

Implicit Gender Bias in the German Federal Elections (2021) – Is there an Effect of the Masculine Generic Form?

Introduction

Using a self-paced reading task and a 2021 German federal election vignette, we explored the role of the masculine generic form in German comprehension. Considering German's grammatical gender system, the flawed male over-representation through masculine form's, and Angela Merkel's enduring tenure, we adapted prior research to assess the prevalence and impact of the masculine generic form. Our hypothesis suggests its dominance and stronger influence over the female chancellor stereotype, while also analyzing reading times for gendered "chancellor" words and 2021 election candidate chances.

Discussion

There was no effect on the reading time of noun by the belief on the next chancellor. Through the analysis of the reading time of grammatically congruent and incongruent conditions we identified out how these are also perceived semantically congruent, or incongruent respectively. We found that grammatical and semantical congruency is also in this context not identical. The **feminine**, **masculine** and **inclusive** forms of "chancellor", were treated differently. **Feminine** was read purely specific, **inclusive** purely generic and **masculine** in between.

Methods

Online study: 47 students (German native speakers, 29 female, mean age 23)

Introduction, Consent

3x

Trainings rounds

9x Self-paced reading

Belief estimation

Demographics

Debriefing

1. Self-paced reading stimulus

Nach der Bundestagswahl am 26. September entscheidet sich, wer für die nächste Legislaturperiode das Kanzleramt übernimmt.

Der*die Bundeskanzler*in regiert für eine Legislaturperiode über vier Jahre, vorher kann er*sie nur durch ein Misstrauensvotum abgelöst werden.

After the federal elections on September 26th, it will be decided who will take over the chancellorship for the next legislature.

The(inclusive) chancellor(inclusive) rules for a legislative period of four years, before which they(inclusive) can only be replaced by a vote of no confidence.

Mix-and-match Noun forms & Pronoun forms

Noun – The chancellor

Feminine

Die Bundeskanzlerin

Inclusive

Der*die Bundeskanzler*in

Masculine

Der Bundeskanzler

Pronoun

sie

er*sie

er

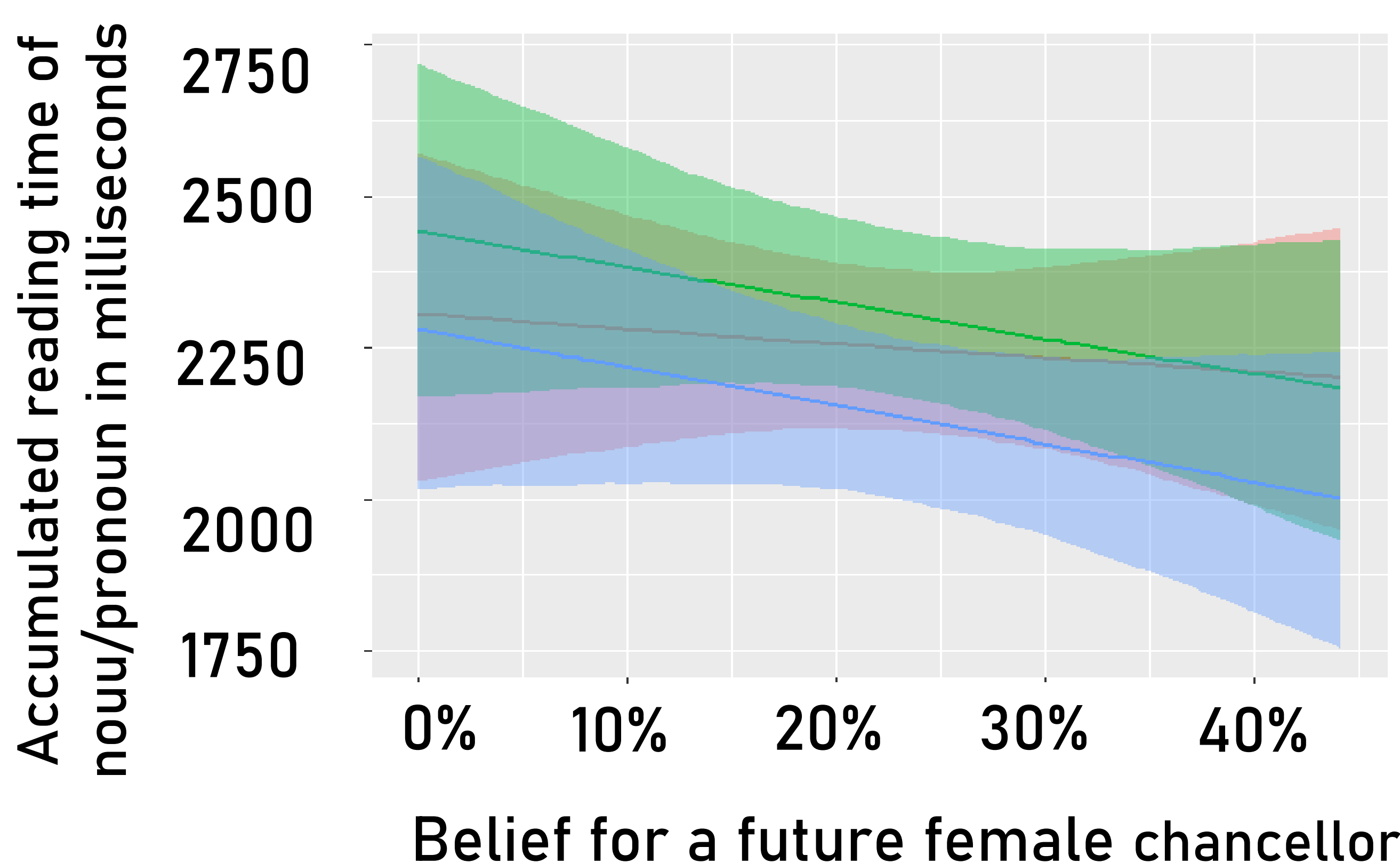
2. Belief estimation

Rate the chance of the 1 female and the 2 male chancellor candidates to win the elections

