Looking for logic in all the wrong places: An investigation of language, literacy and logic in reasoning
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I first became drawn to the idea of doing research into human reasoning while a student in the Master of Logic programme at the ILLC, and following Michiel van Lambalgen’s course on the psychology of reasoning. With a background in mathematics and analytic philosophy, most of the topics in psychology and semantics were new to me. Perhaps more ‘new’ for me though, was Michiel’s research style. This involves original combinations of tools and insights from different fields to make a seemingly total study of the subject. It may not be to everyone’s taste, but I found it exhilarating. For the first time in my brief academic life, the idea of research become appealing. By a fortuitous combination of timing, blind chutzpah and work, I was awarded a PhD position with Michiel and got the chance to pursue my growing interest. For this opportunity I was, and remain, exceptionally grateful. I am also grateful to Michiel for allowing me the freedom and making it possible for me to go my own way in research.

That was how it started. Of course, it didn’t always go so smoothly. A few years later I was in the PhD-dip, demotivated and unproductive. We called in help, in the form of Martin Stokhof. Martin’s supervising capacities are fairly legendary within ILLC/philosophy circles, and so it proved in my case too. His calm and encouraging presence in supervising our meetings helped me to understand better that doing research is not a high-jump competition, but a sculpting process, involving continuous formulating, adjusting, questioning, readjusting. This complemented the input from Michiel very well.

So with the inspiration and guidance provided by Michiel and Martin I gradually found my feet in research, and wrote this dissertation. I am very grateful for their patience and confidence, especially at times when I lacked both, and for their probing questions which raised the level of the arguments in the dissertation significantly.

There were other people who taught me much along the way. Firstly, I would like to thank Keith Stenning, whom I visited in Edinburgh in my first year of the dissertation. His long experience (and good memory!) of the field of psychology
of reasoning, and always thoughtful approach to experimental work, provided me
with an invaluable introduction into the ways of psychology and enabled me to
make a reasonable first stab at empirical work by myself. I feel privileged to have
been able to learn from him.

Further experimental work for the dissertation was conducted in Hamburg,
on the eastern coast of South Africa, with the women from the Keiskamma Art
Project. The visit to Hamburg was a very restorative time for me, and although
I didn’t know it at the time, the work I did there became the basis for most of
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In my working environment in Amsterdam I experienced a lot of support
from contact with my fellow PhDs, especially my roommates, Hartmut Fitz, with
whom I had many lovely conversations and whose company helped me keep a sane
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dated and later galvanised me into working harder than I otherwise would have
when in the office. Talking to fellow PhD students at the philosophy department
helped me to know better what I expected and wanted from research, and for
this I am grateful to everyone there. On the practical side of things, the ILLC
has been a great institute to work in. It’s a well-organised and friendly research
environment and provides students with valuable cross-disciplinary exposure.

My more recent workplace is the University College Utrecht and over the last
two years I have very much enjoyed and been buoyed by the supportive colleagues
I have there. Being involved in teaching and tutoring activities was beneficial to
my research, and being part of the university community there has made me feel
much more comfortable with academic life. In particular thanks to Christel Lutz,
not only for putting me in touch with UCU but also for helping me visualise
post-PhD life.

Slowly developing in the background during the whole PhD project was my
life in Amsterdam, and the quality of this life has contributed enormously to
my energy for the dissertation. Because of this my friends deserve a special
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