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L2 speakers use of discourse strategies in a Maze Task

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Abstract

Sentence completion studies have shown that L1 English readers use verbal aspect (VA) as a cue to disambiguate pronouns in the context of sentences with transfer of possession verbs. Specifically, in the context of a sentence like "Mary gave/was giving a book to Bill", a subsequent pronoun is more likely to refer to the source referent ("Mary") when the aspect is imperfective ("was giving") than when it is perfective ("gave"). L2 studies have shown mixed results on whether L2 speakers, living within an L2 country or outside, can utilise VA as a discourse cue. The current study tested L2 English speakers using an online Maze task, where a pronoun ("He" or "She") referring to either the source or goal referent had to be chosen at the critical point in the sentence. The results showed that both L1 speakers and L2 speakers, regardless of location, used VA as a disambiguation cue.