

Investigating linguistic representations in the structural priming paradigm: The case of adjuncts

Introduction

Structural priming

Branigan and Pickering (2017) claim that **structural priming** (Bock, 1986) may become a source of evidence about **linguistic representations**, thereby replacing introspective judgements.

... of adjuncts

The representation of **adjuncts** is **controversial** (Hole 2015). Attested priming effects might be due to **form similarity** (PPs) and/or to **proto-role similarity** (proto-recipients):

- **Beneficiary PPs** (vs. NPs) prime **recipient PPs** (vs. NPs) (Bock 1989; Pappert & Pechmann 2013).
- **Inanimate goal PPs** prime **animate recipient PPs** (vs. NPs) (Pappert, Baumann, & Pechmann, 2012).

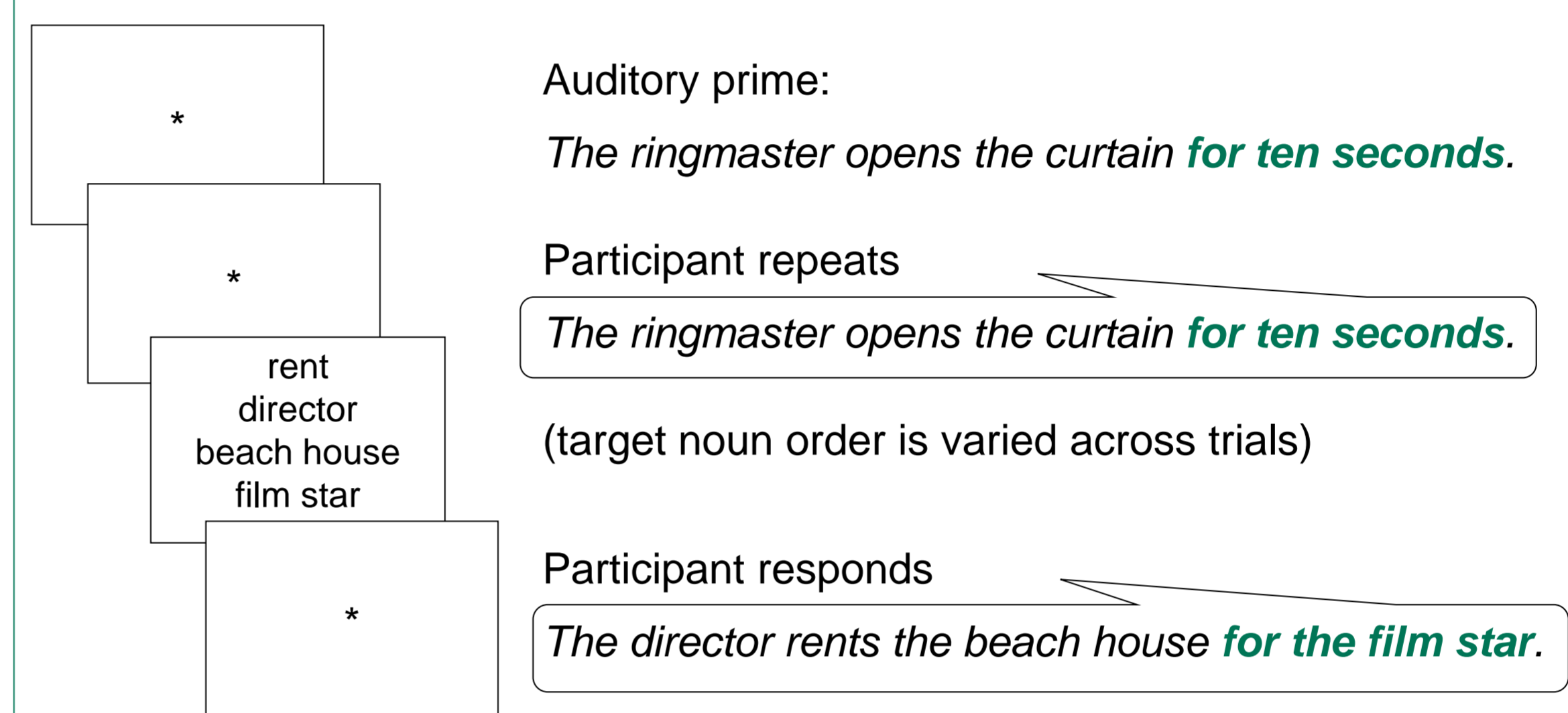
Method

Samples per experiment

48 native speakers of German responded to 24 items.

Sentence generation paradigm

... allowed us to control lexical materials.



