Questions: What is the nature of the representation at ellipsis sites? What information, and how much, is reactivated?

Background

Reactivation occurs when structure is reaccessed to resolve a dependency, e.g., fillers reactivating at gap sites, pronouns reactivating their antecedents.

Ellipsis instantiates such a dependency between the antecedent and ellipsis site. *Susie walked John’s [dog] ellipsis site and Bill walked Mary’s [dog] ellipsis site*.

- AA is fed by differing number features contained in the same constituent [3-5].

- AA differs from filler-gap * requires antecedent but contains non-overt material*

- What is the depth of reactivation needed to interpret ellipsis sites?

Agreement Attraction (AA) can diagnose the amount of structure reactivated. AA occurs when the verb incorrectly agrees with the attractor that intervenes between the grammatical controller of agreement and the verb.

- The key to the cabinet** were on the table**.

AA is fed by differing number features contained in the same constituent [3-5].

[NP Ellipsis + AA]: Can agreement attraction effects be seen after ellipsis sites?

- AA-triggering complex nominals can be used as the antecedent for NPE
- The amount of structure reactivated will reanimate different number features
- Parent’s [key to the cabinet] ellipsis site got lost, but Scarlett’s ...

- Full reactivation: [key to the cabinet** were on the table**. Deep partial reactivation: [key** was on the table**. Shallow partial reactivation: [key]* was on the table*.

- Agreement appearing on the verb after the ellipsis site will diagnose the size of the reactivated constituent.

→ Predictions:

If *full reactivation* → ✓ agreement attraction

If *partial reactivation* → × NO agreement attraction

Experiments 2 & 3

¿- Do complex AA-triggering nominals generate agreement attraction when in a possessive structure?

Design: Self-paced reading: 32 participants; 32 item sets distributed via Latin Square; 96 fillers

- 2x2; Attractor Number (Singular*, Plural a) x Verb GRAMMATICALITY (Grammatical, Grammatical, Singular [●])

- Main effect of GRAMMATICALITY: interaction of NUMBER x GRAMMATICALITY

- Ungrammatical, Plural [a] condition is read faster than Ungrammatical, Singular [●]

- Complex AA-triggering nominals in a possessive structure ✓ DO generate agreement attraction.

Experiments 4

¿- Does agreement attraction occur when only the attractor is elided?

Design: Self-paced reading

2x2 x NUMBER x GRAMMATICALITY x ELLIPSIS: Ellipsis, No Ellipsis

Items: Before the memo from Harvey’s architect** was sent to the engineer** could be found, the report from Frank’s [architect’s] **was sent to the engineer** sent to the engineer.

Main effect of GRAMMATICALITY: interaction of GRAMMATICALITY x ATTRACTOR

- When only the head is elided ... ✓ DO generate agreement attraction.

Conclusions:

- Reactivation is not deep/exhaustive; there is only partial reactivation
- Representation at ellipsis sites is sensitive to number features

Discussion

- Sensitivity to morpho-syntactic number features implicates that the representation is partially syntactic
- Lack of attraction effects in Experiments 2 & 3 is contra a percolation account, but compatible with a content-addressable account

References


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