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To what extent do French listeners perceive word accentuation? An EEG investigation

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► **To cite this version:**

Outhmane Rassili, Amandine Michelas, Sophie Dufour. To what extent do French listeners perceive word accentuation? An EEG investigation. The Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Society for the Neurobiology of Language, Oct 2023, Marseille, France. hal-04380151

HAL Id: hal-04380151

<https://hal.science/hal-04380151>

Submitted on 23 Jan 2024

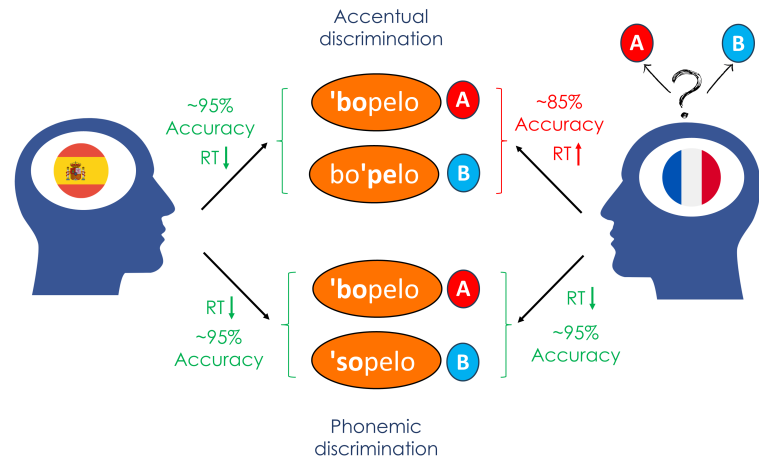
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To what extent do French listeners perceive word accentuation? An EEG investigation

INTRODUCTION

- French listeners exhibit difficulties with discrimination of non-words [1], French words [2] and Spanish words [3], differing in word accentual patterns.



Research objective

- Examine French listeners' ability to perceive native and non-native accentual word contrasts.
- Examine and compare the time-course of native and non-native accent processing by French listeners.

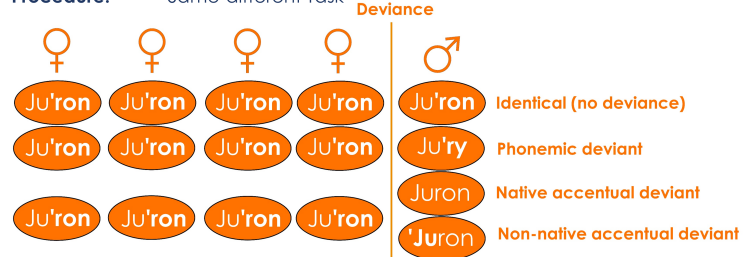
METHODOLOGY

Participants:

Native contrast: ♀ 15 ♂ 5
Non-native contrast: ♀ 18 ♂ 2

Data collected: Electroencephalogram (EEG) signal & Behavioural data.

