The role of lexico-syntactic features in noun phrase production and comprehension: insights from Spanish and Chinese in unilingual and bilingual contexts

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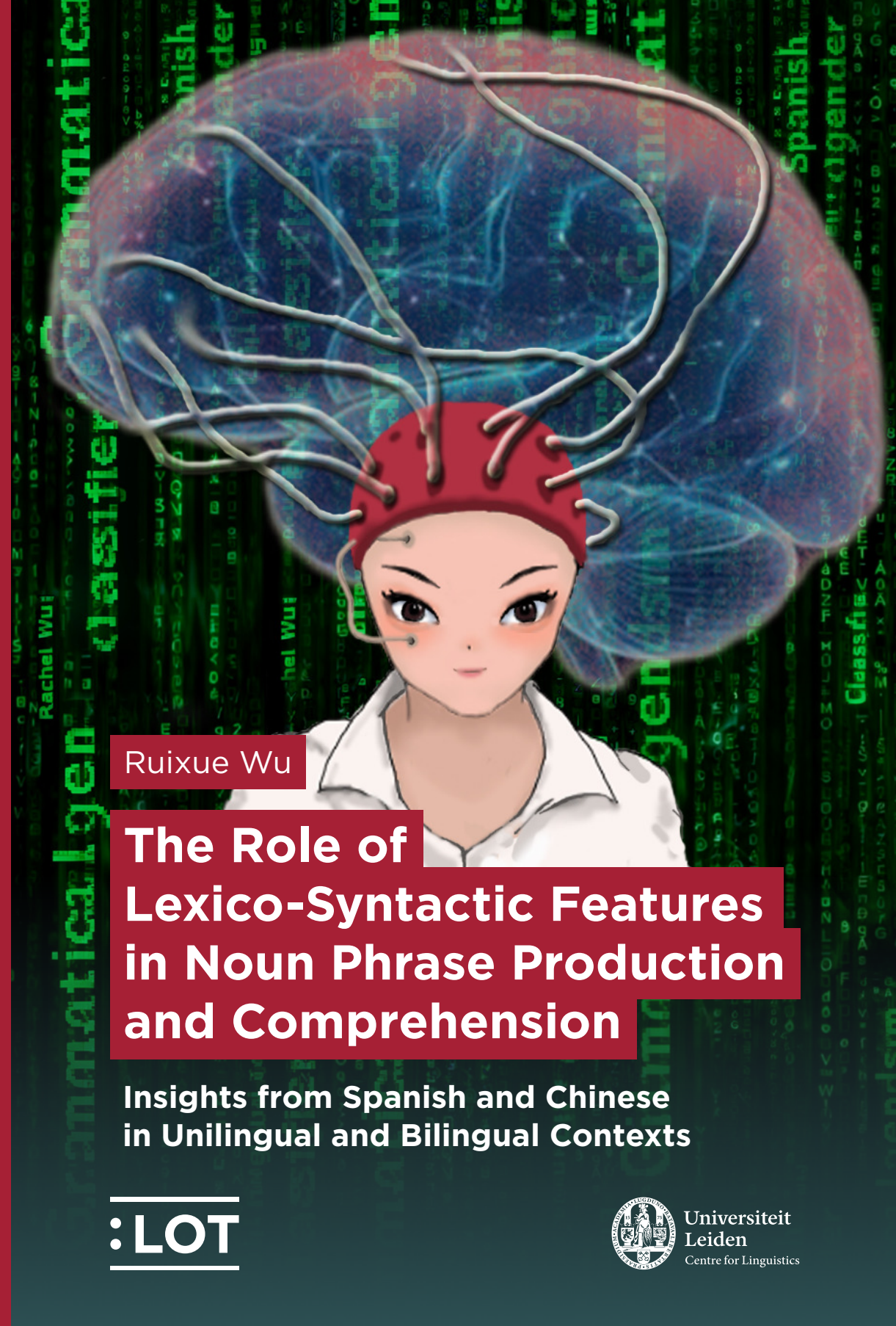
Insights from Spanish and Chinese in Unilingual and Bilingual Contexts

This dissertation investigates how bilingual speakers navigate lexico-syntactic features, including grammatical gender, classifier systems, and the linear order of adjectives and nouns, across Spanish and Chinese in both unilingual and bilingual contexts. The central focus is on how early Spanish–Chinese bilinguals, particularly those residing in Barcelona, Spain, process and produce grammatical gender in Spanish and classifiers in Mandarin Chinese. It also examines how these bilinguals resolve syntactic conflicts arising from differences in adjective placement across the two languages, where Spanish typically places adjectives post-nominally while Chinese places them pre-nominally. Drawing on behavioural and, where relevant, electrophysiological data, and employing a multi-task approach that integrates elicitation, repetition, and acceptability judgment tasks, this dissertation provides an extensive account of bilingual morphosyntactic processing in both experimental and semi-naturalistic contexts. It also sheds light on how bilinguals negotiate cross-linguistic grammatical differences during code-switching, with particular attention to gender assignment, classifier selection, and adjective placement. The findings contribute to broader discussions in bilingualism and psycholinguistics by illuminating the mechanisms through which bilinguals reconcile distinct grammatical systems in language production and comprehension.

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