Anqi Yang

The acquisition of prosodic focus-marking in Mandarin Chinese- and Seoul Korean-speaking children

This dissertation is a cross-linguistic study on how Mandarin Chinese-speaking and Seoul Korean-speaking children acquire the use of prosody in focus-marking in speech production. We collected and analysed semi-spontaneous production of sentences from four- to eleven-year-old children and adults in both languages. We have found that which prosodic focus-marking means is acquired first in a language depends on what is the primary prosodic focus-marking means in the language. Furthermore, whether a prosodic property is used for lexical purposes in a language influences how early the prosodic property is acquired as a cue to focus in the language. Our findings thus show that cross-linguistic differences in the prosodic system and prosodic focus-marking lead to differences in the route and rate of acquisition of prosodic focus-marking.

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