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French stereotypical accent and pronunciation learning: Recalling implicit knowledge

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French stereotypical accent and pronunciation learning: Recalling implicit knowledge

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Background

L2 accent imitation in the L1 (e.g., Pepe Le Pew) considered:
• Effective pedagogical approach, helping Spanish L1 learners increase VOT of L2 English /p, t, k/ (Everitt, 2015)

Stereotypical accents are:
• Perceptually salient (Kristiansen, 2003-92), i.e., more likely to be noticed and acquired (Schmidt, 1990)
• Familiar to the learner, through exposure in media from a young age (Lippi-Green, 1997) ➔ Tap into pre-existing knowledge

French /ʁ/:
+/ʁ/ not pronounced/pronounced like an English /r/
French /R/ + Aspiration of initial /p, t, k/. Comparison between French Award, by French /ʁ/ is notoriously difficult to acquire, /p/, /t/, and /k/ already Familiar to the learner, through
Which /ʁ/ (i.e., degree of friction) will be improved?
More friction than target
For a comprehensive diagnostic of /p/, /t/, and /k/ (duration of aspiration Effective pedagogical approach, helping Spanish L1 learners increase
Friction but not enough
Dissemination
College the
towards Adequate (target
Discovery
However, more awareness of friction for /ʁ/ pronounced with subtle
and
&
Tap into pre
Western
read Number of participants and tokens (avoid cognates)
was work 1
work
Perceptually salient (Kristiansen, 2003:92), i.e., more likely to be
Faculty
Significant negative correlation for /t/ + /a/ (Derwing et al., 2004; Tanner and Landon, 2009)
Overall, practice with stereotypical accent does not significantly help
Acquisition of /ʁ/ pronounced with subtle friction? ➔ Towards more target-like pronunciation?

Method

Research Questions

1. Will practice speaking L1 English with a French stereotypical accent help significantly improve pronunciation of French /ʁ/ and reduce aspiration (VOTs) of /p/, /t/, and /k/?
2. Which /ʁ/ (i.e., degree of friction) will be improved?

Participants & Treatment

8 intermediate students enrolled in French pronunciation course + 6 French native speaker controls:

Group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotypical Accent</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Accent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French NS Control</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3-in-class 20-minute sessions over 3 weeks. Explicit pronunciation instruction about:
• French /ʁ/ + Aspiration of initial /p, t, k/. Comparison between French and English Practice in class and at home

Tests & Instruments

• Pre-test - post-test + 1 narrative + 1 dialogue both read in French

Sounds

• 14 words featuring initial /p, t, k/ + 12 words with /ʁ/ involving several degrees of friction:

Rating Procedure

1- /ʁ/ not pronounced/pronounced like an English /r/
2- Friction but not enough
3- Adequate (target-like amount of friction)
4- More friction than target
5- More friction than target with a misplaced /ʁ/ (e.g., “Paris” instead of “Paris”)

Aspiration
VOT ratio + Native speaker ratings on a 9-point Likert-type scale (Derwing et al., 2004; Tanner and Landon, 2009)
1: Very strong foreign accent
9: No foreign accent

Method

More friction in Group S for Intervocalic & Init/Fin/BeVoicedC ➔ towards target pronunciation

Table: Rating Distribution of /ʁ/ After Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NS Control</th>
<th>Mean rating</th>
<th>VOT ratio</th>
<th>Level of perceived friction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

“Tout”
With the vocal tract lengthened by a back vowel, friction—augmented by muscle relaxation during pronunciation of /ʁ/—is more perceptually salient, and may affect ratings ➔ Verify with remaining /p, t, k/ + /ʁ/ words

Discussion & Conclusion

• Overall, practice with stereotypical accent does not significantly help pronunciation improvement of /ʁ/ and /p/, /t/, and /k/.

• However, more awareness of friction for /ʁ/ pronounced with subtle friction? ➔ Towards more target-like pronunciation?

Recommendations

➢ Increase number of participants and tokens (avoid cognates)
➢ Introduce and study one pronunciation feature at a time
➢ Is this approach better suited for lower proficiency levels?
➢ For a comprehensive diagnostic of /ʁ/, /t/, and /k/ (duration of aspiration and degree of muscle tension), use both VOT measures and rater judgments
➢ French /ʁ/ is notoriously difficult to acquire, /ʁ/, /t/, and /k/ already acquired at the intermediate level ➔ Check with vowels and intonation