

Can Manner-of-Speaking Islands be Rescued Through Discourse Foregrounding?

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Manner-of-Speaking (MoS) Island Effect

**Who_i did John whisper [that Mary met with t_i]?*

Accounts of the MoS Island effect:

1. Subjacency (Synder, 1992)
2. Verb-frame frequency (Liu et al., 2019; 2022)
3. Backgroundedness (Erteschik-Shir, 1973; Ambridge & Goldberg, 2008; Goldberg, 2013)

Previous studies

Backgroundedness of the embedded constituents **correlates** with the magnitude of the MoS Island Effect (Ambridge & Goldberg, 2008; Goldberg, 2013).

Question:

Does the discourse backgroundedness of the extracted constituent **cause** the MoS Island Effect?

Design

Conditions (12 MoS verbs, 24 fillers)

- *Verb Focus condition*

Hanako said: John didn't **WHISPER** that Mary met with the lawyer.

Scott said: Then who did John whisper that Mary met with?

- *Embedded Focus condition*

Hanako said: John didn't whisper that Mary met with the **LAWYER**.

Scott said: Then who did John whisper that Mary met with?

Tasks

- ***Acceptability***

How natural/acceptable does Scott's question sound?

- ***Backgroundedness***

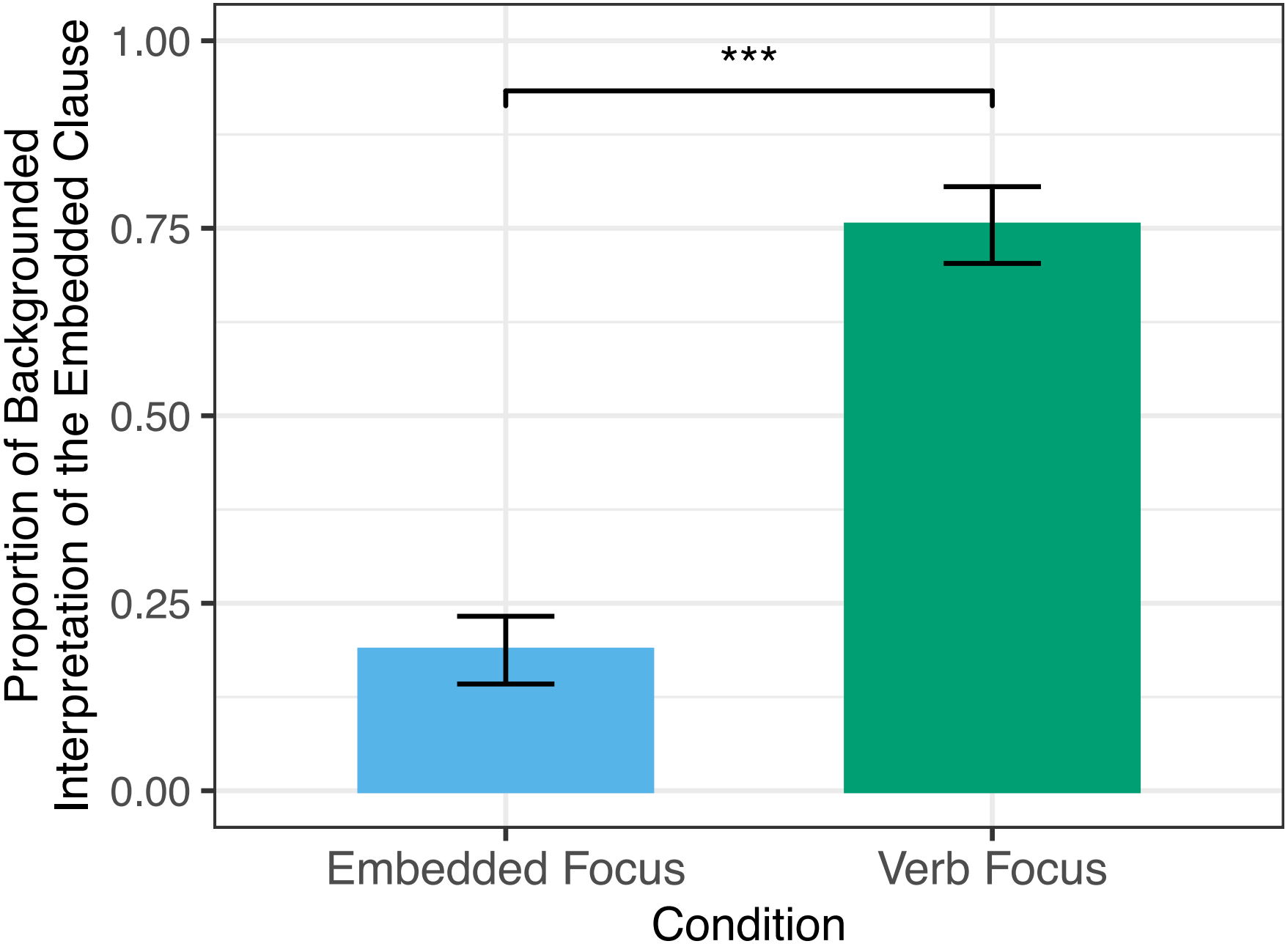
What was Hanako talking about?

a. Who Mary met with, according to John.

