Background

- Language users are often repetitive
  - They repeat referring expressions (Brennan & Clark, 1996)
  - They repeat syntactic structures (Bock, 1986; Branigan, Pickering, & Cleland, 2000)
- Why repeat?
  - Repeated terms understood faster than novel ones when used by old conversational partner (Metzing & Brennan, 2003)
  - No effect when used by new partner
  - Suggests repetition is communicatively beneficial
  - Collaborative approach (Clark, 1996)
  - Repeating referring expressions reinforces shared perspective of communicative partners
  - Alignment model (Pickering & Garrod, 2004)
- Present study
  - Does repetition of syntactic structures increase communicative efficiency too?
  - Investigate communicative benefit through production-to-comprehension priming

Experiment 1

Participants: 48 UCSD students

Materials:
- 72 object pictures (Szekely et al., 2004)
- Targets had multiple acceptable names (e.g., couch/sofa)
- 96 syntactic pictures
- Targets described dative relationships (e.g., giving)

Design:
- 48 lexical and 48 syntactic trials; half filler

Discussion:
- Main effects of Task and Repetition
- Bigger repetition benefits on lexical trials and from human partners
- Lexical trials: Repetition benefits for both old and new partners
  - Not partner-specific
  - Syntactic trials: Repetition benefit only for old partner, none for new partner
  - Equivocal support for partner-specificity

Experiment 2

Motivation for Experiment 2:
- Are repetition benefits partner-specific?
- Collaborative accounts: Yes; conceptual pacts
- Alignment accounts: No; automatic priming

Participants: 48 UCSD students

Materials: Same as Experiment 1

Design: Same as Experiment 1, with one difference
- On half of trials, target description provided by new ‘partner’ (computer) instead of old partner (confederate)

Discussion:
- Main effects of Task and Repetition
- Bigger repetition benefits on lexical trials and from human partners
- Lexical trials: Repetition benefits for both old and new partners
  - Not partner-specific
  - Syntactic trials: Repetition benefit only for old partner, none for new partner
  - Equivocal support for partner-specificity

Experiment 3

Motivation for Experiment 3:
- Possible confound in Experiments 1-2: Participants chose their own referring expressions
  - "Repetition benefit" could just be a preference benefit

Participants: 48 UCSD students

Materials: Same as Experiment 1

Design:
- 2 experimental sessions, one week apart
- Session 1: Determine participants’ preferences
  - Participants presented with every lexical and syntactic picture one at a time; described each
  - Descriptions coded, used to determine target descriptions on Session 2 preference-only trials
- Session 2: Assess priming and preference benefits
  - ‘Partner’ always computer
  - Prime trials: Same as in Experiment 2
  - Target descriptions based on what participant just said
  - Preference-only trials: Targets not preceded by primes
  - Target descriptions based on what participant said in Session 1

Discussion:
- Main effects of Task and Repetition
- Repetition benefit for both referring expressions and syntactic structures
  - Post hoc: Syntactic repetition benefit not due to individuals’ or verb-specific PD/DO preferences
  - Task x Repetition interaction - Greater benefit for lexical than syntactic repetition

Experiment 4

Motivation for Experiment 4:
- Experiment 2 new-partner syntactic trials identical to Experiment 3 syntactic prime trials
- Different results! E2: No repetition benefit; E3: repetition benefit

Participants: 48 UCSD students

Materials: Same as Experiment 1

Design: Same as Experiment 3 syntactic trials

Discussion:
- Syntactic repetition benefit even with new partner

General Discussion

- Linguistic repetition confers a real and measurable benefit for listeners
  - Not partner-specific
  - Cannot be reduced to preference effects, though they do exist
  - Repeating a single act of production can cause a comprehension benefit
  - Supports the interactive-alignment model (Pickering & Garrod, 2004)

References


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