

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND THE PROSODIC-MEANING MAPPING

Mariapaola D'Imperio

Aix-Marseille University & Laboratoire Parole et Langage, CNRS

The pragmatic valence of intonation contours has been under investigation for various decades, though only recently studies have unveiled that both group- and talker-specific strategies are employed at the level of meaning decoding in prosodically variable stimuli (e.g. Cangemi et al. 2015, Warren 2016 for uptalk in New Zealand English). Variability in encoding intonational meaning has focused on pitch contour variability in production. Co-speech gestures have also been recently found to variably mark information structure and appear to precede prosodic encoding in children (Estève-Gibert et al., 2021). However, research on the impact of listener's cognitive differences on decoding intonation meaning is still in its infancy.

In this talk I will offer evidence showing that the intonation-meaning mapping is not homogeneous within a language-community. Specifically, I will show the results of two recent studies on the role of pragmatic skills on recovering intonational meaning. I will first briefly show the results of an Eyetracking study on French intonation processing showing the impact of individual empathy scores on recovering contrastive meaning (Esteve-Gibert et al. 2020). I will then present a perception experiment in which the role of pitch range in the nuclear configuration region is tested as a predictor of type (negative vs positive) and degree of epistemic bias in Salerno Italian (Orrico & D'Imperio 2020). Here, two independent sources of individual variability were uncovered: Listeners' prolonged exposure to either a different language or variety and their Empathy Quotient (EQ), which interacted in epistemic bias identification. I will then discuss the results in terms of viable theoretical models of intonation-meaning mapping.

References

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