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Collaborative meaning-making: the emergence of novel languages in humans, machines, and human-machine interactions

Kouwenhoven, T.

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Acknowledgements

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Initially, it seemed challenging to position my work between linguistics and computer science, but I believe that this has become one of its strengths. Thanks to my promotor Stephan Raaijmakers, I had the opportunity and freedom to settle between these fields. Roy de Kleijn, as my co-promotor, you helped set up experiments and were always there to listen, thank you. I know where to find you on October 2nd.

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List of publications

Asterisks denote equal contributions.

- 1 **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Towns, R., Verhoef, T. (2022). Modelling the emergence of vocal grooming. In Ravignani, A., Asano, R., Valente, D., Ferretti, F., Hartmann, S., Hayashi, M., Jadoul, Y., Martins, M., Oseki, Y., Rodrigues, E. D., Vasileva, O., & Wacewicz, S., editors, *Proceedings of the Joint Conference on Language Evolution (JCoLE)* pages 434-436. Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics.
- 2 **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Verhoef, T., De Kleijn, R., and Raaijmakers, S. (2022). Emerging grounded shared vocabularies between human and machine, inspired by human language evolution. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*, 5:886349
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- 5 Van Duijn, M.J.*, Van Dijk, B.M.A.*, **Kouwenhoven, T.***, De Valk, W.M., Spruit, M.R., and Van Der Putten, P.W.H. (2023). Theory of Mind in Large Language Models: Examining Performance of 11 State-of-the-Art Models vs. Children Aged 7-10 on Advanced Tests. In Jiang, J., Reitter, D., and Deng, S., editors, *Proceedings of the 27th Conference on Computational Natural Language Learning*, pages 389-402, Singapore. Association for Computational Linguistics.
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 - 8 **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Peeperkorn, M., Van Dijk, B., and Verhoef, T. (2024). The curious case of representational alignment: Unravelling visio-linguistic tasks in emergent communication. In Kuribayashi, T., Rambelli, G., Takmaz, E., Wicke, P., and Oseki, Y., editors, *Proceedings of the Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics*, pages 57–71, Bangkok, Thailand. Association for Computational Linguistics
 - 9 Verhoef, T.*, Shahrashbi, K., and **Kouwenhoven, T***. (2024). What does kiki look like? cross-modal associations between speech sounds and visual shapes in vision-and-language models. In Kuribayashi, T., Rambelli, G., Takmaz, E., Wicke, P., and Oseki, Y., editors, *Proceedings of the Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics*, pages 199–213, Bangkok, Thailand. Association for Computational Linguistics
 - 10 **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Peeperkorn, M., and Verhoef, T. (2025b). Searching for structure: Investigating emergent communication with large language models. In Rambow, O., Wanner, L., Apidianaki, M., Al-Khalifa, H., Eugenio, B. D., and Schockaert, S., editors, *Proceedings of the 31st International Conference on Computational Linguistics*, pages 9977–9991, Abu Dhabi, UAE. Association for Computational Linguistics
 - 11 **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Peeperkorn, M., de Kleijn, R., and Verhoef, T. (2025a). Shaping shared languages: Human and large language models’ inductive biases in emergent communication. In Kwok, J., editor, *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, IJCAI-25*, International Joint Conferences on Artificial Intelligence Organization. Human-Centred AI
 - 12 Peeperkorn, M., **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Brown, D., and Jordanous, A. (2025). Mind the gap: Conformative decoding to improve output diversity of instruction-tuned large language models. *Preprint*
 - 12 Pitta, E., **Kouwenhoven, T.**, Verhoef, T. (2025). Probing Vision-Language Understanding through the Visual Entailment Task: promises and pitfalls. In Henrique, L.C., Rui, S., Koponen, M., Pareja-Lora, A., editors, *Proceedings of the Second LUHME Workshop*, Bologna, Spain.
 - 13 **Kouwenhoven, T***, Shahrashbi, K., Verhoef, T.* (2025). Cross-modal Associations in Vision and Language Models: Revisiting the bouba-kiki effect. *Preprint*
- included in this dissertation.

Curriculum Vitae

Tom Kouwenhoven was born on January 26, 1995, in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. He graduated in 2013 with a VWO-plus diploma from the Kandinsky College in Nijmegen, Gelderland. From 2014 to 2017, Tom pursued a bachelor's degree in Lifestyle Informatics (now known as Artificial Intelligence) at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. During this time, he completed a minor in Computation Arts at Concordia University in Montréal, Canada. He obtained his master's degree in 2020 from the University of Leiden, where he completed the Media Technology program.

In 2021, Tom started as a PhD candidate at the Leiden Institute for Advanced Computer Science, which he successfully completed in 2025. During his doctoral studies, he collaborated with researchers from various (inter)national institutions – most notably with Max Peeperkorn. One of these collaborations, exploring the effect of large language models' temperature parameter on their creative writing abilities, received the Best Student Paper Award at the 2024 International Conference on Computational Creativity in Jönköping, Sweden. Alongside his research, Tom completed training in transferable skills, including communication for science, presenting skills for PhDs, and scientific conduct. Since May 2025, Tom has been working as a postdoctoral researcher at Leiden University, affiliated with the Hybrid Intelligence consortium.

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