

UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Exploring the flexibility of perspective reasoning: Evidence from pronoun resolution

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1fc3s9g3>

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 46(0)

Authors

Simovic, Tiana V.

Chambers, Craig

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed

Exploring the flexibility of perspective reasoning: Evidence from pronoun resolution

Tiana Simovic

University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Craig Chambers

University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Work in psycholinguistics continues to demonstrate new ways in which perspective-taking guides language processing. E.g., recent work shows that, in sentences like “Sophie [told Amanda that]/[asked Amanda if] she likes learning new languages”, readers use perspective reasoning to judge the ambiguous pronoun as near-categorically referring to the subject antecedent in TELL (because Sophie possesses the relevant knowledge) and the object antecedent in ASK (Amanda’s knowledge). Although these patterns demonstrate a robust perspective effect, could they instead arise from shallow lexical cues provided by TELL/ASK? Experiment 1 rules out lexical-cue explanations by showing that preceding context sentences can compel readers to actually reverse the “default” antecedent judgements otherwise found for TELL/ASK sentences. Experiment 2 further explores the pragmatic basis of perspective-taking in stand-alone sentences by simply varying character properties, e.g., “Max asked his [son/tutor] Gerald if he understood the assignment correctly”, where Gerald’s role shifts who likely holds the relevant knowledge.