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Syntactic and Semantic Agreement in Russian

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our[masc] doctor[masc] (syntactic agreement)
наш врач



our[masc] doctor[masc] (syntactic agreement)

наш врач

our[fem] doctor[masc] (semantic agreement)

наша врач

Agreement hierarchy (Corbett, 1979)



Russian gender e.g. “vrach” (doctor): morpho-syntactically masculine noun referring to female individual

Attributive	Predicate	Relative pronoun	Personal Pronoun
...our[masc] doctor	...doctor was[masc]	...doctor who[masc]	... doctor ... *he
...our[fem] doctor	...doctor was[fem]	...doctor who[fem]	... doctor... she

ATTRIBUTIVE

Semantic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна - **наша** врач из больницы №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna (is) **our[fem]** doctor from hospital number 7.

Syntactic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна - **наш** врач из больницы №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna (is) **our[masc]** doctor from hospital No.7.

PREDICATE

Semantic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна **была** врачом в больнице №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna **was[fem]** (a) doctor at hospital number 7.

Syntactic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна **был** врачом в больнице №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna **was[masc]** (a) doctor at hospital number 7.

RELATIVE PRONOUN

Semantic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна - врач, **которая** принимает в больнице №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna (is a) doctor **who[fem]** works at hospital No.7.

Syntactic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна - врач, **который** принимает в больнице №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna (is a) doctor **who[masc]** works at hospital7.

PERSONAL PRONOUN

Semantic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна - врач, **она** принимает в больнице №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna (is a) doctor; **she** works at hospital No.7.

Syntactic agreement

Татьяна Ивановна - врач, **он** принимает в больнице №7.

Tatyana Ivanovna (is a) doctor; **he** works at hospital No. 7.

Web-based acceptability rating...

Нина Александровна - фельдшер, которая знает всех в районе.

(абсолютно неприемлемо)

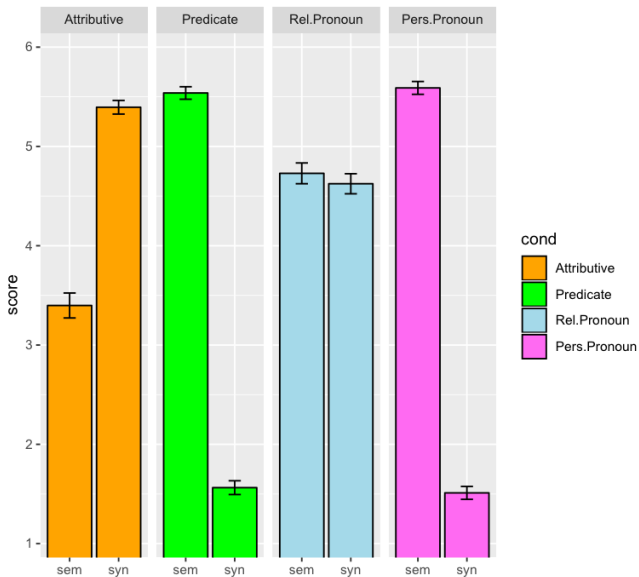
<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>
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(абсолютно приемлемо)

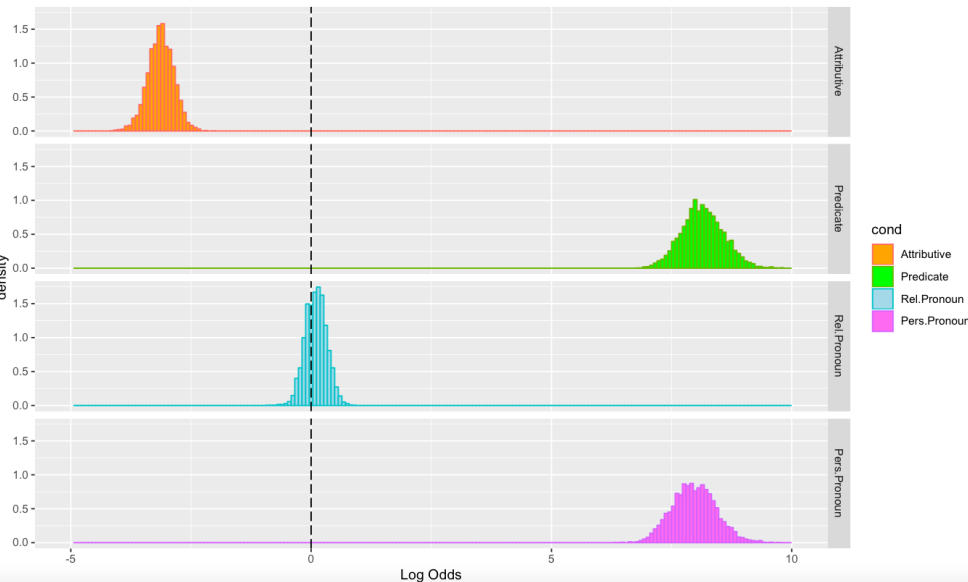
Выберите ответ при помощи мышки, или используйте клавиши 1-2-3-4-5-6 на клавиатуре.

