Morpho-syntactic cues for distributivity in Serbian
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1 Background

- Numerically quantified sentences have two prominent interpretations: collective (1a) and distributive (1b).

1a. Collective
Three clowns are holding two presents.

1b. Distributive
Three clowns are holding two presents.

- English and Serbian acceptance rates are significantly different:

Serbian morphological system is more complex than English. Serbian children acquire distributive markers much later (age 8-9).

- Serbian has several types of numerals and it shows a subject-verb agreement mismatch in environments with numerically quantified expressions. These factors may account for the disparity in English and Serbian child and adult results.

2 Serbian mismatch

Paucals (numerals 2,3 and 4) + paucal case

- Troje dece vs Troje deća

Collective (mixed gender) + plural case
Three paucal plural
Three dece plural

Paucal plural and mixed-gender numerals show verbal agreement mismatch (allow both sg and pl):

4. Troje dece drži/drže kutiju.

Three children are holding a box.

3 Methods

Two Truth Value Judgment Task

2x2 study, 24 items & 24 control items x 4 lists, balanced design

4 Results

Paucal experiment: Mixed-gender experiment:

- General observations from the models are that adults are significantly less likely to choose distributive pictures matched with either singular (sg) or plural (pl) verb than children, and less likely to choose singular verbal agreement.

- Neither experiment showed significant correlations between verbal agreement and collective/distributive interpretations.

References: