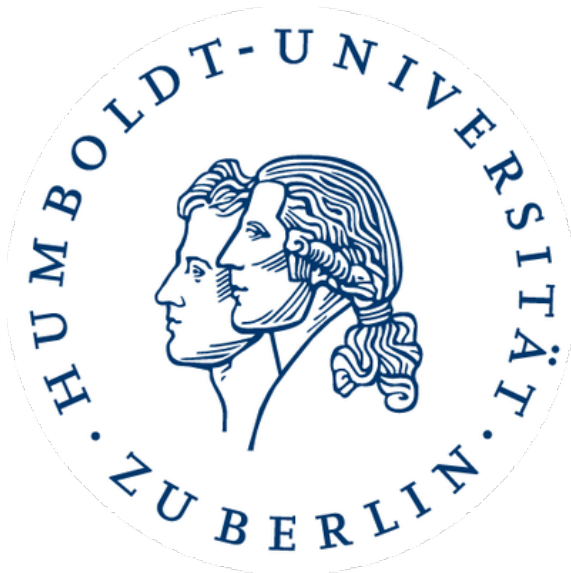


How focus particles affect what we will talk about next

Katharina Spalek, Nicole Gotzner, & Beate Bergmann



Leibniz-Zentrum
Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft



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- DFG SFB 632
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Overview

- Background - focus and focus particles
- Preface - focus particles and memory (DETEC 2013)
- Main part - focus particles and discourse patterns (DETEC 2017)
- Outlook - focus particles and discourse expectations (DETEC 2019?)

Background: focus
and focus particles



“Previously, I was at the DETEC in Tübingen.”



- “Previously, I was at the DETEC in TÜbingen.”
- Literal meaning: Katharina was at DETEC in Tübingen.
- Inference: Presumably, she wasn’t at DETEC in Edmonton.



- “Previously, I was at the DETEC in TÜbingen.”

- Focus indicates the importance of alternatives for the interpretation of an utterance (Krifka, 2007).
- Focus alternatives: {Tübingen, Edmonton, Nijmegen}



“I was even at the DETEC in EDmonton.”



- “I was even at the DETEC in EDmonton.”
- Even (see, e.g., König, 1990):
 - associates with the element in focus.
 - is inclusive (inference: the utterance is true for at least one alternative).
 - presupposes a scale of likelihood on which the focused element has the lowest value (e.g., Edmonton was a long way away).

Preface: focus
particles and memory

- The presence of focus particles improves the memory for focus alternatives.

- Felix begutachtet in seinem Garten Erbsen, Bohnen und Zwiebeln.
- Er pflegte den Garten regelmäßig.
 - Er hat die ERBSEN gegossen.
 - Er hat nur die ERBSEN gegossen.
 - Er hat sogar die ERBSEN gegossen.

- Felix begutachtet in seinem Garten Erbsen, Bohnen und Zwiebeln.

- Er pflegte den Garten regelmäßig.

Focused element

- Er hat die ERBSEN gegessen.
- Er hat nur die ERBSEN gegessen.
- Er hat sogar die ERBSEN gegessen.

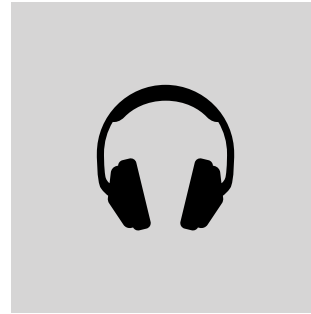
- Felix beutachtet in seinem Garten Erbsen, und .

Alternative

Alternative

- Er pflegte den Garten regelmäßig.
 - Er hat die ERBSEN gegossen.
 - Er hat nur die ERBSEN gegossen.
 - Er hat sogar die ERBSEN gegossen.

Example experimental block (3/10)



1. Felix begutachtet in seinem Garten Erbsen, Bohnen und Zwiebeln. Er pflegte den Garten regelmäßig. Er hat nur die Erbsen gegessen.

Example experimental block (3/10)

2. Janine betrachtet in der Ausstellung Statuen, Gemälde und Fotografien. Sie sollte eine Rezension schreiben. Sie hat sogar die Gemälde erwähnt.



