

EDITORIAL TO RIL 11.1

The current issue of Research in Language brings together contributions exploring different aspects of second language accent studies, a steadily developing field of applied linguistics, which continues to inspire researchers and teachers alike. The approaches taken by the contributors to this issue bear witness to two major perspectives developed in the field: second language phonetics/phonology and instructed learning and teaching of the pronunciation of English. While the papers explore various aspects of non-native accents of English, they all report on primary research based on data from Polish, Czech, French, Finnish and Greek speakers of English, with native speakers of English used as a reference point in many cases. A wide range of methods are employed, including quantitative acoustic studies investigating the effect of imitation (**Rojczyk, Berger and Porzuczek, Zajac**), an acoustic analysis of spectral characteristics (**Volín, Weingartová and Skarnitzl**), an auditory analysis of contextually conditioned stress marking (**Horgues**), a quantitative study of the effect of anxiety on success in pronunciation learning (**Baran-Lucarz**), a questionnaire based exploration of pronunciation-related views and attitudes (**Tergujeff**) and finally, the study of perception of gated casual speech (**Shockey and Cavar**).

The first two contributions focus on the same approach and language context, as they investigate the effect of phonetic imitation in Polish learners of English, with **Arkadiusz Rojczyk, Andrzej Porzuczek** and **Marcin Bergier** examining the effect of immediate and distracted imitation of unreleased plosives, and **Magdalena Zajac** exploring this effect with respect to the durational characteristics of English vowels. Both papers concentrate on phonetic characteristics of English believed to be difficult for Polish learners; by using imitation, the authors investigate the extent to which speech accommodation may affect the pronunciation of non-native speakers. Interestingly, although the results of both studies verify the hypothesis that phonetic (sub)segmental features chosen for the analysis can be imitated by non-native speakers, the degree and direction of imitation is strongly related to experimental conditions. Searching for stable parameters which would make it possible to account for differences in the production of the vowel schwa in English and Czech, **Jan Volín, Lenka Weingartová** and **Radek Skarnitzl** move to a suprasegmental level of analysis for which the studied vowel is crucial. Having conducted a detailed acoustic study, they propose the use of the distribution of acoustic energy in the vowel spectrum as the most reliable measure distinguishing between native and non-native speakers. Concentrating on prosodic parameters, **Celine Horgues** continues the suprasegmental theme by investigating the effect of intonational contexts on the relative difficulty in implementing the stress pattern of English by native speakers of French; unlike previous studies, however, she uses perceptive judgements to verify her hypotheses. The auditory approach moves us towards pedagogically-oriented studies, which tend to rely on the assessment of speech as performed by interlocutors (or teachers) in natural or classroom discourse. The study by **Malgorzata Baran-Lucarz** attempts to determine optimal conditions for phonetic

production by means of examining the relationship between phonetic learning anxiety and success in pronunciation of English in the case of advanced Polish learners, with pronunciation assessed from text and word-list reading. The attitude towards pronunciation training and more generally, the views concerning pronunciation itself have been explored by **Elina Tergujeff**, who asked Finnish school students to talk about their experiences regarding English pronunciation and their attitudes towards it. Adopting a qualitative perspective, the study provides insights into the way young teenagers perceive the role of formal education and their out-of-school English input as decisive in the development of intelligibility and fluency in English. Finally, the study by **Linda Shockey** and **Malgorzata Ćavar** adopts a yet another perspective: searching for reasons conditioning varied success in English casual speech perception by learners from different language backgrounds, the researchers propose to explore the native-language characteristics of the learners. Thus, the final contribution to the volume combines a traditional contrastive analysis based approach with an innovative research programme calling for a data-based analysis of the first languages before formulating predictions as to their effect on second language phonetics and phonology.

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