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Title: Discourse prominence and the conceptual and referential properties of definite and indefinite noun phrases

Abstract: In this presentation, I argue that the comprehension of definite and indefinite noun phrases is best described within a dual-process model of referent activation. In a first process, a comprehender accesses the concept associated with the noun phrase's descriptive material while, in a second process, the function of the noun phrase's article guides the comprehender to select the denoted referent(s). Importantly, definite articles signal that there is a unique element that falls under the previously activated concept. In contrast, indefinite articles signal that there are (potentially) multiple referents for the previously activated concept. The dual-process model proposed here was tested in a visual-world eye-tracking experiment, where the different functions associated with definite and indefinite noun phrases are reflected at the level of a referent's accessibility to a comprehender.