

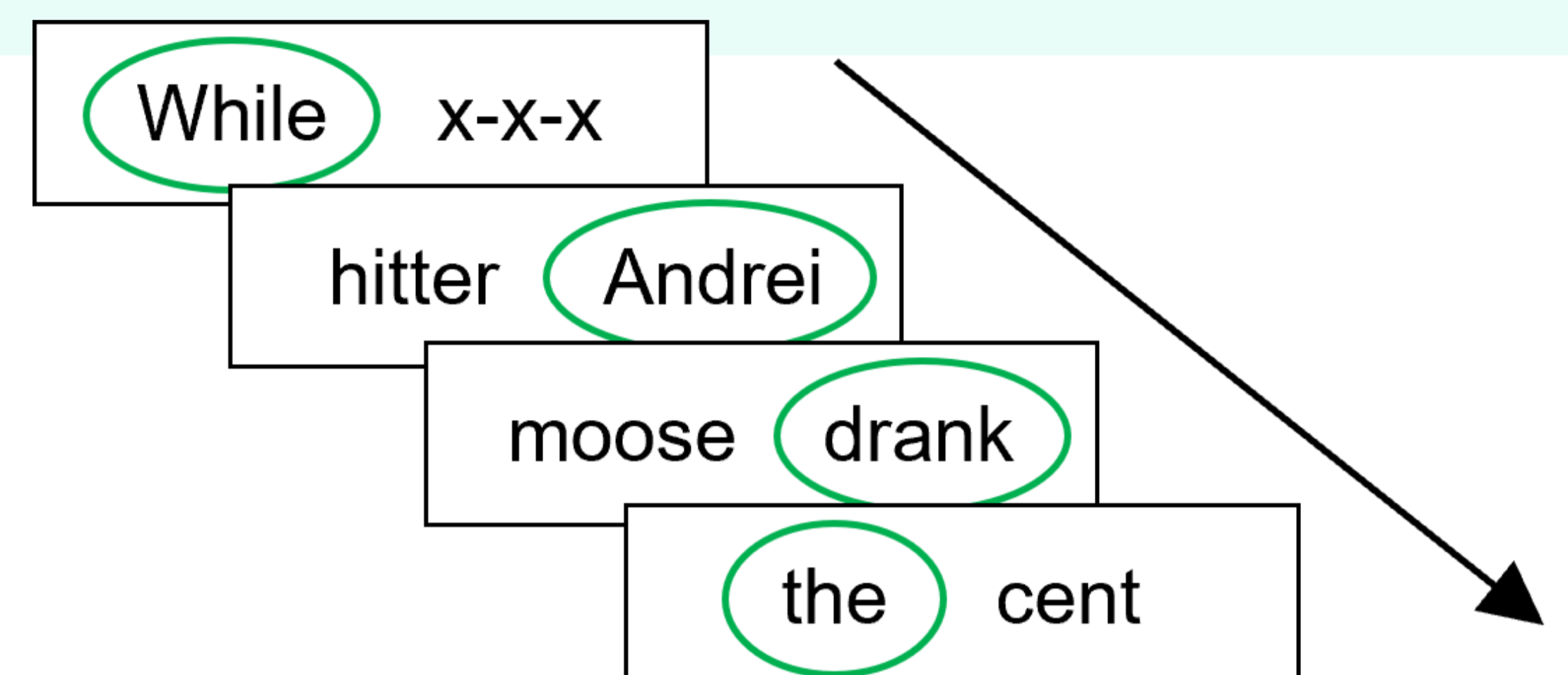
Context affects the comprehension of implicit arguments: Evidence from the maze task

Research questions

- Linguistic arguments can be realized either **explicitly** (*While Andrei drank **the beer**, ...*) or **implicitly** (*While Andrei drank [∅], ...*) [1,2]
- In production**, the choice between explicit and implicit arguments depends on the predictability of the referent [3,4]
- ① **Does contextual predictability also affect the comprehension of implicit arguments** (which might be faster and more automatic)?
- ② **What other context factors influence speakers' expectations about the encoding of upcoming linguistic arguments?**

The maze task

- Word-by-word reading of sentences
- At every step, participants chose between correct continuation and a distractor [5]
- In the present study, only target sentences were presented in the maze.



