
Script knowledge effects on information structuring

Sofiana Chiriacescu
Transilvania Universit at aus Brasov

Sofiana.chiriacescu@unitbv.ro

Freitag
 10.03.2017
 11:30 – 12:00
 B3 1, 0.14

AG2

The knowledge that humans possess about the world is not randomly stored in memory, but is packed into units or scripts, which include information about objects, situations and sequences of situations (Bartlett 1932, Schank & Abelson 1977, Alba & Hasher 1983). Situations can be more or less structured and are organized into variables, each of which can contain values. In the present study we used a multi-sentence story-continuation task to explore to what extent script knowledge activated by different verb types impacts referential continuity and the structure of events.

Results show that discourses have both local and global coherence structures and that language has different means to give structure to both. First, participants build expectations about who will be mentioned next based on the verb introduced in the target sentence (Rohde 2008). Second, script knowledge gives rise to various probabilistic expectations with respect to event sequences and who will be mentioned next in the global discourse. Upon reading a story introducing a superordinate event (e.g. a rescuing event), hearers activate the subevents belonging to the superordinate event (e.g. cause of rescue). However, superordinate or general events differ with respect to how specified they are. Results show that the more particularized in terms of containing subevents an event is, the more similar participants' continuations are, as participants fill out the activated and missing subevents. On the contrary, if participants are not bound to filling out particular subevents, their continuations are more heterogeneous.

References: • Alba, J.W., & Hasher, L. (1983): Is memory schematic? *Psychological Bulletin* 93, 203–231.
 • Bartlett, F.C. (1932): *Remembering*. Cambridge UP.
 • Rohde, H. (2008): *Coherence-driven effects in sentence and discourse processing*. University of California, San Diego.
 • Schank, R.C., & Abelson, R.P. (1977): *Scripts, plans, goals and understanding*. Psychology Press.