A predicate can hold of a plural argument in two main manners:
(1) **Distributively** – predicate applies to every member of a set:
*Each candidate smiled.*
(2) **Collectively** – predicate applies to the set as one:
*Five gunmen surrounded the house.*

Factors conditioning reading availability:
- **choice of predicate** – (Dowty 1987, Winter 2001)
- **NP type**
  - *some strong NPs prefer the distributive reading* – (Beghelli and Stowell 1997)
- **context (for definite NPs)** – (Roberts 1990, Schwarzchild 1996)

Previous accounts did not take into consideration the potential effect of information structural (is) roles.

**Research question:** Can the *is* topic or focus status of semantically plural quantified NPs (QNPs) affect the readiness of collective or distributive readings in ambiguous cases?

### Experiment I. – method & materials

**Method:**
- **2AFC sentence-picture matching experiment, N=30**
  - *short training phase:* respondents are introduced to a visual notation convention for distributive & collective interpretations
  - *trial:* respondents have to pick an interpretation for 54 trial & 48 filler sentences
- **Carried out in Hungarian**
  - discourse-configurational language
  - topics & foci are associated with positions in clause structure
- **Three types of readings compared**
  - **Collective reading** – multiple agents/single event/single object
  - **Individual-key reading** – multiple agents/multiple events/multiple objects
  - **Event-key reading** – multiple agents/multiple events/single object

**Material:**
- **Three QNPs compared:**
  - *Két ‘two’* – bare numeral, e.g., ‘two students’
  - *Több mint három ‘more than three’* – upward entailing comparative modified numeral, e.g., ‘more than three students’
  - *Sok ‘many’* – many-NP, e.g., ‘many students’
- **QNPs presented in two IS positions:**
  - **Topic position**
    - *sok orvos*[QNP tepnag meg vizsgálta a beteget many doctor yesterday/PRT examined the patient/ACC]
  - **Focus position**
    - *sok orvos*[QNP vizsgálta meg tepnag a beteget many doctor yesterday/PRT examined the patient/ACC]

**Results & conclusion:**
- **is position**(*χ^2(2)=3.56 p=0.17), QNP*(*χ^2(2)=34.73 p<0.001*)
- Interaction(*χ^2(4)=5.7496 p=0.003374*)

### Experiment II. & conclusion

**Method:**
- **same 2AFC task without event-key condition** (only individual-key & collective readings were compared), *N=72*

**Material:**
- **QNP két replaced with numeral *őt ‘five’* to avoid the paired activity confound**
- **definite article replaced with indefinite egy ‘a(n)’n egy**
- **IS-neutral post-verbal position** introduced to test inhibition hypothesis
- **tegnap vizsgált meg [sok orvos][QNP egy beteget yesterday examined PRT many doctor a patient/ACC]

**Results & conclusion:**
- **is position**(*χ^2(2)=3.56 p=0.17), QNP*(*χ^2(2)=34.73 p<0.001*)
- Interaction(*χ^2(4)=5.7496 p=0.003374*)

**QNPs behavior is most uniform in post-verbal position** – baseline
- **is position has a differential effect on QNPs:**
  - Distributive reading is inhibited for upward entailing comparative modified numerals in topic position (*χ^2(1, N=72)=10.4048, p<0.001*)
  - Collective reading is inhibited for many-type QNPs in focus position (*χ^2(1, N=72)=5.5627, p=.018*)

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http://clara.nyutud.hu/~suranyi/scopelab/ {suranyi,madarasz}@nytud.mta.hu