

Long-term effects of accent exposure on perception and production

Helena Levy, Lars Konieczny, Adriana Hanulíková
University of Freiburg, Germany
helena.levy@frequenz.uni-freiburg.de

Abstract

We examined how school-aged children perceive and produce speech as a consequence of their experience with regional or foreign accents. We know from previous studies that children have more difficulties recognizing words in unfamiliar accents as compared to familiar accents (Nathan et al., 1998; Bent, 2014). Less attention has been paid to the influence of experience with accented speech on accent comprehension. This project is concerned with the effects of type of accent (regional or foreign) and amount of accent experience on children's comprehension of unfamiliar accents. In a perception experiment, 65 German primary school children (mean age 9 years, 10 months) were asked to repeat sentences spoken by three different speakers: one who spoke standard German, one with a foreign accent (Korean accented German) and one with a regional accent in German (Palatinate German). All of the children had experience with regional and foreign accents but the amount of accent exposure to both kinds of accents varied considerably. More experience with regional accents led to more correct sentence repetitions in the regional accent condition. More experience with foreign accents, however, did not help in the foreign accent condition. Type and amount of experience seem to co-determine processing ease of accented speech. We are currently analyzing the same subjects' productions of German vowels in spontaneously produced words in order to examine how children's pronunciation differs acoustically according to type and amount of accent experience. We will discuss the influence of experience with regional and foreign accents on children's speech perception and production.

References:

- Bent, T. (2014). Children's perception of foreign-accented words. *Journal of Child Language* 41, 1 – 22.
- Nathan, L., Wells, B., & Donlan, C. (1998). Children's comprehension of unfamiliar regional accents: a preliminary investigation. *Journal of Child Language* 25, 343 – 365.