When is a spatula just a spatula?: Investigating the link between observed events and the online interpretation of verb–instrument biases
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The trained referees warned the spectators that a rowdy
tactic against SC-continuation ↑

The trained referees believed the spectators would probably get too rowdy

An Underlying Question:
How does information become associated with the verb?

Are there limits on the kinds of information that can undergo this process?

Hypothesis: Experience of Real Events directly influences
the information that will come to be associated with a verb

The lexical representation of a verb will reflect the nature of the events it is used to denote
- Typical number of event participants (argument structure)
- Typical types of event participants (argument structure, selectional restrictions)

Ken McRae, Koening, Mauna & Bienvenue, 2003

Results

1. Were verbs conceptualized differently based on video exposure?

2. Was this conceptual difference reflected in reading times?

Prediction: The new verbs will behave as instrument biased vs. non-instrument biased verbs depending on the participant’s exposure during the video phase of the experiment

For verbs that were shown predominantly with instruments:
- Filled-gap effects should be lessered
- Participants should be faster to read VP-attached PPs

For verbs that were shown predominantly without instruments:
- Larger filled-gap effects
- Participants should be faster to read NP-attached PPs

References