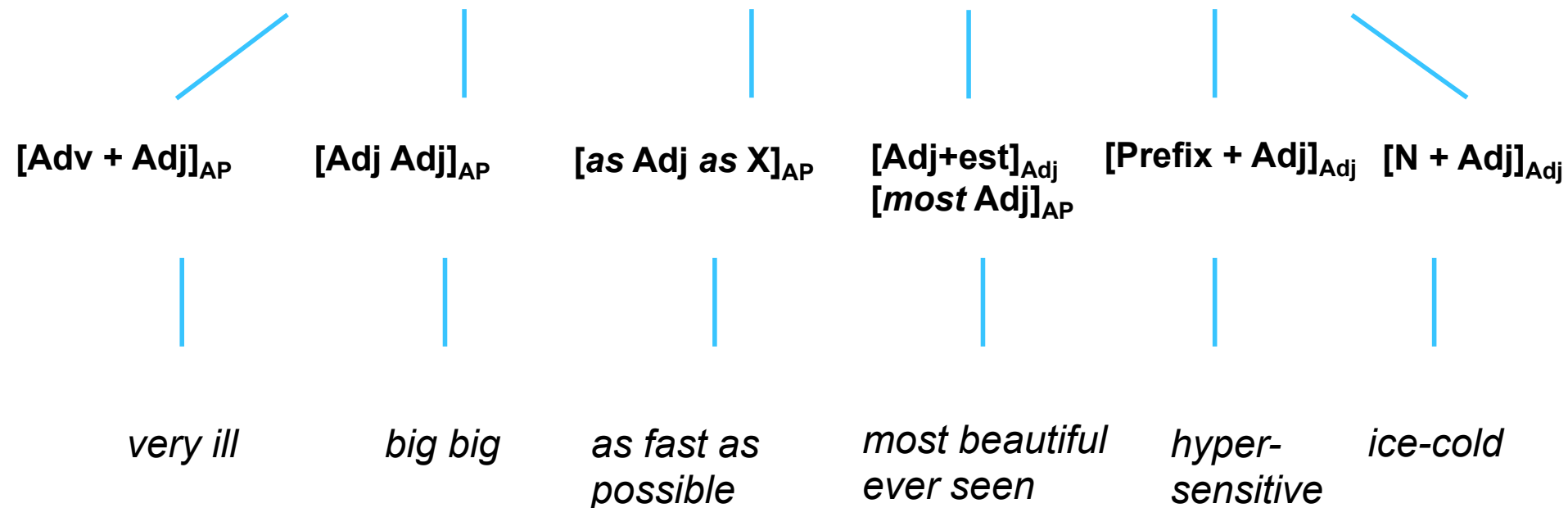
- **Construction:** form-meaning pair at phrase or word-level (cf. Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013; Booij 2010)
- **Intensifying construction** at the interface of lexicon and grammar:

[[X]_{INT} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ/AP} ↔ ‘very Y’

- **Acquiring intensifying constructions:**
 - “learning words and learning grammar are really all part of the same developmental process” (Tomasello 2003: 42)

