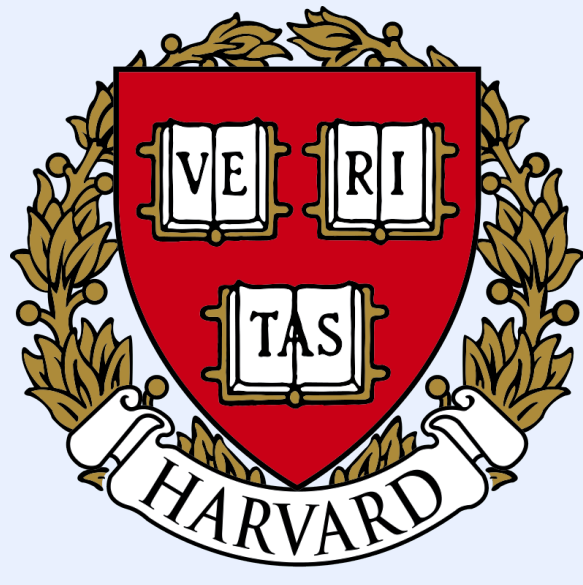


How anaphoric are presupposition triggers? Evidence from cataphora



Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox*, Roger P. Levy⁺, Kathryn Davidson*

* Harvard University, Department of Linguistics ⁺ MIT, Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences



Introduction:

- **Presuppositions** are the parts of sentences that are *backgrounded* and seemingly *non-novel*
- Introduced by lexical items called **presupposition triggers**

Bridgette_F dances tango, **too** ↷

Presupposes that someone (other than Bridgette) dances tango

Two Theories for Presuppositions:

Presuppositions as Anaphors (Kripke, 2009, Zeevat, 1992)

- Presuppositions must be bound by material in the discourse context
- Strongest form: “Presuppositions are only different from pronouns ... in that they have more descriptive content” (van der Sandt, 1992)

Presuppositions as Satisfaction Conditions (Heim 1983)

- Presuppositions impose restrictions on the context in which an utterance can be evaluated
- The context must entail an utterance’s presupposition

How like anaphors are presuppositions?

- Compare presuppositions to anaphors via the case of pronominal **cataphora**

Whenever she_i dances tango, Bridgette_i has to concentrate.

