2aSC25. Articulatory reuse in good-enough speech production strategies
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Overview

Hypothesis: when creating new L2 motor programs, L2 learners use trial-and-error learning based on modification of L1 motor programs, a strategy that emerges from so-called “good-enough” motor control (Loeb, 2012)

Goal: Search for evidence of “re-use” (little to no modification) of L1 motor programs in L2 articulations

Test case: Lingual ultrasound of vowels spoken by English-dominant learners of French, plus syllabic and non-syllabic rhotics

Findings: Lingual motor programs for /ɹ/ and /ɹ/ with L1 English phones, some of which are less obviously good starting points for “hacking,” e.g. rhotics

Global L1-L2 “shift” of all phones in articulatory space could be attributed to language-specific articulatory setting: difficult to disentangle from modifications to specific phones

Suggestive of trial-and-error learning and good-enough (non-optimal) control operating in most of the adult L2 learners studied

Materials and methods

Subjects: 33 English-native learners of French residing in Berkeley, CA (10 M), at least two semesters of classroom exposure

Stimuli are of the form AC, VC, CV for English, or AC, VC, CV for French; C₁ and C₂ are non-lingual consonants, and V is target vowel

Blocks (counterbalanced order):
- English, written stimuli for /iɪɛəɛɔʊ_production: as: – Reading: read stimuli displayed on teleprompter
- Imitation: recording of a model talker speaking stimulus words as written stimuli is presented on teleprompter; subjects additionally prompted to imitate model talker’s vowel quality

Ultrasound data (107 tps): Ultrasound SonitaTablet, C9-5/10 micro-convex transducer, Articulate Instruments head-set; synchronized audio (48 kHz sampling rate)
- English and French audio force-aligned using Penn Aligner
- Ultrasound frames extracted from phone midpoints; fed to Principal Components Analysis (PCA); first 3 generally displayed, cf. Miekkal et al. (2016)
- Separate PCA for each speaker-specific: no reference point in ultrasound data to align rotation of speaker-specific solutions to L1/L2 articulatory setting

L1/L2 articulatory setting

May be a separate, confounding change to L2 productions relative to L1 (Wilson and Gick, 2014)

To gauge overall relationship between L1, L2 articulations, PCA run over all monophthong V in L1 and L2

- The PCs that emerge appear to relate to articulatory primitives (high–low, front–back) Harshman et al. (1977); Nix et al. (1996)
- Participants use different portions of articulatory PC space for L1 and L2, possibly displaying language-specific articulatory settings (even at low experience levels)

Convex hulls drawn a sign PC1–PC2 category means:

Case 1: L1 /i/ or /u/-like /y/

L1 front rounded vowels have a lingual articulation distinct from front unrounded and back rounded vowels (Wood, 1986); is this the case for L2 learners?

PCA run over subset of Eng/Fre front unrounded V /i, e/ (and Eng /i, e/), Eng/Fre back rounded V /u, o/ (and Eng /u, o/), and Fre front rounded V /y, ø/:
- Pulls out front-back variation into a low-numbered PC
- Clusters observed in whole-vowel-space PCA are largely preserved

Five participants maintain native-like separation of French /i, y, u/ (below plus 25, 33, 40):

- “Back” rounded vowels are commonly fronted in California English, characteristic of most participants: similarity may merely reflect working with the acoustically most similar vowel
- Caveat: acoustics do not always directly relate to lingual PC space alone

Case 2: rhotic /ɹ/

Front rounded vowels and rhotics have been observed to be interchangeable and confusable; both articulatory maneuvers lower F3 (Miekkal, 2011)

PCA over subset of Eng/Fre front unrounded V /i, e/, Eng rhotics /ɹ/ and Fre front rounded vowels /y, ø/ to pull concavity–convexity into low-numbered PC

A few speakers cluster /ɹ/ with English rhotic(s):

Rest of data: /ɹ/, /ɹ/ all other vowels distinct from rhotics

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