

Variability of phonetic convergence in spontaneous dialog

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Phonetic convergence involves shifts of segmental as well as suprasegmental features in pronunciation towards those of a communicative partner. Although the convergence mechanism seems to a certain extent automatic and beyond our conscious control, not all speakers are prone to converge exactly to the same extent and in the same acoustic features. Individual differences in the person's talent and personality, combined with the social context of the encounter, set the frame for the displayed degree of convergence. In second language interaction, phonetic talent, openness and the ability of attention shifting (mental flexibility) seem to be crucial factors accounting for the presence or absence of adaptation (Lewandowski, 2012). Data on German spontaneous conversations (from the German conversations – GECCO – corpus) suggest that mutual liking and competence ratings of speakers can influence adaptation as well (Schweitzer & Lewandowski, 2013). A hybrid model of phonetic convergence could account for the influence of automatic as well as the more controlled components on speech accommodation and at the same time bring individual differences and social context into the picture.