

Center for Cognitive Science

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

Wednesday, March 5, 2003

280 Park Hall
North Campus
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Jeffrey Runner, Ph.D.
Department of Linguistics
University of Rochester

On the Complementarity of Pronouns and Reflexives in English: Evidence from Eye Movements

We investigated the role of structural constraints on pronoun and reflexive reference resolution--Binding Theory (BT--e.g., Chomsky 1981)--in sentences containing "picture" noun phrases with possessors (ex. below). We monitored subjects' eye movements while they followed instructions to manipulate one of 3 dolls at a display containing photos of each of the dolls: e.g., "Have Ken touch Joe's picture of him/himself". The photo touched indicates a "judgment" of the sentence interpretation; an analysis of the eye movements reveals how BT is used on-line. I present two findings: (1) pronouns and reflexives do not have complementary referential domains in this construction (contra BT); and (2) BT is not an "initial filter" in on-line reference resolution (contra Nicol & Swinney 1989). I will outline current research investigating the structural and pragmatic factors at play and how they interact on-line.

Refreshments will be available. Everyone is welcome to attend!