

AGREEMENT ATTRACTION IN PERSON

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AGREEMENT ATTRACTION

In production, agreement attraction errors are found in both number and gender features. The attraction effects are not symmetric: feminine attractors cause more errors than masculine (Malko & Slioussar, 2013), and plural – more than singular (Bock & Miller, 1991), as in

(1) * The computer installed in the (Russian antiballistic) missiles *are* ...

- **Markedness**: the marked value of a class is a more effective attractor than the unmarked.
- **Frequency**: in both number and gender agreement attraction, the feature that is a stronger attractor is both more marked and less frequent.

PREDICTIONS

Agreement attraction has never been tested in person.

Markedness account predicts that the more marked values of person will be stronger attractors: 1st > 2nd, 2nd > 3rd.

Frequency account predicts that the less frequent values of person will be stronger attractors: 1st < 2nd, 2nd > 3rd.

Feature Hierarchy account (Carminati, 2005) predicts little to no attraction in person. The reason is that person ranks the highest in the *cognitive significance* hierarchy and should be the most prominent; therefore, all agreement mistakes would be noticed immediately.

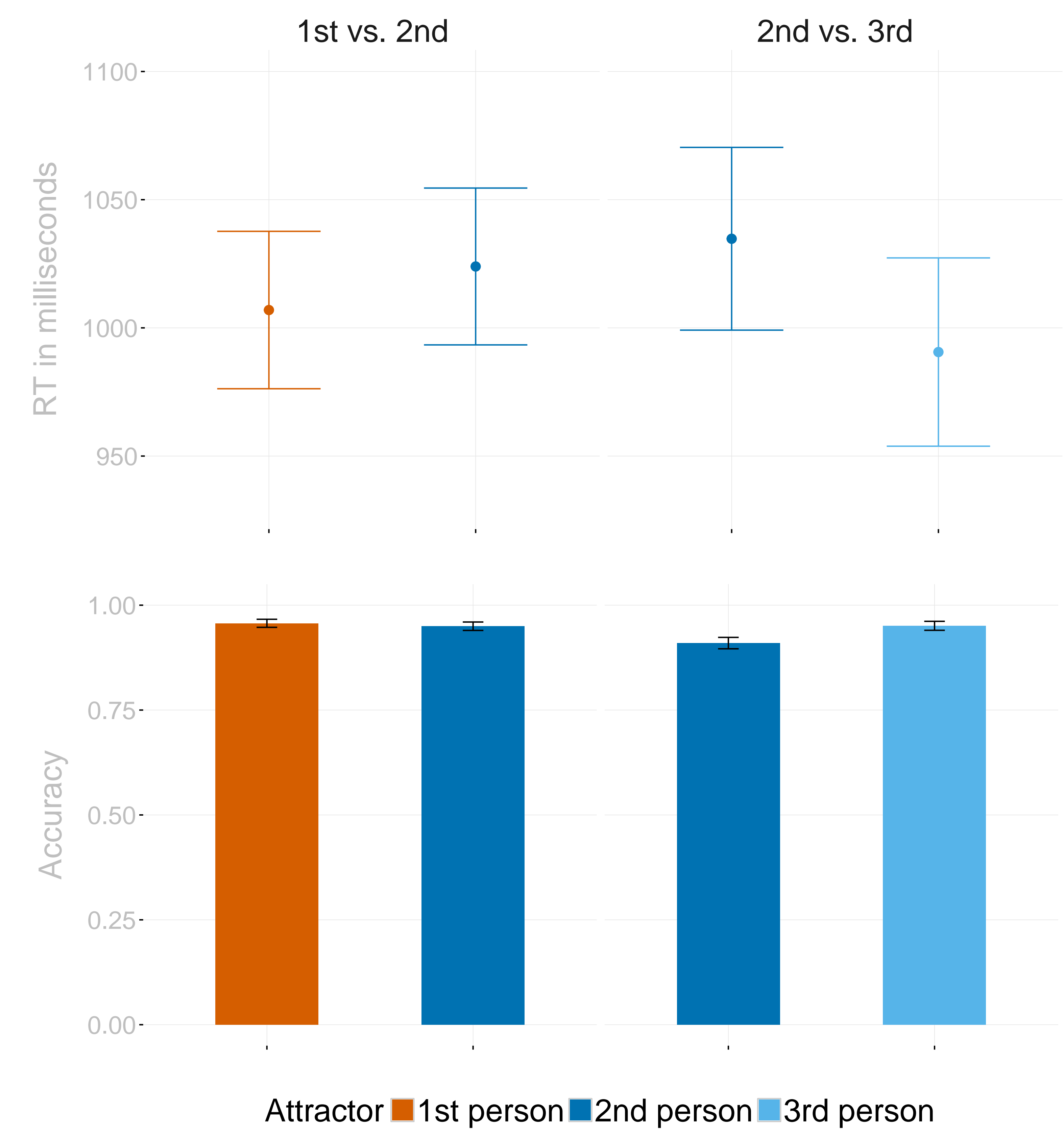
PERSON
 NUMBER
 GENDER
 CLASS

DESIGN

We conducted 2 production experiments in Russian contrasting 1st vs. 2nd and 2nd vs. 3rd persons:

- (2) { I, just as you }
 { You, just as I } , next year in this school study_{inf} [will-2p will-1p]
- (3) { He, just as you }
 { You, just as he } , next year in this school study_{inf} [will-3p will-2p]

- rapid serial visual presentation (300 ms/word) up to the verb; participants press a button to choose a verb that would provide a correct continuation
- we measure accuracy and speed of their decisions
- 120 participants in each experiment were tested online using the Ibxfarm platform
- 32 experimental items, 64 fillers; 32 fillers have pseudo-attractors that do not match the provided verbs, the other 32 have only subject nouns



RESULTS

1st vs. 2nd:

- no evidence for a difference in accuracies and RTs
- accuracy is the same in experimental items and fillers with pseudo-attractors
- reaction times are faster in experimental items than in fillers

⇒ no agreement attraction?

2nd vs. 3rd:

- accuracies are lower ($\hat{\beta}=-0.43$, $SE=0.14$, $z=-3.1$) and RTs higher ($\hat{\beta}=0.025$, $SE=0.01$, $t=2.55$) in conditions with 3rd person subject and 2nd person attractor
- accuracies are lower and RTs higher in experimental items as compared to fillers

⇒ consistent with both the markedness and frequency accounts that predict 2nd person to be a stronger attractor than 3rd.

DISCUSSION

- Either markedness and frequency both affect attractor properties and counterbalance each other, or there is something special about 1st person that blocks agreement errors.
 - special status of 1st person due to discourse linking is proposed in Gibson (2000) and Mancini et al. (2011)
 - special status of 1st person is consistent with the Feature Hierarchy account
- ⇒ if 1st person blocks agreement attraction, we expect no attraction effects in experiment contrasting 1st and 3rd person
- ⇒ if markedness and frequency both affect attractor's properties, we expect 1st person to be a stronger attractor than 3rd