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Abstract:

The theory of concept types and determination (Löbner, 2011) posits that noun concepts can be classified into four concept types (CT) with corresponding preferred determiner types: *sortal* (a stone) + indefinite, *individual* (the sun) + definite, *relational* (his ear) + possessive, and *functional* (his father) + possessive. If a given concept is combined with an incongruent determiner, it is shifted to the respective type: *a stone* (sortal) – *his stone* (relational). Our behavioral work on CT-shifts (Brenner, 2015) demonstrated an overall facilitatory CT congruence effect ('the sun' is processed faster than 'his sun') that we assumed to be triggered by a facilitation of post-lexical NP construction.

Based on our previous results we predicted that a CT shift should not be perceived as a syntactic or semantic violation. We tested this prediction in two ERP studies employing a memory task (1) and a wellformedness judgment task (2). The processing of congruent and incongruent CTs (e.g. *the sun* vs. *his sun*) was compared to the processing of morphosyntactic and semantic violations in control conditions. Whereas the control conditions elicited classic electrophysiological violation responses (N400, LAN, & P600), CT-incongruences, as predicted, did not. Instead they showed a novel response pattern that needs further investigation.

Our findings suggest that the difference between CT-congruent and CT-incongruent determination is not perceived as a violation of the semantic or morphosyntactic structure of the determiner phrase. The reported novel effect rather indicates that it is easier to build up and interpret a CT-congruent NP.