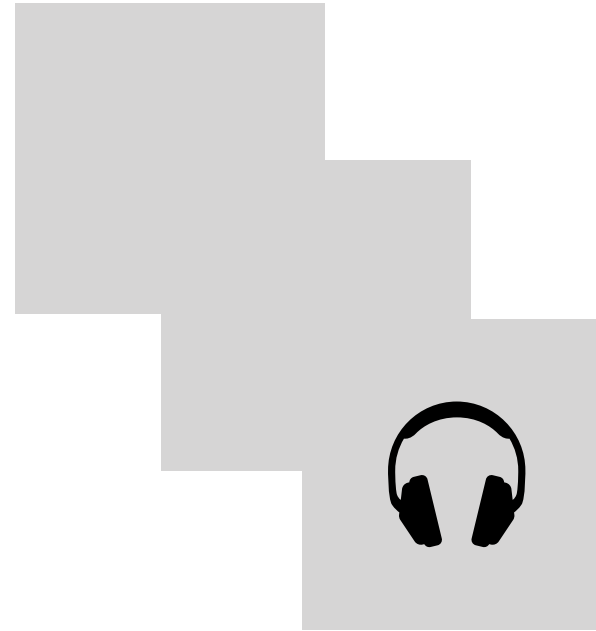
Example experimental block (3/10)

3. Karl jagt auf der Wiese Bienen, Fliegen und Mücken. Er hatte Spaß dabei. Er hat nur Fliegen gefangen.



Example experimental block (3/10)

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...

Example experimental block (3/10)

Was war im
Garten?

Erbsen, Bohnen,
Zwiebeln

Example experimental block (3/10)

Was war im
Ga

Was war in der
Ausstellung?

Statuen,
Gemälde, Fotografien

Example experimental block (3/10)

Was war im
Ga

Was war in der
Auss

Wo hat Karl
Insekten
gefangen?

Auf der Wiese

- Results:
- There was a small (4.5%), but reliable memory advantage for focus alternatives when the focused item had been preceded by a focus particle (independent of the particle type).
- The effect was replicated (6.2%) in another experiment.

- Reaction of a previous DETEC reviewer: “These are really interesting data, but actually they don’t have anything to do with discourse expectations.”
- Why would a memory benefit occur?
 - Focus particles increase salience of alternatives -> strengthened representation -> improved recall (“automatic account”).
 - Alternatives are likely to be mentioned again after focus particles -> memory for alternatives aids comprehension (“discourse-functional account”).

Main part: focus particles
and discourse patterns

Leading question

- Are there patterns associated with the occurrence of focus particles that might shape a language user's discourse expectations?
- Exploratory study, not hypothesis-driven!
- What kind of patterns are we looking for?
 - Proportion re-use of focus alternatives after a focused element (quantitative).
 - Which discourse relations dominate? (qualitative)

Sentence continuation study

- Participants were presented with the stimuli from Spalek et al. (2014) and were instructed to continue the story with two sentences (orally) (see, e.g., Kaiser 2010).