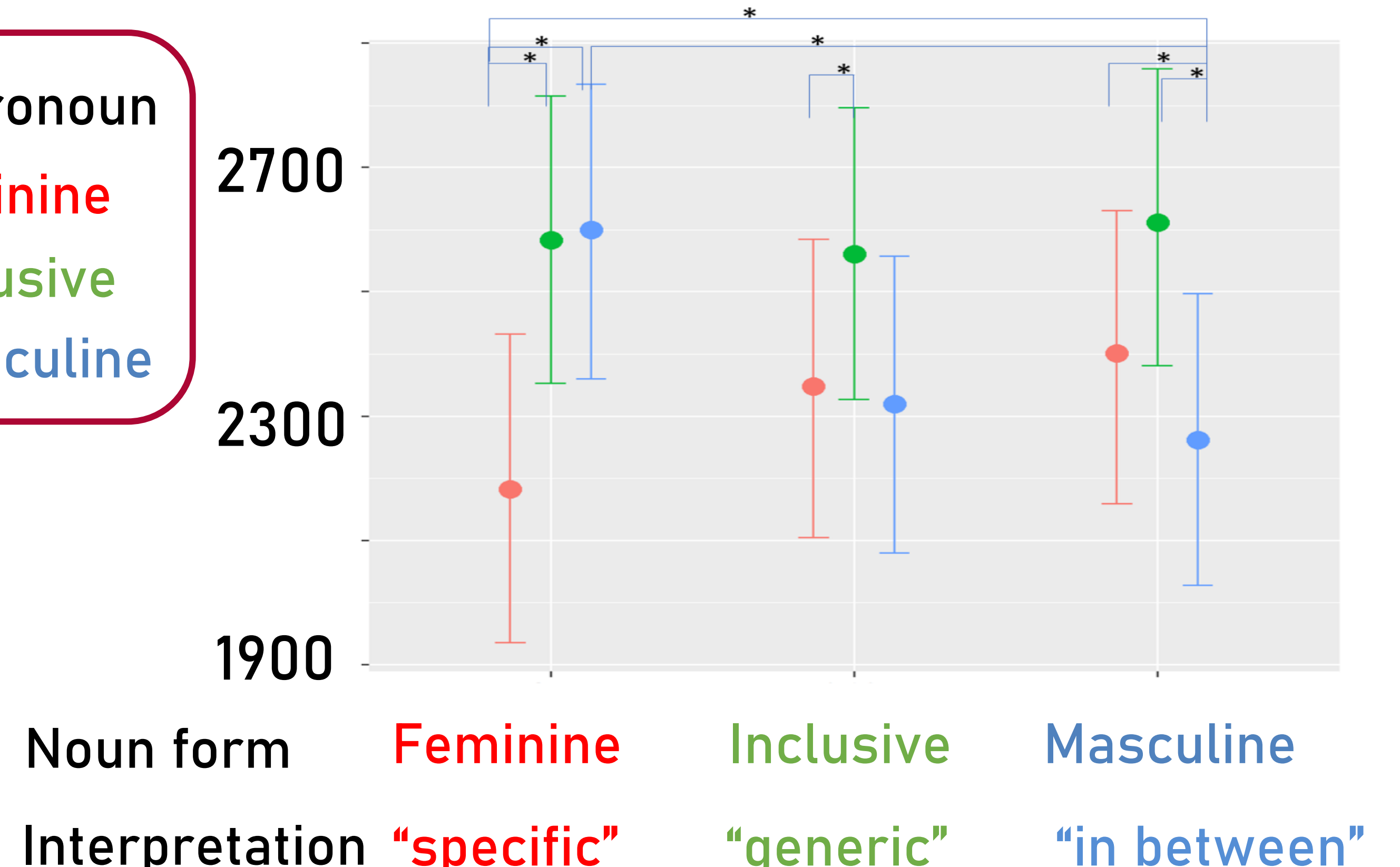
Results

Reading Time accumulated over 4 words

Noun – Chancellor form



Pronoun form



Sources

- Von Der Malsburg, T., Poppels, T., & Levy, R. P. (2020). Implicit gender bias in linguistic descriptions for expected events: The cases of the 2016 united states and 2017 united kingdom elections. *Psychological Science*, 31(2), 115–128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797619890619>
- Pozniak, C., & Burnett, H. (2021). Failures of Gricean reasoning and the role of stereotypes in the production of gender marking in French. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.1310>
- Gygax, P., Gabriel, U., Sarrasin, O., Oakhill, J., & Garnham, A. (2008). Generically intended, but specifically interpreted: When beauticians, musicians, and mechanics are all men. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 23(3), 464–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01690960701702035>
- Braun, F., Sczesny, S., & Stahlberg, D. (2005). Cognitive effects of masculine generics in german: An overview of empirical findings. *Communications*, 30(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1515/comm.2005.30.1.1>

Contact:

ernickel@uni-osnabrueck.de

Gratitude to the conference sponsors:

Universitätsgesellschaft OSNABRÜCK e.V.

CogSci Network e.V.