'This text is called an abstract'
An empirical investigation of referring uses of nouns in name-informing quotation

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Language / Mind / Brain

Quotations in name-informing constructions (NIC) often contain an article, see (1a), indicating a referring use of the quoted nominal. This is unexpected given that in metalinguistic quotation (e.g., Saka 1998) articles are generally blocked, see (1b).

(1) a. This phenomenon is called "sun halo" / **a** "sun halo".
    b. "Sun halo" / ***A** "sun halo" has two syllables.

As argued in Härtl (2020), the referring use of the quoted nominal in NICs can be explained based on the assumption that the verb in a NIC introduces an (identificational) copular relation: to call y "n" entails that y is an n.

Research objective

➢ Referentiality: Is a quoted nominal used with an article in a NIC "more" referential than when used without an article?

➢ Evidence: What empirical evidence can be used to test this?

Previous studies

Corpus data: Use of quotation marks

Nominals in a NIC were found more prone to be used with quotes when accompanied by an article. This can be interpreted as a compensating mechanism to emphasize the metalinguistic status of the mentioned expression in this case.

Acceptability judgement

Participants were presented NIC with compounds as target words. Items with an article in front of the expression were regarded significantly better. These results once again point to the referentiality of the nominal mentioned in a NIC.

Self-paced reading study I

Is anaphoric resolution sensitive to referring uses of nominals in NICs? We hypothesized reading times for anaphors to differ between the two alternatives.

(2) a. Man nennt die Erfindung (**einen**) **Eierbecher**$_i$. *'One calls this invention (an) egg cup.'*
    b. Mittlerweile verwandelt sich **dieser**$_i$ jedoch in einen Staubfänger
    'By now however, it [demonstrative] transforms into a dust collector.'

Participants: 32 German native speakers, undergraduates from Kassel university
Procedure: word-by-word self-paced reading at language lab, E-prime software
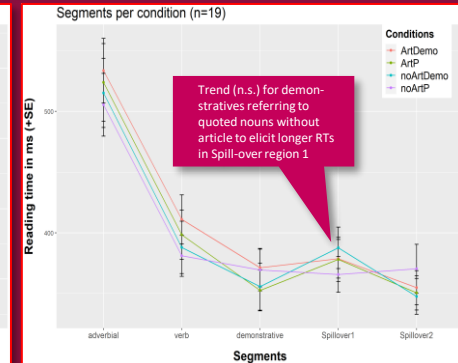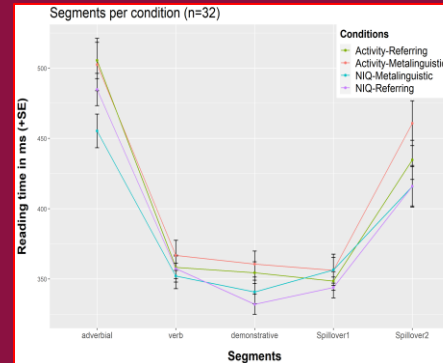
Material & Conditions

• 48 fillers and 32 critical items
• Endocentric compounds as target words
• 2x2: CONSTRUCTION TYPE (NIC vs. activity) REFERENTIALITY (+article vs. –article)

Results

Study I yielded a main effect for CONSTRUCTION TYPE, RTs for the demonstratives presented in a NIC were read significantly faster
Study II yielded no sign. effects

Self-paced reading study II

In a follow-up, we mostly kept the design and material used in Study I. The independent variable used were REFERENTIALITY (+article vs. –article) and ANAPHORA TYPE (demonstrative vs. pronoun). Spill-over regions were controlled to allow for comparison. In the process of data collection.

Trend (n.s.) for demonstratives referring to quoted nouns without article to elicit longer RTs in Spill-over region 1

Conclusion

➢ Offline data suggest a referential difference between nominals used with article and without article

➢ No systematic support in online data (SPR) – only a tendency is observed w.r.t. demonstratives referring to nouns without article

➢ We conclude that both uses share one semantic representation

Härtl, Holden. 2020. Referring nouns in name-informing quotation: A copula-based approach. In Michael Franke, Nikola Kompa, Mingya Liu, Jutta L. Mueller & Juliane Schwab (eds.), *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 24 – Vol. 1*. U Osnabrück / HU Berlin, 291–304.
Saka, Paul. 1998. Quotation and the use-mention distinction. *Mind* 107 (425), 113–135.