

Abstract

Structural (or syntactic) priming is an effect in which exposure to a particular syntactic structure facilitates processing of a subsequent structure that has the same structure. This effect is observed in comprehension - we process a sentence more quickly if we have previously heard a sentence with the same structure - and in production - we are more likely to produce a sentence with a structure we have recently perceived. The syntactic priming effect is used in research to help us understand psycholinguistic questions about how our brains process language. But it is also used in studies that address linguistic questions about the representational structure of language, and is thus an important phenomenon that bridges several areas of research.

The primary aim of this dissertation was to replicate the results of structural priming in Czech. Most of the research in this area has been conducted in English, but other languages have also been included to some extent. However, this study is the first to confirm the priming effect in Czech.

This thesis presents 6 experiments focusing on different aspects of structural priming. The influence of working memory, social interaction, as well as the enhancing effects of levels of language other than syntax (repetition of lexical and morphological units) are described. In particular, this work focuses on the supporting effect of case-marking morphemes of nouns. Probably the most important finding is that the repetition of case-marking morphemes between 2 primed sentences can increase the priming effect. This finding suggests that the morphological and structural levels of language do not operate in isolation but may interact, at least to some extent. The limitations of the results and their further implications are discussed in detail in the text.

Key words:

inflectional morphology, speech production, structural priming, syntax