**A morphological cue beats a semantic constraint in Turkish agreement attraction**

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**Background**

Recent work suggests that illusory ‘agreement attraction’ in comprehension reflects a cue-based retrieval repair process. Specifically, agreement attraction effects model error-driven retrieval of plural agreement attraction.

But does repair involve computing syntactic agreement between the retrieved plural attractor and the verb? Or is it a shallower process that is wholly satisfied by retrieval itself? Turkish has the answers—because of how number interacts with animacy.

The key to the cabinets were on the table.

**The countries is**

• Some basics on Turkish agreement:
  - In Turkish, plural subjects can optionally (and somewhat preferentially) take singular agreement on the verb (see Bamyaci, Hauser, & Kázi, 2014).
  - However, Turkish speakers still show agreement attraction, albeit reduced, in comprehension (Lago, 2016).
  - Critically, in Turkish, only animate plural nouns take plural verbal agreement— inanimate take singular agreement.

Our question: Can an inanimate plural act as an attractor, making an ungrammatical singular subject—plural verb sentence more acceptable—even though it doesn’t take plural agreement itself?

**Animate Attractor**

- Even though inanimate plurals take singular verbal agreement, animate and inanimate plural attractors produced similar rates of attraction in ungrammatical sentences, suggesting that agreement repair involves retrieval only, and not syntactic licensing of verb number with the attractor.

**Results**

- We observe a standard agreement attraction profile across the board: ungrammatical sentences with plural attractors were accepted more than their counterparts with singular attractors, resulting in a significant interaction of grammaticality with attractor number (p<.05).

- Animacy of the attractor did not significantly modulate the size of attraction effects (p=.8), which was ~14% for the animate and ~9% for the inanimate attractors.

**Discussion**

• Even though inanimate plurals take singular verbal agreement, animate and inanimate plural attractors produced similar rates of attraction in ungrammatical sentences.

  - The online repair process for subject-verb agreement in Turkish comprehension does not appear sensitive to animacy despite its status as a grammatical constraint on agreement.

  - Animacy is not used as a cue for retrieval, perhaps because it is not as reliable and easily detectable as the plural morpheme itself, which is formally similar (e.g., the same plural morpheme –Ar) on both subject and verb in Turkish.

**Conclusion**

• Repair is satisfied simply by successful retrieval of a noun + plural chunk from memory. As a result, inanimate nouns drive illusions of grammaticality as well as animate nouns.

• These data provide novel support for the ‘shallow repair’ hypothesis, suggesting that agreement repair involves retrieval only and not syntactic licensing of verb number with the attractor.

The winner is the plural marker.

**Future Work**

• Adding an adverb between the subject and the verb to allow more time to think over the grammaticality of the sentence could drive deeper processing strategies involving syntactic licensing?

• Investigating attraction in the comprehension of advanced L2 speakers of Turkish who already disregard this animacy constraint in their production.