Abstract

This article presents the results of an experimental study whose purpose is to determine whether normal cognitive aging affects older adult's processing of ambiguous garden path sentences. The hypothesis that is tested empirically postulates that the reduction in the capacity of working memory due to normal cognitive aging produces a decline in the ambiguous garden path syntactic structure processing, which would eventually affect sentence comprehension. The experiment compares the performance of 39 young adults and 31 older adults in a timed reading comprehension task of sentences that contain direct object /subject temporary syntactic ambiguity (mientras la joven montaba el potro fue robado de las caballerizas, While the girl was riding the horse was stolen from the stables). Each sentence was followed by a comprehension task. The analysis of the differences in reading times and sentence comprehension partially confirms the hypothesis.

Keywords

Aging, syntactic processing, working memory, temporary syntactic ambiguity.