

# How Font Emphasis Influences the Encoding of Salient Alternatives in L2 Discourse

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## Previous Work

- ❑ L1 comprehenders: (Fraundorf et al., 2010; 2013)
  - Encode salient alternative(s) to focus:  
*Mary likes **CATS**, not dogs. (L+H\*/CAPS)*
  - Helps reject **that alternative** in memory
  - Set of alternatives is based on discourse plausibility, not just mere mention
- ❑ L2 comprehenders: (Braun & Tagliapietra, 2011; Lee & Fraundorf, in press)
  - Evoke an alternative set in response to **L+H\*** accents in a spoken discourse
  - But, fail to fully encode which is the salient alternative
- ❑ What underlies L2 learners' non-native encoding of contrastive accent information?
  - Deficits in L2 focus representation?
  - Cognitive resource limitations?

## Competing Predictions

- ❑ Representational deficit account:
  - Non-native performance may generalize across different manipulations of focus.
  - Just like contrastive accents, font emphasis would *not* help L2 learners reject **contrast** probes
- ❑ Resource limitations account:
  - Cognitive demands of speech processing
  - Reducing online processing demands would enable more native-like encoding
  - That is, would help reject **contrast** probes, but not **merely mentioned** probes

## Current Study

- ❑ Use written texts rather than speech
  - Can be self-paced
  - Do reduced online processing demands lead to more native-like focus processing?
- ❑ *Question 1*: How is an alternative set constrained in L2 discourse?
- ❑ *Question 2*: Does font emphasis help L2 learners to represent the discourse in the same way as it helps native speakers?

## Method

- ❑ 49 L2 learners of English
  - L1-Korean
  - Moderate or high proficiency
- ❑ Materials: Fraundorf et al. (2013), Expt. 3
- ❑ 36 written discourses
- ❑ Manipulate font emphasis (**no caps** or **CAPS**)

Context: A new Mexican and a new Indian restaurant had recently opened. (...) They were nervous because the critic was notoriously harsh and disliked even the popular entrees at the local Italian restaurant. The critic originally planned to dine at both new restaurants during the week.

Continuation: But he caught a cold and could only visit the **Mexican/MEXICAN** restaurant.

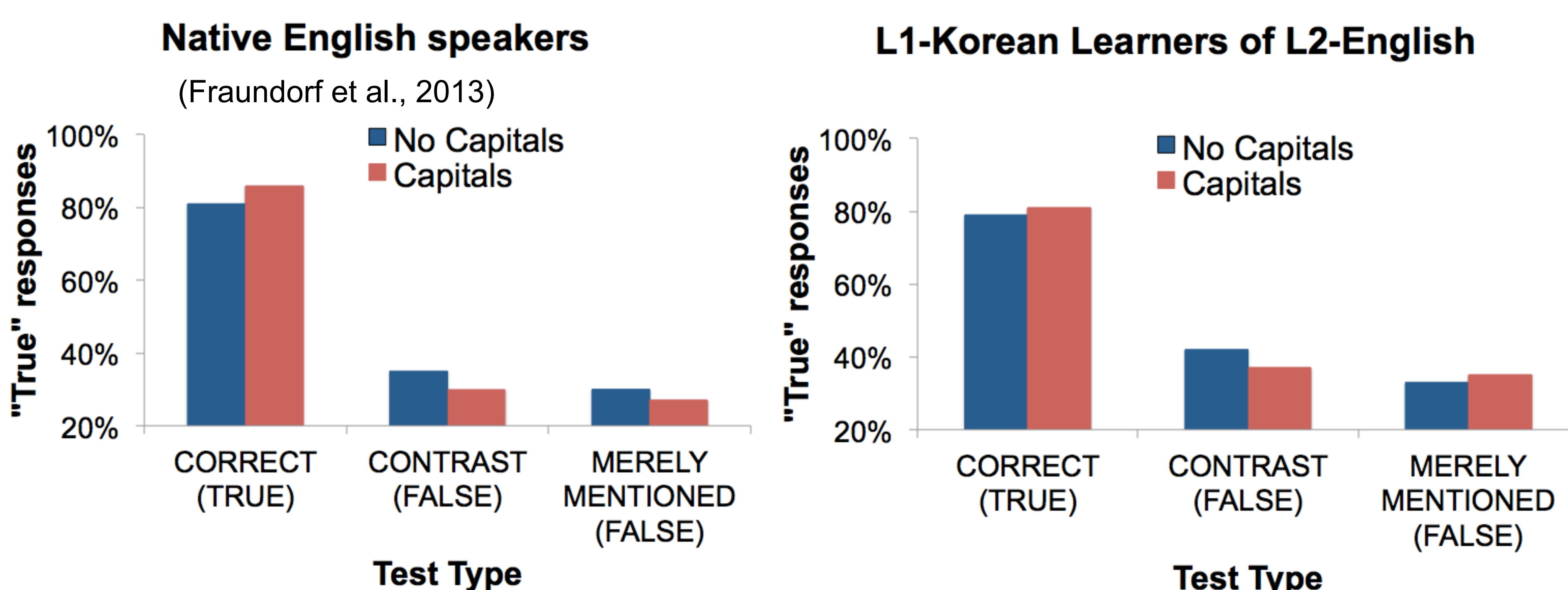
- ❑ True/false probe recognition task (½ hr later)

**CORRECT**: Because the food critic caught a cold, he only visited the Mexican restaurant.

**CONTRAST**: ... the Indian ...

**MERELY MENTIONED**: ... the Italian ...

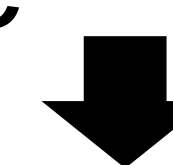
## Results & Discussion



- ❑ Native-like representation of salient alternatives in response to emphasized words in written discourse
  - Previous underuse of contrastive accents may reflect cognitive demands of processing running speech

- ❑ L2 learners were *similar* to native speakers

- Font emphasis helped reject only **contrast** probes and not **merely mentioned** probes.
- Alternative set restricted by situation model rather than by mere mention in discourse



No fundamental L1-L2 differences in focus representation