

Dutch weather: A reason to stay

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Marjolein did an internship on the valency of weather verbs at her home-base, Utrecht University.

"I can tell you that I have never been more enthusiastic about anything (and so can anyone who has spent five minutes with me over the last few months, because I just could not shut up about weather verbs)."

From the 12th of November until the 1st of February, that is, Block 2 of this academic year, I did an internship at Utrecht University under the supervision of dr. Marijana Marelj. I was introduced to her line of research when I took a course about the syntax-semantics interface taught by her last year. After this course it was clear to me that there was no point in going abroad or to another university in the Netherlands for my internship, since there is nowhere I could be working on something as cool as I could under the supervision of dr. Marelj (full disclosure, I am a bit of a syntax nerd, so "cool" is very subjective here).

Unlike most internships, where students join a larger, already existing project, I had a research project all of my own. In this project, I researched the valence of weather verbs (such as *rain*, *snow*, *hail*, et cetera) in Dutch. Valence refers to the number of arguments that the verb selects. Weather verbs in both English and Dutch (and many other languages) are often taken to be aivalent, meaning that the weather verb does not select any arguments. The subject we often observe in weather verb constructions, *it* in English and *het* in Dutch, is then analyzed as an expletive. However, a recent study by Beth Levin (2017) showed that weather verbs in English might actually have lexical subjects, making them valent. I wanted to see if a similar argument could be made for Dutch (spoiler alert: the answer is yes).

An internship is a perfect opportunity to explore your interests and learn new skills. People doing experimental work often use the internship as a way to familiarize themselves with an experimental method, such as eye-tracking or EEG. In my case, I used the internship as a way to see if I wanted to pursue an academic career in the field of the syntax-semantics interface. Before the interfaces course I took last year, I saw myself as a pure syntactician.

The syntax-semantics interface was something I never knew was even an option as a field of research. After a small identity crisis (What does it mean to be interested in this interface? Am I still a syntactician? Does this make me a semanticist?), I asked dr. Marelj to be my supervisor so I could further explore my interest in this field. Now that I have completed my internship, I can tell you that I have never been more enthusiastic about anything (and so can anyone who has spent five minutes with me over the last few months, because I just could not shut up about weather verbs).

In conclusion, you can use your internship for a lot of things, not just to learn how to work with certain experimental equipment, but also as a way to discover things about yourself and where your interests lie. And a lot of people will recommend you to go abroad for your internship, because they had a great time abroad themselves, or because they feel like that should be part of your time as a student. I am not saying you should not go abroad, but do keep in mind that your own university might also offer some really great opportunities as well, that might actually be a better fit for you. In my case, I do not think I could have learned as much as I did about myself if I had gone to another university. ■

REFERENCES

Levin, Beth. 2017. *Talking about the weather: a case study of precipitation verbs* [Extended abstract].