

The Common Ground is not enough: Why Focus-sensitivity matters for Presupposition triggers

EXPERIMENTS IN LINGUISTIC MEANING - SEPTEMBER 16-18, 2020

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The Big Picture

- Presupposition triggers are heterogeneous class
 - soft vs hard (Abusch 2010)
 - entailing vs non-entailing (Sudo 2012)
 - weak vs strong (Glanzberg 2005, Tiemann 2014)
 - lexical vs resolution (Zeevat 1992, ...)
 - anaphoric vs non-anaphoric (Kripke 2009, Beck 2007)
 - ...

The Hypothesis

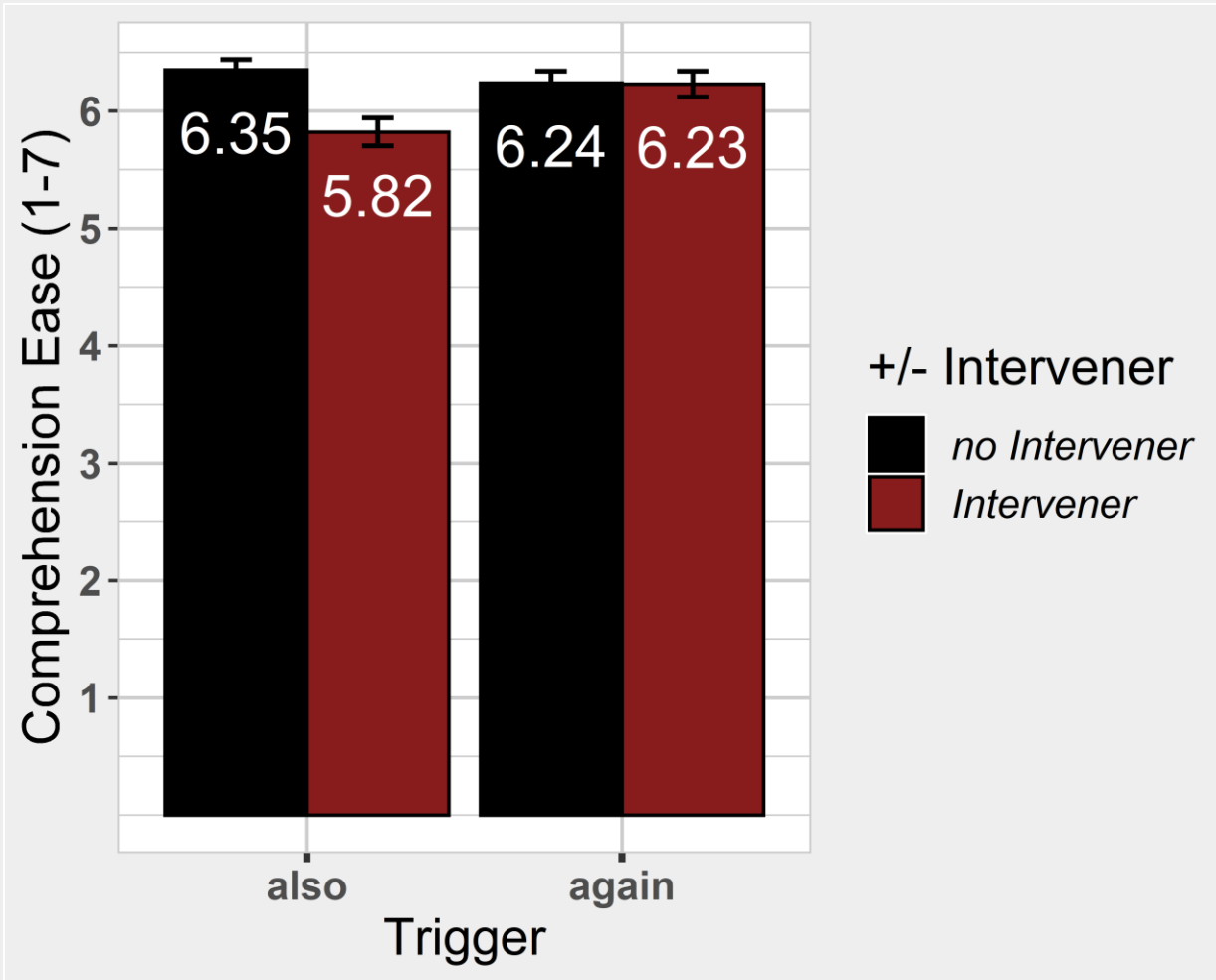
- Present work investigates role of Focus-sensitivity

Focus Presupposition Antecedent Hypothesis (FoPAH)

