**Title**

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**Permalink**

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**Journal**

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

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**Publication Date**

2022

Peer reviewed

# The interplay of situation-formality register congruence and verb-argument relations

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## Abstract

The semantic relation between a verb and its argument rapidly impacts language comprehension much like world knowledge and the linguistic context (Altmann & Steedman, 1988; Kutas & Hillyard, 1984; McRae et al., 1998). As part of the socially situated context, register could incrementally modulate comprehension and interact with standard language knowledge processing. Two self-paced reading experiments with an additional picture selection task examined how social-formality contexts and their (mis)matches with register use are comprehended in the presence of verb-argument semantic relation (mis)matches. We assessed whether comprehenders can rapidly adapt to shifting situation formality (Exp 2, N=64), or whether they benefit from habituation enabled by blocked presentation of formality (Exp 1, N=64). We successfully replicated incremental verb-argument (mis)match effects. No significant register effect was found, but the observed picture selection accuracy patterns could be taken to suggest that the processing of social contextual information might impact late sentence processing.