Endpoint preferences in bilingual infants

Anna Marklová & Barbara Mertins
TU-Dortmund

Different languages typically prefer different perspectives when producing motion events. A main distinction is between the phasal and the holistic perspectives: The latter is typically characterized by the inclusion of an endpoint, which the former typically lacks.

Linguistic studies have shown that speakers that take the holistic perspective verbalize an endpoint in the description of motion events more often. Eye-tracking studies have found that endpoint preferences affect not only the verbal description of motion events, but also their visual perception and even their memory.

In comparative studies has been shown that even proficient speakers tend to follow the perspective of their native language while talking in the L2. It is assumed that these perspectives are acquired along with the native language. In this study, we look at this phenomenon in the pre-school children's interaction with their parents. The data consists of spontaneous conversations over picture stimuli. All participants were Czech native speakers. Czech prefers a holistic perspective.

The data analysis shows that in interviews, the endpoint is verbalized very often, parents even lead the children's attention to this endpoint.

On this poster, we will present these findings about the perspective preferences and introduce the upcoming research with bilingual infants of various ages. The goal is to determine when the preference for endpoint emerges. We plan to compare interactions with very young Czech-German and Czech-English bilingual speakers, since German is a holistic perspective language and English a phasal perspective language. Comparing the perception of motion events from these two groups of speakers will give us insights about how bilingualism influences the perspective taking.
References:


SCHMIEDTOVÁ, Barbara, Christiane VON STUTTERHEIM a Mary CARROLL, 2011. Language-specific Patterns in Event Construal of Advanced Second Language Speakers.