

Tel Aviv University  
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## THURSDAY INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM

Thursday 19/05/2022

16:15-17:45

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Frontal lecture in Webb 103

transmitted on Zoom

### Early resumptive pronouns in Hebrew: Acceptability and production preferences

Resumptive pronouns (RPs) are pronouns appearing at the tail of filler-gap dependencies (FGDs). In Hebrew, they are obligatory in object-of-preposition relative clauses (RCs), both argumental and adverbial, with the RP cliticized to the preposition. In addition, they can appear either post-verbally (in-situ), or immediately after the RC-initial complementizer (early RPs).

A prominent finding regarding the processing of FGDs is that the parser actively posits a gap as soon as possible, a strategy referred to as “active filler”. Two proposals have been put forth regarding the motivation guiding the parser in this strategy. A **structurally motivated** parser, positing a gap in any syntactically viable position; and a **thematically motivated** parser, positing a gap where a thematic role can be assigned to it. Alternating the thematic motivation to a more general *semantic* motivation will allow to include interpretation of adverbs that do not receive thematic roles from the verb. Under this option, the parser attempts to maximize **semantic interpretation**, and will posit a gap at points where semantic interpretation can be reached.

To investigate the parser’s motivation, we contrasted *argumental* with *adverbial RCs* in acceptability and production experiments. Since in argumental RCs, the filler must be maintained until the verb for semantic interpretation, we hypothesized that early RPs will not be beneficial; they will not be rated higher than in-situ RPs, and will not be produced in high rates. In the case of adverbial fillers, semantic interpretation does not depend on the properties of a specific verb, as they are not selected for by it, and therefore early resolution will be preferred.

The acceptability results revealed that both early and in-situ RPs are acceptable in argumental RCs, whereas RPs in-situ are strongly dispreferred in adverbial RCs. The production results show that, though acceptable, early argumental RPs are seldom produced. These findings support the hypothesis that the parser is motivated to maximize semantic interpretation. Hence early argumental RPs, despite being a grammatical option in Hebrew, are not beneficial to comprehenders or producers. In contrast, adverbial RCs are not dependent on the verb, and can therefore employ the early RP mechanism for immediate resolution. Alternative explanations for the results will also be discussed.

Click [here](#) to see the colloquium program.