
Gender agreement with engineers, teachers and artists: an eye-tracking study

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Abstract

We tested masculine/feminine verbs following feminine/masculine or bigendered nouns in Italian with eye-tracking in reading. We show that masculine verbs are overall more accepted than feminine, and that the cost of gender mismatch is greater when a feminine verb follows a masculine noun than vice versa. This effect cannot be reduced to frequency and is consistent with the use of generic masculine in Italian. For bigender nouns, gender bias partly affects the agreement process and disruption effect is stronger when a female verb follows a male-biased bigender noun. We discuss our findings within the debate about gender-fair and gender-inclusive language.

Keywords: gender agreement, inclusive language, eyetracking

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