Sentence continuation study

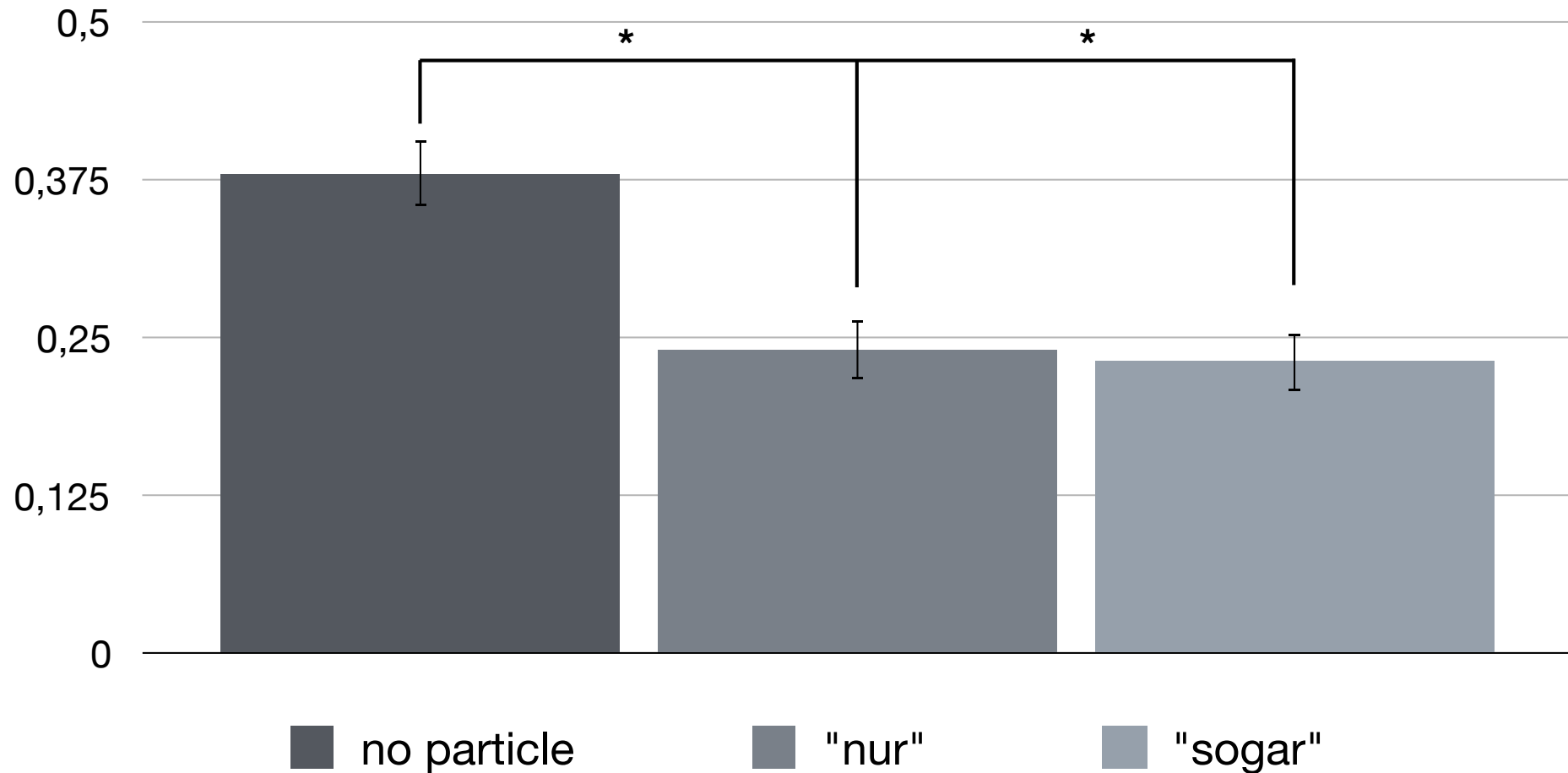
- Karolin betrachtet in ihrer Schatulle Ketten, Ringe und Broschen. Sie überlegte, was zu ihrem Outfit passt. Sie hat die Ringe herausgenommen. *Denn sie wollte ihr langes blaues Kleid anziehen, das sie so gerne mochte. Ihre Mutter hat es ihr geschenkt.*
- [...] Sie hat nur die Ringe herausgenommen. *Ähm, sie trug einen Rollkragenpullover und konnte deswegen keine Kette tragen. Die Perlen trug sie nur abends.*
- [...] Sie hat sogar die Ringe herausgenommen. *Die Perlenkette zog sie ebenfalls an. Nur die Broschen fand sie unpassend für ihr Outfit.*

