

## The interaction of factors facilitating displacement to the left periphery

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Hypothesis: Factors licensing left peripheral placement of foci are not additive, i.e. the acceptability of a sentence should be determined only by the stronger factor when two aspects of interpretation would license the leftward displacement of a focus.

Based on: Skopeteas & Fanselow’s (2011) finding that object fronting does invoke an exhaustive interpretation for predictable objects and does not for unpredictable objects.

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### Experiment 1: the effect of predictability in non-contrastive contexts

- (1) C: Was hat der Bürgermeister heute Vormittag gemacht?  
‘What did the mayor do this morning?’
- a) Der Bürgermeister hat einen Brief geschrieben.  
the mayor has a letter written  
‘The mayor wrote a letter.’
  - b) Einen Brief hat der Bürgermeister geschrieben.
  - c) Der Bürgermeister hat einen Fahrplan geschrieben.  
the mayor has a schedule written  
‘The mayor wrote a (train/bus) schedule.’
  - d) Einen Fahrplan hat der Bürgermeister geschrieben.

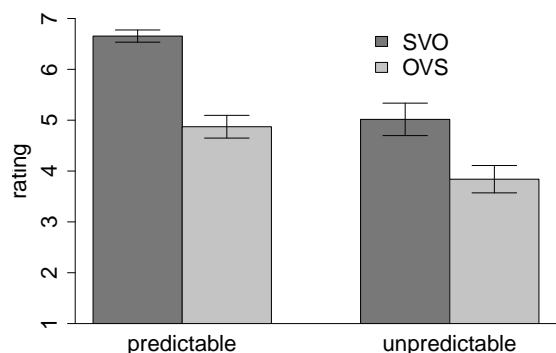


Figure 1: mean ratings with 95% CI

word order	predictability	mean (SE)
SVO	high	6.65 (0.06)
OVS	high	4.87 (0.11)
SVO	low	5.02 (0.16)
OVS	low	3.84 (0.13)

Table 1: mean ratings, SE in brackets

Significant main effects ( $p < 0.001$  for both *word order* and *predictability*), and a significant interaction ( $p = 0.006$ ) according to a mixed model with random intercepts for subjects and items.

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## Experiment 2: the effect of predictability in contrastive contexts

- (2) C: Alle denken, dass der Bürgermeister eine Rede geschrieben hat. Fritz vermutet aber:  
*‘Everybody thinks that the mayor wrote a speech. Fritz, however, assumes:’*
- a) Der Bürgermeister hat einen Brief geschrieben.  
the mayor has a letter written  
*‘The mayor wrote a letter.’*
  - b) Einen Brief hat der Bürgermeister geschrieben.
  - c) Der Bürgermeister hat einen Fahrplan geschrieben.  
the mayor has a schedule written  
*‘The mayor wrote a (train/bus) schedule.’*
  - d) Einen Fahrplan hat der Bürgermeister geschrieben.

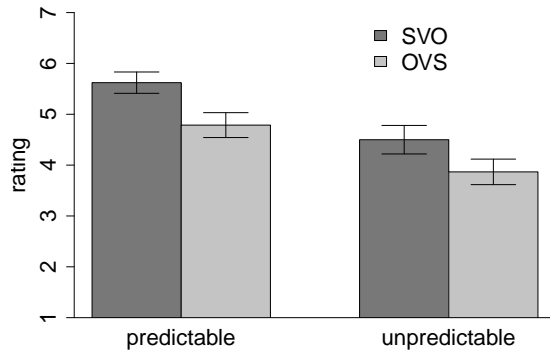


Figure 2: mean ratings with 95% CI

word order	predictability	mean (SE)
SVO	high	5.62 (0.10)
OVS	high	4.79 (0.12)
SVO	low	4.50 (0.14)
OVS	low	3.87 (0.13)

Table 2: mean ratings, SE in brackets

Significant main effects ( $p < 0.001$  for both *word order* and *predictability*), no significant interaction ( $p = 0.40$ ) according to a mixed model with random intercepts for subjects and items.

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Our interpretation of the results: Low predictability has a facilitating effect on object fronting in the absence of other facilitating factors. Overt contrast is a stronger facilitating factor and thus makes the effect of predictability vanish.

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## References

Skopeteas, Stavros, and Gisbert Fanselow. 2011. Focus and the exclusion of alternatives: On the interaction of syntactic structure with pragmatic inference. *Lingua* 121:1693–1706.