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Title:

Mental simulation of object orientation and size in L1 and L2 speakers

Abstract (max. 400 words):

Is language comprehension the same as mental simulation? In the last decade, several studies have provided empirical evidence for the idea that language causes humans to simulate object orientation, shape and color (Stanfield&Zwaan, 2001; Zwaan, Stanfield&Yaxley, 2002; Zwaan&Pecher, 2012). Now, different languages mark object orientation or size differently. In German, for example, one can imply the orientation of an object by means of two placement verbs (*legen; stellen*, 'to lay'; 'to stand'), whereas in Spanish, one would use the verb *poner* ('to put'), that does not imply object orientation. In Spanish however, one can mark the size of an object with a suffix on the noun (*cigarro; cigarazzo*, 'cigar'; 'big cigar'), whereas in German, this type of morphological marking is not possible. Can these cross linguistic differences affect the speed with which native (L1) speakers of German and Spanish speakers react when recognizing objects that (mis)match with aspects described in a preceding sentence? And if so, what happens when speakers of L1 Spanish learn German as a second language (L2); and speakers of L1 German learn L2 Spanish? In this investigation we address these questions by comparing reaction times of L1 speakers as well as L2 learners of German and Spanish on the same experimental task as used by Stanfield and Zwaan(2001). Our goal is to add to our understanding of mental simulation in the mono- and multilingual mind.

References:

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