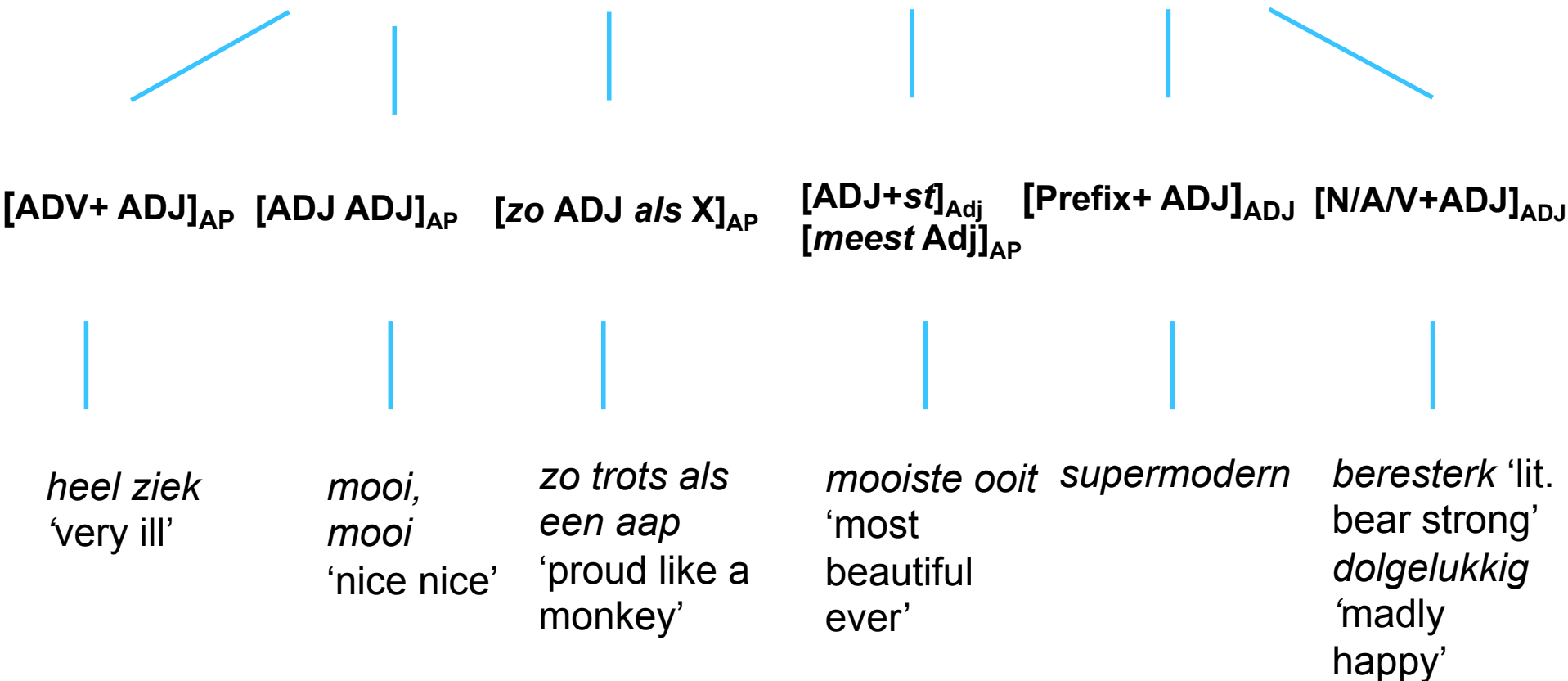
1.4. Intensifying constructions in English

[[X]_{INT} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ/AP}



1.5. Intensifying constructions in Dutch

[[X]_{INT} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{AP/ADJ}



1.6. Intensifying constructions in French

[[X]_{INT} [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ/AP}

[ADV+ADJ]_{AP}

[ADJ ADJ
(ADJ)]_{AP}

[ADJ *comme* X]_{AP}

[*plus* ADJ]_{AP}

[Prefix+ ADJ]_{ADJ}

[N+ADJ]_{ADJ}

très malade
'very ill'

*un monde fou
fou fou*
'a crazy crazy
crazy world'

*fort comme un
Turc*
'strong like a
Turkish
person'

*meilleur de
ma vie*
'the best of
my life'

*hyper-
sensible*
'hyper-
sensitive'

1.7. Language-specific preferences for morphological / syntactic intensifying constructions

Germanic sandwich hypothesis



- Both Dutch and French use morphological and syntactic intensifiers but may display different preferences
 - More morphological constructions in Dutch than in French

Van Haeringen 1956; Lamiroy 2011; Van der Wouden & Foolen 2017; Hendrikx et al. 2017

1.8. *Diasystematic Construction Grammar* (DCxG) (Höder 2012, 2014)

- Languages are not compartmentalized in the mind of a multilingual speaker
 - “multilingual speakers [...] form **meta-generalizations that connect corresponding constructions from different languages** in their repertoire” (Hilpert & Östman 2014: 139)
- Linguistic competence of multilingual speakers as an
 - “**interlingual network** of constructions with different degrees of schematicity” (Höder 2012: 255)
- Learning a typologically similar language is less problematic thanks to a **higher degree of diasystematicity**
 - More shared constructions between the two languages
 - learners can build on their L1 experiences and routines for their L2

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions

1. Do cross-linguistic differences form an obstacle for learners to develop diasystematic links?

Do **French-speaking pupils** encounter difficulties when they acquire **English** or **Dutch intensifying constructions**?

(specifically morphological constructions such as **compounds**)

2. Does more input help learners to form more (entrenched) diasystematic links?

CLIL input: Compared to non-CLIL learners, do French-speaking **CLIL-learners** of English/Dutch develop a **more native-like** use of intensifiers due to more exposure to English/Dutch?

