Syntactic adaptation to short-term cue-based distributional regularities

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Abstract

Syntactic adaptation to short-term exposure has been documented with both single-trial priming and cumulative priming paradigms. These studies usually involve repeated exposure to the same structure (e.g. reduced relative clauses), and therefore it remains open whether people can track context-dependent regularities through short-term exposure. In the current study, we present a self-paced-reading experiment that investigates context-dependent syntactic adaptation by manipulating the relationship between the animacy feature of the subject NP (animate vs. inanimate) and the corresponding parse of a verb following a subject NP. We analyzed the results in terms of a log-linear model for context-dependent syntactic adaptation. The results suggest that comprehenders can track and adapt to cue-based distributional regularities, but only when the short-term regularities are consistent with the long-term ones existent in their native language.

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