Sentence continuation study

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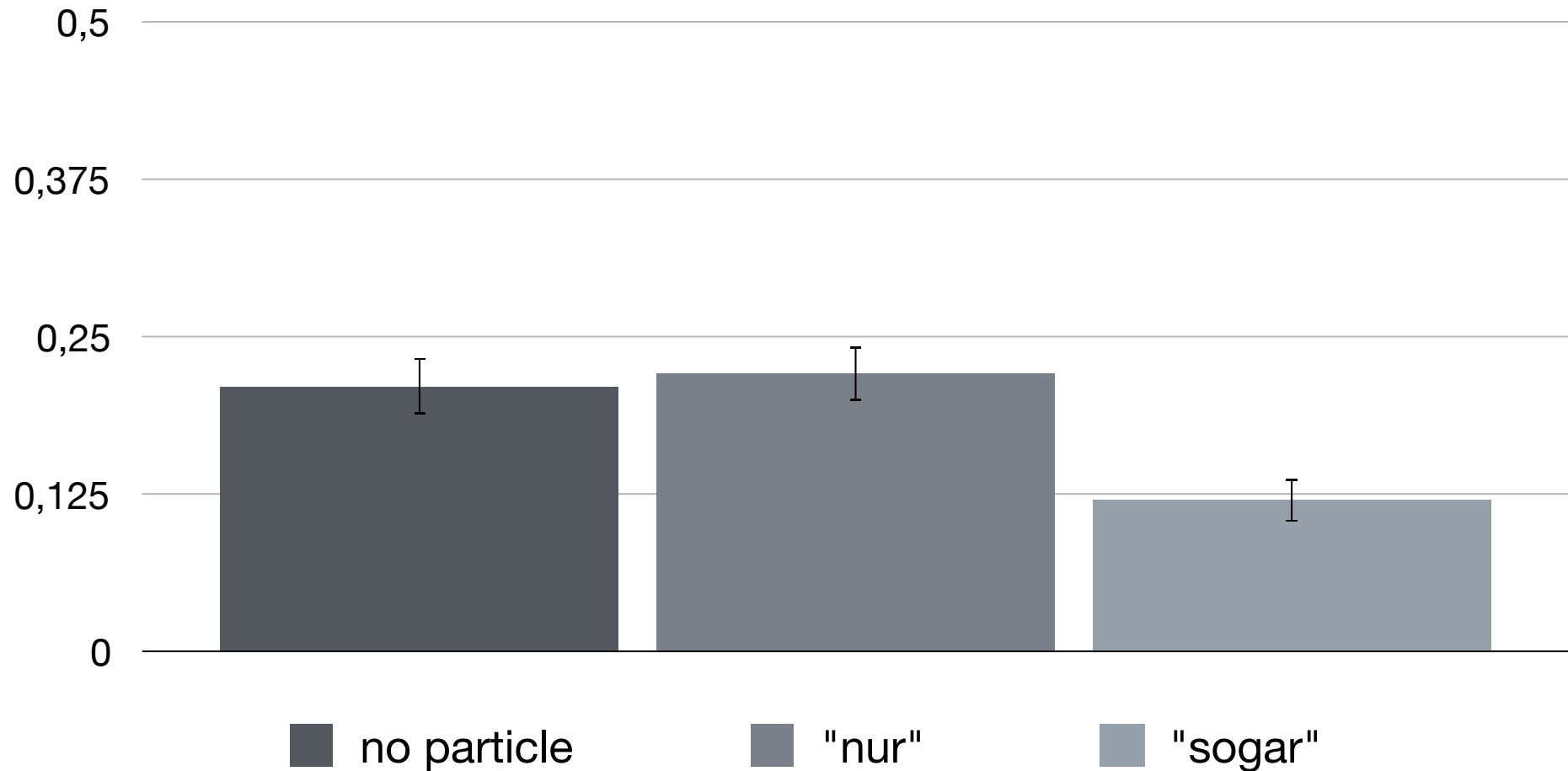
Results

