UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Processing non-maximal readings of sentences with plural definites

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0538r54s

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 47(0)

Authors

Bernard, Ang □ le
Maldonado, Mora

Publication Date

2025

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Processing non-maximal readings of sentences with plural definites

Angèle Bernard
Nantes Université/CNRS, Nantes, France

Mora Maldonado
CNRS/Nantes Université, Nantes, France

Abstract

Sentences with plural definites like 'the circles' are usually interpreted akin to universally quantified sentences (maximal reading). In some circumstances, however, they also allow for non-maximal readings, i.e imprecise readings that allow for exceptions. We report two mouse-tracking experiments that investigate the online derivation of these non-maximal in- terpretations of plural definites. Our results show that non- maximal readings are harder to process than maximal interpre- tations. This difficulty seems to be associated to hesitation in the decision-process rather than to a truly two-step derivation. Interestingly, we also find that experimental setup plays an im- portant role in the availability and difficulty linked to these readings.

In D. Barner, N.R. Bramley, A. Ruggeri and C.M. Walker (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 47th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* ©2025 the author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).