

Elliptical appendices of relative clauses (EARs)

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The story I'm going to tell

- Observation: remarkable relative clauses in German
- Question: output of mental grammar or systematic mistake?
- Hope: low acceptance
- Test: pseudo response time experiment
- Surprise: high acceptance!
- Question: see above...
- Answer: pro grammar, contra performance



The observation:

Chance finds from German edited texts

Nachrichten [...], die man schaudernd liest
news REL.ACC.PL one with a shudder reads

und (***man**) dabei dieses unendliche Grauen
and (*one) at the same time this infinite horror

doch nicht begreifen **kann**
yet not comprehend can

(KulturSPIEGEL, no. 2/2011, p. 38)

‘news that one reads with a shudder and yet cannot comprehend this infinite horror’

obligatory
subject gap

+

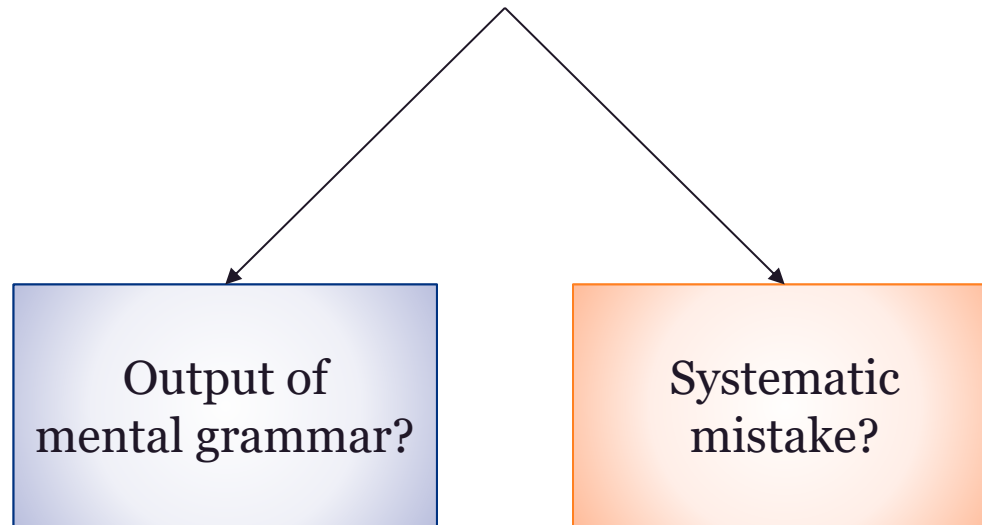
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EAR

The question

...die... und dieses Grauen nicht begreifen kann



The problem and the hope

- Criterion for being an **output of mental grammar?**
 - **Acceptability not necessary:** garden path structures
 - **Acceptability not sufficient:** grammatical illusions (Haider 2011)
- But:
 - EARs presumably too peculiar to qualify as garden paths
 - EARs hopefully too poorly accepted to qualify as illusions

The test

- Usual problem of acceptability judgement tasks: participants biased by education
- My attempt at a solution: pseudo response time experiment
 - Task: tell apart **real** from **mock** German sentences accuracy presupposed
 - Purported research question: How **quick** are you? speed emphasized
- Technically: matching task with (real) measurement of response times at <https://www.soscisurvey.de/>

The test: Design



The test: Design

4 structural types of stimuli

- EARs from sample
- AC: asymmetric coordination (Reich 2009)
≈ V2 + V1 with obligatory subject gap
- DC1: deep coordination type 1
surface structure that can be analysed as coordination low in the clause (type 1 = below subject)
- DC2: deep coordination type 2
see above (type 2 = below non-subject, with potential subject gap)

acceptability baselines

4 conditions

| | [+ conj.] | [- conj.] |
|-------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| [+] subject | | double-check subject gap |
| [-] subject | | |