3. METHOD

Data collection (1)

- **Subjects:**
 - 438 Belgian French-speaking secondary school learners of English or Dutch in CLIL and non-CLIL
 - Fifth grade secondary school (mean age: 16.5 years old)
 - In fifth grade - fall 2015 & **in sixth grade - spring 2017**
- **Control groups:**
 - 57 American **English-speaking** students at the University of Florida
 - 18-22 years (mean age: 19.4 years)
 - 61 **Dutch-speaking** students from the Netherlands and Flanders
 - Fifth grade secondary school (mean age: 16.7 years old)

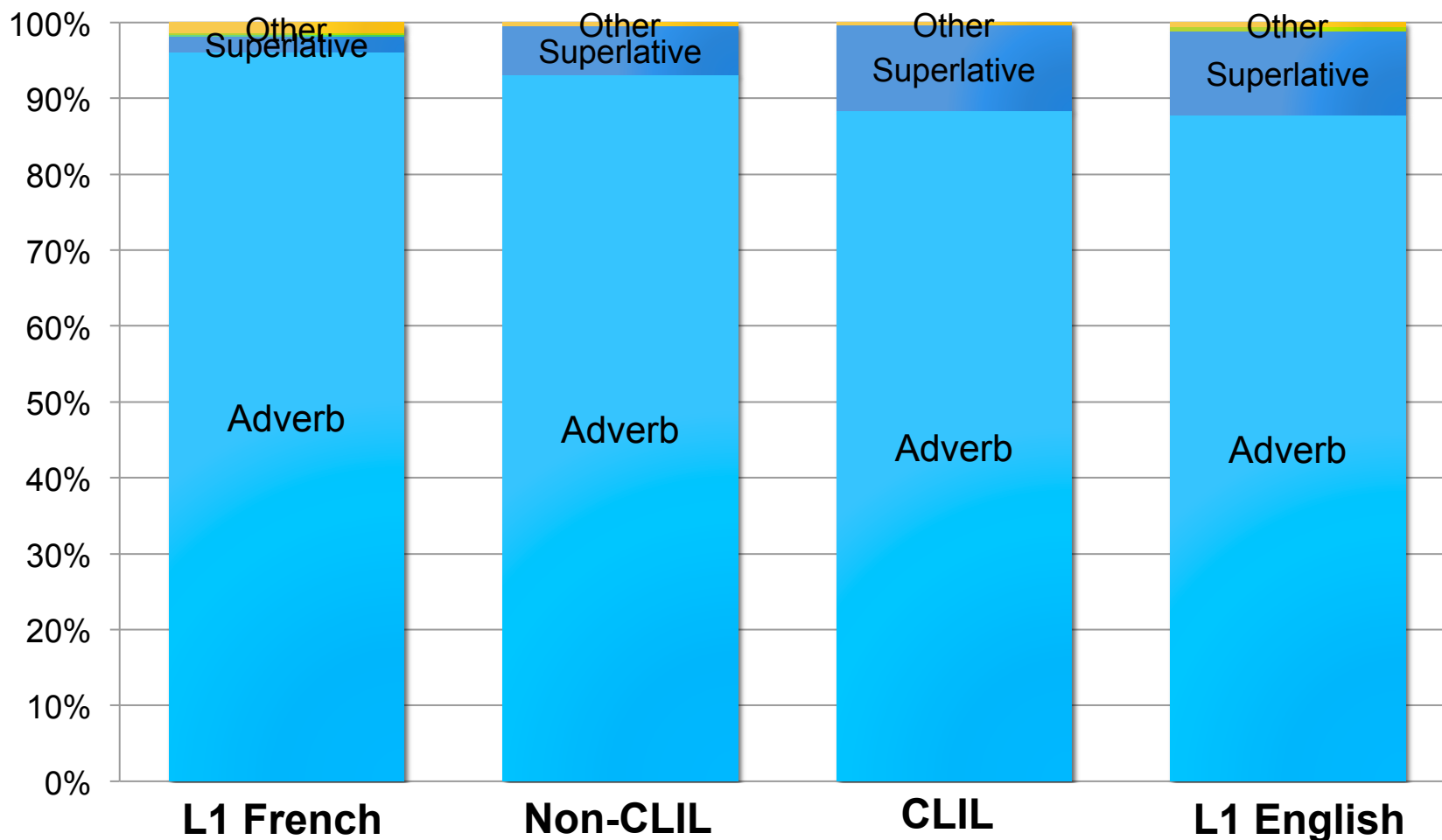
Data collection (2)

| | L1 French | L2 English non-CLIL 6 th grade | L2 English CLIL 6 th grade | L1 English |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Number of texts | 146 | 65 | 78 | 57 |
| Number of words | 51 573 | 18 064 | 24 607 | 18 760 |
| Mean text length (in words) | 353 | 278 | 315 | 329 |

| | L1 French | L2 Dutch non-CLIL 6 th grade | L2 Dutch CLIL 6 th grade | L1 Dutch |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Number of texts | 255 | 68 | 117 | 59 |
| Number of words | 80 237 | 14 806 | 32 035 | 13 220 |
| Mean text length (in words) | 315 | 218 | 274 | 224 |

