ABSTRACT

AMBIGUITY PROCESSING AND ATTACHMENT PREFERENCES FOR
NATIVE SPEAKERS AND EFL LEARNERS

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This study focused on sentence ambiguity phenomenon. It compares the level of difficulty of three types of ambiguity: a) syntactic ambiguity alone, b) semantic ambiguity alone, c) combined syntactic and semantic ambiguity. It also explores the effect of thematic fit and lexical information on the ambiguity processing. Two self-paced reading experiments were conducted to assess the processing difficulty and to establish the preferred reading. The subjects were (32) advanced L2 learners and (21) native speakers of English. The result has shown that combined syntactic and semantic ambiguity is the most difficult type to process. Also, it shows that lexical information play an important role in reducing the processing difficulty. Moreover, the result has proven that comprehenders prefer the simplest and most economical structure. Finally, it demonstrates that native speakers and advanced L2 learners processed syntactic and semantic ambiguity in an indistinguishable manner, despite the fact that they differ in the overall reading rate.