Implicit Causality Biases Influence Relative Clause Attachment
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Abstract

Problem: As comprehenders combine words to form a sentence, they must also combine clauses and sentences to form a coherent discourse. Is the resolution of local syntactic ambiguity sensitive to the process of inferring a coherent discourse?

Proposal: Bring together 3 observations about the pragmatic functions of relative clauses (RCs) and the biases associated with implicit causality (IC) verbs, and test whether these types of factors influence the resolution of local structural ambiguity in relative clause attachment:

(i) John deteststhe children of the musician who…

(ii) While effects were generally seen to be specific to IC verbs, a few effects for Non-IC verbs have been observed:


References


Au (1986) A verb is worth a thousand words: The causes and consequences of interpersonal events implicit in language. JML, 25, 104-122.


Brown, Kehler, Kertz, & Rohde (2007) Implicit causality biases influence the resolution of local structural ambiguity in relative clause attachment.


McKoon, Greene, & Ratcliff (1993) Null Hypothesis: Verb type will have no effect on attachment.

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