

Épreuve orale de linguistique de la Sélection Internationale Lettres **Concours 2018**

Partie 1.

L'interprétation des phrases avec des conjonctions de prédicats pluriels a reçu beaucoup d'attention dans la littérature sémantique. Ces phrases sont parfois interprétées de manière strictement intersective (i), parfois de manière strictement non-intersective (ou "scindée") (ii), et parfois les deux interprétations semblent disponibles (iii).

Ces deux interprétations sont particulièrement évidentes lorsqu'on considère des cas dans lesquels deux prédicats qui peuvent s'appliquer simultanément à un seul individu sont conjoints dans la portée d'un pluriel défini.

Considérez les phrases anglaises (1) et (2) :

- (1) The bears are big and white.
- (2) The bears are big and small.

Question 1 :

Veillez détailler les interprétations des exemples (1) et (2). Est-ce que la portée de la conjonction est différente dans les deux phrases ? Si oui, comment ?

Il a été observé que la disponibilité de ces interprétations est affectée par des propriétés spécifiques des deux prédicats conjoints. Considérez les exemples (3) et (4) :

- (3) The ducks are swimming and flying.
- (4) The ducks are swimming and quacking.

Question 2 :

Que montrent ces exemples ? Quelles sont leurs interprétations possibles ? En comparant les deux phrases, formulez une hypothèse par rapport à ce qui semble affecter la disponibilité d'une interprétation intersective ou non-intersective.

Considérez maintenant les exemples en (5) et (6) :

- (5) The boys are sitting and cooking.
- (6) The boys are sitting and reading.

Question 3 :

Quelles sont leurs interprétations possibles ? Est-ce que ces interprétations sont compatibles avec les hypothèses que vous avez formulées sur la base des phrases (3) et (4) ? Si ce n'est pas le cas, que se passe-t-il en (5) et (6) ? Est-ce que ces phrases vous apprennent quelque chose par rapport à ce qui peut affecter la disponibilité des deux interprétations ? Si oui, dans quel sens ?

Des études développementales sur la conjonction se sont demandé comment les enfants acquièrent une sémantique de la conjonction semblable à celle des adultes, et quand ils deviennent sensibles à la flexibilité de la conjonction (en termes d'interprétations possibles) que vous avez découverte ci-dessus.

Tieu et al. (2017) étudient les connaissances des enfants d'âge préscolaire sur la sémantique de la conjonction des prédicats.

Voici un extrait de leur article:

EXPERIMENT

Our first experiment tested the interpretation of phrasal predicate conjunctions. We used a 2×2 design with group (adults vs. children) as a between-subject factor and compatibility of the conjoined predicates (compatible vs. incompatible) as a within-subject factor. In the remainder of the paper, we will use the label `COMPATIBLE` to refer to the condition in which the conjoined predicates were compatible, and `INCOMPATIBLE` to refer to the condition in which the conjoined predicates were incompatible.

METHOD

Participants

We tested twenty-six English-speaking children (3;02–5;02, $M=4;05$), who were randomly assigned to the two conditions. Seven additional children (mean age 3;09) were tested but were excluded from analysis for failing to score at least % accuracy on control and filler trials (9/12 correct). We decided on this exclusion criterion before data collection began. We also tested twenty-two adult native speakers of English, who were likewise randomly assigned to the two test conditions. All adults successfully passed the control trials.

Procedure

We used a Truth Value Judgment Task (Crain & Thornton, 1998). Participants were presented with a series of cartoon pictures on a laptop computer. Pre-recorded video clips of a puppet watching and playing along with the game created the ruse that the puppet was participating in the game via webcam. A short introduction to each picture was provided, to encourage the child to pay attention to the full set of objects in the picture. The puppet was then asked to describe something about the set of objects. The participant's task was to decide whether the puppet's description was right or wrong. Participants were asked to fill out a scorecard for the puppet. Follow-up justifications were elicited after each response, e.g. "Why was Ellie wrong?" / "How do you know Ellie was right?" Children gave verbal justifications, while adults were asked to write out brief justifications for each of their responses.

