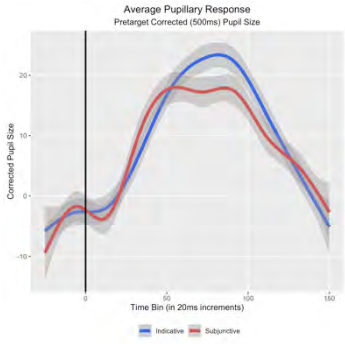
Anticipating a subjunctive clause in Spanish: A pupillometry study

Donnerstag,
05.03.2020
09:30–10:00
ESA1 O 121

Priscila López-Beltrán, Paola E. Dussias
The Pennsylvania State University
Pul57@psu.edu, pdussias@psu.edu

In this study, we use the Spanish subjunctive mood to investigate the human linguistic predictive capacity during spoken language processing in a group of Spanish speakers, using experimental materials derived from natural language usage. The Spanish subjunctive is well suited to investigate predictive processing because the presence of a subjunctive verb in a subordinate clause typically depends on lexical information encoded in the verb (the "governor") in the immediately preceding main clause. Hence, in supportive contexts, speakers should anticipate a verb carrying subjunctive morphology. Seventeen native speakers of Spanish participated in the experiment. Data were collected using an Eyelink Portable Duo eye-tracking system, and the resulting pupillary data were analyzed utilizing Generalized Additive Mixed Effects Models. We employed pupillometry because this technique has been used to study a wide variety of language-related processes. An advantage of pupillometry over other psycholinguistic methods is that it is well suited to study spoken language processing in unrestricted contexts. Because our experimental materials were extracted from oral corpora, the use of pupillometry was ideal as it required no visual information to be present, allowing for less restricted and more naturalistic stimuli presentation. Participants heard a preceding contexts (Table 1) followed by a target sentence in two conditions: In Condition 1 (C1), the subordinate verb was presented in the subjunctive form (licensed condition); in Condition 2 (C2), the subordinate verb was presented in the indicative form (unlicensed condition). In both conditions, the **governor** subcategorized for a verb with subjunctive morphology. Target sentences were designed to be as ecologically valid as possible. To this end, tokens extracted from the *Corpus Sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México* (CSCM) were used as the bases to create the target sentences. As target sentences were designed to be as ecologically valid as possible, tokens extracted from the *Corpus Sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México* [1] were used as the bases to create the stimuli. In addition, all sentences were recorded by a native speaker of Mexican Spanish. We predicted that if participants were immediately sensitive to the lexical constraints encoded in the governor, C1 should be easier to process than C2. The results show just that (Figure 1). These findings suggest that the use of an appropriate method for data collection, along with the incorporation of corpus-based materials in the design of psycholinguistic experiments, can contribute to a predictive processing theory that has greater explanatory adequacy.



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References: Martín Butragueño, P. & Lastra, Y. (2011; 2012; 2015). Corpus sociolingüístico de la ciudad de México. México: El Colegio de México.