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An Inchoative-Resultative Bias in Event Representation: A Comparative Study between Arabs and Spaniards

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Abstract: Where is attention deployed when we represent an event? Which is the moment of the action that anchors the representation of the whole event? Is it possible that different cultures encode events differently? In order to clarify these questions, both Spanish and Arab participants carried out an ambiguous action judgment task. We found that Spaniards show a tendency to suppose that an action is about to reach its goal. In contrast, Arabs showed the reversed pattern: they tended to think that an action has just started. We suggest that Spaniards show an attentional bias towards the end of events, whereas Arabs show an attentional bias toward the beginning of events. These results show that culture can induce differences in the perception and representation of events, and opens a new venue of research for future investigation of cross-cultural differences in cognitive processes.