Design & materials

Context: *Andrei went to a pub where he was a regular. The bartender immediately served him...*

- (a) **a beer** [single referent]
- (b) **two things: a beer and a whiskey** [two referents]

- (c) **something** [underspecified]
- (d) **something particular** [individuated]

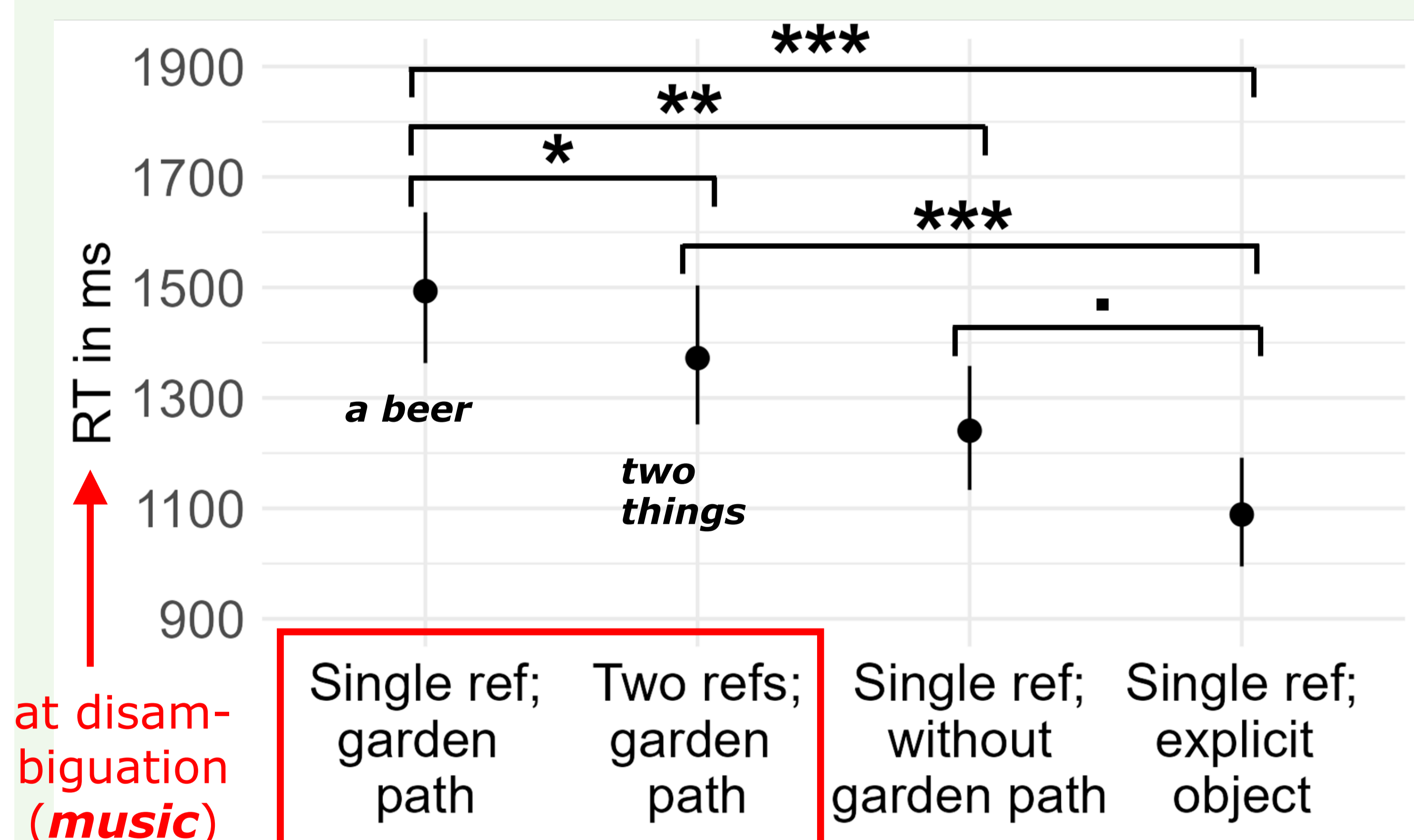
Exp. 1: number of contextual referents

Exp. 2: genericness of contextual referents

Garden path targets: *While Andrei drank the music played loudly from the speakers.*

