
Cleft focus and accessibility: Online vs. offline differences

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Clefting makes a noun more accessible for pronoun reference, but this effect is critically dependent on discourse units (DUs). When the clefted noun appears in the same DU as the pronoun, the boost in accessibility is reversed. This reversal has been dubbed the anti-focus effect [1; 2]. This study investigates whether and how the anti-focus effect emerges during online processing. An eye-tracking experiment was carried out, manipulating the focus type of the first noun phrase (NP1), see (1).

- (1) a. Herr Müller erklärte der Lehrerin am Freitag, dass er nicht mitfahren könne.
'Mr Müller explained to the teacher (fem.) on Friday that he could not come along.'
- b. Es war Herr Müller, der der Lehrerin am Freitag erklärte...
'It was Mr Müller who explained to the teacher (fem.) on Friday...'
- c. Ausgerechnet Herr Müller erklärte der Lehrerin am Freitag...
'Of all people Mr Müller explained to the teacher (fem.) on Friday...'

There was an early advantage for NP1 reference when the pronoun refers to the clefted antecedent, in line with memory accounts of easier retrieval for focused NPs. Later measures, however, did not show a reversal of this pattern. The contrast with the previous offline results and participants' own post-experiment ratings suggests that the anti-focus effect, which is necessary to override the initial advantage for the clefted antecedent, may emerge at a late stage, well after the whole DU has been processed.

References: • [1] Colonna, S., Schimke, S., & Hemforth, B. (2012). Information structure effects on anaphora resolution in German and French: A crosslinguistic study of pronoun resolution. *Linguistics*, 50(5), 991–1013. • [2] de la Fuente, I. (2015, December). *Putting pronoun resolution in context: The role of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in pronoun interpretation*. Université Sorbonne-Paris Cité and Université Paris Diderot – Paris 7, Paris, France.