4. RESULTS

4.1. Types of intensifying constructions - English

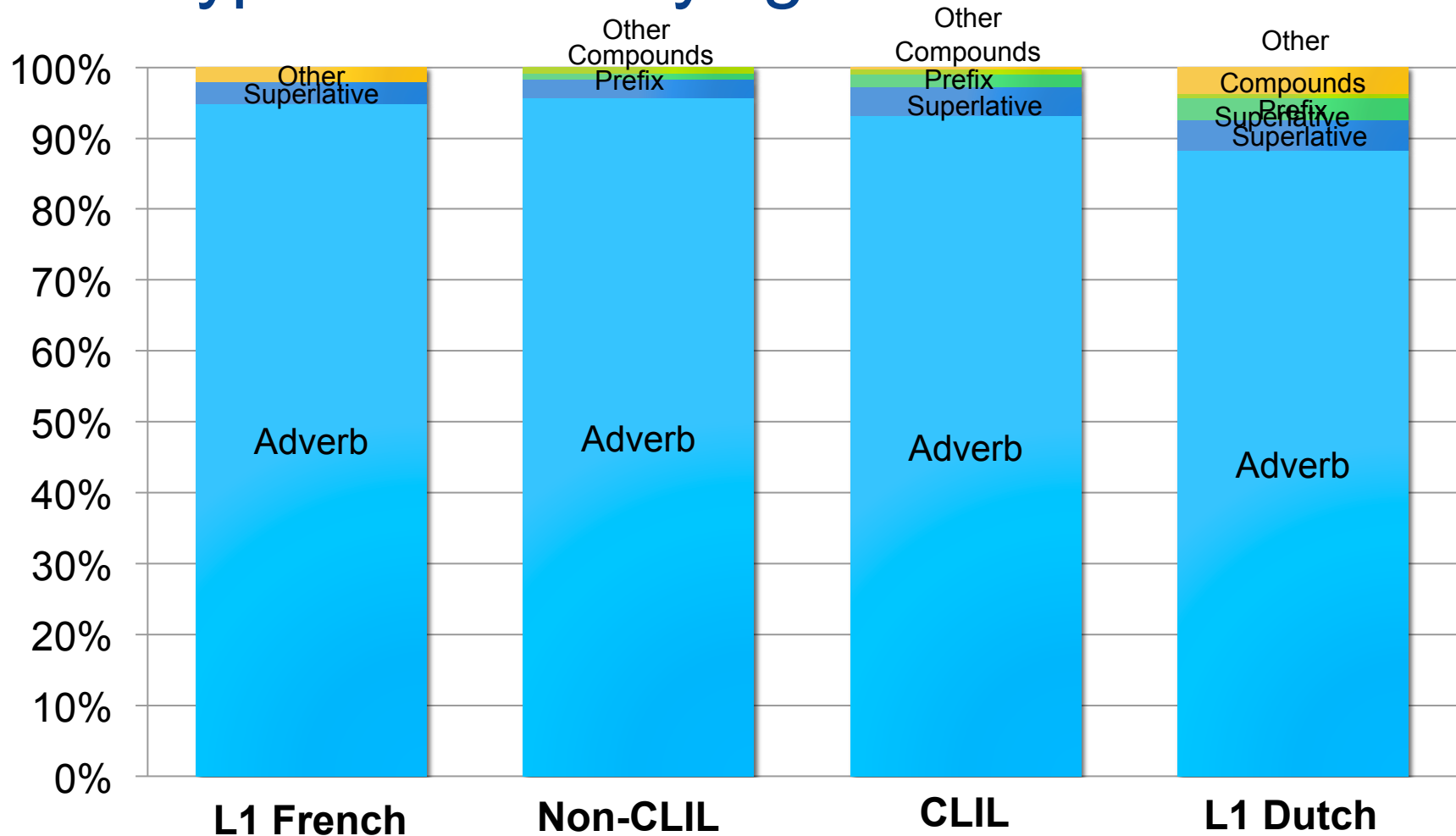


L1 English vs. non-CLIL $U = 1551.00$, $z = -3.00$, $p < .05^*$, $r = -0.26$

L1 English vs. CLIL $U = 1880.50$, $z = -2.40$, $p < .05^*$, $r = -0.22$

CLIL vs. non-CLIL $U = 2084.50$, $z = -2.47$, $p < .05^*$, $r = -0.21$

4.2. Types of intensifying constructions - Dutch

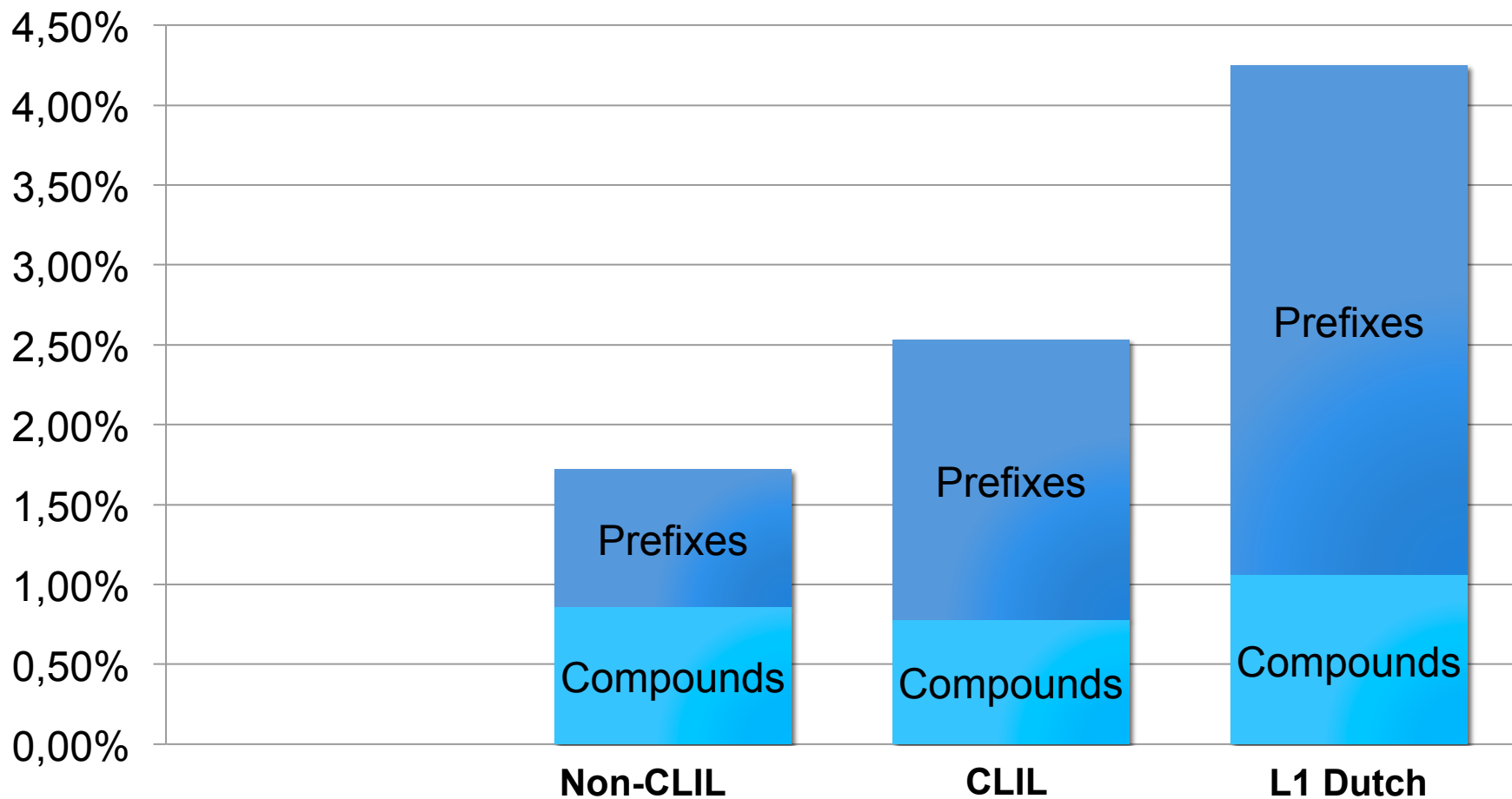


L1 Dutch vs. non-CLIL: $U = 1729.50$, $z = -2.15$, $p < .05^*$, $r = -0.19$

L1 Dutch vs. CLIL: $U = 3002.00$, $z = -1.20$, $p < .05^*$, $r = -0.09$

CLIL vs. non-CLIL no significant differences

4.3. Morphological intensifying constructions in L2 Dutch and L1 Dutch



4.4. Examples (1)

- **Adverbs** $[[X]_{\text{ADV}} + [Y]_{\text{ADJ}}]_{\text{AP}}$
 - French *très sympa* ‘very nice’, *vraiment bien* ‘really good’, *super joli* ‘super pretty’
 - English *very nice, so funny, really good*
 - Dutch *heel leuk* ‘very nice’, *echt goed* ‘really good’, *veel leuk* ‘many nice’
- **Superlatives** $[\text{ADJ}_{\text{superlative}}]_{\text{ADJ/AP}}$
 - French *plus grand du monde* ‘biggest in the world’
 - English *funniest, best of my life*
 - Dutch *grootst ter wereld* ‘largest of the world’
- **Simile construction** $[\text{as } [X]_{\text{ADJ}} \text{ as } [Y]_{\text{NP}}]_{\text{AP}}$
 - English *blue as the Pacific Ocean*
- **Prefixes** $[[X]_{\text{PREFIX}} + [Y]_{\text{ADJ}}]_{\text{ADJ}}$
 - Dutch *megakwaad* ‘mega angry’

