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Authors

Ryzhova, Margarita

Loy, Jia

Demberg, Vera

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Pragmatic comprehension of implicatures — consistency within individuals across types and time

Margarita Ryzhova
Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany

Jia Loy
Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany

Vera Demberg
Saarland University, Saarbrücken, Germany

Abstract

While some first results in the literature indicate a relationship between pragmatic processing and specific personality traits or cognitive properties, no results to date show whether an individual makes consistent inferences across different pragmatic tasks or throughout time. In the present longitudinal study, we address these questions by collecting the data on seven types of implicature tasks (including classic scalar implicatures, embedded scalars, and implicatures based on informational redundancy), for the same set of participants. Additionally, we relate the propensity of drawing pragmatic inferences to participants' cognitive and personality profiles. Results show a strong consistency in pragmatic inferences within individuals across time, and between highly similar implicature tasks, but no correlation between different classes of implicatures such as those based on quantifiers vs. not, suggesting that these are subject to different processes. Furthermore, of the individual differences examined, only memory updating was associated with pragmatic competence in bare numerals.