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Pragmatics of conversation and communication in noisy settings

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Abstract

Most analyses of discourse pragmatics assume a quiet setting that does not affect the interaction. This study examines two common, communicationally hostile environmental contexts that make demands on the perceptual, cognitive, and pragmatic dimensions of language and multimodal communication. It identifies strategies which discourse participants use to recover the information lost or degraded in noisy conversational interaction, and the repairs and conversational strategies they use if they recognize that communication has failed. We recorded the conversational discourse interaction of 6 normally-hearing adults in a restaurant setting and 24 normally-hearing children in elementary-school classrooms, using ear-level binaural microphones, head-mounted bullet cameras, and tripod-mounted video cameras. This yielded extensive audiotape and videotape data from the perspectives of individual listeners and speakers, and information about the interaction among participants. Our data indicate that the strategies employed in these settings are similar to those employed by people who are hard of hearing, and that usage-based linguistic theories and cognitivist theories of

hard-of-hearing, and that usage-based linguistic theories and cognitivist theories of language processing, interaction, and pragmatics, that ignore language perception, are inadequate.



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Keywords

Discourse strategies; Noise classroom; Usage-based theory; Relevance

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