THE ROLE OF FOCUS SENSITIVE PARTICLES IN ENHANCING MEMORY OF DISCOURSE INFORMATION IN MANDARIN

Mengzhu Yan (Huazhong University of Science and Technology), Jun Fei (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), He Zheng (Huazhong University of Science and Technology), Yiang Li (Huazhong University of Science and Technology), Yan Zhou (Huazhong University of Science and Technology) & Tianfangyuan Zhou (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

mengzhu_yan@vuw.ac.nz

The role of linguistic cues (e.g., prosodic, morpho-syntactic) in guiding listeners to identify and comprehend important information (i.e., focus) in discourse is well established (Birch & Garnsey, 1995; Ip & Cutler, 2020; Kember et al., 2019). In a variety of languages, such as English, German and Vietnamese, prosodic prominence and focus-sensitive particles are known to be effective cues for language processing (Fraundorf et al., 2010; Spalek et al., 2014; Tjuka et al., 2020). However, little research has been conducted to explore their interactions on the encoding of focused word and its alternatives, and the gap is particularly evident in the case of Mandarin. The purpose of the study is to investigate how focus-sensitive particles (exclusive particle "只" *only,* inclusive particle "也" *also*), marked by prosodic prominence, play a role in enhancing important discourse information in Mandarin.

In a memory delay experiment, eighty participants listened to eight blocks of ten stimuli that included two context sentences introducing a set of three alternatives (e.g., 小云在首饰盒里寻找项链，耳环和手镯。Xiaoyun looked for <u>necklaces, earrings, and bracelets</u> in her casket. 她在想哪件首饰和衣服搭配。She wondered what would go well with her outfit.), followed by a continuation that mentioned the focused word which was one of the alternative sets (e.g., 她只拿了项链。She only took the <u>necklaces</u>.), and then orally answered questions to recall the alternative set in the previous block.

Logistic mixed-effects models were used to analyze the data using the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015) in R (R Core Team, 2019). The estimated accuracy of the recall for focus alternatives was significant ($\chi^2 = 7.26$, df = 2, p = 0.03), with 56.2% in control condition, 61.5% in "也" *also* and 60.4% in "只" *only* condition. However, the estimated accuracy of the recall for focused words showed no significant effect ($\chi^2 = 4.08$, df = 2, p = 0.13). Results indicated that, in the presence of prosodic prominence, (1) memory for focus alternatives was enhanced by both types of focus-sensitive particles, although it was marginally significant in the case of "只" *only*; (2) memory for focused words was not significantly improved by either of the focus-sensitive particles, probably due to ceiling effects. Findings in the study contribute to the limited knowledge of the role of morpho-syntactic markings in the processing of information structure in Mandarin, in addition to the established role of prosody.

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