Focused element mentioned in sentence 1



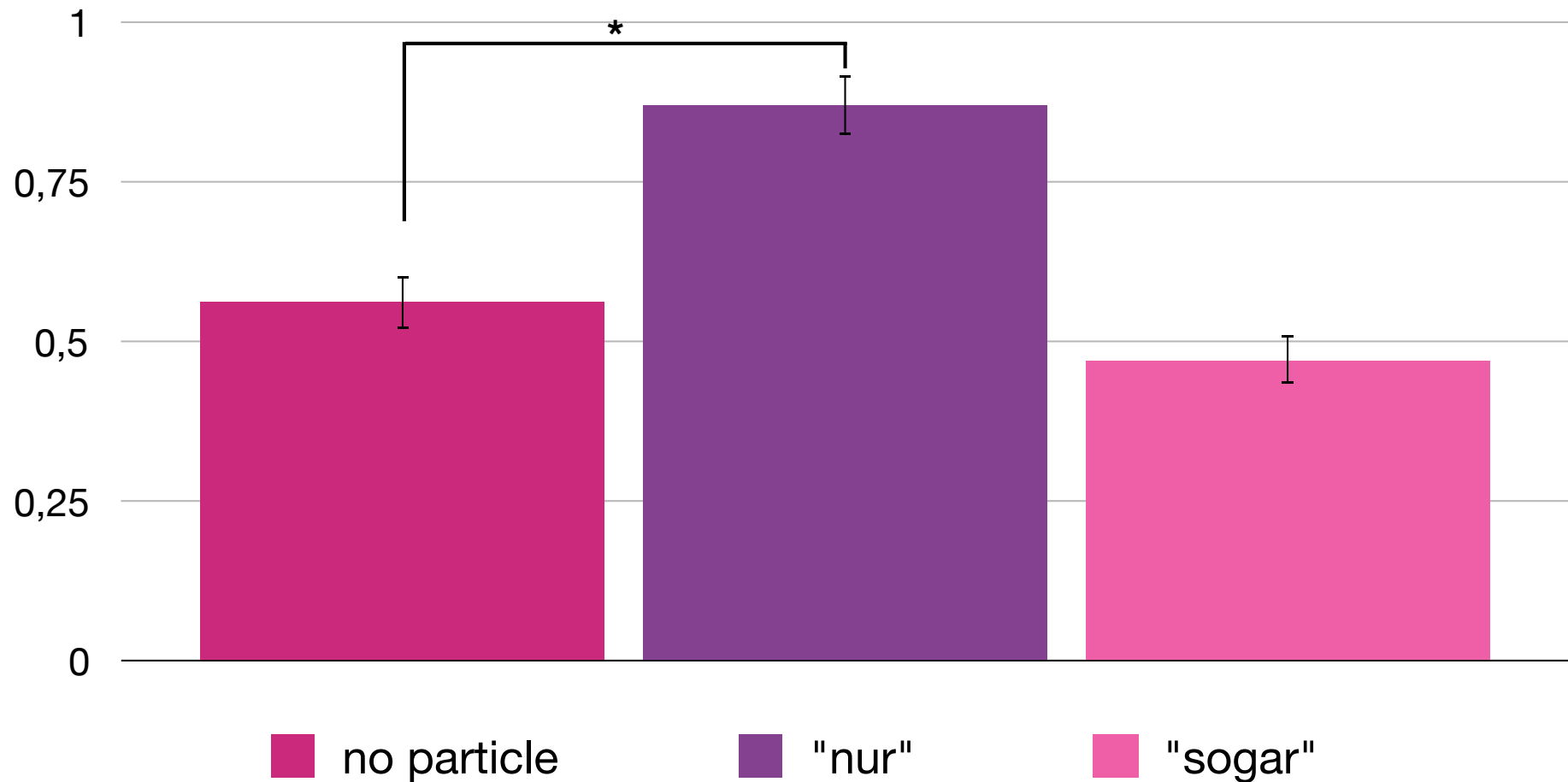
Results

Focused element mentioned in sentence 2



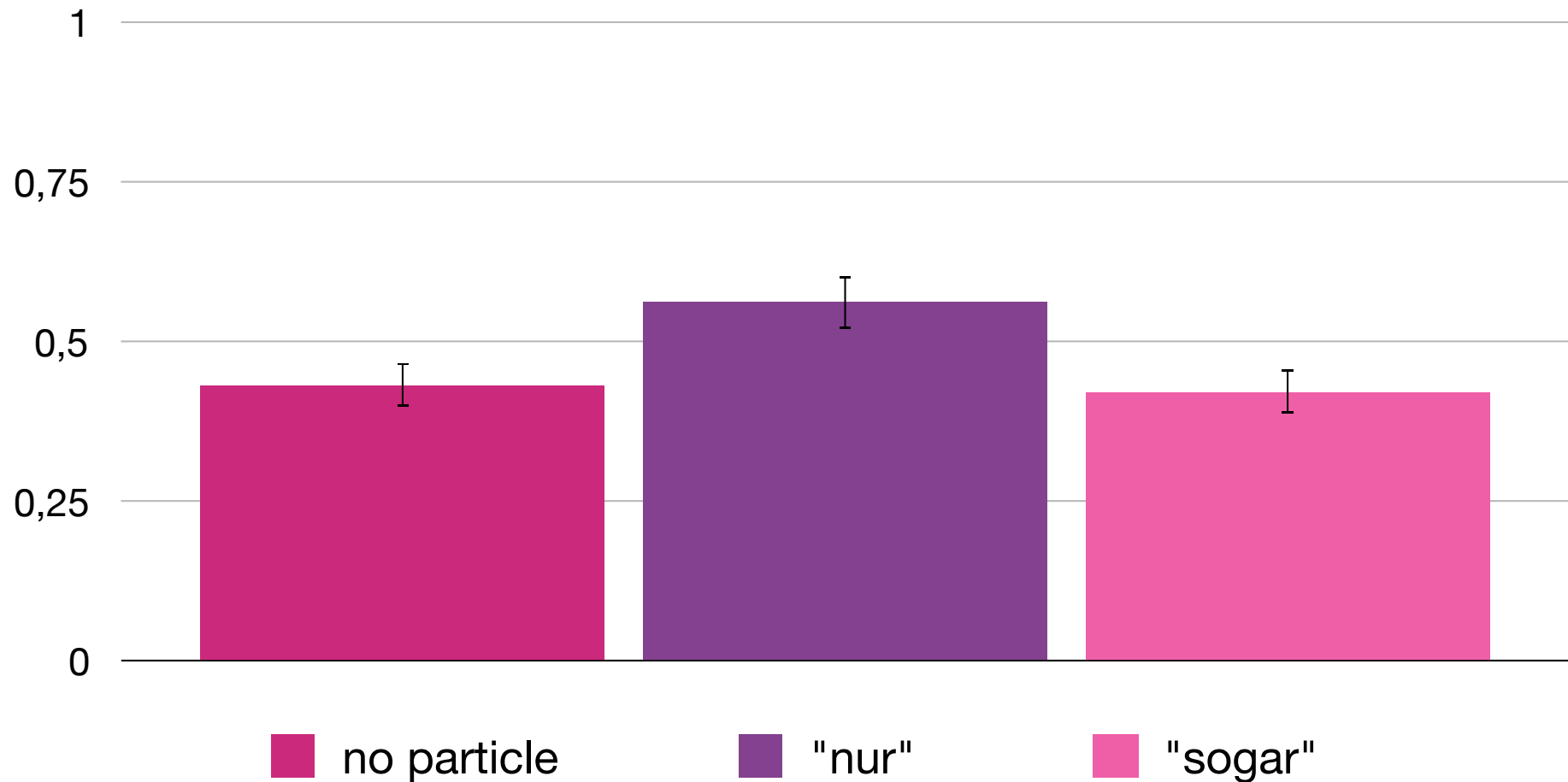
Results

Alternatives mentioned in sentence 1



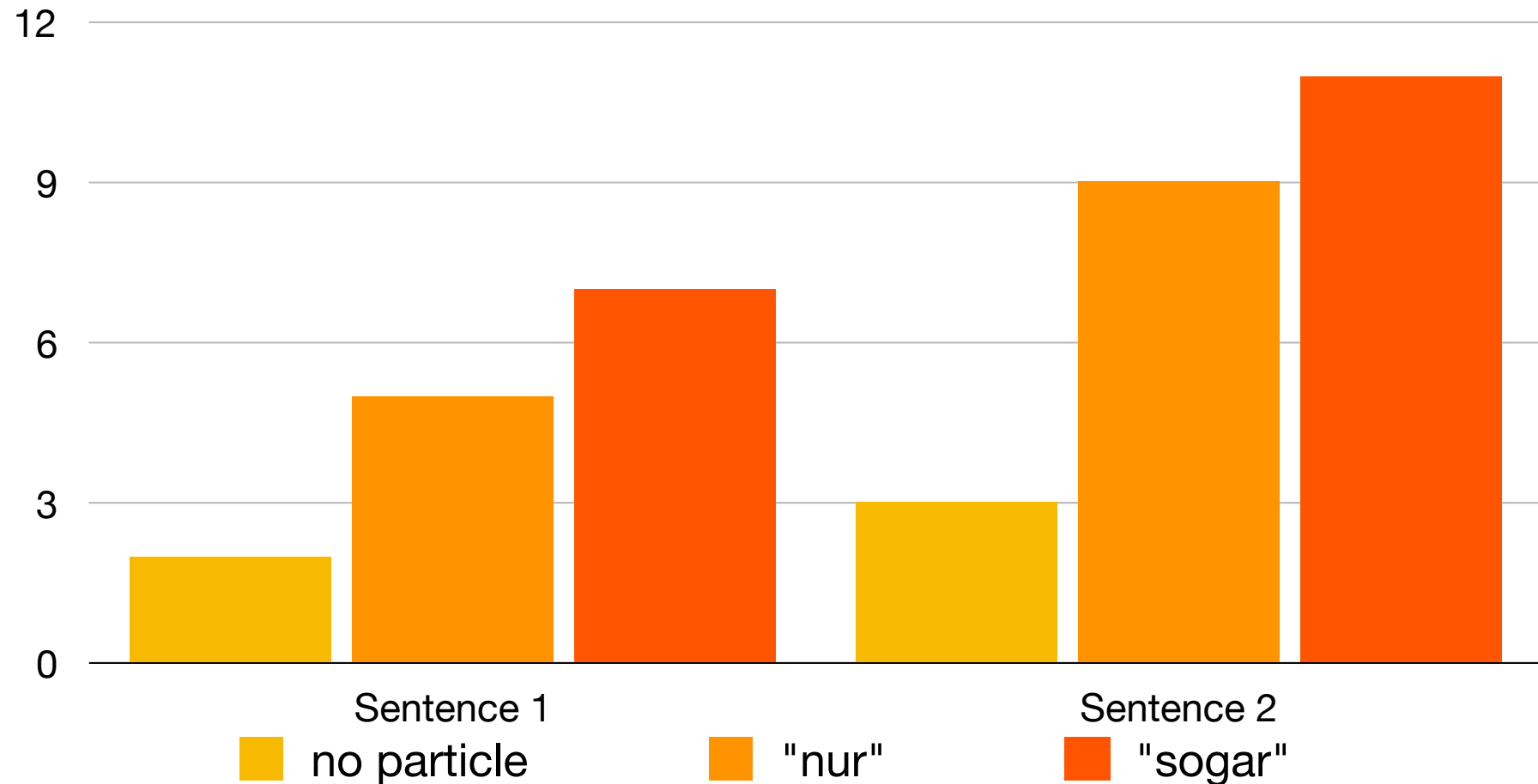
Results

Alternatives mentioned in sentence 2



Results

Alternatives not mentioned previously



Discussion

- After a focus particle, the focused element is less likely to be mentioned again.
- After an exclusive particle, an alternative is more likely to be mentioned again.
- After an inclusive particle, an alternative is less likely to be mentioned again.
- These data confirm and extend previous findings from sentence continuation studies (Kaiser, 2010) and corpus studies (Spalek & Zeldes, 2015)

