Equiv
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ication in second dialect imitation: the case of assibilated rhotics
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This study aims to determine whether equivalence classification (e.g., Flege, 1995) operates in the same way in second dialect phonological acquisition in comparison with second language phonological acquisition. As such, it will investigate assibilated rhotic production of Ecuadorian Spanish by Andalusian Spanish speakers and compare the findings with assibilated rhotic productions by naïve English-speaking learners previously reported by Rafat (2015). Although there has been considerable growth in interest in D2 phonological acquisition (e.g., Babel, 2009; MacLeod, 2012; Nielson, 2011), the issue of how equivalence classification works in D2 production/imitation remains largely unresolved.

Assibilated/fricative rhotics characterize a number of varieties of Spanish (e.g., Solé, 1998, 2002). However, Andalusian Spanish is mainly characterized by a trill and a tap and their reduced forms (e.g., Blecua, 2001). Moreover, it is characterized by a weakened articulation (e.g., Hualde, 2005), and it includes sibilants such as [ʃ] as an allophonic variant of the fricatives such as [tʃ] (e.g., Carbonero, 2001, Jimenez, 1999). If equivalence classification operates in the same way as in L2 phonological acquisition, then based on Flege (1995), similar to English speakers (See Rafat, 2015), assibilated rhotics should be classified as 'similar' sounds and produced as a [ʃ] or other sibilants.

10 adult Andalusian speakers were asked to do an imitation/repetition task. The participants were tested with real words (30), nonce words (30) and fillers (108) at two different times. The stimuli were controlled for the factors 'stress' and 'position in the word'. The stimuli for the imitation task were recorded by a male speaker of Ecuadorian Spanish. The results were analyzed both auditorily and acoustically.

The preliminary results diverged from what has been reported for naïve English-speaking learners of Spanish (e.g., Rafat, 2015). In particular, Spanish speakers of Andalusian Spanish showed a different pattern of assimilation in comparison with naïve English-speaking learners of Spanish. Whereas in Rafat (2015) naïve English-speaking participants mostly produced assibilated rhotics as a [ʃ], the preliminary results of our study show that 34.25% of the assibilated rhotics were produced as assibilated rhotics, 24.25% as trills, 25% as taps, 13.5% as sibilants and 3% as laterals. We will consider factors such as the phonemic status of [ʃ] (or lack thereof it) in Spanish and knowledge of the Spanish language in explaining the results.

In conclusion, this study is important because it sheds new light on second dialect phonological acquisition by drawing comparisons with previous findings in second language phonological acquisition.
Bibliography


