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Learning L2 Rhythm: Does the direction of acquisition matter?

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Research Question

Does the **direction of learning** affect the acquisition of **final and accentual lengthening** by Dutch learners of Spanish (DLS) and Spanish learners of Dutch (SLD)?

Spanish

“syllable-timed”

simple syllables (CV)

< final lengthening

< accentual lengthening

Dutch

“stress-timed”

complex syllables

(up to 6 Cs in 1 syllable)

> final lengthening

> accentual lengthening

La	ma	dre	de	Su	sa	na	es	de	Má	la	ga
De	ma	ma	van	Su	sa	na	komt	uit	Má	la	ga

Background

Markedness Differential Hypothesis

(Eckman, 1977, 2008)

“the areas of the target language that differ from the L1 and are more marked than the L1 will be difficult for L2 learners.”

Markedness

(Eckman, 1977 : 320-321)

“A phenomenon is more typologically marked if the presence of this phenomenon in a language implies the presence of another phenomenon; but the presence of the latter does not imply the presence of the former.”

Rhythm & Markedness

Stress-timed is more marked than syllable-timed (e.g., Ordín & Polyanskaya, 2015; Payne, Post, Prieto, Vanrell & L. Astruc, 2012)

Lengthening effects of any kind imply that there is a lower baseline.

Dutch is more marked than Spanish, due to its complex syllable structure and lengthening effects.

Hypothesis

Rhythmic features of Dutch are more difficult to acquire for Spanish learners than the rhythmic feature of Spanish are for Dutch learners.

Focus on: **accentual** and **final lengthening**

Method

Participants

5 participants per language group:

L1 Dutch, DLS with varying proficiency: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2

L1 Spanish, SLD with varying proficiency: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1

Materials

15 sentences with comparable type and number of syllables and prosodic frases for both languages.

(Prieto, Vanrell, Astruc, Payne & Post, 2012; Nazzi, Bertoncini & Mehler, 1998)

Procedure

participants were asked to read the sentences aloud, repeating those that were not fluent.

Prosodic coding (Prieto et al., 2012)

Statistical analysis

Generalized Linear Mixed Effects model

Fixed factors: speaker group, lengthening level (either accentual or final)

Random factor: speaker

Target variable: syllable duration, in percentage of baseline condition (Li & Post, 2014)

Results

Conclusion

H: Rhythmic features of Dutch are more difficult to acquire for Spanish learners than Spanish is for Dutch learners.

Both groups approach native values quite well.

Statistically, there are no differences were found that can determine whether DLS or SLD advance more towards their target.

The **hypothesis cannot be rejected** based on the results.

Discussion

- effect of syllable structure (CV, CVC, or mixed)
- rhythm metrics
- include item as a random factor