

Production Experiments and Morphosyntactic Representations in Slovenian

In this talk, I will discuss work with Lanko Marusic and Bill Badecker that looks at verbal agreement with conjoined noun phrase subjects, such as /erasers-fem.pl and pens-neuter.pl were sold/, in Slovenian, a language with three genders and three numbers. The research consists of four parts:

Experiment 1: Effects of Mixing Genders

Experiment 2: Effects of Directionality

Experiment 3: Effects of Mixing Numbers

Experiment 4: The Curious Case of 5&Ups

I demonstrate that the grammatical option of agreeing with only a single conjunct -- even in preverbal position -- is robustly attested, and propose that it arises (ontogenetically and phylogenetically, so to speak) due to the ambiguity in the paradigm created by syncretisms. This single-conjunct agreement is usually optional, but is (a) impossible when inconsistent with the number of the conjunction as a whole, and (b) forced when the conjunction as a whole has no number, due to the presence of numerically quantified noun phrases, such as "5 cars".