

Competition between Verb-Based Implicit Causality and Theme Structure's Influence on Anaphora Bias in Mandarin Chinese Sentences: Evidence from Corpus

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Abstract : Linguists, as well as psychologists, have shown great interests in implicit causality in reference processing. However, most frequently-used approaches to this issue are psychological experiments (such as eye tracking or self-paced reading, etc.). This research is a corpus-based one and is assisted with statistical tool - software R. The main focus of the present study is about the competition between verb-based implicit causality and theme structure's influence on anaphora bias in Mandarin Chinese sentences. In Accessibility Theory, it is believed that salience, which is also known as accessibility, and relevance are two important factors in reference processing. Theme structure, which is a special syntactic structure in Chinese, determines the salience of an antecedent on the syntactic level while verb-based implicit causality is a key factor to the relevance between antecedent and anaphora. Therefore, it is a study about anaphora, combining psychology with linguistics. With analysis of the sentences from corpus as well as the statistical analysis of Multinomial Logistic Regression, major findings of the present study are as follows: 1. When the sentence is stated in a 'cause-effect' structure, the theme structure will always be the antecedent no matter forward biased verbs or backward biased verbs co-occur; in non-theme structure, the anaphora bias will tend to be the opposite of the verb bias; 2. When the sentence is stated in a 'effect-cause' structure, theme structure will not always be the antecedent and the influence of verb-based implicit causality will outweigh that of theme structure; moreover, the anaphora bias will be the same with the bias of verbs. All the results indicate that implicit causality functions conditionally and the noun in theme structure will not be the high-salience antecedent under any circumstances.

Keywords : accessibility theory, anaphora, theme structure, verb-based implicit causality

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