Exp. 1: Temporal vs. beneficiary PPs

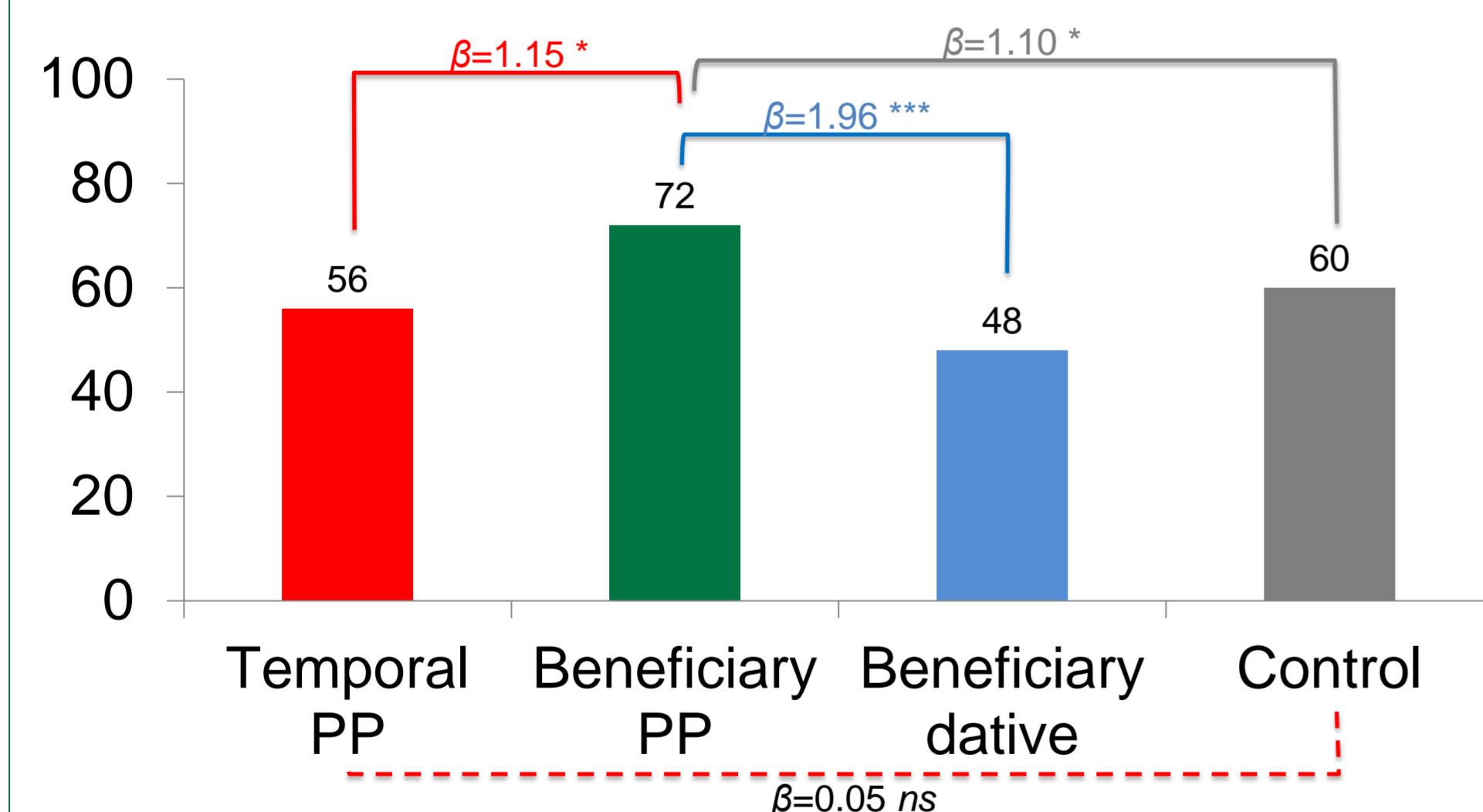
Materials

4 prime conditions, with/out PP vs. dative adjunct:

Temporal PP	Der Zirkusdirektor	öffnet	den Vorhang	für zehn Sekunden.
	the.NOM ringmaster	opens	the.ACC curtain	for ten seconds
Beneficiary PP	Der Zirkusdirektor	öffnet	den Vorhang	für den Clown.
	the.NOM ringmaster	opens	the.ACC curtain	for the.ACC clown
Beneficiary dative	Der Zirkusdirektor	öffnet	dem Clown	den Vorhang.
	the.NOM ringmaster	opens	the.DAT clown	the.ACC curtain
Control	Der Zirkusdirektor	öffnet	den Vorhang.	
	the.NOM ringmaster	opens	the.ACC curtain	

Targets with benefactive alternating between PP and dative

Results (% beneficiary PP vs. ben dat responses)



Discussion

Role dissimilarity (temporal vs. beneficiary) **hinders** priming. Parallels in **phrase structure** (PPs) are **not sufficient** to elicit priming.

