

What did you expect? Linguistic prediction occurs in both a first and second language but there are differences

Comprehenders use real-world knowledge to consider possible messages a speaker might try to convey and linguistic knowledge of how phonetic, lexical, and morphosyntactic information constrain message realization. Native listeners (L1) integrate both types of knowledge in processes ranging from the resolution of lexical and syntactic ambiguity, to the anticipation of upcoming speech. This study uses eye-tracking to explore similarities and differences between first and second language (L2) listeners' integrative and predictive sentence processing. L1 and L2 Mandarin Chinese speakers heard sentences that began with a specific location (e.g., "Look in the closet."), followed by simultaneous presentation of four images and a spoken classifier-noun phrase (e.g., the classifier for long, thin objects and the noun 'scarf'). Participants' eyes were recorded as they searched for the target (scarf) among a classifier competitor that shared class membership and class-specific semantic properties (snake), a location competitor with location-specific semantic relevance (hat, which uses the headwear classifier), and a distractor (watermelon). The context and target either matched (closet-scarf) or mismatched (closet-snake) listeners' location expectations. In match trials, L1 and L2 listeners looked to the classifier competitor (snake) and the location competitor (hat) only at chance levels, favoring the semantically-relevant and classifier-consistent target (scarf). In mismatch trials, however, L1 and L2 participants differed in their looks to the classifier competitor (scarf) and location competitor (hat) suggesting real-world and linguistic knowledge is used differently by L1 and L2 listeners and that such differences condition the time courses of recovery from incorrect anticipatory looks.