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Temporal and benefactive *for*-phrases prime differently: Evidence against phrase structural accounts of persistence

Introduction

- Speakers tend to parallel linguistic structures in consecutive utterances (= Structural Persistence; Bock, 1986). This phenomeneon is ascribed to priming of representations that are involved in sentence production.

Hypotheses:

- Priming of phrase structural representations (e.g., Bock & Loebell, 1990); for example, of ditrans. constructions (NP V NP PP vs. NP V NP NP)
- Priming of conceptual representations (e.g., Pappert & Pechmann, 2014); for example, of the linearization of thematic roles (theme before recipient or vice versa)

▪ We conducted a structural priming experiment in German to pin down the type of representation that gets primed.

Materials and Procedure

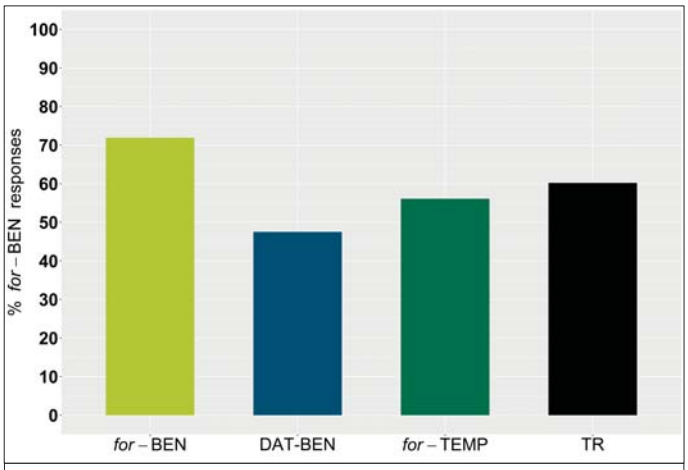
Primes:

for-BEN:	*Der*	*Zirkusdirektor*	*öffnet*	*den*	*Vorhang*	*für*	*den*	*Clown*.
	the.NOM	circus director	opens	the.ACC	curtain	for	the.ACC	clown
	'The circus director opens the curtain for the clown.'							
DAT-BEN:	*Der*	*Zirkusdirektor*	*öffnet*	*dem*	*Clown*	*den*	*Vorhang.*	
	the.NOM	circus director	opens	the.DAT	clown	the.ACC	curtain	
	'The circus director opens the clown the curtain.'							
for-TEMP:	*Der*	*Zirkusdirektor*	*öffnet*	*den*	*Vorhang*	*für*	*zehn*	*Sekunden.*
	the.NOM	circus director	opens	the.ACC	curtain	for	ten	seconds
	'The circus director opens the curtain for ten seconds.'							
TR:	*Der*	*Zirkusdirektor*	*öffnet*	*den*	*Vorhang*.			
	the.NOM	circus director	opens	the.ACC	curtain			
	'The circus director opens the curtain.'							

Target: mieten ('rent') Regisseur ('director') Strandhaus ('beach house') **/** Filmstar ('movie star')

Target Noun Order varied

Results



Percentages of *for*-BEN (vs. DAT-BEN) responses per Prime Structure.

- N_{valid} = 559 (59% *for*-BEN), 24 items, 48 participants
- GLMMs on *for*-BEN (vs. DAT-BEN) responses

- main effects of Prime Structure and Target Noun Order; no interaction

Comparisons of factor levels for Prime Structure:

***for*-BEN**	**≠ DAT-BEN**	**(p < .001)**
***for*-BEN**	**≠ *for*-TEMP**	**(p < .01)**
***for*-BEN**	**≠ TR**	**(p < .01)**
DAT-BEN	≠ *for*-TEMP	(p = .03)
DAT-BEN	≠ TR	(p = .02)
***for*-TEMP**	**= TR**	**(p = .89)**

Discussion

- Participants showed structural persistence in benefactives but they did not parallel *for*-temporals and *for*-benefactives, although those are superficially identical in phrase structure.
- There was no evidence for the additivity of conceptual level and phrase structural priming.
- Thus, the findings speak against an account of structural persistence that relies on priming of phrase structural representations (e.g., Bock & Loebell, 1990; Pickering & Branigan, 1998).
- Approaches are supported that suggest priming at the conceptual level or of the subsequent procedural representations that map conceptual categories to syntactic structure (Pappert & Pechmann, 2014; Baumann, Pappert & Pechmann, submitted).
- In addition, the outcome highlights a division between meaning- and form-related mechanisms in sentence production (cf., Bock et al., 1992).

References

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