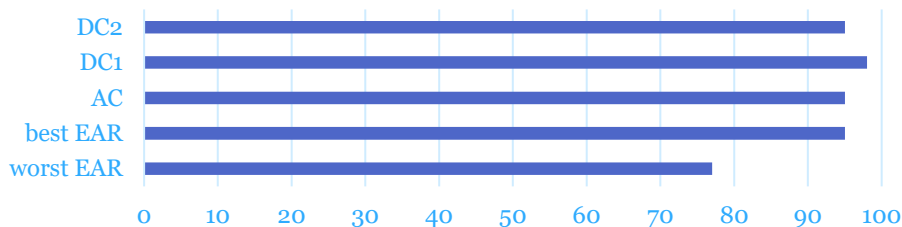
explore syndesis as a factor for coordination acceptability

Total numbers

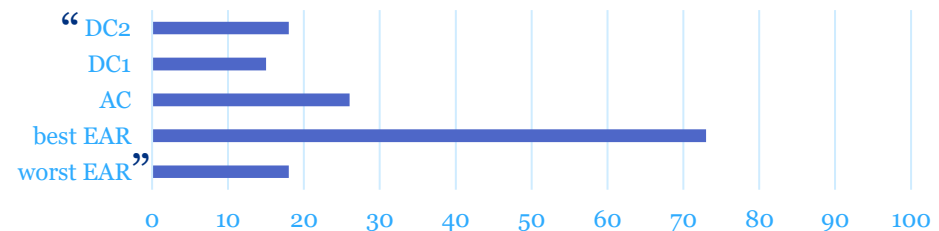
5 EARs * 4 conditions + 1 AC * 4 conditions
+ 1 DC1 * 4 conditions + 1 DC2 * 4 conditions
= 32 target items, judged by 103 participants

The test and **the surprise**: Results (accumul.)

[- subject], [+ conj.] acceptance rate



[+ subject], [+ conj.] acceptance rate



n.s.

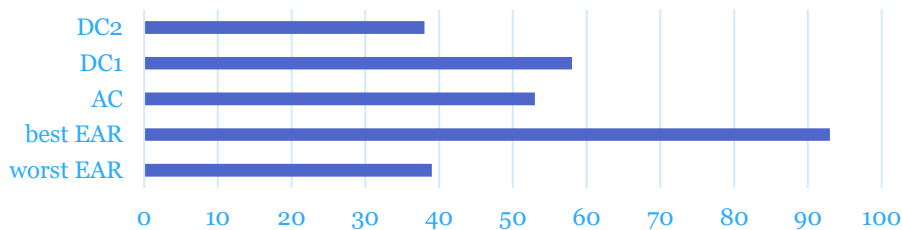
| | AC | worst EAR |
|---------|----|-----------|
| + conj. | 95 | 77 |
| -conj. | 53 | 39 |

