

Figurative and Literal Action-Sentence Compatibility Effect in Japanese

Soichi Kozai

Kansai Gaidai University

Katsunori Kotani

Kansai Gaidai University

Markane Sipraseuth

Kansai Gaidai University

Abstract: It is well-known that the action-sentence compatibility effect (ACE) is activated by mental simulation triggered by visual or linguistic stimuli (Glenberg and Kaschak 2002 and many others). However, no study has compared the extent of ACE activated by literal and figurative understanding of honorific Japanese verbs.

Two experiments, consisting of 59 Japanese university students was conducted using two regular and two honorific Japanese verbs in sentences where participants' literal or metaphorical interpretation of the verbs was measured by their vertical or horizontal hand movement.

The findings from this research found metaphorical, not literal, meaning activated a stronger degree of ACE in regards to Japanese sentences. In addition, social norms of Japanese society partly played a crucial role regarding ACE.