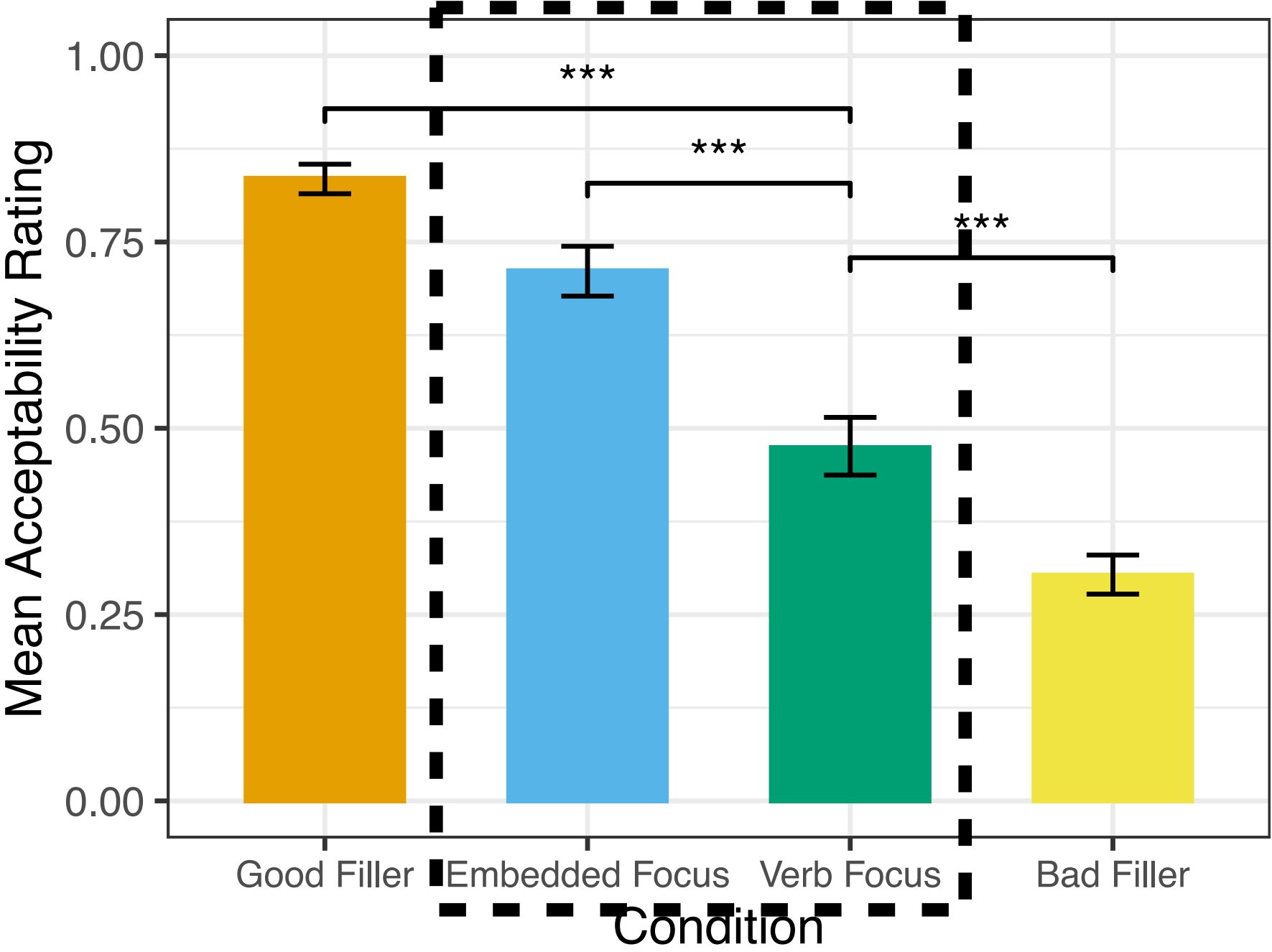
b. The way John said that Mary met with the lawyer.

