People are better at taking the perspective of non-native speakers

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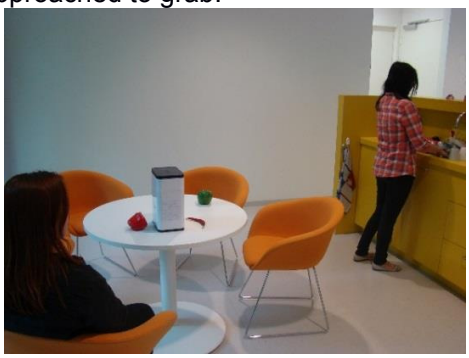
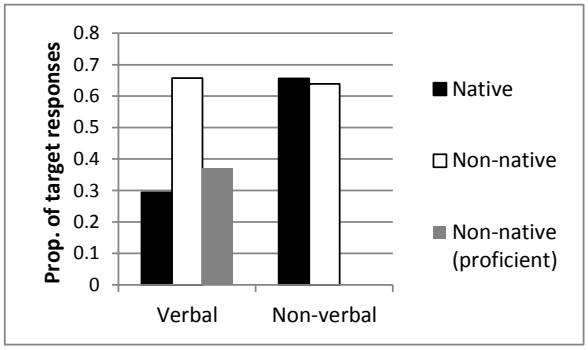
Successful social interaction requires recognizing that others' perspectives may differ from one's own. Yet people sometimes fail to take others' perspective and instead rely on their own (Keysar et al., 2000 but see Brown-Schmidt & Hanna, 2011). Counter-intuitively, there is some evidence to suggest that people are better at taking the perspective of dissimilar others (Savitsky et al., 2011; Todd et al., 2011). Further research shows that when listening to non-native speakers, people increase their reliance on context and on predictive processes - two tendencies that could boost perspective taking – as an adaptive response to the lesser reliability of the language of non-native speakers (Lev-Ari, 2015). We therefore hypothesized that (1) listeners would be better at taking the perspective of non-native than native speakers, and that (2) this advantage would be reduced when processing non-native speakers' nonverbal rather than linguistic behavior, or (3) if the non-native speaker has native-like proficiency.

To test these predictions, 180 participants read a story about a woman cooking at the counter while her friend sits at a table behind her. There were 3 peppers on the table: a green bell pepper, a red chili pepper, and a red bell pepper. Crucially, a tall box hid the red bell pepper from the view of the woman at the counter (see Figure). Therefore, when the cooking woman asks for the *red pepper*, she could only refer to the red chili pepper. The story had 5 versions differing in the identity of the cooking woman: Molly with a Boston accent, Mingying with a Chinese accent, or Mingying with native-like proficiency, and in whether the woman asked her friend for the target object (verbal condition), or approached the table to grab it (non-verbal condition). Participants needed to indicate the object the woman asked for or approached to grab.





Results supported our hypotheses: In the verbal condition, participants were significantly better at taking the perspective of the non-proficient non-native speaker than that of the native speaker or the proficient non-native speaker, with the latter two not being different from one another. In contrast, there was no such difference in the non-verbal condition, leading to a significant Speaker x Behavior interaction. A follow-up experiment, in which all peppers were visible to all, showed no difference in responses with a native and a non-native speaker, indicating the pattern in Experiment 1 is not due to differences in how the term *red pepper* is interpreted when produced by a native vs. a non-native speaker.

These studies thus show that linguistic expectations can influence perspective taking, and thus have implications for interactions between native and non-native speakers.

