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What matters? The effect of individual political ideology on spoken gender stereotype comprehension

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Abstract

When people hear 'The babysitter/ put on a TV show/ for the kids/ because he/ needed to use/ the washroom', the male identity of the subject clashes with the stereotypical expectation of babysitters as female, rendering the pronoun he more difficult to process than she. We asked whether participants political views would modulate listening times to pronouns congruent/incongruent with stereotyped role nouns in spoken sentences.

74 English speaking participants listened to sentences with female/male stereotypes in segments and pushed the spacebar to proceed; these reaction times were recorded. Correlating the results with scores from a Political Ideology questionnaire using Generalized Additive Models, we found slower reaction times with incongruent pronouns on the segment following the pronoun ($p < .005$). More interestingly, we found an interaction between participants political ideology scores and pronoun congruence on this segment: participants who were higher in Conservatism showed longer reaction times to incongruent pronouns ($p < .0001$).