
Immediate commitment, but no evidence for a coercion cost, in individual/degree polysemy

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We present two experiments measuring eye movements during reading that investigate the processing of individual and degree interpretations of DPs. We conclude that there is evidence for immediate commitment to a single representation during processing (unlike other types of polysemy, see Frisson 2009), however we fail to find evidence for a cost to processing a dispreferred or potentially semantically enriched representation (unlike other types of semantic coercion, see Traxler et al. 2002).

Rett (2014) shows that DPs have an available degree reading in the appropriate context (e.g., 1), and proposes that these degree readings are related to the canonical individual readings via a null measure phrase operator.

(1) Four/the/many pizzas ...are vegetarian. (*ind.*) ...is too many. (*deg.*)

Experiment 1 tested whether readers commit to a single analysis during real-time processing, and if so whether their preferred interpretation is constant across DP types (definites, numerals and *many*-DPs). We measured reading times on sentence continuations that were compatible with either a degree or an individual interpretation. Our results reveal immediate commitment during processing, although interpretations differ across DP types. With individual continuations, there was an advantage for definite DPs, and with degree continuations, there was an advantage for numeral DPs.

Experiment 2 tested sentences with predicates that require a degree interpretation of the subsequent definite DP (e.g., *increase*) or ones that require an individual interpretation (e.g., *soak*). Eye movement measures fail to show a penalty for processing the definite DP following a degree predicate.

References: • Frisson, S. (2009): Semantic underspecification in language processing. *L&LC*, 3(1): 111-127. • Rett, J. (2014): The polysemy of measurement. *Lingua*, 143: 242-266. • Traxler, M. J., Pickering, M. J., and McElree, B. (2002): Coercion in sentence processing: Evidence from eye-movements and self-paced reading. *JML*, 47: 530-547.

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