4.4. Examples (2)

- **Compounds** $[[X]_{N/V/ADJ} + [Y]_{ADJ}]_{ADJ}$

- English
- Dutch

crystal clear

bloedheet 'lit. bloody hot'

- Other constructions

- French

- **[ADJ–issime]_{ADJ}**
- **[ADJ de N]_{AP}**
- **[jamais aussi ADJ]_{AP}**
- **[plus que ADJ]_{AP}**
- **[aussi ADJ les uns que les autres]_{AP}**

énormissime 'totally enormous'

rouge de chaleur 'red hot'

jamais aussi joli 'never as pretty'

plus que saouïl 'lit. more than drunk'

aussi bons les uns que les autres
'lit. as good the ones as the others'

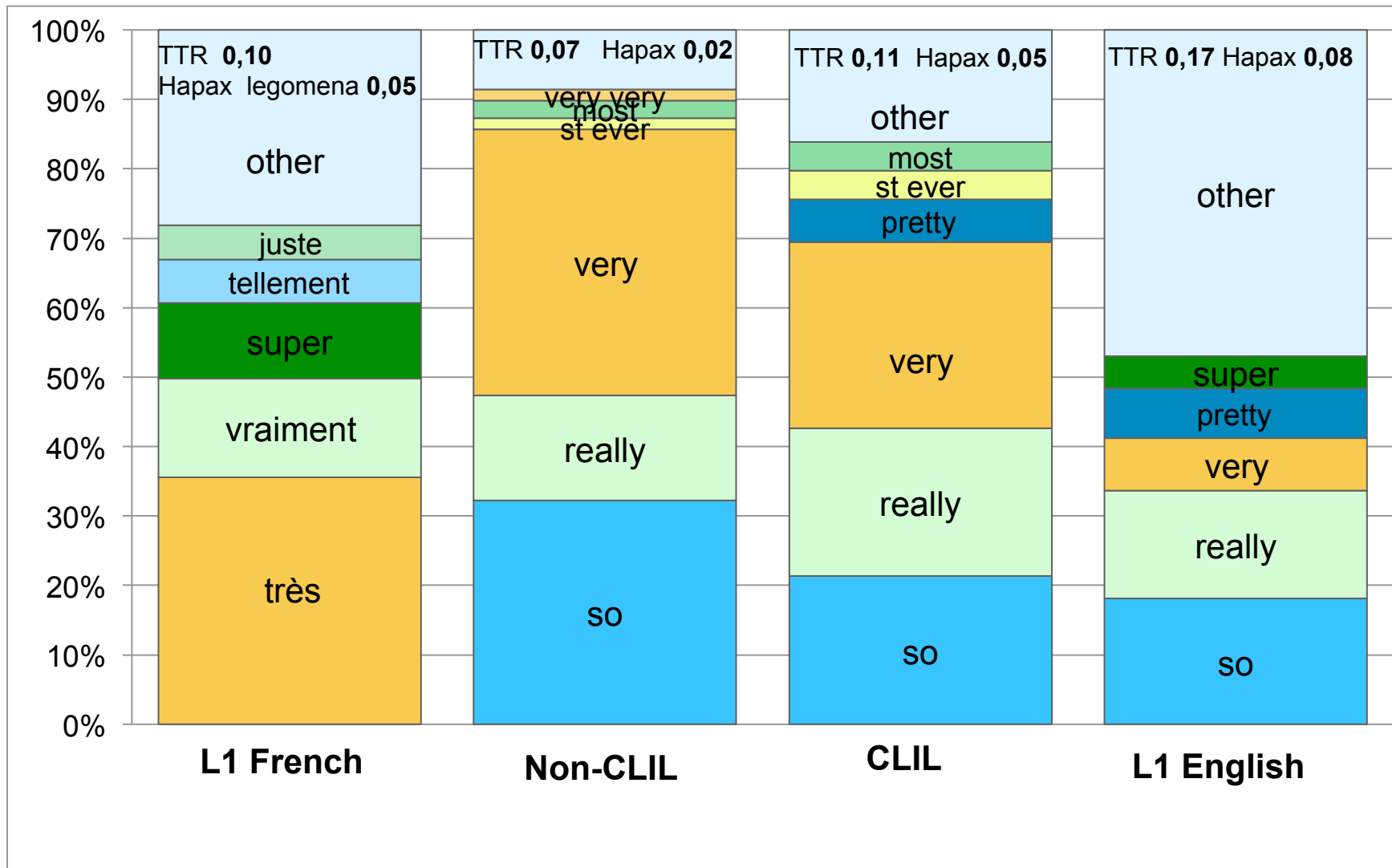
sympa comme tout 'lit. nice as all, very nice'

