

Noun-to-verb ratio and articulation rate cross-linguistically

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This talk reports on on-going research on local variations in the noun-to-verb ratio, based on measurements in time-aligned corpora of spontaneous spoken language of roughly 30.000 words each from eight languages (Bora, Baure, Texistepec, Hoocak, Even, Chintang, N|uu). Across these eight languages, as the noun to verb ratio increases, the articulation rate decreases. This pattern appears to reflect topic shifts and paragraph boundaries (at which full nouns rather than pronouns or zeros often occur), but also points at cognitive differences in processing nouns and verbs. I will also discuss further issues in articulation rate measurements, such as the effect of final lengthening.