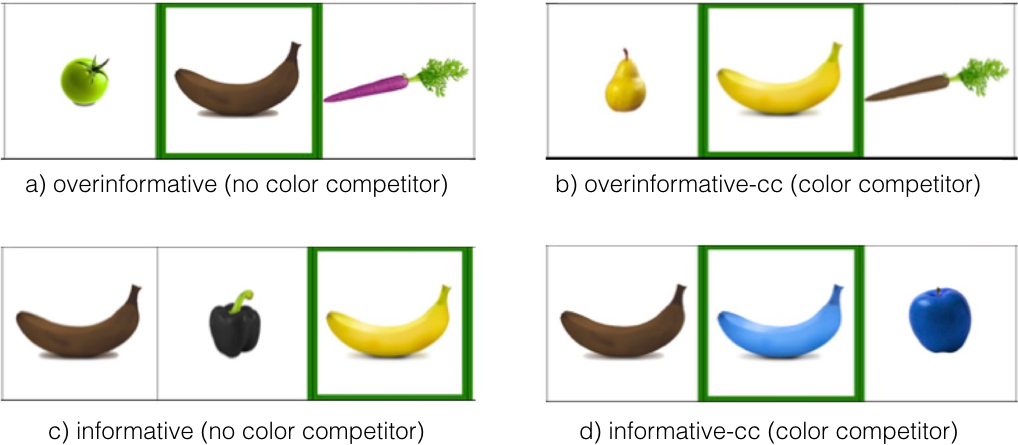
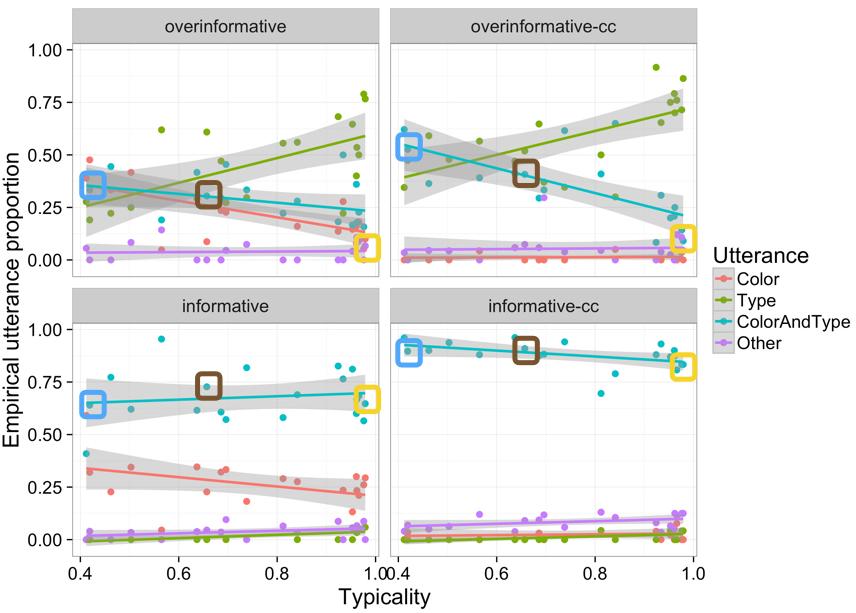
**Including atypical information in referring expressions is communicatively efficient**

What governs how much information speakers include in referring expressions? One prominent idea is that speakers include just enough information for their interlocutor to uniquely select an intended referent from among a set of potential referents (e.g., Grice 1975). In Fig. 1, this corresponds to calling the target object a “banana” in 1a), where there is no competing banana; but a “yellow banana” in 1c), where there is a competing (brown) banana. However, speakers also have a well-documented but selective preference to mention properties of objects – especially color – “overinformatively” (Pechmann 1989, inter alia). For example, speakers are likely to call the banana in 1c) a “brown banana” some of the time. Generally, speakers are relatively more likely to mention atypical rather than typical properties of objects overinformatively (Sedivy 2003; Westerbeek et al. 2015; Rubio-Fernandez 2016). For example, a banana is more likely to be called a “blue banana” if it is blue and more likely to be called a “banana” if it is yellow.

An account of why more typical properties are less likely to be mentioned is still lacking. Some have proposed that it is a speaker-internal pressure to mention salient properties (fixme cite). Others have proposed that speakers mention properties when they are useful for their addressees, e.g., by facilitating visual search (fixme cite paula). Here, we abstract away from the question of whether properties are mentioned for speakers or for listeners and instead ask when a rational speaker with the goal to correctly communicate the intended referent with high probability would be expected to mention an object’s color “overinformatively”.





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