Missing VPs in Comprehension and Production
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Under certain conditions, sentences with multiply center-embedded clauses in which one of the clauses lacks a VP are nevertheless perceived as grammatical. This illusion of grammaticality has become known as the missing VP effect. In my talk, I will review the evidence on the missing VP effect that has accumulated over the past 20 years and identify the major controversies that have arisen. These controversies concern the role of working memory and the role of language statistics in accounts of the missing VP effect. Recently, Futrell, Gibson & Levy (2020) have proposed the Lossy-Context Suprisal Model, which explains both effects of working memory and effects of language statistics, and have provided an account of the missing-VP effect as a major piece of evidence for their model. Based on a recent series of acceptability experiments, I will compare the account of the missing VP effect proposed by the Lossy-Context Suprisal Model with the account proposed by Häussler & Bader (2015). Finally, I will discuss how the two accounts fare with regard to corpus evidence showing that the missing VP also occurs during language production.