

COMPLEMENT COERCION IN THE CANADIAN ENGLISH *BE DONE NP* CONSTRUCTION

Patrick Murphy

Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto

1. Experiment Overview

- Eye-tracking study comparing two classes of nouns as objects in the Canadian English *be done NP* construction.
 - Testing hypothesis of Fruehwald & Myler (2015).

2. Background: *be done NP* Construction

- I'm {done/finished} my homework.
 - Characteristic of Canadian English [1,2,3].
- Not the same as *I'm {done/finished} with my homework*.
 - That prepositional construction (which is dialect-neutral) allows cases where the subject loses interest.
 - The Canadian construction requires that the object actually be finished.

3. Background: Complement Coercion

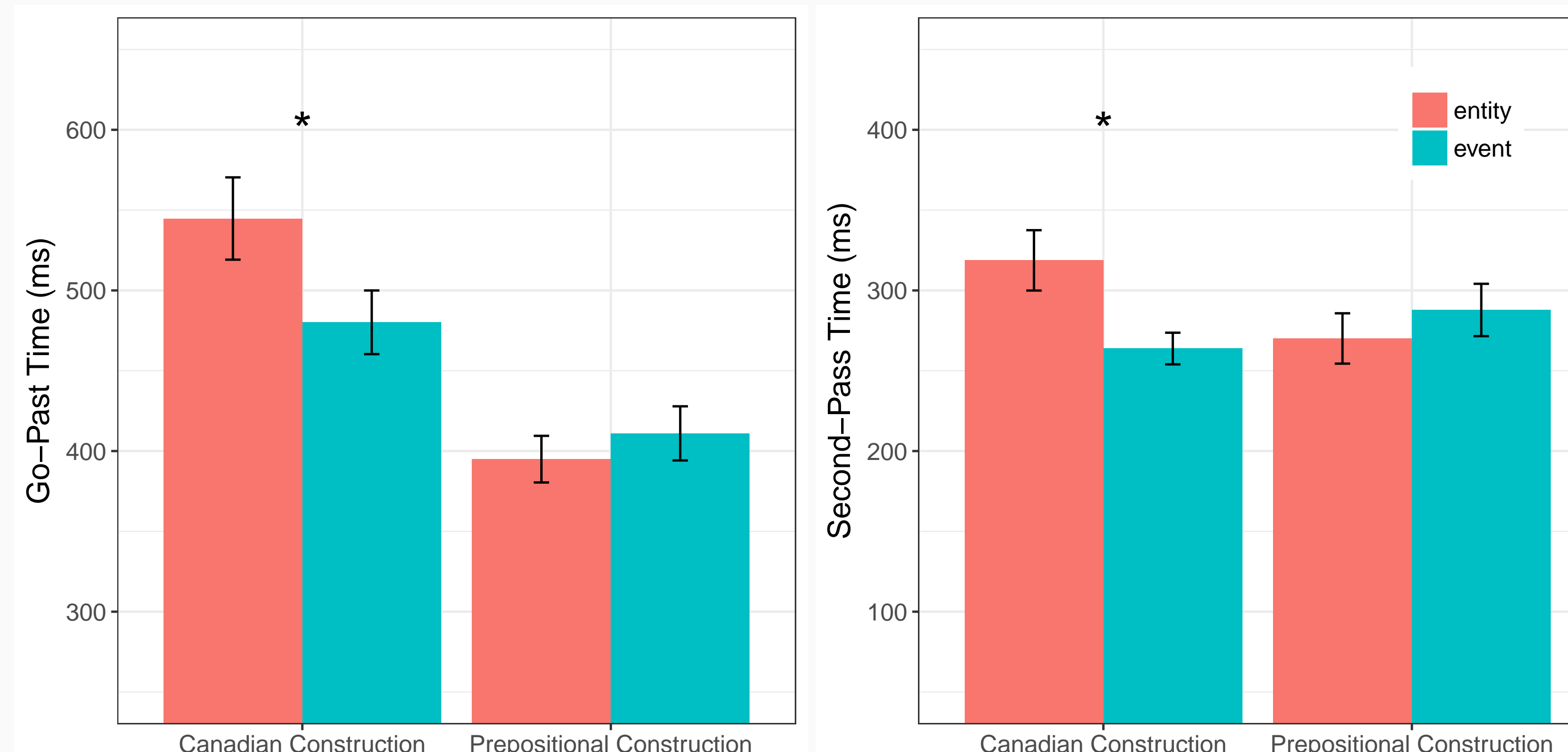
- **Aspectual verb** plus **entity noun** (*begin the book, finish the coffee*) results in **increased reading time** for noun [4,5,6].
 - Compared with event nouns (*the dance, dancing*).
- Evidence of **coercion**. Aspectual verbs select for events; entities have to be coerced into events to be interpreted.
 - Entity reinterpreted as event (that involves the entity): *begin [the book] → begin [reading the book]*.
 - (Computationally costly) process of type-shifting [7,8].

4. Fruehwald & Myler (2015)

- Canadian English *be done NP* construction involves **aspectual adjectives** taking direct object (no silent PP/VP).
 - Like aspectual verbs, these aspectual adjectives **require coercion / type-shifting for entity nouns**.
- If correct, expect longer reading times for entity objects than event objects in the Canadian construction.

5. Results

- Take-away: entity nouns read longer in Canadian construction, as hypothesized. No difference between nouns in prepositional construction.



- Noun:construction interaction was significant for go-past time ($t_{54.9}=2.188$, $p<0.05$) and second-pass time ($t_{438.3}=2.679$, $p<0.01$) in a mixed effects model.
- Post-hoc comparisons done using paired t-tests.

6. Methods

- **Participants**
 - Thirty-six native speakers of Canadian English at the University of Toronto.
- **Items**

Conditions	Noun	Construction
Because the actor is finished <i>the script</i> for [...]	Entity	Canadian
Because the actor is finished <i>the audition</i> for [...]	Event	Canadian
Because the actor is finished with <i>the script</i> for [...]	Entity	Prepositional
Because the actor is finished with <i>the audition</i> for [...]	Event	Prepositional

 - 32 sentences total. 16 entity and 16 event nouns. Noun types were balanced for length and corpus frequency. Included both *done (with)* and *finished (with)*.
 - * Entity examples: resume, hamburger, autobiography, coffee, album, software.
 - * Event examples: interview, celebration, lecture, battle, speech, party.
- **Procedure**
 - EyeLink II eye tracker (250Hz). Comprehension question after each trial.

7. Discussion

- **Canadian construction**
 - Longer reading times for entity nouns than event nouns.
 - Supports proposal that these aspectual adjectives behave similarly to aspectual verbs in requiring coercion / type-shifting for entity nouns (Fruehwald & Myler 2015).
- **Prepositional construction**
 - No difference between entity and event nouns.
 - One possibility is that the preposition eliminates the selectional requirement for an event.
 - Alternatively, the preposition could have a mechanism for anticipating coercion / type-shifting and attenuating the processing cost (see Frazier & Frisson 2005).

8. Contact & Acknowledgements

- **Email:** p.murphy@mail.utoronto.ca
- **Website:** sites.google.com/view/patrickmurphy
- This project benefited from the involvement of Margaret Grant, Philip Monahan, Guillaume Thomas, and Suzi Lima, and the help of Mercedeh Mohaghegh, Kelly-Ann Blake, Kristen DonPaul, and Erin Pettibone.

9. References

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