

Factors licensing embedded present tense in speech reports

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THE PUZZLE OF THE EMBEDDED PRESENT

Ogihara (1995): present tense can be used only if the cause of the belief still holds at the utterance time of the report.

John and Bill are looking into a room. Sue is in the room.
John (near-sighted): 'Look! Mary is in the room.'
Bill: 'What are you talking about? That's Sue, not Mary.'
John: 'I'm sure that's Mary.'

(1) One minute later, Kent joins them. [Sue is still in the room](#).
Bill (to Kent): 'John said that Mary is in the room. But that's not true. The one that is in the room is Sue.'

(2) [Sue leaves the room](#). One minute later, Kent joins them.
Bill (to Kent): '#John said that Mary is in the room.'

Counter example by Klecha (2015)

Mary puts a balloon under her shirt. John then observes her in this state, and then says to everyone: 'Mary is pregnant!' **1**
Later that day, Mary takes the balloon out from under her shirt and [pops it](#). **C**
Bill, [aware](#) **2** of everything that happened, says to Mary: '(Earlier today,) John [told](#) **3** everyone that you're pregnant.'

THIS STUDY

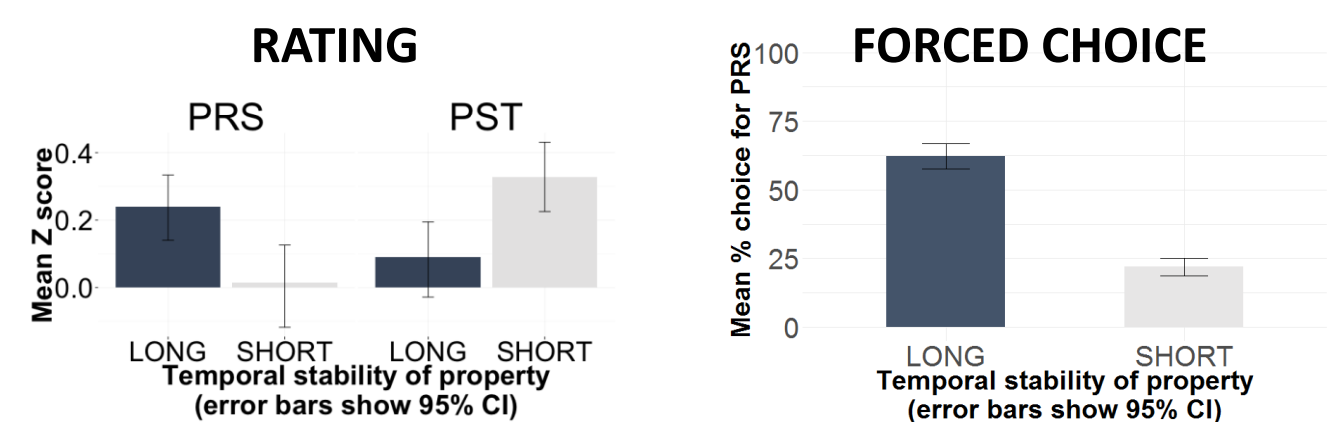
GOAL explore which factors are involved in licensing a felicitous usage of the embedded present tense.

	EXP1: RATING TASK	EXP2: FORCED CHOICE
<i>Participants</i>	88 native speakers of English	41 native speakers of English
<i>Factors</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Temporal stability of reported property Who is aware of the falsity Matrix verb Embedded tense 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Temporal stability of reported property Who is aware of the falsity Does the cause of the false belief still hold
<i>Dependent variable</i>	Acceptability of target sentence rated on a 5-point scale (GLMM on Z-scores)	choice for present tense (binomial GLMM)
<i>Number of items</i>	12 experimental scenarios, 6 control scenarios, 3 training items and 8 fillers	

RESULTS

1 Temporal stability of reported property (within-subjects)

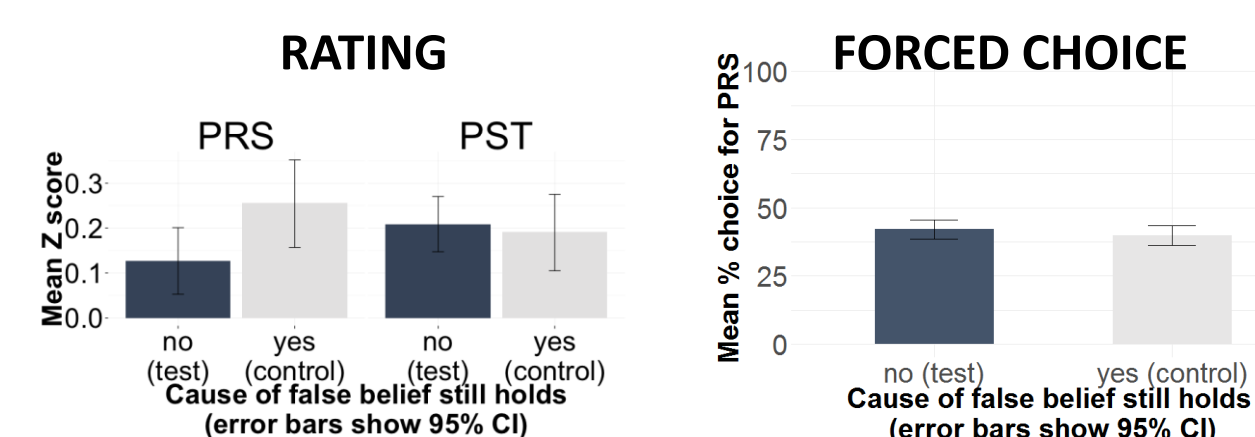
Properties were either short-term stable (*raining, being at the bar*) or long-term stable (*gender, being pregnant*).