Materials

Each participant received two training items. These were simple true and false statements designed to familiarize the participant with the task. Subsequently participants received a

randomized sequence of four target items, eight control items, and four filler items. These items were presented in two orders (one the reverse of the other). The full list of test sentences is provided in the 'Appendix'.

Target items corresponded to sentences containing a plural subject noun phrase and two conjoined adjectival predicates, which were either compatible or incompatible. To create the predicate pairs for the INCOMPATIBLE condition, we selected gradable adjectives that were antonyms. More concretely, two adjectives A and B were considered INCOMPATIBLE if being A entailed being not-B; for example, being 'big' entails being 'not small', and being 'small' entails being 'not big'. For the COMPATIBLE condition, we chose to pair gradable adjectives with color adjectives, in order to ensure that the intersective interpretation was possible, and even natural; the colors were chosen in such a way as to be natural for the relevant objects (for example, brown or white bears, as opposed to pink bears). Notice that the INCOMPATIBLE pairs would fail the entailment test mentioned above: being 'big' does not entail being 'not white', and being 'white' does not entail being 'not big'.

An example image is given in Figure 2; an example trial is described below:



Fig. 2. Image accompanying the INCOMPATIBLE *The bears are big and small* and the COMPATIBLE *The bears are big and white*. The two bears to the left are simultaneously big and brown, and the two bears on the right are simultaneously small and white.

Example test trial (accompanying Figure 2)

Experimenter: What a beautiful day. Look at all the bears on the mountainside! Ellie, can you tell us something about the bears?

a. INCOMPATIBLE condition

Puppet: Hmm . . . the bears are big and small!

b. COMPATIBLE condition

Puppet: Hmm . . . the bears are big and white!

Question 4 :

Quelle est la prédiction pour les deux conditions expérimentales si les participants interprètent les phrases de manière intersective ? Quelle est la prédiction s'ils interprètent les phrases de manière non-intersective (“scindée”) ?

Voici la suite de l'article :

In addition to the target sentences, participants received three kinds of unambiguously true and unambiguously false control sentences, containing a singular subject noun phrase. Participants heard two false control sentences containing a singular subject and incompatible conjoined predicates (only one of the predicates was true of the object in the picture), two false control sentences containing a singular subject and compatible conjoined predicates (again, only one of the predicates was true of the object), and two true control sentences containing a singular subject and compatible conjoined predicates where both predicates were true of the object in the picture. These sentences can be found in the ‘Appendix’.

Finally, to balance the overall number of yes- and no-responses across the experiment, four filler items without conjunction were included, each of which could be associated with a yes- or a no-target.

RESULTS

Both groups displayed above 93% accuracy across the various control and filler conditions. The performance by child and adult participants in the target conditions are presented in Figure 3, plotted as the percentage of yes-responses to the COMPATIBLE and INCOMPATIBLE targets. A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of the compatibility of the conjoined predicates ($F(1,44)=$, $p<0.001$), no effect of group, and no interaction between compatibility and group. Both adult and child participants were significantly more accepting in the INCOMPATIBLE condition than in the COMPATIBLE condition (Tukey HSD, both $p < 0.01$).

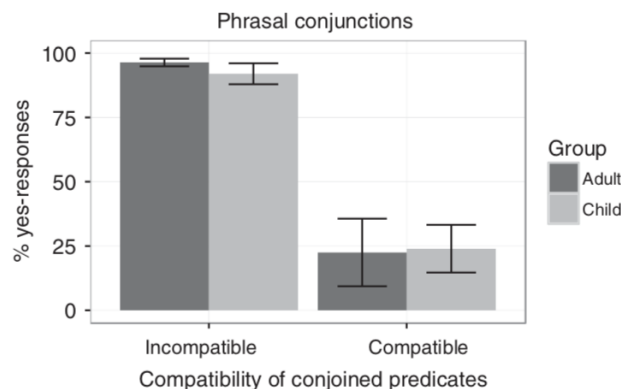


Fig. 3. Percentage of *yes*-responses from children and adults in the phrasal INCOMPATIBLE and COMPATIBLE conditions. *Yes*-responses were indicative of weak readings, and *no*-responses were indicative of strong readings.