X-squared = 0.057856, df = 1, p-value = 0.8099

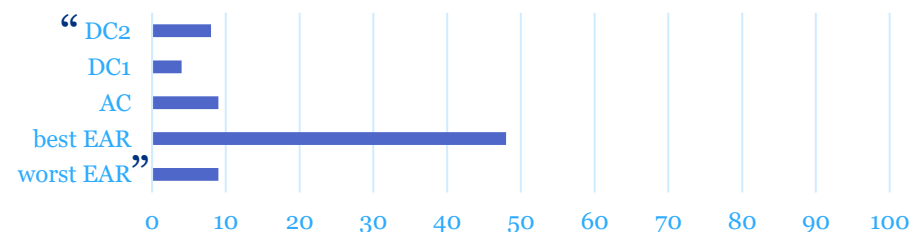
**syndesis >
structural
type**

**subject gap
indeed obligatory**

[- subject], [- conj.] acceptance rate



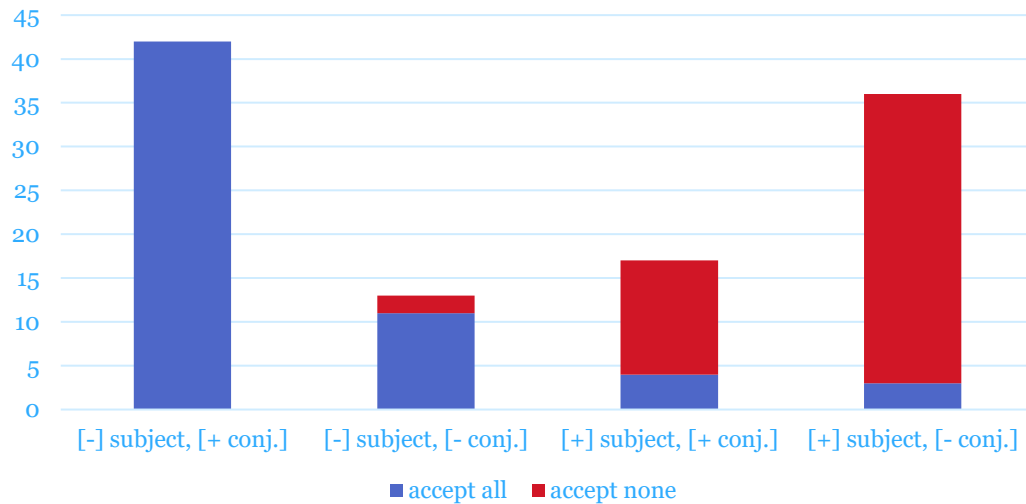
[+ subject], [- conj.] acceptance rate



EARs are not bad 😊

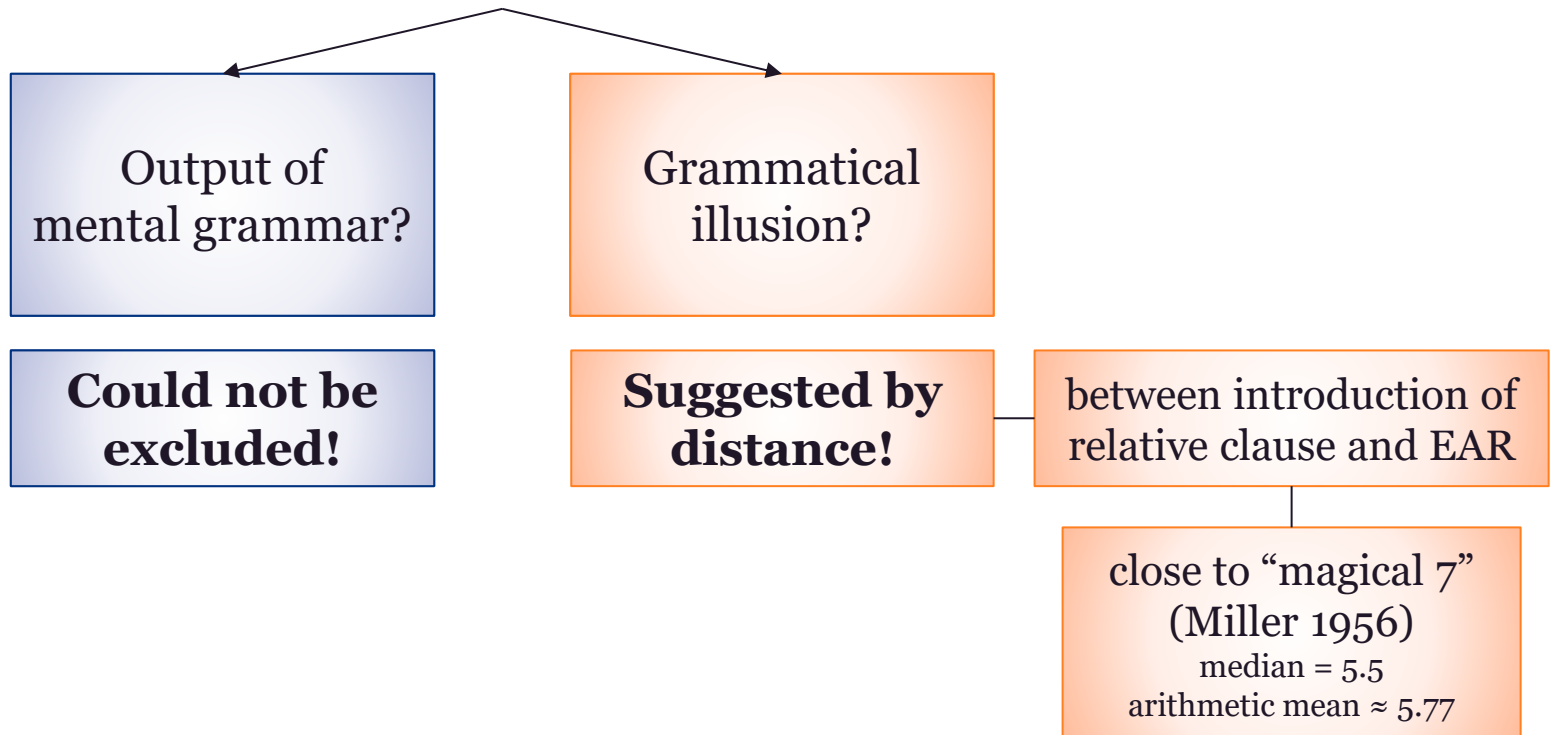
The test and **the surprise**: Results (individ.)

