Comprehenders consider salient alternatives to prominent information in a discourse:\(^1\):“DUANE didn't break the eye-tracker.” (but someone else did)

Present study:
- What cues lead to consideration of alternatives?
- What constrains set of alternatives encoded?

Past work\(^2\):
- Contrastive (L+H\(^\ast\)) prosody leads listeners to encode salient alternative
- Helps reject the alternative on a memory test
- But doesn't help reject unmentioned item

EXPERIMENT 1 (\(N = 48\))

STUDY: Read 48 stories with pairs of alternatives
"Both the British and the French biologists were searching Malaysia and Indonesia for the endangered monkeys. Finally, the British spotted one of the monkeys in Malaysia and planted a radio tag on it."

Manipulate font emphasis on critical word:
- No emphasis: British
- CAPS: BRITISH
- Italics: British

Collapsing across CAPS and italics—no difference

TEST: (30 min later)
True/false memory test with 3 kinds of probes:
- TRUE: The endangered monkey was found by the British.
- ALTERNATIVE: The endangered monkey was found by the French.
- UNMENTIONED: The endangered monkey was found by the Germans.

RESULTS

Emphasis:
- Helps reject alternative on later memory test
- Doesn't help reject completely unmentioned items

Suggests encoding of alternative
Generalizes effect\(^3\) from contrastive (L+H\(^\ast\)) pitch accents

EXPERIMENT 2 (\(N = 48\))

What constrains alternative set?
- Mere mention in discourse?
- Situation model?

Either would have helped reject a totally unmentioned item.

NEW MATERIALS: Include mentioned but poor alternative.
"Originally, the space probe Cosmo III was designed to fly past Jupiter and Saturn and send photos and measurements back to NASA from both planets. NASA needed this information to guide the videos they were going to take of Neptune on a future mission. However, due to a glitch in the programming of the Cosmo III, it lost the photos taken of Jupiter and put the future mission in trouble."

True item: Jupiter
Salient alternative: Saturn
Merely mentioned: Neptune

Same procedure as Experiment 1
Except only CAPS or no emphasis

RESULTS

Emphasis:
- Helps reject salient alternative
- But not merely mentioned item

Alternative set narrowly defined, constrained by situation model

CONCLUSION
Salient alternatives contribute to long-term comprehension
- Not exclusive to contrastive (L+H\(^\ast\)) pitch accents
- Set of alternatives narrowly defined by situation in discourse

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