

Crossover Effects in English and Chinese

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It has been known that weakest crossover examples like (2) are more acceptable than weak crossover ones like (1) (Lasnik and Stowell 1991).

- (1) a. * John_i, his_i mother loves t_i.
b. ?? the book_i [which_i [its_i author read t_i]]
c. * Who_i does his_i boss dislike t_i?
(2) a. John_i [NO_i [I believe his_i mother loves e_i]]
b. This book_i, which_i its_i author wrote t_i last week, is a hit
c. Who_i did you stay with t_i [before [his_i wife] had spoken to e_i]

Pan (2016:61) shows that weak crossover effects are also observed in Chinese topicalization like (3a). However, if the context is changed to (3b, c), no weak crossover effect occurs. On the other hand, a relative clause as in (3d) does not make it natural as in English.

- (3) a. * Nà-ge xiǎohái_j, tā_j māma bù xǐhuan t_j.
that-CL kid his mother NEG like
'As for that kid_j, his_j mother doesn't like.'
b. Zhè-ge háizi_j, tā_j fùmǔ tèbié chǒng'ài e_j.
this-CL child his parent strongly love
'As for this child_j, his_j parents strongly love.'
c. Zhè-ge zhǒngtiān rěshìshēngfēi de xiǎohái_j, tā_j fùmǔ cóngxiǎo
this-CL always make trouble DE kid his parent since childhood
jiù bù xǐhuan e_j.
EMPH NEG like
'As for this kid_j who always makes trouble, his_j parents don't like since his childhood.'
d. ? Nà-ge xiǎohái_j, wǒ juéde tā_j māma bù xǐhuan e_j.
that-CL kid I feel his mother NEG like
'As for that kid_j, I think his_j mother doesn't like.'

This presentation will explain English and Chinese crossover effects in terms of Mental Space Theory (Fauconnier 1994, 1997) and argue that no weak crossover effect occurs (i) if the same referents are not presented in the same mental space in English, and (ii) if the Focus Space is not contradictory to its upper space in Chinese. (1) is not natural since there is only one space with two same referents "John_i" + "his mother loves him_i"/ "the book_i" + "its author read it_i"/ "who_i" + "his boss dislike him_i". It becomes natural if the same referents are presented in two mental spaces like (2). In (2a), an upper space contains "John", from which the Belief Space "John's mother loves him" is accessed. In (2b), the Focus Space "this book is a hit" is structured independently of the background space "this book's author wrote it last week". In (2c), the Base Space which contains "who" sets up both the space "his wife spoke to him" and the space "you stayed with him". That is, weak crossover effects are absent if the same elements are not put together in one space. On the other hand, when a topic is presented in Chinese, common sense usually constructs an upper space which makes the same referents shown in different mental spaces. Chinese topicalization is grammatical if the Focus Space is consistent with its upper space. When the topic is family members like in (3), a space built by common sense (implicature) "they love each other" is constructed under the Base Space "that kid". The Focus Space "his mother doesn't like him" is contradictory to its upper space, therefore (3a, d) is ungrammatical. (3b) is acceptable since the Focus Space "his parents strongly love him" is consistent with the upper space. Note that if a context like "the kid always makes trouble" is provided as in (3c), the implicature is contextually cancelable (Grice 1989:44) and the context constructs an upper space, which makes the Focus Space "his mother doesn't like him" compatible with it.

References

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