

Prediction and Adaptation in Language Processing

Lecture by Dr. Edith Kaan

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.

November 3rd 4:05 pm

Little Hall Room 0113

Light refreshments will be served

Questions?

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