

## Abstract

Can discourse context override syntactic parsing preferences? This question is important for models that assume an autonomous syntax. Two experiments were conducted in Chinese to address this question by manipulating prominence of topic in Chinese passages. Experiment 1 showed that when the background information was not sufficiently enough, no topic effect was detected. In Experiment 2, additional background information provided and the topic effect was observed. Combined the findings from two experiments suggest that when information of topic is sufficient, the topic effect can be noticed. It provides insights that topic may have its psychological importance of reading and comprehend discourse.