

# Processing non-maximal readings of sentences with plural definites

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## Abstract

Sentences with plural definites like ‘the circles’ are usually interpreted akin to universally quantified sentences (maximal reading). In some circumstances, however, they also allow for non-maximal readings, i.e imprecise readings that allow for exceptions. We report two mouse-tracking experiments that investigate the online derivation of these non-maximal interpretations of plural definites. Our results show that non-maximal readings are harder to process than maximal interpretations. This difficulty seems to be associated to hesitation in the decision-process rather than to a truly two-step derivation. Interestingly, we also find that experimental setup plays an important role in the availability and difficulty linked to these readings.