Abstract

This study examined the processing of Japanese wh-questions with preposed (scrambled) vs. in-situ (canonical SOV word order) wh-objects, and of yes/no-questions with scrambled vs. in-situ demonstrative objects. Questions with scrambled objects elicited bilateral slow anterior negative potentials between filler and gap. Scrambled demonstratives elicited P600 effects following the filler and (L)AN /P600 effects at the gap, while scrambled wh-words elicited primarily (L)AN effects at the gap. This replicated effects in response to filler-gap dependencies created by wh-movement in other languages, supporting the existence of universal parsing operations for all types of filler-gap dependencies. We suggest that these results are most generally compatible with notions of canonicity in sentence processing.