BIDIRECTIONAL SYNTACTIC PRIMING IN CONVERSATION:
I AM PRIMED BY YOU IF YOU ARE PRIMED BY ME

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We investigate whether the magnitude of syntactic priming effects, like other aspects of linguistic behavior, is mimicked between speakers in a conversation. Speakers adapt syntactic structures to their interlocutor (i.e. syntactic priming), but what is more, speakers adapt the magnitude of syntactic priming effects to interlocutor's magnitude (Schoot et al. 2014). We expect to replicate and extend this finding with the present results.

60 participants were divided into 30 pairs who performed the experiment together. They were asked to describe photographs to each other, depicting two persons performing a transitive action (e.g. a man hugging a woman). Descriptions were actives or passives (no free choice, see Menenti et al., 2011). Priming effects were measured by comparing speech onset latencies for sentences with repeated syntax (two consecutive actives or passives) relative to novel syntax (active follows passive or vice versa). Before participants performed this communicative task, we ran a non-communicative pre-test for each participant, to measure their individual priming effect without influence of the partner's priming effect.

The results show that priming magnitude is determined by your partner's priming effect; the more your partner is primed by you, the more you are primed by your partner ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.002$, Figure **A**). Furthermore, the difference between paired speakers' individual syntactic priming effects (as measured in the pre-test) predicted how much speakers adapt their syntactic priming effects when they are communicating with their partner in the communicative experiment ($ß = -0.632$, $p < 0.001$, Figure **B**). If in the pre-test, your partner is primed more/less by you than you are by her, you will increase/decrease your own priming magnitude towards your partner's priming magnitude in the communicative context.

Syntactic priming effects in conversation are said to result from speakers aligning their syntactic representations by mimicking sentence structure (Pickering & Garrod, 2004; Jaeger & Snider, 2013). Here we show that on top of that, the magnitude of priming effects is also mimicked between interlocutors. Although measuring syntactic priming effects in speech onset latencies is now proven to be a valid method (Corley & Scheepers 2002; Segaert et al. 2010; 2014; Smith & Wheeldon 2000; Wheeldon & Smith 2003), we are currently running an experiment to investigate whether we can replicate this effect when looking at syntactic priming magnitude in structure choices.
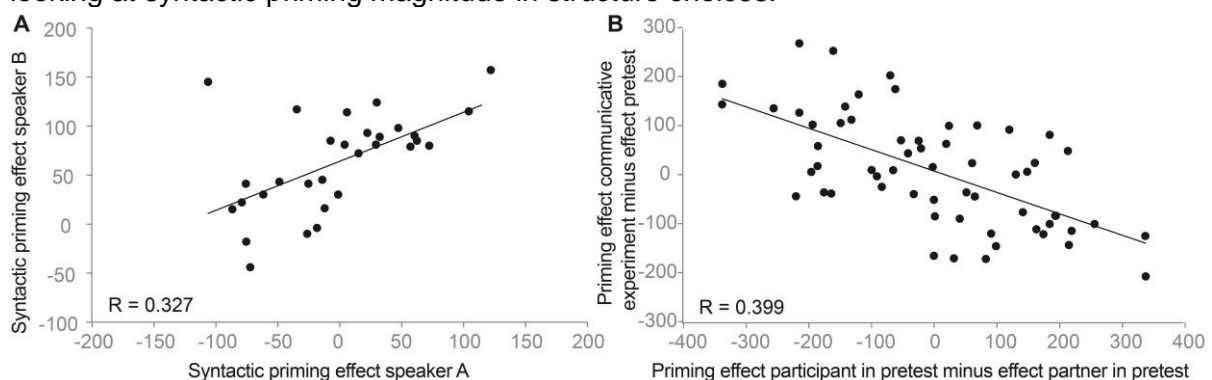

Figure A. The syntactic priming effect (ms) of one speaker in a pair is significantly influenced by the priming magnitude of this speaker's communicative partner. The more your partner is primed by you, the more you are primed by your partner. Speaker A is always the participant with the smallest priming effect. **B**. The more different a speaker's priming effect (ms) is from her partner's in the non-communicative pre-test, the more this speaker's priming effect changes when she is communicating with this partner. If your partner's priming effect is bigger than your own in the pre-test (negative x-value), your priming effect increases in the communicative experiment (positive y-value) and vice versa. Speakers thus (unconsciously) adapt their own priming effects towards their partner's priming magnitude in conversation.