

The issue of lexical guidance in sentence production: Evidence from structural priming experiments

13:00 – 13:30: Sandra Pappert, Universitaet Bielefeld, sandra.pappert@uni-bielefeld.de, Michael Baumann, Universitaet Bielefeld, michael.baumann@uni-bielefeld.de & Thomas Pechmann, Universität Leipzig, pechmann@rz.uni-leipzig.de

Psycholinguistic accounts of sentence production differ in the role they attribute to lexically represented information as, e.g., the argument structure of verbs. According to the hypothesis of strict incrementality, conceptual factors are the main determinants of linguistic encoding. In contrast, lexicalist approaches claim that argument structure information triggers the mapping of thematic roles onto syntactic functions. In a series of experiments that combined a structural priming manipulation with a sentence generation task, the impact of argument structure on formulation was tested in German.

Dative alternation (DA) primes (e.g., *Der Rechtsanwalt schickte seinem Klienten den Vertrag / den Vertrag an seinen Klienten*, 'The lawyer sent his client the contract / the contract to his client') were found to prime the syntactic realisation of benefactive alternation (BA) targets (e.g., *Die Sekretärin backte ihrem Chef einen Kuchen / einen Kuchen für ihren Chef*, 'The secretary baked a cake for her boss / her boss a cake.') and vice versa (Pappert & Pechmann 2013). The observation of priming across argument structures disfavours a lexical account of structural persistence (Pickering & Branigan 1998). A more recent experiment combined DA primes and BA primes (the latter now without reference to caused possession, e.g., *Der Schüler wischt dem Lehrer die Tafel / die Tafel für den Lehrer*, 'The pupil wipes *the teacher the blackboard / the blackboard for the teacher') with DA targets. There was significant priming, but the effect was not modulated by the alternation type (DA vs. BA), either. Thus, there was no evidence that differences in semantics or in the syntactic configuration are an issue. The found effects most probably arise during conceptualisation or phrase structural realisation. Even though there is little evidence for a necessary lexical involvement, DA priming is boosted by verb repetition (Pickering & Branigan 1998; Chang et al. 2015). Future experiments will show whether this also holds for adjunct priming.

References:

- Chang, Franklin & Baumann, Michael & Pappert, Sandra & Fitz, Hartmut. 2015. Do lemmas speak German? A verb position effect in German structural priming. *Cognitive Science* 39 (5). 1113–1130.
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- Pickering, Martin J. & Branigan, Holly P. 1998. The representation of verbs: Evidence from syntactic priming in language production. *Journal of Memory and Language* 39 (4). 633–651.