Contribution ID: 56

Type: Poster

## Form overlap vs. morphological complexity in L1 and L2 processing

Saturday, June 24, 2017 10:50 AM (1h 55m)

Morphological complexity in Germanic may involve considerable form overlap. Non-native speakers not only appear to concentrate more on declarative knowledge than decomposition in morphological processing (e.g. Bowden et al. 2010) but they also appear to be guided more strongly by surface orthographic factors when processing complex words in masked priming studies (e.g. Heyer & Clahsen 2014).

We investigated L2 speakers of English using a visual delayed priming task where morphological processing usually shows different effects from form and semantic processing. We conducted a series of experiments with three conditions: form (fluently-influential), semantic (exceptional-remarkable) and morphological (natural-unnatural). Participants were native English speakers (n=32) and highly proficient native Bengali L2 speakers of English (n=54) in English-medium education in Kolkata.

Both groups show no facilitation for semantically related items but strong priming effects (p < .001) in morphological conditions. However, while L1 speakers predictably do not show facilitation in the form condition, L2 speakers show significant priming (p = .012). While these results support previous studies (e.g. Heyer & Clahsen 2014) regarding a form effect for L2 but not for L1 speakers, our data also shows significant differences in the degree of priming between form and morphological conditions (p = .024) with greater facilitation for the latter.

One possible explanation is that L2 speakers may also apply the structural analysis process required for the decomposition of complex items (resulting in a slower decay of activation and thus delayed priming) to items with pure form overlap. In a masked priming paradigm (employed by previous studies), L2 speakers may not have sufficient time to fully analyse the morphological structure as morphosyntactic processing, for example, has been shown to take longer in L2 speakers (Bosch et al. 2016) and thus display greater reliance on surface properties such as orthographic overlap.

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Session Classification: Poster 2 (with coffee)

Track Classification: Freely Contributed Paper