- Dutch

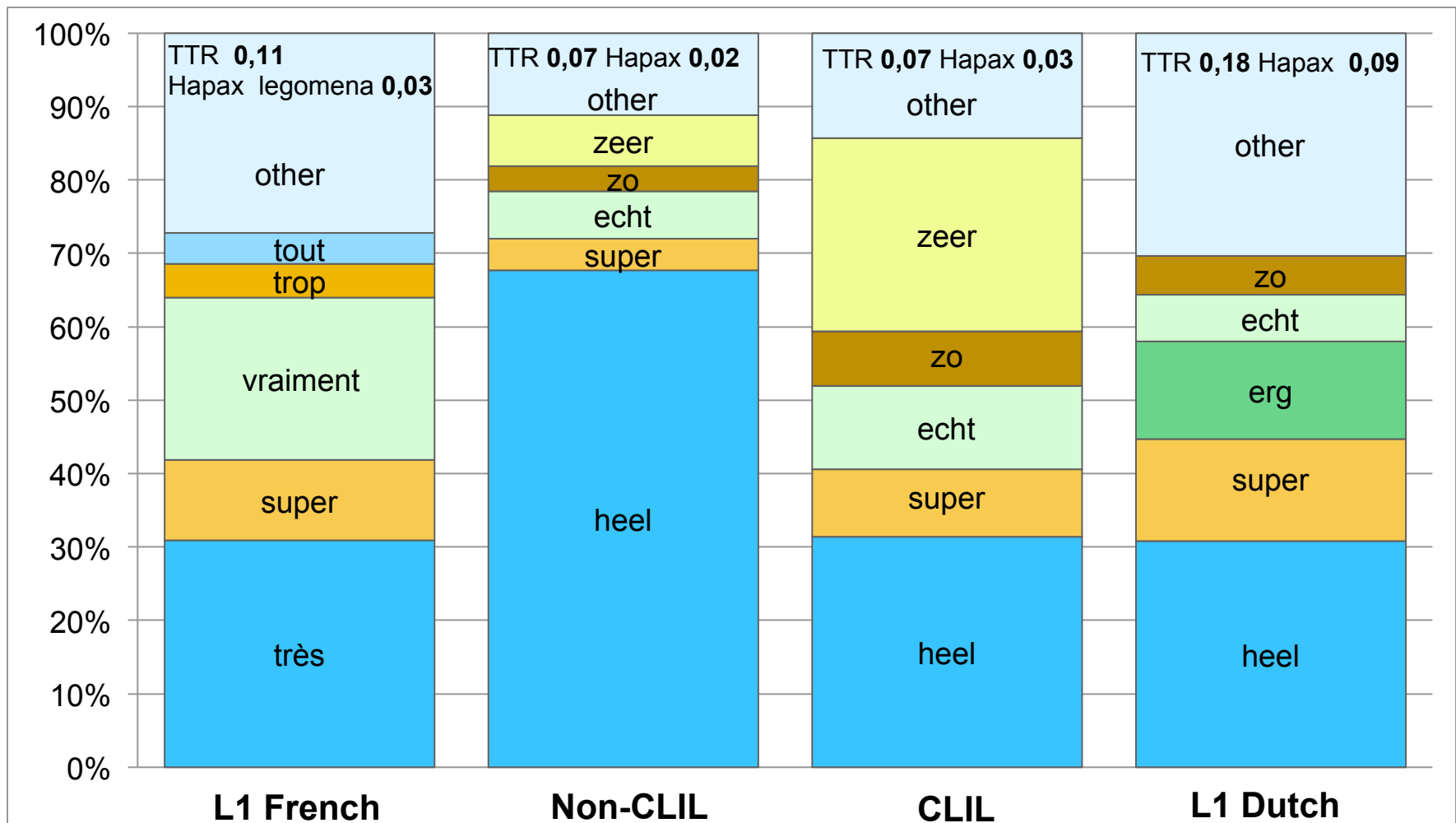
- **[te ADJ voor woorden]_{AP}**

te leuk voor woorden 'lit. too nice for words'

4.5. Most frequent intensifiers - English



4.6. Most frequent intensifiers - Dutch



5. DISCUSSION

Three levels of diasystematic linkage (1)

1. **Cross-linguistic similarities** lead to entrenched diasystematic constructions, e.g. [ADV_{booster} + ADJ_{scalar}]_{AP}
 - *very nice, really beautiful, so happy, really good / heel leuk, heel lekker, super leuk, zo leuk*
 - Mostly limited to most frequent intensifiers
 - *very, really, so/ heel, zeer, zo*
 - Intensifiers that are not or less entrenched in the L2:
 - Among others: *truly, infinitely / ontzettend, geweldig, heel erg*

2. Despite different degrees of productivity between particular L1 and L2 constructions, **input can favor** the formation of diasystematic links
 - French-speaking **CLIL learners** use overall **more morphological** constructions to express intensification, in particular intensifying prefixes in L2 Dutch