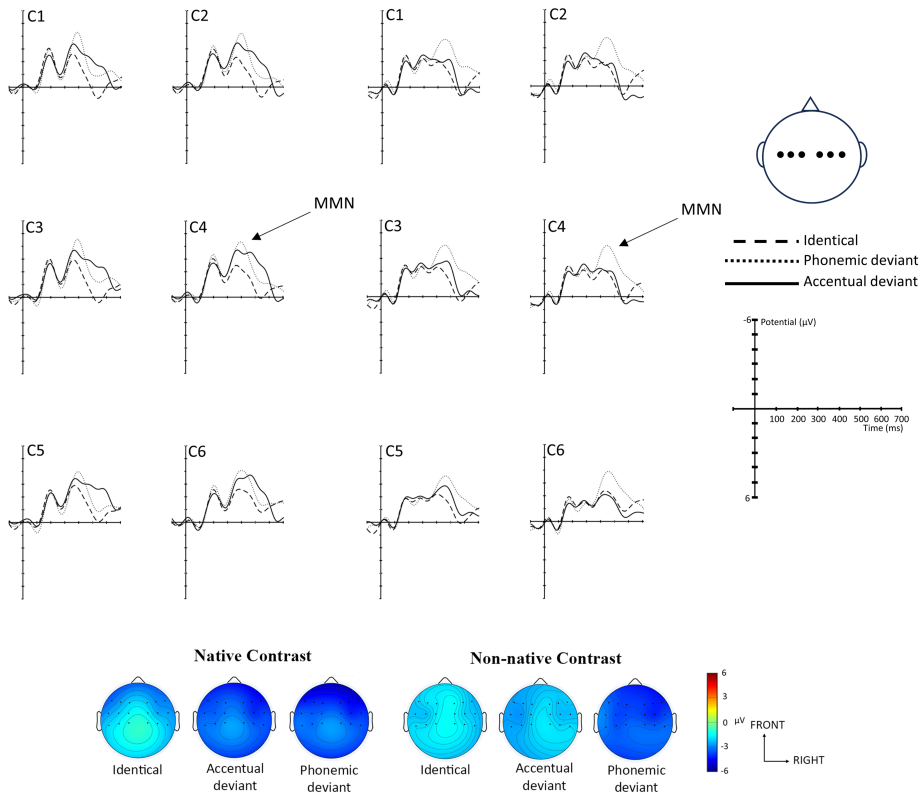
Procedure: Same-different Task



RESULTS

Native contrast

Non-native contrast



ELECTROPHYSIOLOGICAL RESULTS

Native accentual contrast

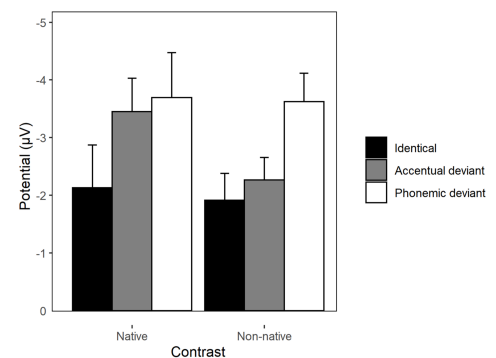
- Main effect of Condition with more negative values in the phonemic deviant condition and accentual deviant condition than in the identical condition.

Non-native accentual contrast

- Main effect of Condition with more negative values in the phonemic deviant condition than in both the accentual deviant and the identical conditions.

BEHAVIOURAL RESULTS

Native contrast		Non-native contrast		Native contrast		Non-native contrast	
Phonemic deviance	Accentual deviance	Phonemic deviance	Accentual deviance	Phonemic deviance	Accentual deviance	Phonemic deviance	Accentual deviance
RTs	Errors	RTs	Errors	RTs	Errors	RTs	Errors
975 ms	1%	1097 ms	8%	1044 ms	1.32%	1158 ms	6.80%



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- French listeners react similarly to accentual contrasts and phonemic contrasts when the accentual patterns are native, but react differently when the accentual patterns are non-native.
- Stimuli with non-native accentual contrasts are perceived as being identical in the early stages of processing.

French listeners do not perceive non-native accentual contrasts.

HOWEVER

- Even though French listeners obtained more errors and longer RTs in the accentual than in the phonemic deviance, they still achieved a high level of accuracy (93%) in the non-native accentual contrast.

French listeners can use the change in accent location (non-native deviance) to perform certain tasks if their attention is directed to the accentual differences.

Conclusion: Despite a high level of performance in the discrimination tasks, French listeners do not perceive the difference in non-native accentual contrasts (e.g. /'ʒyʁi/ and /ʒy'ʁi/) during unconscious and automatic speech perception processes.

[1] Dupoux, E., Pallier, C., Sebastian, N., Mehler, J. 1997. A destressing "deafness" in French?. J. of Memory and Language 36(3), 404-421.

[2] Michelas, A., Esteve-Gibert, N., Dufour, S. 2018. On French listeners' ability to use stress during spoken word processing. J. of Cognitive Psychology 30(2), 198-206.

[3] Schwab, S., L isteri, J. 2013. Does training make French speakers more able to identify lexical stress?. Proceedings of the international symposium on the acquisition of second language speech, Concordia working papers in applied linguistics: 2013.