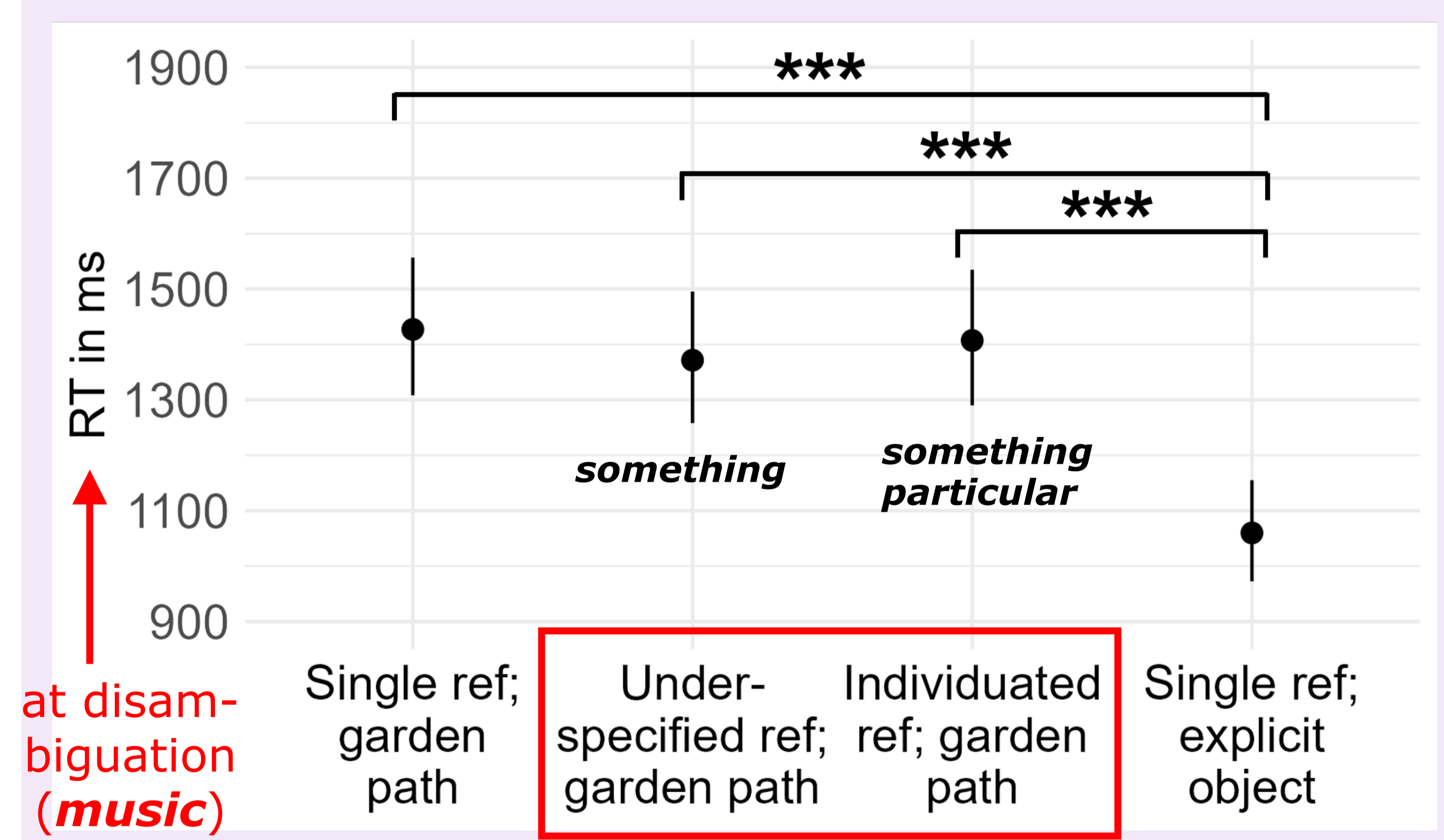
Control targets with comma (*While Andrei drank, ...*) or explicit object (*While Andrei drank the beer...*)

Experiment 1 (N = 40)



- No effect of predictability:** RTs are shorter when the context contains multiple referents rather than a single referent ($t = 2.82, p = .03$)
- Contrast with previous production results → **Modality-specific effects**
- Events involving multiple referents** are more likely to be **interpreted generically**, thus licensing implicit arguments

Experiment 2 (N = 40)



- Effect of genericness (Exp. 1) is not confirmed:** underspecified and individuated referents are processed similarly ($t = -0.85, p = .83$)
- Context may provide insufficient cues for generic interpretation** (compared to Exp. 1)

The transitivity of a verb may depend on the nature of the antecedent that can be taken as a potential filler for the argument position

