Does native speaker status influence comprehenders' guesses about the informativity of upcoming utterance content?

Vilde R. S. Reksnes, Alice Rees, Chris Cummins, Hannah Rohde

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

BACKGROUND

Expectations of informativity
Comprehenders rely on real-world knowledge when anticipating upcoming content – bias towards typicality[1,2]

BUT they are also guided by what speakers typically produce – bias towards informativity[3-6]

- Visible speaker (over standard cloze task) ✓
- Reticent speaker (over chatty speaker) ✓
- Adult addressee (over child addressee) ✓
- Native speaker (over non-native speaker) ?

Expectations for native and non-native speech

- Processing of ungrammatical sentences differs: Smaller neural response when uttered by non-native speakers[7]
- Expectations of informativity differ: Under-informative statements from
  - non-native speakers → inability
  - native speakers → unwillingness[8]

Suggests non-native speakers are not expected to make informative contributions on par with native speakers

RESEARCH QUESTION

Do expectations about non-native speech guide listeners' guesses about likely content?

Two competing outcomes
Non-native speakers are **less** informative, e.g. because they lack vocabulary for unexpected, non-typical content
→ More mentions of real-world typical situations and events

Non-native speakers are **more** informative, as choosing to communicate in their L2 suggests higher likelihood the content to be conveyed is newsworthy and informative
→ More mentions of non-typical, informative content

METHODS

Sentence continuation task (N=100): Within-participant manipulation (native vs. non-native speaker) to index comprehenders' expectations about the content of conversation-initial utterances

Typicality pre-test (N=22): Elicitation of typical things one finds at 20 test-item locations

Post-test survey: Asking whether participants paid attention to native speaker status

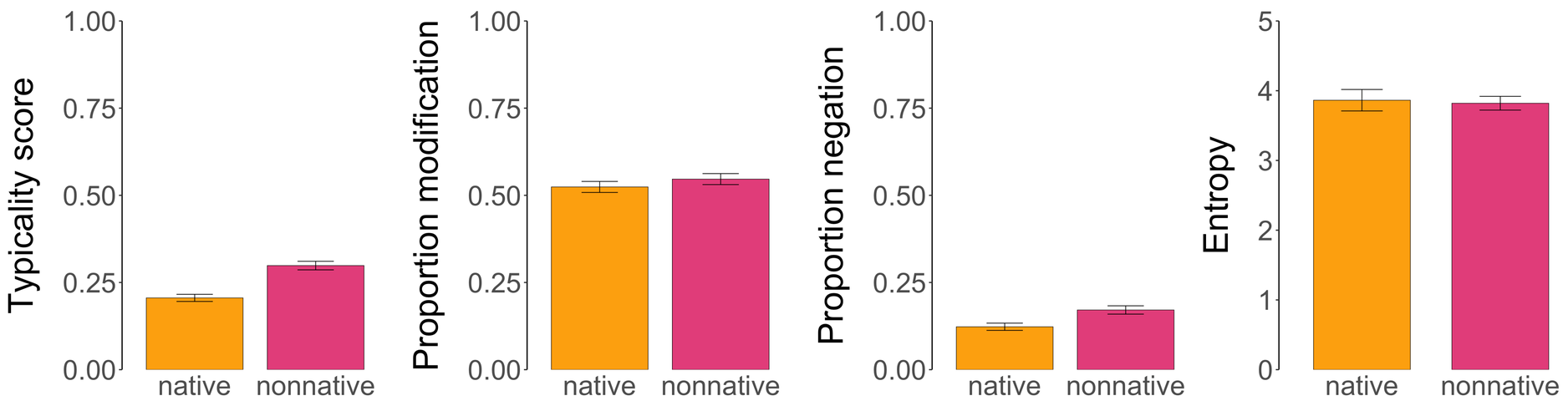
4 measures to capture **different senses of informativity**:

- Typicality of main nouns (compared to pre-test)
- Use of modification
- Use of negation/marking absence
- Entropy (variability)

Example target item in the native speaker condition.

Example target item in the non-native speaker condition.

RESULTS



- **No effect** of **condition**
- Non-native speakers:
  - Marginally **more negation** (↑ informativity)
  - and **more typicality** (↓ informativity)
- Native speakers:
  - Numerically (non-significant) **higher entropy** (↑ informativity)
- **No effect** of **speaker attention**

DISCUSSION

True null effect

Not enough time/realistic enough portrayal of non-native speakers with limited vocabulary

- Future studies: Include grammatical errors or foreign-accented speech

Competing models of non-native speaker cancel each other out

- Expectation of low informativity due to assumed lower proficiency vs. higher likelihood for informative content due to a higher threshold for speaking in a non-native language

Contact: v.r.s.reksnes@ifikk.uio.no

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