L2 Learners’ Sensitivity to Contrastive Accents in Memory for Discourse

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Previous Work

- Contrastive reading of the L+H* accent
  Mary like oranges, right?
  Mary like APPLES.
- L+H* improves native speakers’ memory for discourse, relative to H*
  - by enhancing a representation of a relevant contrast item (Fraundorf et al., 2010)
    - “Mary did not like oranges”
- What about L2 listeners?
  - Non-native-like processing of contrastive accents (Akker & Cutler, 2003; Braun & Tagliaferri, 2011)
  - Poor memory for accenting patterns of L2 utterances (Pennington & Ellis, 2000)
  - L1-L2 differences in how contrastive accents are encoded in memory?

Competing Predictions

- The contrast representation account
  - L+H* enhances a contrast representation (“not French”).
  - Helps reject contrast probes (French)
- The granularity account
  - L+H* enhances a representation of a focused word (“definitely British”).
  - Helps reject all incorrect probes (p/c they’re not the focused word)
- The shallow representation account
  - L+H* evokes a contrast set (“British or French”).
  - But, which is the contrastive alternative not fully encoded (lack of memory resources)
  - Helps reject unmentioned probes outside the contrast set, but doesn’t distinguish correct vs. contrast

Current Study

- Tests whether and how contrastive accents lead L2 learners to differently represent the discourse itself
- 60 L2 learners
  - L1-Korean, L2-English
- Used the same task and material as Fraundorf et al. (2010)
- 36 recorded spoken discourses

Context: Both the British and the French biologists had been searching Malaysia and Indonesia for the endangered monkeys. Continuation: Finally, the (British / BRITISH / MALAYSIA) spotted one of the monkeys in (Malaysia / MALAYSIA /) and planted a radio tag on it.

- Probe recognition task
  CORRECT: The British spotted the endangered monkey.
  CONTRAST: The French …
  UNMENTIONED: The Portuguese …

Results

Native: Consistent with the contrast representation account
Low & Mid: No memory benefit from L+H*
High: Consistent with the shallow representation account

Discussion

- L1-L2 differences in the depth of processing of contrastive accent information might underlie previously established non-native performance.
- Mnemonic effects of contrastive accents are developmental.