-FOCUS-sensitive: *Common Ground entailment*

+FOCUS-sensitive: *Antecedent in Discourse Model*

- *Two experiments testing two predictions of FoPAH*



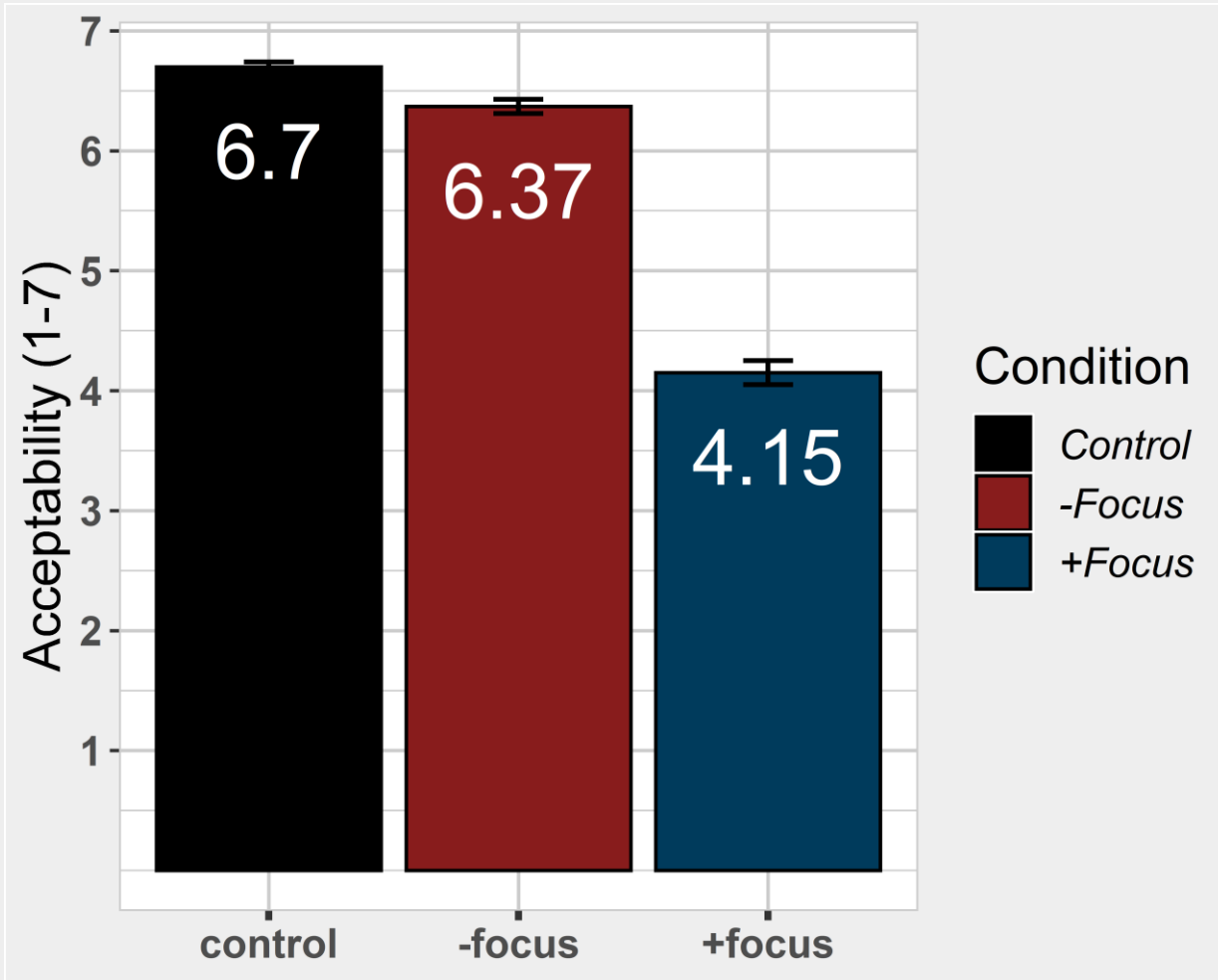
Experiment 1

Sample Item & Rating Results

A_1 : When did Robert leave for school on Tuesday?
 B_1 : He left the house around 8am.

(A_2 : *When did he leave on Thursday?*
 B_2 : *He got a stomach ache and stayed home.*)

A_3 : When did he leave on Friday?
 B_{3a} : He **also** left the house around 8am on Friday.
 B_{3b} : He left the house around 8am **again** on Friday.



Experiment 2

Sample Item & Rating Results

A: Who is having dinner in New York tomorrow?

B: Saul is having dinner in New York. CONT

B: Saul is having dinner in New York **again**. -FOC

B: Saul is having dinner in New York **too**. +FOC

other trigger-pairs:

still/even, back/at least, continue/only

Takeaways

- Main findings, supporting hypothesis:
 - 1) +FOCUS subject to interference, -FOCUS is not
 - 2) +FOCUS harder to accommodate than -FOCUS
- *Same kind of meaning (=PSPs) accesses distinct representations, depending on other property (=Focus-sensitivity)*
- *Novel contrast btw. again & also/too, which pattern together in previous distinctions (e.g. Abusch)*