**Morpho-syntactic cues for distributivity in Serbian**

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**Background**

- Numerically quantified sentences have two prominent interpretations: collective (1a) and distributive (1b).

1a. Collective

1b. Distributive

- English and Serbian acceptance rates are significantly different:

![Graph showing differences in acceptance rates between English and Serbian](image)

- Serbian has several types of numerals and it shows a subject-verb agreement mismatch in environments with numerically quantified expressions. These factors may account for the disparity in English and Serbian child and adult results.

**Serbian mismatch**

- Paucals (numerals 2.3 and 4) + paucal case
- Tri klovna vs. *Tri klovova
- Three, plural case
- Troje dece vs *Troje deteta
- Three, mixed-gender numerals show verbal agreement mismatch (allow both sg and pl):

![Graph showing naturalness study](image)

- Four. Troje dece drži/žene kutiju.

Three. *mixed children gen.pl hold.sg /hold.pl box.acc

"Three children are holding a box."

**Methods**

- Two Truth Value Judgment Task
- 2x2 study, 24 items & 24 control items x 4 lists, balanced design

**Results**

- General observations from the models are that adults are significantly less likely to choose distributive pictures matched with either singular (sg) or plural (pl) verb than children, and less likely to choose singular verbal agreement.

- Neither experiment showed significant correlations between verbal agreement and collective/distributive interpretations.

**Discussion**

1) Adults understand numerically quantified sentences without distributive markers as scalar/conversational implicatures.

- Since there is a better alternative to convey a distributive message (using each, or in the case of Serbian – a distributive marker po), numerically quantified sentences must be collective. (Pagliarini et al, 2012)

2) Some children had a problem to interpret singular indefinite objects as conceptually plural. This was a motivation to reject distributive pictures in the Paucl experiment, which contrasts current empirical and theoretical data.

**Future work:**

- Hypothesis: complex morpho-syntactic system of Serbian is loading children’s working memory, and it is affecting the processing of such ambiguous sentences.

- Proposed test: unloading the working memory will change children’s choices and make them more adult-like.

- Following Van Rij et al, (2009) – slowed-down speech rate

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**References**