

English L1 and L2 speakers' recognition of formulaic sequences

The use of formulaic sequences by adult L2 learners has received considerable attention in L2 acquisition studies. Prior research has suggested that L2 learners use formulaic sequences differently from native speakers, showing both overuse and underuse of these constructions, as well as greater creativity (Bolander, 1989; DeCock et al., 1988; Granger, 1998). Previous studies have mostly focused on learners' production of formulaic sequences in oral or written discourse and comparing it to L1 speakers' use of those forms. However, these studies did not consider the discourse function of the formulaic sequences, which has been shown to affect L1 speakers' use of these units (Biber, Conrad & Cortes, 2004; Cortes, 2004).

The present study examined the differences in L1 and L2 English speakers' (N = 60) recognition of formulaic sequences that perform two distinct discourse functions, referential and discourse organizing. The materials used in the study included 16 sequences of each type (e.g., *one of the most, in the case of*) identified in Biber et al.'s (2004) descriptive study of academic discourse. Then, using the academic prose subcorpus of the LSWE Corpus, each sequence was embedded within an attested context, leaving out one content word within each formulaic sequence. Participants were asked to complete the sentences by filling in the gaps with the most contextually appropriate words, as well as provide additional possibilities for each sentence. Participants included 20 English native speakers, 20 intermediate and 20 advanced non-native speakers of English.

Preliminary results suggest an interesting interaction between the discourse function of formulaic sequences and the English L2 speakers' proficiency level. Implications for L2 pedagogy and further research about recognition of formulaic sequences by L2 learners are discussed.