Objectives

- Certain verb classes lead to ambiguity in correlatives
- An eye tracking experiment could show us how to pick out the correct referent

Simple Correlatives in Bengali

Non-eventive:

(1) Raj k khoob raagi. [jey kukur-ta Meena-key,]
Raj very angry. REL dog-DET Meena-ACC
bhalobashey | [ok o-kei marlo]
love.PRES DEM DEM-ACC hit
'Raj has a temper. He/she knows the dog who loves Meena.'

(2) Meena j khoob raagi. [jey kukur-ta Meena-key,]
Meena very angry. REL dog-DET Meena-ACC
bhalobashey | [ok o-kei marlo]
love.PRES DEM DEM-ACC hit
'Meena has a temper. He/she knows the dog who loves Meena.'

Eventive verbs:

(3) Raj j khoob raagi. [jey kukur-ta Meena-key,]
Raj very angry. REL dog-DET Meena-ACC
bhalobashey | [ok o-kei marlo]
love.PRES DEM DEM-ACC hit
He hit the dog who loves Meena.

(4) Meena j khoob raagi. [jey kukur-ta Meena-key,]
Meena very angry. REL dog-DET Meena-ACC
bhalobashey | [ok o-kei marlo]
love.PRES DEM DEM-ACC hit
She(Meena) hit the dog who loves Meena.

Proposal

With the context as a variable, the fixation time on the coreferent of the demonstrative positively correlates to the correct coindex and thus, resolves the ambiguity.

Non-eventive vs. eventive verbs

According to Rosch’s prototype theory (1973):

- A non-eventive verb denotes a situation without a clearly delineated beginning or end point and are exemplified by state verbs such as know and love.
- A eventive verb denotes a dynamic change which takes place within a circumscribed period of time, and which involves several actors and are exemplified by transitive action verbs like hit, kiss, eat, reject.

Experimental design

- Eye-tracking study based on the visual world paradigm proposed by Cooper (1974) & Tanenhaus et al. (1995)
- Participants would be given examples (1) - (4) as pre-recorded audio stimuli
- Visual stimuli (Fig. 1) is based on four object display of Allopenna et al. (1998) & the positions will change with each sentence
- The visual fillers will have random images for each sentence

Conclusion

- Eventive verbs in Bengali correlatives lead to ambiguity
- There is a testable experimental prediction which would help resolve the ambiguity in Bengali correlatives.

Selected References


