

Endpoints and Midpoints in Event Perception

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Abstract: Events unfold over time, i.e., they have a beginning and endpoint. Previous studies have illustrated the importance of endpoints for the perception and memory of various events (Lakusta & Landau, 2005, 2012; Papafragou, 2010; Regier & Zheng, 2009; Strickland & Keil, 2011; Zacks & Swallow, 2007). However, this work has not compared endpoints to other potentially salient points in the internal temporal profile of events (e.g., midpoints). Building on the “picky puppet task” (Waxman & Gelman, 1986), we presented 4-to-5-year-old children and adults with a puppet that liked clips of events containing brief screen blanks that disrupted either the midpoint or the endpoint of the event. Both children and adults learned the puppet’s preferences better (as evidenced by their extension to novel events) when the puppet liked midpoint compared to endpoint interruptions. These findings suggest a bias for event endpoints that is present from an early age.