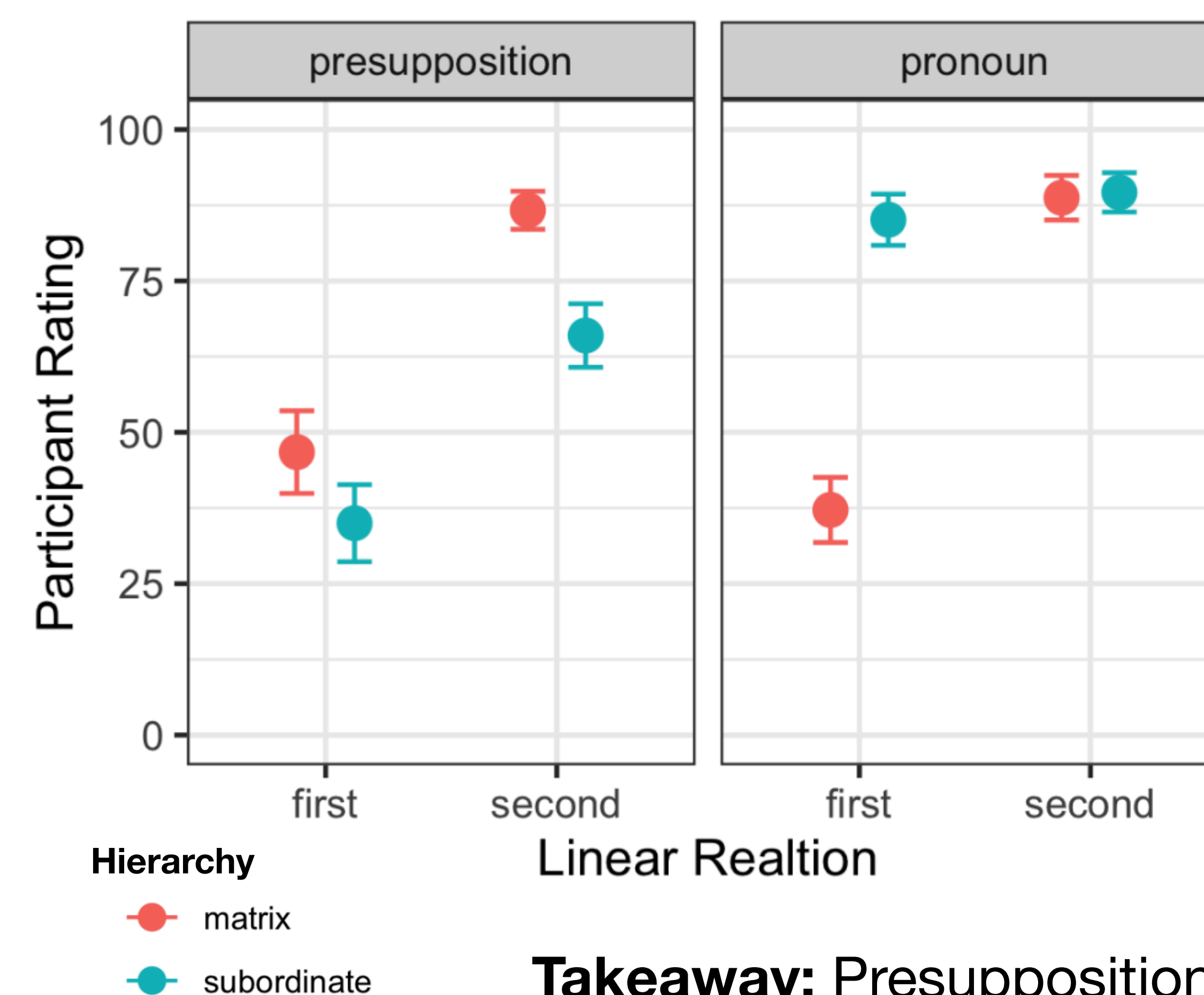
Experiment

- Manipulate **linear** and **hierarchical** relationship between pronoun/presupposition trigger and its supporting material
- Sentence acceptability judgement experiment
- 50 participants recruited on Prolific; 20 target items, 19 filler items

Pronouns	Pronoun Linearly First	Pronoun Linearly Second
Pronoun in Matrix Clause	She has to concentrate, whenever Bridgette dances tango.	Whenever Bridgette dances tango, she has to concentrate.
Pronoun in Subordinate Clause	Whenever she dances tango, Bridgette has to concentrate.	Bridgette has to concentrate, whenever she dances tango.

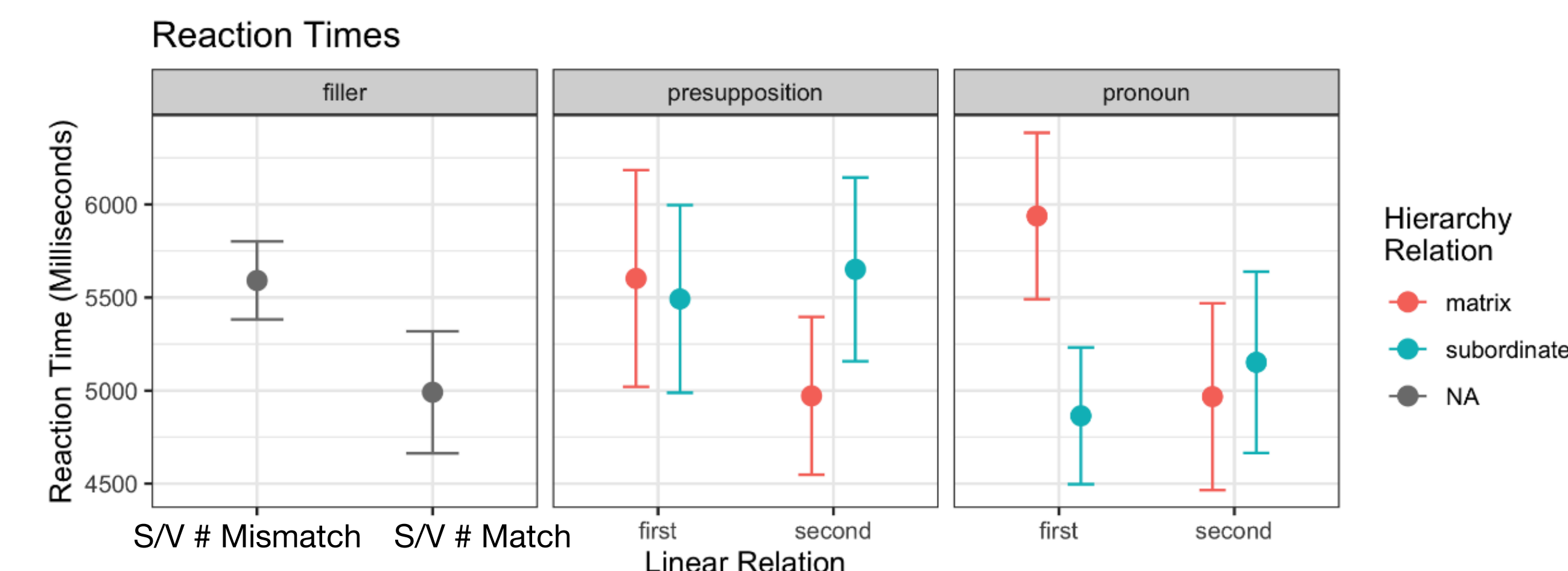
Presuppositions	Trigger Linearly First	Trigger Linearly Second
Trigger in Matrix Clause	Bridgette dances tango too, whenever Javier dances tango.	Whenever Javier dances tango, Bridgette dances tango too.
Trigger in Subordinate Clause	Whenever Javier dances tango too, Bridgette dances tango.	Bridgette dances tango, whenever Javier dances tango too.

Results (acceptability ratings)



Takeaway: Presuppositions & Pronouns pattern differently.

Results (response times)



- Comparison to subject/verb number mismatch sentences reveals processing time differences

Discussion:

For Pronouns:

- Participants do not require active antecedents at the moment pronouns are encountered
- Co-reference can be resolved globally, as in the case with cataphora

For Presuppositions:

- Participants require presupposition of “too” to be supported at the time it is processed.
- Violation of this local effect cannot be salvaged, even if subsequent material supports the presupposition

Additional Evidence for Dissimilarity

A storm blows down a fence at a farm and some of the animals escape. Two farmers survey the damage.

Farmer 1: “Only six out of the ten chickens are back in the coop”

Farmer 2:
 (a) #**They** are down by the creek.
 (b) The cow is missing, **too**.

- Pronoun cannot refer to the four missing chickens, while presupposition is supported by the context