Participants were generally consistent in their responses, either accepting or rejecting at least three of four targets. Only four of the twenty-six children gave mixed responses (two yes-responses and two no-responses).

Children and adults gave similar justifications for their responses. These fell into three categories. Recall that yes-responses were indicative of the weaker, split interpretation. Justifications for accepting the INCOMPATIBLE targets indeed made reference to the two subsets of objects that verified the two predicates, e.g. "There are two short pants and two long pants" or "The green ones are tall and the yellow are short".

No-answers were indicative of the strong, intersective reading. Justifications for rejecting the COMPATIBLE targets indeed made reference to the failure of the objects to satisfy both predicates, e.g. "These giraffes are tall but not yellow" or "The bears are big or white, not both".

Finally, those participants who accepted the COMPATIBLE targets gave justifications similar to the justifications participants offered in the INCOMPATIBLE condition, making reference to the two subsets of objects that verified the two predicates, e.g. "Some are round and some are red" or "The grizzly bears are big, the polar bears are small".

Question 5 :

Que révèlent les résultats de l'expérience ?

Que suggèrent-ils en ce qui concerne la "connaissance du monde" ("world knowledge") des enfants à propos des propriétés associées ?

Question 6 :

*Considérez maintenant ce que vous aviez observé pour les phrases (5) et (6) ci-dessus, ainsi que votre réponse à la **Question 3**.*

À la lumière de l'expérience présentée ci-dessus, comment feriez-vous pour tester comment les enfants interprètent ces phrases et si leur interprétation diffère de celle des adultes ? Quelles conditions expérimentales et quels stimuli choisiriez-vous, et pourquoi ?

Quelles sont les différentes prédictions que vous pourriez formuler? Considérez ce qu'elles révéleraient et ce qu'elles suggéreraient par rapport à la connaissance du monde des enfants à propos des propriétés associées.

Partie 2.

Dans cette seconde partie de l'exercice, nous nous intéressons à la conjonction dans un cadre plus large (c'est-à-dire que nous laissons de côté le problème spécifique des prédicats pluriels).

Observez ces phrases :

(7) Marie chante et danse.

(8) Marie chante et Marie danse.

(7) et (8) sont logiquement équivalentes.

- (9) Une linguiste chante et danse.
(10) Une linguiste chante et une linguiste danse.

Question 7 :

(9) et (10) ne sont pas logiquement équivalentes. Montrez-le.

La théorie de la coordination appelée “Réduction de la conjonction” (“Conjunction Reduction Theory”) veut que “et” ait un type sémantique stable dans toutes les constructions ; une version forte de cette théorie tient que “et” coordonne toujours des phrases (sémantiquement, une phrase est un élément dont la dénotation est de type t, autrement dit, une valeur de vérité) ; il existe, selon cette vue, des réajustements syntaxiques qui donnent l’illusion de coordination entre des éléments autres que des phrases, comme en (7).

Question 8 :

Qu’est-ce que la comparaison entre (6)-(7) et (8)-(9) suggère à propos de l’analyse de la coordination et en particulier, de cette théorie de la réduction de la conjonction ?

Considérez :

- (11) Peu de gens achètent un téléphone et une coque de protection.

Question 9 :

Comment cette phrase (11) peut-elle être utilisée pour argumenter pour ou contre la théorie de la réduction de la conjonction ?

Considérez :

- (12) Jean refuse de visiter quelque pays d’Europe que ce soit et quelque pays d’Asie que ce soit.

Question 10 :

Comment cette phrase (12) peut-elle être utilisée pour argumenter pour ou contre la théorie de la réduction de la conjonction ?