Individual consistency in judging EARs
& EARs with forced subjects




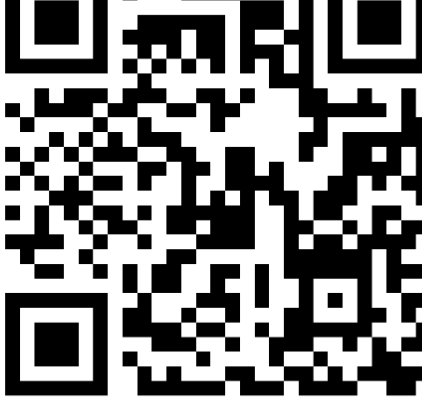
The question again

...die... und dieses Grauen nicht begreifen kann



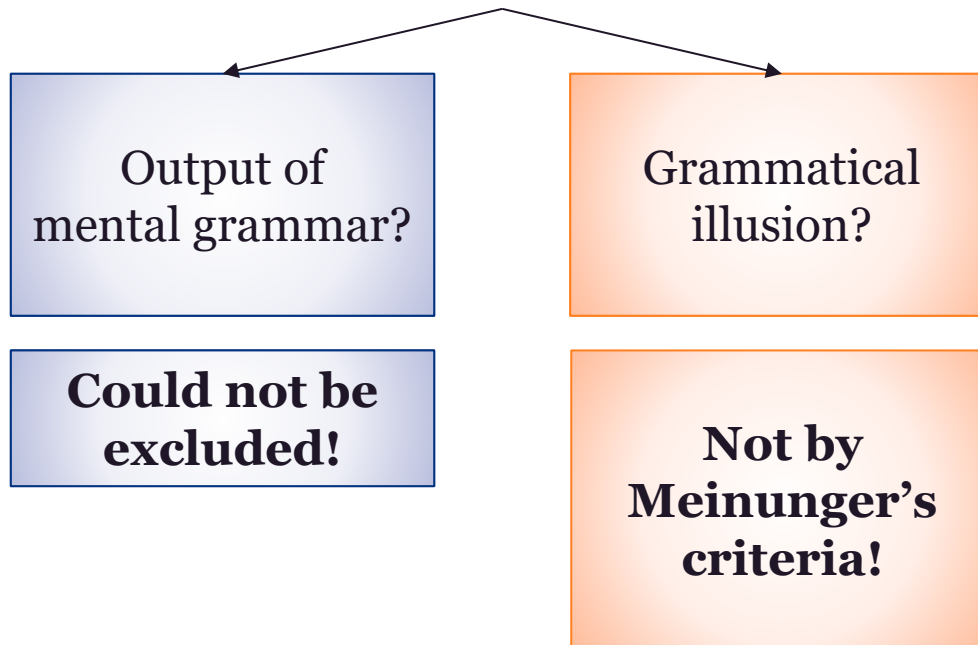
An answer: Meinunger's (2023) criteria

Should we assume that phenomenon X is a grammatical illusion?

