

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SELECTIVE ATTENTION IN FOREIGN ACCENTED SPEECH PERCEPTION

An experiment was performed to examine the role of selective attention in foreign-accented speech. While much attention has been paid to the role of selective attention in speech perception, the majority of research has examined the role of selective attention in dichotic listening tasks or tasks in which multiple speakers are presented simultaneously. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of selective attention in the perception of speech that is nonstandard to the listener but varies in a predictable manner. Performance in two tasks was compared to examine the role of selective attention in foreign-accented speech perception. In order to assess variation in participants' selective attention ability, a Stroop task was performed. The scores on the Stroop task were compared to scores on a foreign-accented speech perception task in which participants were trained on and asked to translate foreign-accented speech. Results showed a significant relationship between performance on the Stroop task and the speech perception task. Further analysis revealed a difference in this relationship between bilinguals and nonbilingual participants with no measure of selective attention predicting performance in accented-speech perception for the bilingual group. Results of this experiment are relevant to examining how differing cognitive styles might be advantageous to specific speech perception tasks as well as testing the predictions made by different models of speech perception.

Gregg Deslauriers
December 2008