

Verifying who "jumped more" or "higher" in simple events

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Abstract: Sentences with "more" can be used to compare along many different dimensions (e.g., number, height, etc.). Barner, Wagner, and Snedeker (2008) found that participants strongly preferred number as the relevant dimension for comparatives with deverbal nominals like "more jumping," even when height was an available choice. Would this preference manifest as a choice of number over height pitting the two dimensions against one another with verbal "jumped more"? We animated two objects, A and B, and varied each's height, duration, and number of jumps, counterbalancing how often A "won" along each dimension. In separate blocks, participants judged whether "A jumped higher/longer/more times/more than B," and unambiguously chose height with "higher," duration with "longer," and number with "more times." With bare "more," however, participants said "yes" both by height and number. This study challenges Barner et al's (2008) idea that the lexical root "jump" determines a comparison by number with "more".