

BRIDGING AND DISLOCATION

BACKGROUND. In its original formulation [1], bridging is described as a strategy for accommodating the given-new structure in cases where the given content is given for the speaker, but it is not for the hearer (i.e. it is discourse-old and hearer-new in the terminology of [2]). A standard case is the following:

(1) In the group there was one person missing. It was Mary who left.

In the cleft in (1), the speaker takes as given “X left”, but this information is not provided in the previous discourse: we only know that “X was missing”. Hence, the hearer is required to build a bridge from the latter given information to the former.

This general conversational strategy, which Clark links to Grice’s conversational implicatures [3], is pervasive in language, but it figures prominently in the realm of dislocation structures, under different labels: inferrable topics [4], poset relations [2, 5, 6], or monotonicity [7]. Despite terminological differences, it is commonly assumed that the conditions for allowing bridging phenomena are less strict in the case of left-dislocation (LD, henceforth) than in the case of right-dislocation (RD, henceforth). In this paper we test this hypothesis experimentally in Catalan, a language with a high frequency of dislocations. Our goal is to determine which information functions of LDs and RDs are better suited for encoding different bridging phenomena, and particularly whether speakers’ judgments meet the received view.

EXPERIMENT. We designed a judgment task with two dislocation types (LDs and RDs) and seven bridging types: Hyponym (*fruit-watermelon*), Set Membership (*Italian cities-Florence*), Epithet (*John-that idiot*), Necessary Part (*train-wagon*), Inducible Part (*kitchen-coffee maker*), Optional Role (*death-murder*), and Necessary Role (*murder-murderer*). (2) shows an example for the Hyponym type with a RD.

(2) Avui he menjat fruita de postres. Me l’ he acabada tota, la síndria.

Today have eaten fruit for dessert. Me it have finished all, the watermelon.

‘Today I’ve eaten fruit for dessert. I have eaten it all, the watermelon.’

Two counterbalanced randomized lists were prepared with 42 target items (= (3 sentences with LD + 3 sentences with RD) × 7 bridging types) and 40 fillers. Since the experiment was posted in the web (Survey Monkey), it was preceded by a language proficiency questionnaire and a brief instruction section. 168 native Catalan speakers completed the experiment, in which they had to rate the acceptability of every item in a 7-point Likert scale.

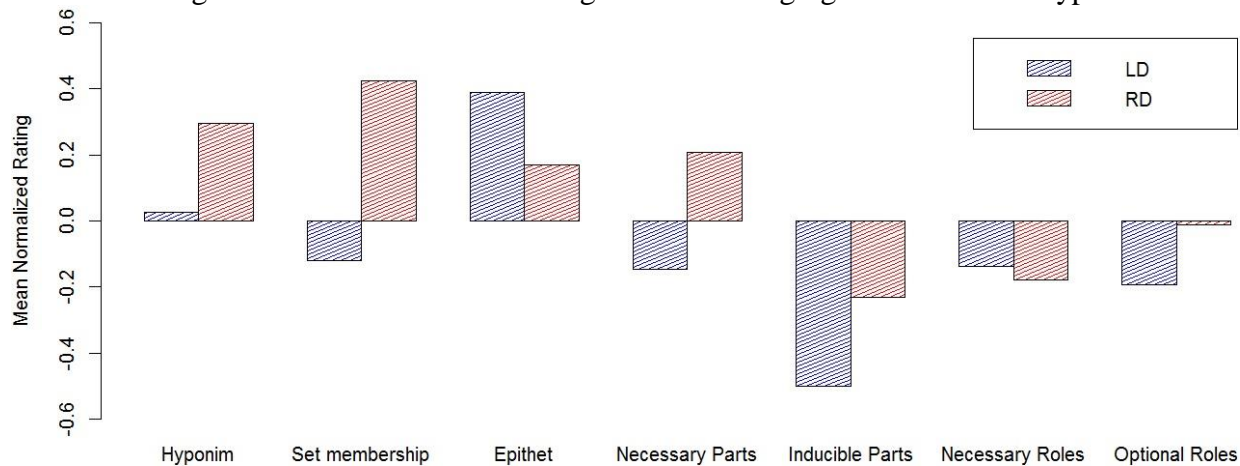
RESULTS. Mean normalized z-score ratings for each bridging and dislocation type can be seen in Figure 1. We processed standard t-tests comparing LD and RD for each bridging type, which showed a significant effect ($p < 0.05$) for Hyponym, Set Membership, Epithet, Necessary Part, Inducible Part, and Optional Role, but not for Necessary Role ($p = 0.4976$). In all the cases where a significant effect was found, RD rated higher, with the exception of Epithets, where LD was rated higher. We also compared related bridging types and found significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between Necessary Parts vs. Inducible Parts (both for LDs and RDs) and between Necessary Roles vs. Optional Role for RDs (but not for LDs).

DISCUSSION. The results do not confirm the received view on dislocation and bridging. While, it is clear that LD and RD are clearly perceived as different for all categories, with the exception of Necessary Roles, the preferences are always on the RD side, which was predicted to have a narrower distribution, with one sharp exception: Epithets. The case of Epithets is particularly

striking for it instantiates a subcase of identity, which has been argued to favour RD ([4, 8, 9]). Moreover, the cross-category comparison also shows an unexpected pattern. Whereas the difference between Necessary Parts and Inducible Parts is significant for both LD and RD, the difference between Necessary and Optional Roles is only significant for RD, against expectation.

All in all the data show that Catalan speakers can use RD for a wider range of uses than previously assumed (e.g. [10-12]).

Figure 1. Mean normalized ratings for each bridging and dislocation type.



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