→ interaction ($p=.009$), short-term properties a stronger preference for PST
→ significant difference ($p<.001$)

C Does the cause of the false belief still hold (within-subjects, control condition)

Scenarios were manipulated such that the cause of the false belief still holds.



→ no differences

Introduction of a false belief

1

Alec, Ben, and some friends are out at a pub one night. Alex and Ben look over at the bar. Their friend Chad is sitting at the bar talking with a woman. However, the light is dim, and Alec can't see very well, so he thinks the guy at the bar is their friend David, who is gay and married. He turns to Ben, and says, in a voice loud enough for their friends to hear, "Hey, look! David's at the bar with a woman!" The friends look over to the bar and shake their heads at this scene, disappointed. The exception is Ben.

Who is aware of the falsity?

2

	reporter	reporter & reported speaker	everyone
Ben pulls Alec aside, away from the other guys, and says, "Alec, look more closely. That's Chad, not David!"	Ben pulls Alec aside, away from the other guys, and says, "Alec, look more closely. That's Chad, not David!"	Ben pulls Alec aside, away from the other guys, and says, "Alec, look more closely. That's Chad, not David!"	Ben says to Alec in front of the others, "Alec, look more closely. That's Chad, not David!"
Alec says, "No way! That's David at the bar with a woman!" Alec walks away. Ben remains standing there, apart from the others.	Alec says, "Oh wait, you're right! That's Chad, not David." Alec and Ben remain standing off to the side.	Alec says, "Oh wait, you're right! That's Chad, not David." Alec, Ben, and their friends laugh about this.	

Cause of the false belief no longer holds

Cause of the false belief still holds

C

Ben watches as Chad and the woman get up from the bar and walk out the door. No one else notices this.	Alec and Ben watch as Chad and the woman get up from the bar and walk out the door. No one else notices this.	All the guys watch as Chad and the woman get up from the bar and walk out the door.
Ben watches as the bartender pours someone a drink. No one else notices this.	Alec and Ben watch as the bartender pours someone a drink. No one else notices this.	All the guys watch as the bartender pours someone a drink.

Report of the false belief

3

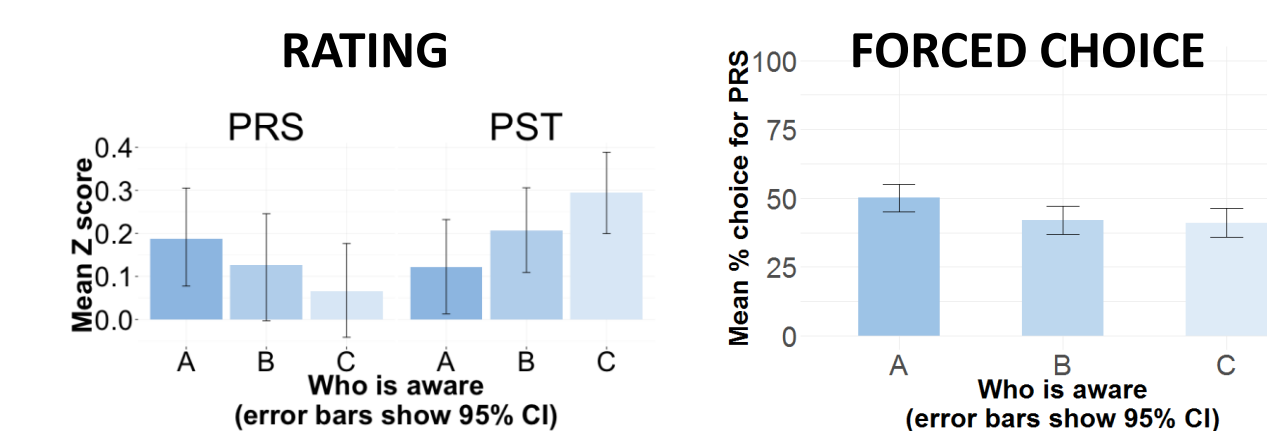
A minute or two later, Ben's friend Evan arrives. Ben says to Evan, "You know what just happened?"
Alec [told us/said] that David [was/is] at the bar with a woman."

CONCLUSIONS

- When cause of false belief no longer holds:
 - short-term properties disfavor present tense;
 - knowledge state of others seems to effect present tense use: present tense better when people still entertain false belief.
- Surprisingly, whether the cause of the false belief still holds, did not make a difference.

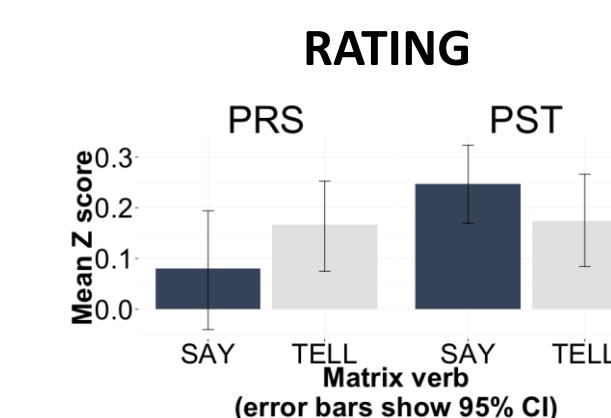
2 Who is aware of the falsity (within-subjects)

	reporter	reported speaker	audience
A	x		
B	x	x	
C	x	x	x



→ no main or interaction effects (although simple comparison within condition C shows PRS>PST ($p=.004$))
→ stronger preference for PRS when only the reporter is aware of the falsity (A) compared to when everyone is aware (C) ($p=.04$)

3 Matrix verb: tell vs. say (between-subjects)



→ no differences