Results

Manipulation check

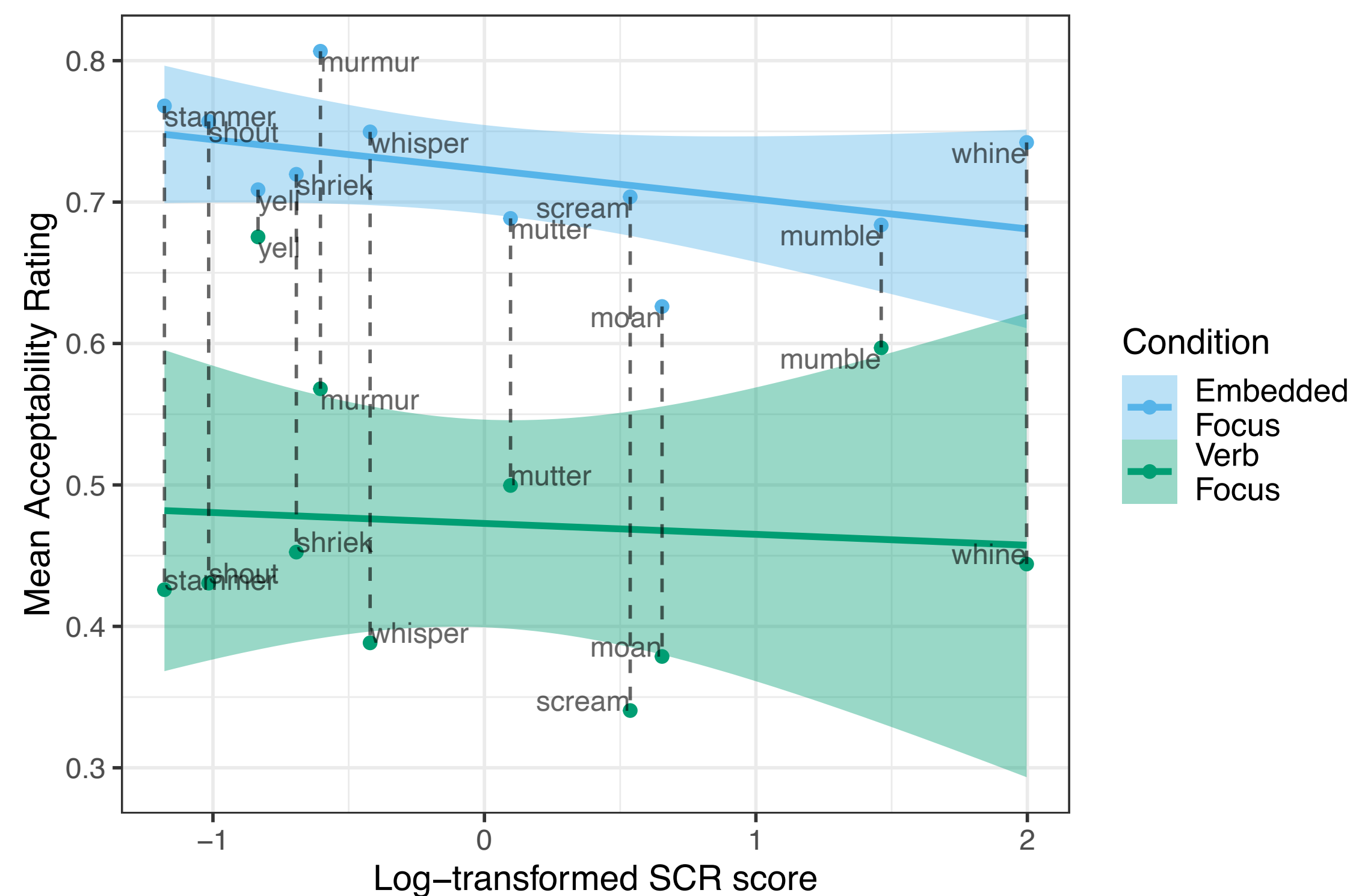


Main analysis



n=96 participants on Prolific.

Post-hoc Analysis



Sentential Complement Ratio (*SCR*, following Kothari, 2008; Richter & Chaves, 2020)

$$SCR = \frac{\# \text{ (verb used with sentential complement)}}{\# \text{ (verb)}}$$

Discussion

✓ Support the **backgroundedness** account

- there is a **causal** relationship between the discourse backgroundedness of an embedded constituent and the degradedness of extracting that constituent from an MoS island.

? Challenge the **subjacency** account and **verb-frame frequency** account

- neither the subjacency and verb-frame frequency depends on the discourse context.

Thank you!



References

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