Three levels of diasystematic linkage (2)

3. Some constructions **cannot lead to shared representations**

- only exist in the L1:

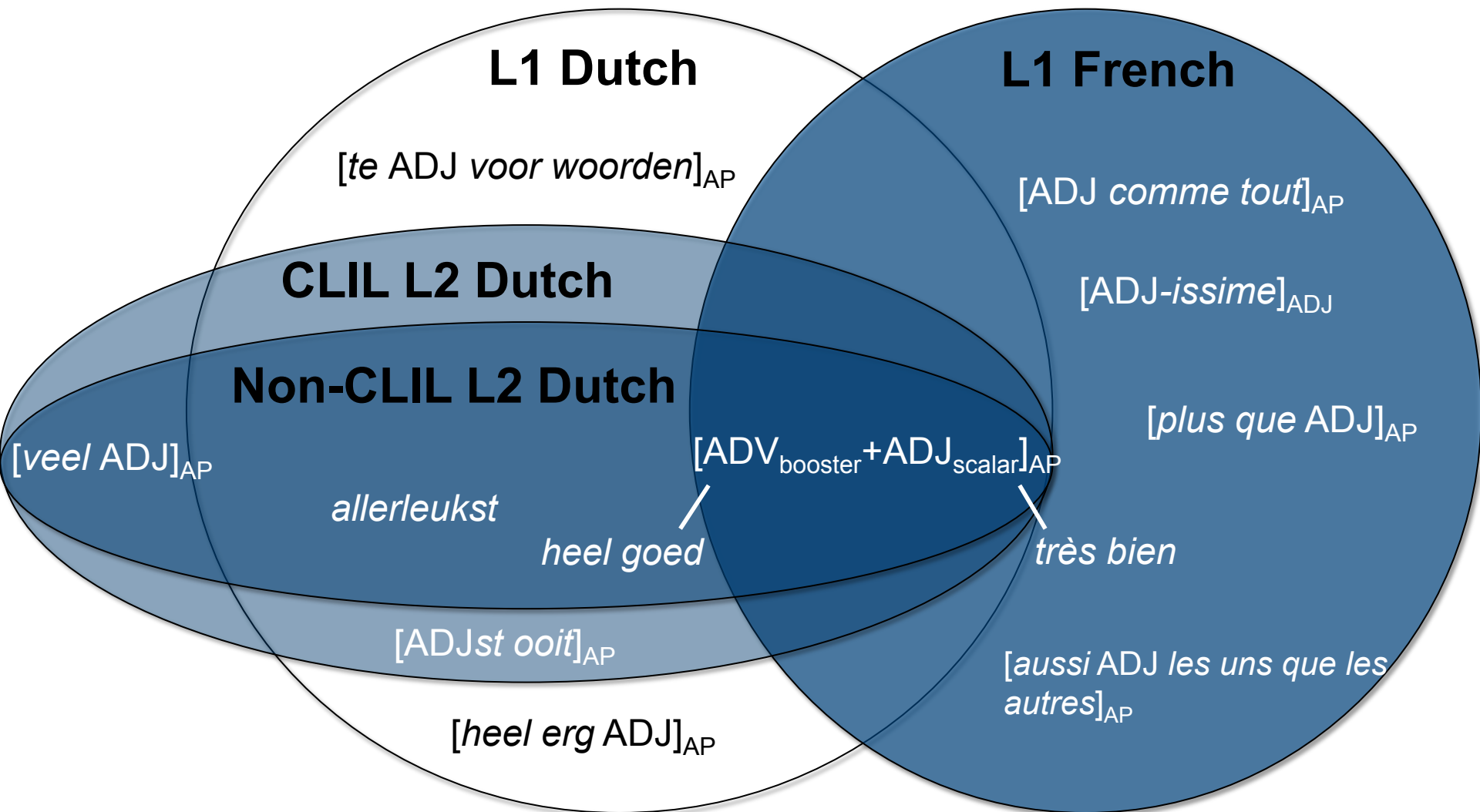
[ADJ + *comme tout*]

sympa comme tout 'very pleasant'

- only exist in the L2:

[*te ADJ voor woorden*]_{AP}

te leuk voor woorden 'lit. too nice for words'



6. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

- Our study aimed to explore an application of DCxG to the study of SLA
- Cross-linguistic differences in productivity do not prevent learners from using intensifying morphological constructions (compounds and prefixes)
- More L2 exposure through CLIL fosters the creation of diasystematic links
 - CLIL learners produce:
 - a greater variety of intensifiers
 - more target-like proportions of most frequent intensifiers
 - less overuse of *heel / very*
 - less misuse (*veel* 'many')

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Thank you!

Bedankt!

Merci !

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