

## Interpretation of ambiguous pronouns in Russian: canonical and non-canonical word order

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The interpretation of ambiguous pronouns is controversially discussed. Three main strategies include i) First mention: pronouns co-refer with the NP which was mentioned first (Gernsbacher & Hargreaves 1988), ii) Subjecthood: pronouns co-refer with the subject NP (Crawley et al. 1990), iii) Parallelism: subject pronouns co-refer with the subject NP and object pronouns co-refer with the object NP (Smyth 1994, Chambers & Smyth 1998, cf. Gagarina 2010).

Previous eye-tracking studies showed – in English and Finnish – a preference for the syntactic role and parallelism in the pronoun resolution; data come from two and a half year old children and adults (reference). The results of the other study on English showed that participants interpret ambiguous pronouns as referring to the first mentioned (subject) character of the preceding sentence (Arnold et al. 2000, Song & Fisher 2005, Song & Fisher 2007, Hartshore et al. 2011).

Kaiser & Trueswell (2008) studies anaphora resolution in adults with native language Finnish. Participants were tested with short narratives containing SVO or OVS sentence structures and personal pronouns “HÄN” (H/SHE). The results showed that adults preferably interpret the subject pronoun “HÄN” as referring to the subject in sentences with canonical (SVO) and non-canonical (OVS) word order. This results supports the subjecthood account. Pyykkönen & Järvikivi (2010) conducted another study on adult Finnish. Participants saw pictures while listening to two-sentence stories with canonical word order (SVO). The results showed that after the pronouns “HÄN” and “HÄNET” participants preferred to look at the subject. This provides evidence for the subject preference in the pronoun resolution.

**Aim:** The study aims to find out the impact of word order (non/canonical) and pronoun type (subject/object pronoun) on anaphor resolution in children acquiring a language with a flexible word order (Russian).

**Method:** A *visual world paradigm* (eye-tracking) with 5-year old monolingual TD and SLI Russian speaking children (in St. Petersburg) and adults were used. 2x2 design: third person masculine pronoun in a subject/object ON/EGO) in the canonical SVO word order and non-canonical word order OVS (table (1)).

Word order	Sentences
SVO	Тигр видит льва. ОН зовет жирафа. <i>The tiger sees the lion. HE calls the giraffe.</i>
SVO	Тигр видит льва. ЕГО зовет жираф. <i>The tiger sees the lion. HIM calls the giraffe.</i>
OVS	Льва видит тигр. ОН зовет жирафа. <i>The lion{OBJ} sees the tiger {SUBJ}. HE calls the giraffe.</i>
OVS	Льва видит тигр. ЕГО зовет жираф. <i>The lion{OBJ} sees the tiger {SUBJ}. HIM calls the</i>

<i>giraffe.</i>
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Table (1)

**Results:** The experimental data showed an influence of word order on the interpretation of ambiguous pronouns in adults and TD children. A clear discrepancy between the preferential looking in TD and SLI children was found. TD children showed a clearer preference to look at the subject or the object referent, whereas in SLI children exhibited no preference for either of the referents.

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