EXECUTIVE CONTROL IN SENTENCE PRODUCTION

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In everyday language use, speakers are able to produce sentences effortlessly, weaving together multiple words while following complex grammatical rules. The ease with which sentences are produced has led to speculations that sentence production may not rely on executive functions such as inhibitory control. This project aims to test whether inhibitory control plays a role in grammatical production by focusing on subject-verb agreement 'attraction' errors. In English, the subject of the sentence agrees with the verb in number (e.g., "The lion is red," "The lions are red"). Attraction errors arise when the sentence contains a second noun with a different grammatical number than the subject noun, as in "The lion next to the birds ARE red."

Understanding the role of inhibitory control in sentence production could provide key insights on how to evaluate and treat language impairments, as well as how to develop more effective pedagogical methods for children who produce non-adult-like syntactic structures. The proposed research provides opportunities to bring together undergraduate and graduate students in medical and cognitive science research, and the outcome of this research will be disseminated to the broader public through community outreach programs and aphasia rehabilitation projects.

Award webpage: https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1631993&HistoricalAwards

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