

Task effects on the lexical boost effect in structural priming

Roger van Gompel

University of Dundee, Dundee, United Kingdom

Laura Wakeford

University of Abertay, Dundee, United Kingdom

Leila Kantola

Ume University, Ume, Sweden

Abstract

Four structural priming experiments investigated the lexical boost effect in structural priming. In two experiments, we tested whether repeating the subject in prepositional object or double object ditransitive structures boosted structural priming. In two other experiments, we manipulated the repetition of the verb. Repetition of the subject noun affected structural priming, but only when the prime remained visible while participants produced the target sentence. In contrast, repetition of the verb boosted priming regardless of whether participants could see the prime and target simultaneously. We conclude that the subject noun repetition effect is more strategic in nature than the verb boost effect. Structures are automatically associated with the verb, their syntactic head, whereas repetition of the subject noun only affects priming if the presentation method makes the repetition highly explicit.