

# The identity condition of right node raising in German: experimental evidence

Lisa Schäfer, Ingo Reich & Robin Lemke  
(Saarland University)

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Right node raising (RNR, 1a) has been argued to be less tolerant of mismatches than other ellipses such as gapping (1b), by requiring **phonological** (not morphological (1c)) **identity (PI)** (e.g., Eisenberg 1973, Wilder 1997). Christ (2011) relaxes *PI* by suggesting that the acceptability of RNR mismatches in German decreases **gradually** with the **difference in phonological form (GPI)**. Shiraishi et al. (2019) even propose **lexeme identity (LI)** because they found that mismatches with distinctive forms are acceptable in English and French (2). For German, an empirical investigation is still pending to our knowledge.

(1) a. \* *weil ich Bier trinke und du Milch trinkst*  
because I beer drink.1SG and you milk drink.2SG  
b. *weil ich Bier trinke und du Milch trinkst* (Eisenberg 1973: 417)  
c. *weil wir.1PL Bier trinken.1PL und sie.3PL Milch trinken.3PL*

(2) *Some new hybrid models already have appeared, and others soon will appear [...].*

(Shiraishi et al. 2019: 5)

We tested whether gapping and RNR differ in mismatch ‘tolerance’ with an acceptability rating experiment and used a gradation of the phonological difference. Table 1 summarizes this and the predictions of the identity accounts. 42 German native speakers rated 24 items such as (3) on a 7-point Likert scale (7 = best).

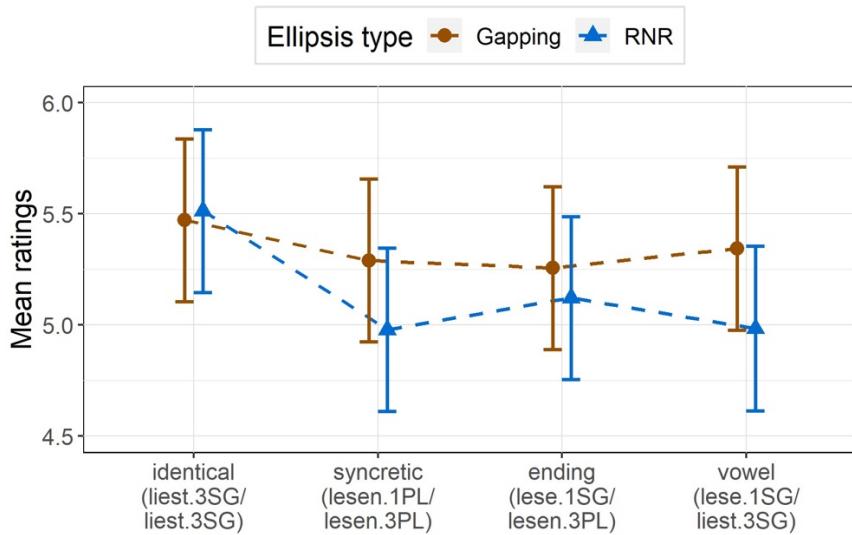
**Table 1:** Levels of phonological difference and predictions ('-' means degraded)

phonological difference	verb <sub>1</sub>	verb <sub>2</sub>	LI	PI	GPI
<i>identical</i>	<i>liest.3SG</i>	<i>liest.3SG</i>	+	+	+
<i>syncretism</i>	<i>lesen.1PL</i>	<i>lesen.3PL</i>	+	+	+
<i>ending</i>	<i>lese.1SG</i>	<i>lesen.3PL</i>	+	--	-
<i>ending+vowel</i>	<i>lese.1SG</i>	<i>liest.3SG</i>	+	--	--

(3) [...] *dass [Jan|wir|ich|ich] den Zeitschriftenartikel ([liest|lesen|lese|lese]) und*  
[...] that [Jan|we|I|I] the journal.article [read.3SG|1PL|1SG|1SG] and  
[Sara|Jan und Sara|Jan und Sara|Jan] das Kapitel [...] ([liest|lesen|lesen|liest]).  
[Sara|Jan and Sara|Jan and Sara|Jan] the chapter [...] [read.3SG|3PL|3PL|3SG]

Using CLMMs (Christensen 2022), we found significant main effects but no interactions (despite the impression in Figure 1, ELLIPSISTYPE:PHONOLOGICALDIFFERENCE(*identical* vs. *mismatches*):  $\chi^2 = 2.01$ ,  $p > 0.15$ ). RNR is

generally worse than gapping ( $\chi^2 = 4.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and *identical* is better than all mismatches ( $\chi^2 = 14.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which show no significant difference. These results do neither provide evidence for a difference between gapping and RNR mismatches nor for *PI* or *GPI*. They are also not fully consistent with *LI* since there is an advantage for matches over mismatches, which are, however, relatively acceptable. Since previous research (see Kim et al. 2011 for VPE) has linked gradual acceptability differences between antecedent-target mismatches under ellipsis to processing difficulty, we plan a self-paced reading study to investigate whether elliptical mismatches are indeed more difficult to process.



**Figure 1: Mean ratings and 95% CIs**

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