
Topichood and temporal interpretation of DPs guide clause-internal, causal coherence

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Abstract

Most studies of discourse coherence focus on relationships like Result (forward causality) and Explanation (backward causality) that are established between sentences. Such relationships may, however, also be clause-internal. The current study explores clause-internal coherence triggered by deverbal resultative adjectives in examples like *The broken window got struck with a stone* ‘broken because of the stone’ using an experimental approach and proposes that topichood, signalled by definiteness and subjecthood, permits and constrains plausible causal inference. This analysis suggests a closer relationship between (morpho)syntax and causal coherence inferences than is currently suspected.

Keywords: Coherence, temporal interpretation, topichood

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