Abstract

There is ample evidence that language users adjust their language processing based on the preceding context. For instance, speakers tend to re-use the syntactic structure they just heard; readers read an initially non-preferred syntactic structure more quickly after being exposed to this structure over the course of the experiment. Exposure can even result in a preference for the initially non-preferred over the initially preferred structure (Fine et al, 2013). One mechanism proposed for such adaptation is error-based learning: language users anticipate upcoming information; if this prediction turns out to be incorrect, their subsequent expectations are adjusted (Chang et al., 2006). Error-based learning accounts assume a tight connection between prediction, experiencing an error, and learning. Such approaches are very attractive, as they unify language production, language comprehension, and language learning. However, I will discuss some observations that are potentially problematic for these approaches. First, I will discuss some findings suggesting that learning does not necessarily imply predictive processing. Second, I will discuss data from second-language processing studies suggesting that second-language learners experience errors but do not show adaptation. I will sketch how error-based approaches could be modified to accommodate these data, and conclude with an outline of ongoing and future research in my lab.