- Criterion no. 1: “Too much effort”
Fundamental changes in theory needed just to capture X
→ X = illusion
- EARs captured by very general, early generative analysis  
- Criterion no. 2: “Too restricted”
X only found in very restricted semantic or syntactic contexts
→ X = illusion
- EARs in mini-sample: restrictive & non-restrictive, head adjacent & dislocated, simple introductions & pied-piping, diverse conjunctions, more than two conjuncts, symmetric & asymmetric readings (Altshuler & Truswell 2022:ch.3); in addition: free relative clauses

The question and the answer for now

...die... und dieses Grauen nicht begreifen kann



Conclusion and open questions

- EARs apparently output of mental grammar!
- Open questions:
 - How can we account for the devaluation of asyndetic examples?
 - Does DC2 allow subjects in Dutch?
Als theatraal tegendraads politicus
viel Fortuyn op door zijn uiterlijke vertoon
[...] en formuleerde hij zijn politieke denkbeelden provocatief [...].
(<https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandy>, 11 May 2022)

References

- Altshuler, Daniel & Robert Truswell. 2022. Coordination and the syntax-discourse interface (Oxford Scholarship Online). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Haider, Hubert. 2011. Grammaticische Illusionen. Lokal wohlgeformt – global deviant. *Zeitschrift für Sprachwissenschaft* 30(2). 223–257.
- Meinunger, André. 2023. Unexpected finite verb forms in German: Cases of grammatical illusion? *Linguistische Berichte* (Special issue 34). 205–230.
- Miller, George A. 1956. The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information. *The psychological review* 63(2). 81–97.
- Reich, Ingo. 2009. „*Asymmetrische Koordination*“ *im Deutschen* (Studien zur Deutschen Grammatik 75). Tübingen: Stauffenburg.



Additional slides

17: examples

18: improvements

19: best/worst EAR



The observation: Additional examples

- Rosemarie sagte: »Für Mara ist so ein Text einfach das **Material, das man auseinanderschraubt, anguckt und überlegt, wie man es sinnvoll wieder zusammenmontiert**. Ist das nicht verrückt?« (Christian Schünemann: Die Studentin. Der dritte Fall für den Frisör. Zurich: Diogenes 2009. p. 77) <4>
- Manche der alten Offiziere verschwanden von einem Tag auf den anderen, sie entsorgten Uniformen und Wintermäntel in **Container, aus denen Gunnar und andere Rekruten sie wieder herausfischten, die Schulterstücke ablösten und auf die eigenen Uniformen knöpften**. (Der Spiegel, no. 42/2009, p. 62) <8>
- Übrigens ging ihr es vollkommen nach Wunsche, sie hatte ihr besonderes Zimmer, war immer um die **Gräfin, die sie mit ihren Affenposen unterhielt und dafür täglich etwas geschenkt bekam**: [...]. (<https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/goethe/meisterl/mstl307.html>) <24>

The test: Improvements

- More targeted filler and control items
 - Obvious grammatical illusions, e.g. missing-VP effect
 - Standardized control items if available for German
- Manipulated target items w.r.t. informational balance
- Represent baseline structures by more than one item

The test: Results

- Best EAR
 - All conditions except [- subj.], [- conj.]:
Es ist eine dieser **Nachrichten**, die in allen Zeitungen stehen, **die (man) schauernd liest (und) dabei dieses unendliche Grauen doch nicht begreifen kann.** (from <25>)
 - [- subj.], [- conj.]: Eine junge Chinesin verliebt sich in einen feschen **Geschäftsmann, dem sie bis nach Berlin nachreist, ihn dort aber höchstens mal ans Telefon bekommt.** (original <26>)
- Worst EAR (all conditions):
Ich holte einen dicken **Pullover** aus Brillenschangs Stube, **den ich Luo um die mageren Schultern legte (und) (ich) ihm die Ärmel um den Hals band.**
(from <6>)