

Cross-linguistic emotion recognition: Dutch, Korean, and American English

This study investigates the occurrence of asymmetries in cross-linguistic recognition of emotion in speech. Theories on emotion recognition do not consider asymmetries in the cross-linguistic recognition of emotion. To study perceptual asymmetries, a fully crossed design was used, with speakers and listeners from two typologically unrelated languages, Dutch and Korean. Additionally, listeners of American English, typologically close to Dutch but not Korean, were tested.

Eight emotions, balanced in valence (positive-negative), arousal (active-passive), and basic vs. non-basic emotions, properties of emotion that are all known to affect emotion recognition, were recorded by eight Dutch and eight Korean professional actors, in a nonsense phrase that was phonologically legal in both languages (and English). Stimuli were selected on the basis of prior validation studies with Dutch and Korean listeners.

28 Dutch, 24 Korean, and 26 American participants were presented with all 256 Dutch and Korean stimuli, blocked by language. Participants indicated for each stimulus which emotion it expressed by clicking on one of the eight emotions or "neutral".

Results showed strong asymmetries across languages and listener groups that cannot be explained along previously described dimensions (valence, arousal, basic-non-basic). The present results calls for the extension of theories of cross-linguistic emotion recognition to incorporate asymmetrical perception patterns.