

Effects of Unfamiliar Orthography on the Lexical Encoding of Novel Phonological Features

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Abstract : Prior research indicates that second language (L2) learners encounter difficulty in the distinguishing novel L2 contrasting sounds that are not contrastive in their native languages. L2 orthographic information, however, is found to play a positive role in the acquisition of non-native phoneme contrasts. While most studies have mainly involved a familiar written script (i.e., the Roman script), the influence of a foreign, unfamiliar script is still unknown. Therefore, the present study asks: Does unfamiliar L2 script play a role in creating distinct phonological representations of novel contrasting phonemes? It is predicted that subjects' performance in the unfamiliar orthography group will outperform their counterparts' performance in the control group. Thus, training that entails orthographic inputs can yield a significant improvement in L2 adult learners' identification and lexical encoding of novel L2 consonant contrasts. Results are discussed in terms of their implications for the type of input introduced to L2 learners to improve their language learning.

Keywords : Arabic, consonant contrasts, foreign script, lexical encoding, orthography, word learning

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