Exp. 2: Temporal vs. theme accusatives

Materials

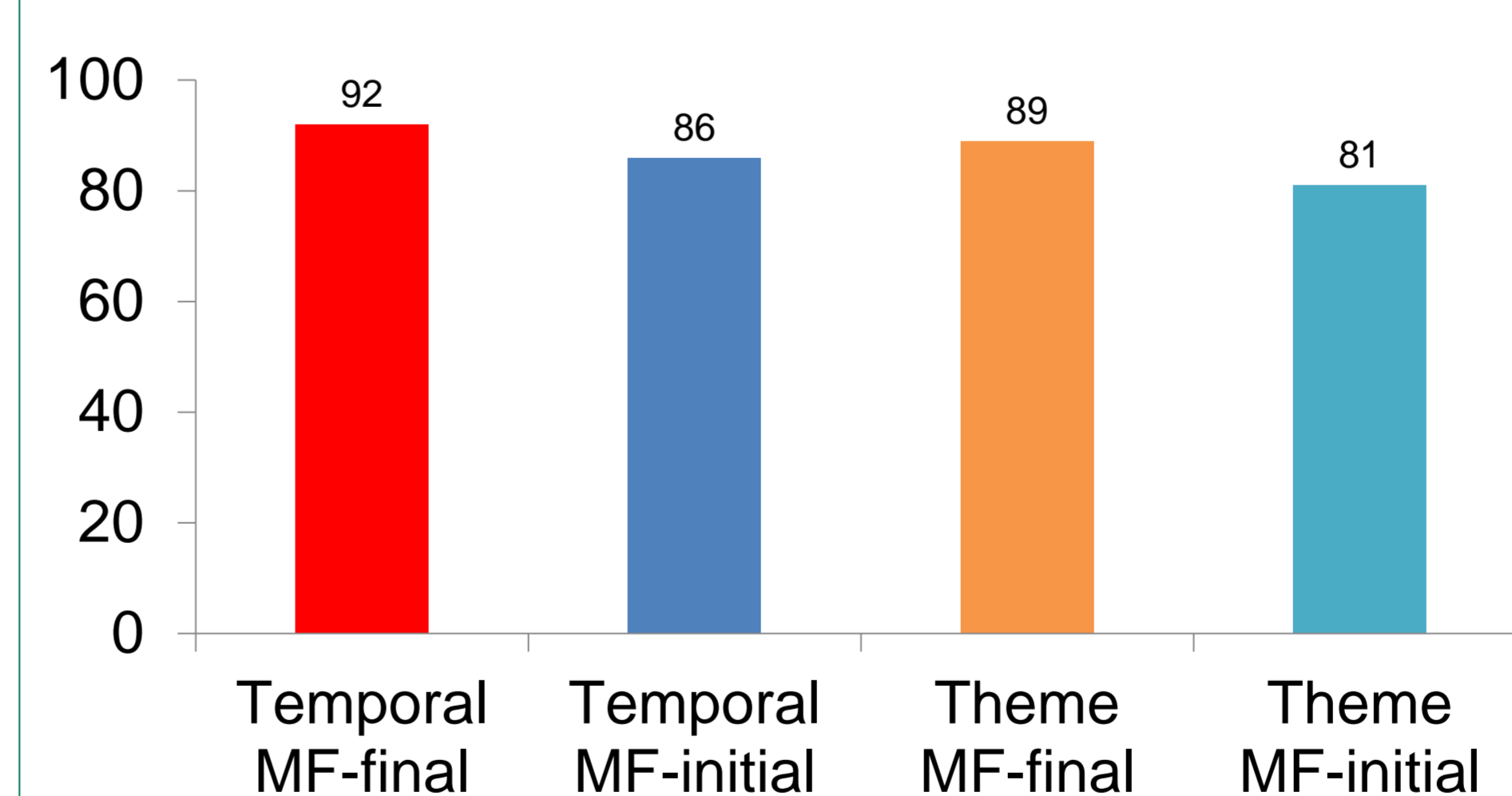
MF: Mittelfeld (here positions after the verb)

4 prime conditions, with accusative adjunct vs. argument:

Temporal MF-final	Der Mechaniker	hilft	dem Lehrling	den ganzen Sommer.
	the.NOM mechanic	helps	the.DAT apprentice	the.ACC whole summer
Temporal MF-initial	Der Mechaniker	hilft	den ganzen Sommer	dem Lehrling.
	the.NOM mechanic	helps	the.ACC whole summer	the.DAT apprentice
Theme MF-final	Der Mechaniker	überreicht	dem Lehrling	den Hammer.
	the.NOM mechanic	hands	the.DAT apprentice	the.ACC hammer
Theme MF-initial	Der Mechaniker	überreicht	den Hammer	dem Lehrling.
	the.NOM mechanic	hands	the.ACC hammer	the.DAT apprentice

Targets with theme and non-alternating dative recipient

Results (% theme MF-final vs. MF-initial responses)



Discussion

Role dissimilarity (temporal vs. theme) **does not hinder** priming. Parallels in **case** are **sufficient** to elicit priming.

- Main effect of **word order/position** (MF-initial vs. MF-medial)

General discussion

The outcome of **Experiment 1** favours the **proto-role** approach.

In **Experiment 2**, **form similarity** (case) turns out to be crucial (even though it does not seem to be a necessary condition of structural persistence, cf. Pappert & Pechmann, 2014).

Conclusions

Does this pattern of results justify the conclusion that there are differences in semantic or syntactic representations?

The **identification of linguistic representations** involved in structural persistence is **not easy**.

References

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