- 120 Participants
- 48 Experimental items (2×4 design)
- 24 Filler (“baseline”) items
- Bayesian mixed effect ordinal regression

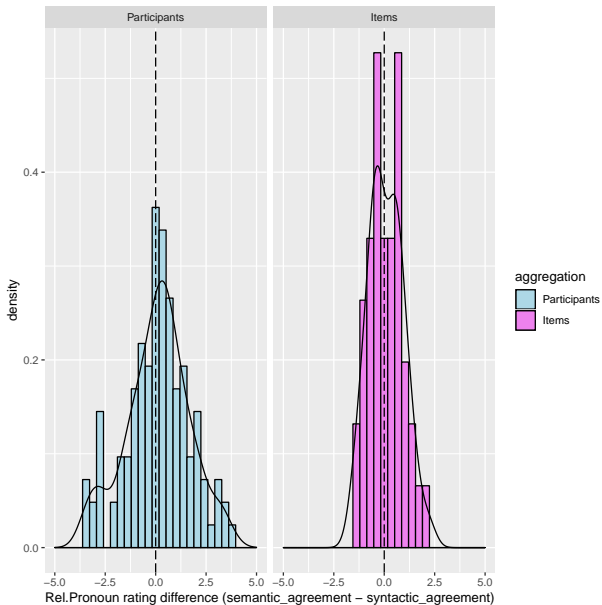
Experimental items: Mean ratings



Bayesian posterior distributions (Experimental items)



Relative pronoun preference distribution



- For human referents: gender agreement either via semantic features of the discourse referent or formal features of the lexical item
- Across 3 dependency types (excluding predicate), preferences for semantic vs. syntactic agreement follows agreement hierarchy
- Future studies:
 - Why is the hierarchy as it is? e.g. role of structural/linear distance?
 - role of stereotypes?

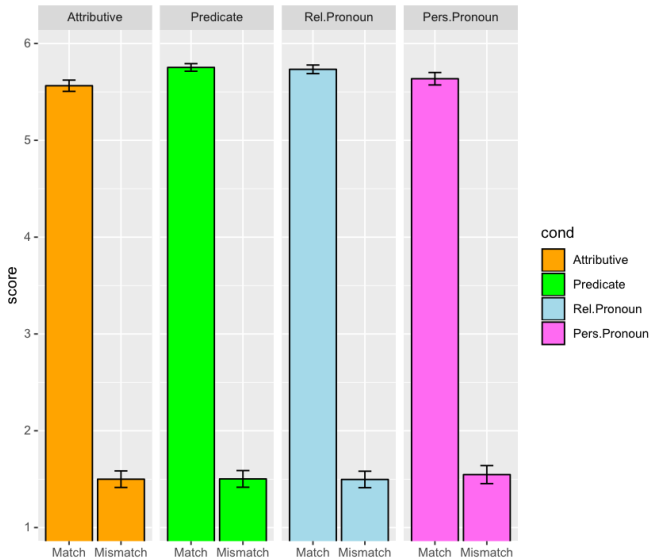
Why did predicate condition show semantic agreement preference?

Incremental processing?

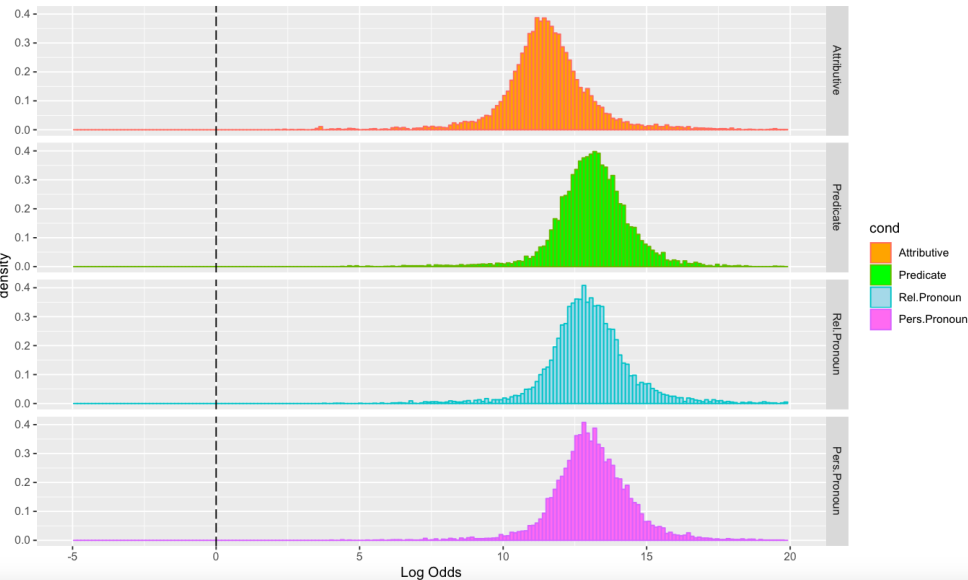
- Tatyana Ivanovna was[fem] doctor
- Tatyana Ivanovna was[masc] doctor

⇒ Introduce the female character using a picture in next experiment

Means for Baseline items



Bayesian posterior distributions (Baseline items)



Fillers included 24 items like experimental items, but with male name:

ATTRIBUTIVE (adj/noun agreement)

Борис Александрович - **наша**/**наш** программист из управления.

Boris Aleksandrovich (is) **our[fem]**/**our[masc]** programmer from the department.

No conflict between semantic and syntactic gender:

- Masculine agreement = match
- Feminine agreement = mismatch