Mapping Prosody to Reference in L2

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How does CONTRASTIVE INTONATION/PROSODY affect native and non-native speakers’ interpretation of ambiguous pronouns?

Background & Motivation

- Contrastive intonation/prosody affects native-speaker processing, although its precise role in the interpretation of pronouns has received limited attention.

  (1) ...noticed a paramedic/PARAMEDIC calling the CAPTAIN/captain...

  Later Wendy bumped into him. (Balogh, 2003)

  (2) John hit Bill and then George hit HIM. (Akmajian & Jackendoff, 1970)

- Prosody presents challenges in L2 acquisition, which vary with factors such as the L1-to-L2 mapping and prosodic function.

  (Huang & Jun, 2011; Zuzubiarreta & Nava, 2011; Takeda, Schafer, & Schwartz, 2010; Pennington & Ellis, 2000; Chen & Lai, 2011)

- Pronoun interpretation is challenging in L2. This has been attributed to the need to integrate information from multiple domains.

  (e.g., Roberts et al., 2008; Sorace, 2011)

Previous work has shown a reduced effect of event structure, marked by grammatical aspect, on L2 speakers’ reference choices. (see below)

The role of prosody in L2 pronoun resolution has not been investigated.

Our goals:

- Test how contrastive intonation on potential antecedents (Exp1) and pronouns (Exp2) affects L1 and L2 speakers’ reference choices.

- Compare effects of contrastive intonation and grammatical aspect.

Predictions:

- IF prosody is generally challenging in L2, we expect L1-L2 differences in both Exp1 and Exp2. (NB same L1-L2 design in both experiments)

- IF integrating information from multiple domains is generally challenging in L2, we expect L1-L2 differences in both Exp1 and Exp2.

- IF L2 speakers’ ability to use prosodic information depends on the complexity of the mappings (L1 > L2; prosody > reference), we expect greater L1-L2 differences in Exp2 compared to Exp1.

Event structure and pronoun interpretation in L1 & L2

(3) Emilybrought / was bringing a drink to Melissa. She _______.

L1 speakers of English write more continuations with ‘she’ than ‘he’. Following imperfective vs perfective aspect (Kehler et al., 2008), this is not the case for L1-Japanese/Korean learners of English (Griiter et al., 2014, in press), even though (i) they reliably associate imperfective/perfective with completed/incomplete events in an independent task, (ii) aspect affects their choice of coherence relation in the continuation, and (iii) Japanese and Korean speakers show the same effect of aspect in their L1s (Jeon & Kehler, 2010; Kim et al., 2013).

Results

- Annotation for coherence by two trained coders.

- No difference in the number of pronouns used by native speakers.

(see below)

Method

- Study continuation: aural context sentence + written prompt (pronoun) + written completion

- 2 (contrast location) X 2 (aspect design)

- Hear: DAVID served/was serving a pint of beer. See: He

- Hear: David served/was serving PAUL a pint of beer. See: He

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