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Where's the Bingleduff? How speaker accent shapes children's linguistic processing

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Abstract

Listeners interpret spoken language differently, depending on the perceived identity of the speaker. Within increasingly diverse societies, it is important to understand how speaker characteristics such as accent may impact simple linguistic exchanges. In the current study, children are being tested on their ability to recall factual information provided by native and non-native accented English speakers. Preliminary results demonstrate that children tend to remember neutral facts better if they heard them from a native accented speaker. Interestingly, children understood the native and non-native accented talkers equally well, indicating that comprehension difficulties could not account for the results. To date, there have been no studies examining how a speaker's accent affects children's memory, and only preliminary, mixed results in adults have been found. This gap in the literature underscores the need to understand how linguistic biases might impact information transfer across diverse language communities.