# The Evolution of Syntactic Priming Research: A Dual-Nature Perspective

Authors: Zhengyue Wang, School of Foreign Languages, Shandong Normal University, Jinan, China
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Presenter Name: Zhengyue Wang

## Abstract

**Objectives:** Syntactic priming refers to the phenomenon of producing the subsequent utterance in the related form after processing the previous utterance. Syntactic priming has been extensively studied as a psycholinguistic phenomenon and widely adopted as an experimental paradigm in interdisciplinary research. This dual nature of syntactic priming was discussed by Pickering and Ferreira in 2008 as an important future research direction. Although existing reviews have examined the evolution of syntactic priming research, the dual nature has rarely been adopted as a theoretical framework for understanding the development of this field. This study aims to systematically review the evolution of syntactic priming research from the perspective of its dual nature with bibliometric evidence.

**Methodology:** This study retrieved relevant literature on syntactic priming from SSCI and SCI Expanded indexes, covering the period from 1998 to 2026. CiteSpace 6.4.R2 was employed to conduct bibliometric analysis through four dimensions: keyword co-occurrence, keyword clustering, keyword timeline and keyword burstness.

**Results:** The bibliometric analysis reveals two clustering categories, supported by high Modularity Q and Silhouette S values and a strong spillover effect. These findings support the dual-nature framework of syntactic priming. Moreover, the analysis suggests two marked turning points in the evolution of syntactic priming research, around 2008 and 2017. Based on these temporal patterns, the evolution of syntactic priming research can be divided into three stages: 1998-2007; 2008-2016 and 2017-2026, with the research focus transitioning from the investigation of syntactic priming phenomenon within psycholinguistics to the establishment of syntactic priming as an experimental paradigm and to the extensive interdisciplinary application in recent years. The two turning points may correspond to the seminal critical review by Pickering and Ferreira in 2008 and the advent of the Transformer model in 2017.

**Discussion:** This study reconstructs the three stages in the evolution of syntactic priming research from a dual-nature perspective. The analysis of the current stage reveals an emerging trend towards interdisciplinary applications of syntactic priming in NLP research and a gap in multilingual syntactic priming research regarding the investigation of shared syntactic representations. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of the evolution of syntactic priming research and its dual nature, and points to several directions for further linguistic investigations.