

## Default Phrasing and Relative Clause Attachment

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One of the recent theories in sentence processing hypothesized that the prosodic phrasing implicit to a certain syntactic structure determines how speakers interpret the structure. According to this Implicit Prosody Hypothesis (IPH; Fodor 1998, 2002), in a structure of Relative Clause (RC) with a complex head noun (*NP1 of NP2* or *NP2's NP1*), speakers/languages are predicted to prefer low attachment (i.e., an RC is modified by the adjacent head noun) if the prosodic break adjacent to RC is smaller than that between the head nouns. On the other hand, speakers/languages are predicted to prefer high attachment (i.e., an RC is modified by the non-adjacent head noun) if the prosodic break adjacent to RC is greater than that between the head nouns. This prediction was confirmed for Japanese and Korean data by Jun & Koike (2003, 2008) and Jun & Kim (2004, 2007), respectively. We have shown that Japanese and Korean speakers prefer high attachment and their default prosodic phrasing is to mark a bigger prosodic break adjacent to RC than that between the head nouns.

The current study examines the default prosodic phrasing of English sentences to investigate whether speakers of American English, known to prefer low attachment, would produce a larger prosodic break between the two head nouns than that between the RC and the adjacent head noun. Twenty seven target sentences were chosen from the literature. To see whether default phrasing is sensitive to length and meaning, we varied RC length (9 short RC sentences, 9 medium RC sentences, and 9 long RC sentences) and the bias of RC (i.e., RC is biased to modify NP1 or NP2 or is unbiased by manipulating either gender or number agreement). Thirty-six subjects were randomly assigned to read one of the three scripts (each script read by twelve subjects), each of which has only one bias-version of each sentence.

The prosodic phrasing data produced by thirty-six speakers were independently transcribed by three labelers following the MAE\_ToBI transcription conventions. Results show that, counter to the prediction of the IPH, the most common prosodic phrasing was (NP1 NP2) // (RC), the same pattern found in Japanese and Korean, which are known to be high attachment preference languages. The results also showed that the default phrasing was influenced by the length of the RC but not the semantic/pragmatic bias of the RC. The results will be discussed in relation to factors affecting default phrasing and the validity of the IPH.