

Unconscious, Unintended and Efficient Analogies in Lexical Decision under Dual-task Conditions

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Abstract: The possibility of automatic analogies is still debated. While people can perform analogies unintentionally and unconsciously in some complex structures like interpretation of ambiguous stories, yet, they seem not to benefit from relational similarity between simple structures in a lexical decision task (LDT). Moreover, automaticity supporting studies have used lack of analogy-orienting instructions and awareness debriefing to determine automaticity. We tested whether analogies can operate in simple structures under high executive load conditions in a dual-task paradigm. Participants were faster in a LDT on pairs of words preceded by analogically related pairs of words compared to ones preceded by unrelated pairs, while performing a random interval generation task, which is known to interfere with executive functioning. They were neither told about the connection between pairs, nor did they report noticing it. Participants performed analogies not only unintentionally and without awareness, but efficiently as well.