Accessing Cross Language Categories in Learning a Third Language

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I. Introduction

THEORIES OF BILINGUAL PHONOLICAL ORGANIZATION

Traditional views of bilingual phonological organization posit that language currently in use (language mode) or language dominance.

More recent theories posit that languages are controlled by a scheme of activation and suppression, where the language not in use is never totally deactivated.

QUESTIONS FOR CURRENT STUDY

1. What role do bilinguals play when learning a language with a three-way contrast that includes sounds from both of their languages?
2. What role will they play in phonological access: language mode or language dominance?

II. Methods

STIMULI

- Words and non-words from Eastern American as produced by two female speakers.
- All test words included the three-way VOT contrast of negative VOT, short-lag VOT, and long-lag VOT for balanced and unbalanced stimuli.
- Half of words were CVC and half CCVC.

PROCEDURE

AX Discrimination Task
Hear 2 words say if same or different

ABX Discrimination Task
Hear 3 words say if third word is same as first or second word

III. Predictions

ROLE OF LANGUAGE MODE IN PHONOLICAL ACCESS

Regarding phonological access, when learning a third language bilinguals are not limited by the language mode.

ROLE OF LANGUAGE DOMINANCE IN PHONOLICAL ACCESS

Bilinguals can access phonemes from both of their languages at once, supporting the idea of activation and suppression where a language is never totally deactivated.

Bilinguals who are more dominant in one language over another are limited to the contrasts in that language when learning a third language.

IV. Results

ABX DISCRIMINATION TASK

Balanced Speakers
Access to both languages at once
Three-way Contrast
Access to one language at a time
Two-way Contrast

English Dominant Speakers
Access to both languages at once
Three-way Contrast
Access to one language at a time
Two-way Contrast

V. Discussion

Perception
Access to both languages for balanced bilinguals

Preference
Two-way contrast when possible

VI. Conclusion

Balanced bilinguals can show a three-way contrast in perception as evidenced by the AX task.

However, when learning a new language they will show a preference for a two-way contrast since both of their languages have two-way contrasts as evidenced by the AX task.

VII. Acknowledgements

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References