

Explicitness in heritage speakers' majority English productions

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One aspect often overlooked in adult heritage language research is heritage speakers' (HSs) ability in their majority language, i.e. the dominant language of the society they live in (Rothman 2009). This could be due to the fact that many adult HSs are majority language dominant and indistinguishable from monolingual speakers (MSs) in everyday interactions. However, experimental evidence shows that HSs differ from MSs in some aspects of majority English, e.g., phonology (Polinsky 2018) and scope assignment (Scontras et al. 2017).

Our talk focuses on another potential difference between HSs and MSs - the possibility that HSs are more explicit in their English productions. For example, Polinsky (2018) shows that HSs differ from MSs in pronouncing words more clearly and using fewer contractions. We extend this work by focusing on explicitness in referent introductions in the majority English of HSs. Referent introduction is a phenomenon dynamic for change because it is located at the external interface of syntax and discourse (Sorace 2011).

Our dataset includes elicited narratives produced by 5 speaker groups (20 speakers in each): Greek, Russian, German, and Turkish HSs, and English MSs. The speakers saw a video of a car accident and described it in two settings (formal/informal) and two modes (spoken/written). For our analysis, we compiled a list of 19 referents in the video (e.g. *car 1* and *car 2*), and investigated how, if at all, they were introduced in the narratives.

Preliminary results based on a sample of 15 Greek and Russian HSs and 12 English MSs reveal that HSs are indeed more explicit than MSs in their referent introductions. First, HSs introduced more referents than MSs: on average, HSs introduced 47% of the possible 19 referents, while MSs introduced only 40% ($p < 0.01$). Second, HSs tended to provide explicit explanations for conjoined referents, e.g. *I see this little family* (conjoined), *a mom, a dad and a little baby* (explanation). HSs explained 14 new conjoined referents, whereas MSs explained only 2, although the difference was only marginally significant ($p = 0.09$).

The results can be interpreted in two ways. First, following Polinsky (2018), we can suggest that HSs adapt their narrative style to their family members who are nonnative English speakers and might benefit from clear detailed stories. Alternatively, HSs might be explicit for internal reasons: perhaps overtly mentioning more referents helps them better keep track of the storyline (cf. Arnold & Griffin 2007). In our talk, we explore how these interpretations relate to the results of our full dataset analysis.

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