UC Merced
Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title
Linguistic aspect constrains event apprehension

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2d17k1nw

Journal
Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 44(44)

Authors
Vurgun, Ugurcan
Ji, Yue
Papafragou, Anna

Publication Date
2022

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Linguistic aspect constrains event apprehension

Ugurcan Vurgun
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

Yue Ji
Beijing Institute of Technology, Beijing, Beijing, China

Anna Papafragou
Unversity of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

Abstract

This study addresses the interaction between language and event cognition. Previous research has shown that viewers follow perceptual and conceptual features of event structure, and these features influence how they process events. Here, we examine whether events are processed in different ways when preceded by descriptions that contrast in lexical aspect. In our experiment, viewers watched fifteen short movie clips and were asked to indicate whether they saw an interruption. Interruptions occurred in either the midpoint or the late point of the events. We found that telic vs. atelic sentences shown prior to the movie clips influenced event construal and hence the detection of interruptions at midpoints vs. endpoints. This novel finding supports a mapping between lexical aspect in language and temporal structure-building in event apprehension. Our study provides direct experimental evidence for the role of language as a top-down conceptual cue in event processing.

In J. Culbertson, A. Perfors, H. Rabagliati & V. Ramenzoni (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 44th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*. ©2022 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).