

evocation. Thus, they found that readers do not resort to stereotypical gender inferences when discourse has already explicitly assigned to the role noun. In addition, they concluded that stereotypical gender is qualitatively different from definitional gender. In fact, the greater P600 effect elicited by definitional gender nouns in the ERP study conducted by Osterhout et al. (1997) would refer to such a qualitative difference and not to the quantitative character (regarding the probabilistic degree) interpreted by the authors.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, readers do instinctively resort to their world knowledge to assign stereotypical gender to role nouns when they appear unspecified for gender in the discourse. There seems to be consistent evidence claiming that these inferences are made elaboratively, in a forward direction as soon as these occupation nouns are encountered posing serious challenges for the minimalist view which argue that inferences are only made when information is readily available or when are necessary for establishing local coherence. In addition, the activation of these stereotypical inferences is qualitatively different from activation of definitional gender. While the former can be eliminated when the context explicitly assigns a categorical gender to the noun, the gender of the latter cannot be suppressed by context since it is encoded as part of the lexical representation and thus is accessed with the activation with the word.

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