Do Open Specifier Positions at Clause Edges Alleviate Working Memory Load?

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Abstract: In this study I examine the relationship between syntactic working memory and intermediate gap positions in long-distance filler-gap dependencies. An "intermediate" gap position is a structural position, distinct from verbal argument positions, which is available to the filler at a clause edge between its surface dislocated position and its original canonical position.

I will use anterior negativity (AN) as an index of working memory resources as the filler is held by the parser before its integration in the final gap position. Under the hypothesis that such an available intermediate gap position offers a temporary integration of the filler, an attenuation of the anterior negativity is expected at the intermediate gap site. However, this attenuation is not observed, suggesting either that this intermediate gap position is in fact not available to the parser as a site of temporary integration, or that such integration has no mitigating effect on working memory resources.