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Person blocking effects in the processing of English reflexives

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Reflexive pronouns are usually constrained by Principle A to refer to c-commanding referents within the local clause [1]. A large body of psycholinguistic research has found that this constraint is applied very early in antecedent resolution: Principle A non-conforming referents are not considered when processing reflexives [2-4]. However, recent studies call this generalization into question, finding that ungrammatical reflexives are processed more easily when a feature-matched, non-local referent is present [5,6]. While these effects might be captured with an error-prone retrieval mechanism [7,8,i.a.], we argue instead that an alternative grammatical representation associated with the reflexive form gives rise to a Principle A exempt interpretation. Specifically, we present evidence that sensitivity to Principle A non-conforming referents is constrained by the availability of a logophoric interpretation. Logophors are pronouns which refer to the entity whose speech/thoughts are represented in an utterance (i.e. the perspective center), and are often homophonous with reflexives forms [9,10]. Previous work [11] has found that reflexives are more sensitive to the phi-features of non-local speakers than to those of non-local perceivers, as expected if the reflexive form is being interpreted logophorically. In this study, we test another consequence of logophoricity: person blocking effects. In some languages, non-local interpretations of reflexive forms become unavailable in the presence of 1st/2nd person pronouns (e.g. Mandarin *ziji* [12]). These "person blocking" effects have been explained as a consequence of the logophoric nature of long-distance anaphors: 1st/2nd person pronouns tie an utterance to the perspective of the speaker/addressee, preventing 3rd person referents from acting as perspective centers capable of binding the logophor [13]. If sensitivity to non-local referents arises from a logophoric interpretation, the presence of a 1st person pronoun should attenuate the effect. To test this, we constructed sentences like (1), manipulating the match of a reflexive with local (**embedded:***Name, it, I*) and non-local subjects (**matrix:**±*match*) in a 3×2 design. Context sentences introduced referents which co-varied with the target's embedded subject. We expect reflexives to be sensitive to the matrix subject's gender when the local subject is a poor match, and not first-person.

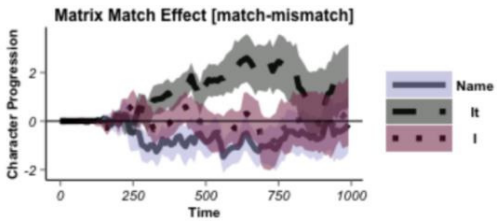
(1) **Context:** { Some movie critics / The salacious tabloid / I } said some very unflattering things about hollywood icons.

Target: The { actress / actor } | said that | { Joanna / it / I } | horribly | misrepresented | herself | in the article | ...

36 items patterned on (1) were included in an eye-tracking while reading study (n=36). In go-past times at the reflexive, mixed effects modeling revealed an interaction of embedded and matrix match (β=135; t=2.13), such that reflexives were read uniformly slowly after *I*, but slowly after *it* only when the matrix subject mismatched the reflexive's gender. A cumulative progression analysis [14] also revealed a significant matrix-match effect (difference between matrix ±*match* conditions) only for *it* sentences: starting at the reflexive, gender-matched matrix subjects only facilitated progression through the sentence when the embedded subject was *it*.

		Embedded Subject		
		Name	*it*	*I*
Matrix	*+match*	375(24)	378(30)	493(46)
	−match	362(31)	492(40)	476(40)

Table 1: Go-past reading time at the reflexive region



Combining the results of the present study with those of [12,15], a coherent picture emerges: sensitivity to non-local referents is contingent on the referent being a source of information, and is diminished in the presence of a first-person pronoun. This pattern strongly suggests that a logophoric interpretation of reflexive forms underlies Principle A exempt behavior in comprehension.

References: [1]Chomsky.(1986). [2]Nicol.(1988). [3]Sturt.(2003). [4]Dillon, Mishler, Sloggett & Phillips. (2013). [5]King, Andrews, & Wagers.(2012). [6]Parker & Phillips.(2014). [7]Lewis & Vasishth.(2005). [8]Van Dyke & McElree.(2011). [9]Sells.(1987). [10]Culy.(1997). [11]Sloggett & Dillon.(2015). [12]He & Kaiser.(2012). [13]Huang & Liu.(2001). [14]Kreiner, Sturt, & Garrod.(2008). [15]Kaiser, Runner, Sussman, & Tanenhaus.(2009).

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