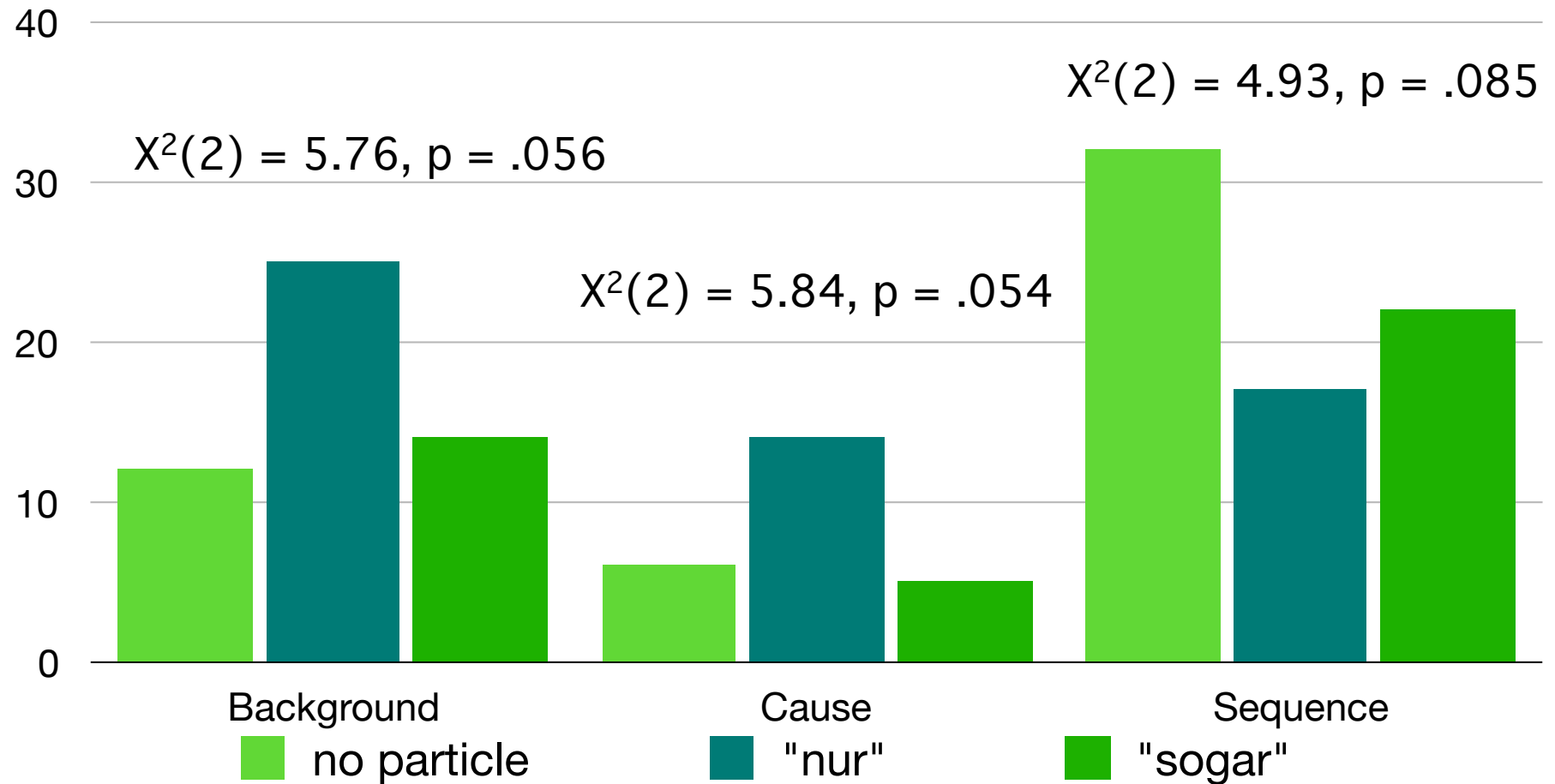
Conclusions (1)

- There are trends in alternative use based on the particular particle employed.
- The memory benefit is automatic (recall patterns and discourse patterns don't align).

Discourse relations

- For all sentence continuations, their relation to the sentence containing the focused element was evaluated (B. Bergmann, 120 of 360 items so far).

Results



Conclusions (2)

- The presence of focus particles and the type of particle present affects
 - whether or not focus alternatives are likely to be mentioned again later.
 - which focus alternatives (previously mentioned vs. novel) are likely to be mentioned again.
 - which rhetorical relations will be employed.

Outlook - focus particles
and discourse
expectations

- Now that we have established the presence of (probabilistic) patterns, the next step is to test whether language users are sensitive to these patterns by studying i. violations and ii. anticipatory effects - results at DETEC 2019, perhaps?