

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Using Eye Movements to Semantic Anomalies to Inform
a New Model of Verb-argument Processing, or What We
Can Learn from Blackmailing Spaghetti

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3:00 PM
Martin Colloquium Center
4127 Sennott Square**

There are two broad classes of hypotheses about how verbs and their arguments (e.g. their subjects, objects, and indirect objects) are processed during language comprehension. Classic theories suggest that the arguments of a verb are processed differently from non-arguments, and that processing proceeds in stages (e.g. Frazier & Clifton, 1996; Katz & Fodor, 1967). More recent theories tend to hold that the seemingly special relationship between verbs and their arguments simply reflects the strong conceptual associations that develop between them due to, for example, the way our knowledge about events is structured (e.g. McRae, Ferretti, & Amyote, 1997). In this talk, I will present a set of experimental results regarding the way readers process sentences describing impossible and improbable events (Rayner, Warren, Juhasz, & Liversedge, 2004; Warren & McConnell, 2007; Warren, McConnell, & Rayner, 2008; Patson & Warren, in press). Importantly, neither class of theories about verb-argument processing can account for the full set of results. I will propose a novel non-stage model of verb-argument processing that reconciles these and other results.

Reception to follow in Room 4125 Sennott Square