The effect of L1 use on L2 rhythmic implementation in L2 French spoken by Italian speakers

PURPOSES
- to study the impact of Italian L1 foot structure, in terms of French L2 different rhythmic structure realization;
- to explore the relationship between French foreign accent (FA) and the amount of L1 use;
- to adopt the imitation paradigm to study rhythmic convergence in L2 acquisition.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

French / Italian metrical differences

• Foot structure:
  - ITALIAN = TROCHAIC LANGUAGE (stressed syllable is the last of the Prosodic Word)
  - FRENCH = IAMbic LANGUAGE (stressed syllable is the last of an AccenTual Phrase)

• Phonology: position of themetrical head
• Phonetic: implementation ofmetrical head as increased syllable duration

INTRODUCTION

- Is French FA produced by advanced Italian L2 speakers due to metrical differences both at phonetic and phonological level?
- Is there a relationship, in production, between FA degree and amount of L1 use?
- Are learners able to modify rhythmic phonetic detail to imitate native speaker?

HYPOTHESIS
- French FA by Italian speakers is a consequence of rhythmic errors related to the duration ratio of the penultimate and last syllable of the word.
- Reinforcement of FA indices for Italian L2 learners of French displaying great L1 use.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS
19 Italian non-native speakers
(9 males and 10 females)

PROCEDURE (2 sessions):
Baseline: Participants read sentences using the target L2 language (French).
Imitation: Participants listened to a recording of a model French speaker and that imitated the way he produced each sentence.

MATERIALS
- 1 French native speaker (FRN) + 3 French native speakers (judges for the Read Aloud task)
- Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire (EOQ): 37 questions
- Cloze Test: lexical, morphological and discursive competence (written level)
- Read-Aloud task: phonological competence at segmental level (speech level)
- Corpus: 10 words: 5 high frequency - 5 low frequency
- Factors: Lexical frequency (high/low); use of language (L1/L2); task (Baseline/Imitation)

MEASURES
- Duration of target syllable (CV₁)
- Duration of last syllable (CV₂)

RESULTS

Average of target syllable duration (CVP on the top) and last syllable duration (CVL on the bottom): on y-axis (higher values are more Italian like) and score of language use responses on x-axis (lower values are more Italian L1 use), for each participants during the Baseline (blue box plot) and the imitation (green box plot).

- Unrelated effects between competence and the total accuracy rate of syllables duration (penultimate and last) for the L1 user.
- Significant effects of interaction between the L1/L2 use and the total accuracy rate of syllable duration (penultimate and last) for all-participants.
- The duration of the penultimate syllable (CVP) increases proportionally with the increase of the L1 use (blue box plot) during the Baseline and decreases during the imitation for all participants (green box plot).
- The duration of the last syllable (CV₂) is shorter that of the model French speaker during the Baseline (blue box plot) and increases during the imitation for all non-natives (green box plot).

CONCLUSIONS
- FA may be related to rhythmic errors in terms of different duration ratio of CVP and CVL.
- Relationship between the L1/L2 use and the better performance in the rhythmic structure realization.
- Non-native modified rhythmic phonetic details to imitate a native French speaker.

REFERENCES