

PHONETIC TRAINING IN L2 AND ITS EFFECT ON THE REPRESENTATION OF L2 PHONOLOGY

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Laboratory-based phonetic training, especially within high variability paradigm, has been evidenced to exert some positive influence on speech production (e.g. Insam & Schuppler, 2015; Alshangiti, & Evans, 2015) and perception (e.g. Hazan et al., 2005), influencing (enriching) the representation of second language phonology (Cutler, 2015). The results of studies are though mixed, with limited developmental benefits also observed (e.g. Aliaga-García, & Mora, 2009). The overarching conclusion seems to be that lab-based training generates overall better results than classroom-based training. The artificiality of the instruction and mostly immediate testing sessions might be why the inflated effect of lab-based phonetic training is sometimes reported. In real life, learners rarely learn the sounds of L2 in a lab, most of them being taught in formal classroom settings.

The current contribution investigates the influence of a classroom-based phonetic training in L2 English on the perceptual lexical processing of L2 speech. It evaluates the success of the development of L2 phonological representation. The training lasted 45 hours and involved a broad presentation and articulatory practice of English vowels, consonants and phonological processes. An auditory lexical decision task has been designed to find out whether classroom-based phonetic training influenced the lexical processing of 24 Polish speakers of L2 English with no phonetic experience. Their perceptual lexical processing pre- and post-training has been compared to that exhibited by 29 English native speakers. The experiments investigated how quick and accurate both groups are with auditory recognition of e.g. voiced versus voiceless word-final consonants. Additionally, the actual progress in pronunciation has been evaluated in a perceptual judgement task completed by independent evaluators and taken into consideration in analyses.

The results show that training effects are not as evident as in lab-based training studies, which might mean that findings concerning representation of L2 phonology might not apply in out-of-lab contexts. The results are discussed within theories of the acquisition of word recognition skills and are juxtaposed with evidence supporting the developmental change in L2 representations following phonetic experience (e.g. Broersma, & Cutler, 2011; Cutler, 2015).

References:

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