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## Discourse contextualisation affects referring expression choice

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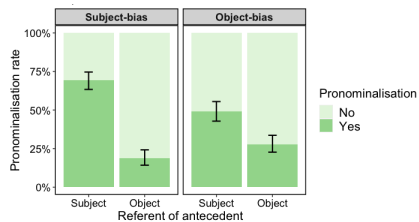
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Theories of referring expressions highlight the role of predictability on reference choice: more predictable elements should be pronominalised with higher probability (e.g., Arnold, 2008). However, experimental evidence for this is mixed. This inconsistency may be in part due to the myriad of factors that have been examined, from linguistic (e.g., verb biases) to methodological (e.g., nature of paradigm). In particular, passage completion tasks, where participants continue a story based on a sentence prompt, have been criticised for being removed from naturalistic discourse production, potentially limiting predictability effects.

In three experiments, we manipulate a range of factors identified by previous studies: verb type, antecedent gender ambiguity, antecedent length, and naturalness of context (see Demberg, Kravtchenko & Loy, 2023 for full details). Our main finding points to naturalness of context as the sole factor influencing predictability effects on reference choice. When the paradigm was modified to use longer, story-like narratives embedded within a thematic context (e.g., a fantasy setting), we observed a predictability effect such that subject and object antecedents were pronominalised more often with subject-biasing and object-biasing verbs respectively ( $\beta=1.44$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Crucially, this task was closer to natural language production than traditional passage completion tasks, suggesting that the rich, story-like contexts allowed speakers to develop stronger discourse representations, leading to better conceptual integration of sentences and a stronger bias towards selecting pronouns.



The thief was resting in the woods when he heard a rustling nearby. The healer was returning from the market with a fresh batch of magical herbs. The thief followed the healer through the woods. Subsequently, ...



**References:** • Arnold, J. E. (2008). Reference production: Production-internal and addressee-oriented processes. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 23(4), 495–527. • Demberg, V., Kravtchenko, E. & Loy, J. E. (2023). A systematic evaluation of factors affecting referring expression choice in passage completion tasks. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 130, 104413.