Can Language Users Derive Sentence Meaning without Relying on Verbs? Evidence from English and Korean

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Method

1. How do language users go about when interpreting sentences?
   - Adult native speakers of English (n = 30) & Korean (n = 32)
   - Half in real verb group & half in nonce verb group for each language

2. What are the major typological differences between English and Korean?

   - Verbs are central to sentence meaning
   - Argument Structure Constructions (ASCs) are crucial for sentence meaning:
     - may show bias towards either verbs or ASCs in sentence interpretation

Research Questions & Prediction

- **RQ1:** Which cues do speakers of each language utilise more in sentence comprehension—verbs or ASCs?
  - Weaker ASC-based sorting in nonce verb than in real verb condition
  - The same or stronger ASC-based sorting in nonce verb than in real verb condition

Results & Discussion

- Stronger control of ASCs in sentence meaning in nonce verb vs. real verb (supporting CA)
- Effects of multiple cues (e.g., verb, word order, case marking) in sentence comprehension

Appendix: Cluster Analysis

Background

Lexical Approach (LA)

Constructional Approach (CA)

Verbs are central to sentence meaning
- Argument Structure Constructions (ASCs) are crucial for sentence meaning

Verbs

- (a) & (b) in the same group
- (a) & (c) in the same group

- may show bias towards either verbs or ASCs in sentence interpretation (⇒ RQ1)

Word order
- Case marking
- Example

English
- SVO
- I like you.

Korean
- SOV
- I - ka you - lul like.

→ may lead to different interpretive strategies in each language (⇒ RQ2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word order</th>
<th>Case marking</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>SVO</td>
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<td>Korean</td>
<td>SOV</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Method

- Sorting 16 sentences into 4 piles based on overall sentence meaning
- 4 sentences per pile

Deviation Score

- # of changes for a sort to be completely formulated by verbs (Vdev) / constructions (Cdev)

Clustering Analysis

- Strong bias
- Weak bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitive</td>
<td>S-V-O</td>
<td>X acts on Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditransitive</td>
<td>S-V-O-O</td>
<td>X causes Y to receive Z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause-motion</td>
<td>S-V-O-Oblique</td>
<td>X causes Y to move Z</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vdev</th>
<th>Cdev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>8.19</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Korean: Effects of multiple cues (e.g., verb, word order, case marking) in sentence comprehension

English: Strong effects of verbs in sentence comprehension