Native English speakers’ structural alignment with foreign-accented speech
Eunjin Chun, Julia Barrow, Edith Kaan
University of Florida

INTRODUCTION

- Downward Convergence in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT): Native speakers adjust the complexity of their speech (i.e., alignment) to ease non-native speakers’ language processing (James, 1993).
- Alignment appears to be modulated by social factors.
  - Most studies on alignment regarding social factors have focused on phonetic adaptation (Abrego-Collier et al., 2011)
  - Social factors also influence syntactic alignment (Balcetis & Dale, 2005; Weatherholtz et al., 2015 in press)

REFERENCES

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- Alignment appears to be modulated by social factors.
  - Most studies on alignment regarding social factors have focused on phonetic adaptation (Abrego-Collier et al., 2011)
  - Social factors also influence syntactic alignment (Balcetis & Dale, 2005; Weatherholtz et al., 2015 in press)
  - Speaker’s accent/ smartness/ perceived standardness of accents
  - Perceived similarity to speaker/ preference for compromise

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Do Native speakers of American English show Downward Convergence, namely more syntactic alignment toward non-native speakers?
  - NO!
  - But different pattern of alignment depending on the accent of the speakers
    - More priming in Am. English speaker (for both DO/PO)
    - Priming only for PO in non-native speakers
    - Suggesting an automatic response to speakers’ accents
- The results do not support Downward Convergence. It may be because of
  1) non-interactive task in the current study
  2) No visual information of speakers
- Alternative accounts
  - Similarity-Attraction Theory? (Byrne, 1971)
  - Social identities/ differences between the speakers?

METHODS

- Participants: 41 Native American English speaking students from the University of Florida (33 females; mean age: 20.2 yrs)
- Task & Procedure:
  - Three speaker conditions: a) Native American English speaker, b) Korean L2 English speaker, c) Indian English speaker
  - Rate: type of accent, degree of accent, familiarity with accent

QUESTION

- Will Native English speakers show Downward Converge at the syntactic level (i.e. syntactic alignment) to the accent of non-native speakers?

RESULTS

- Separate analysis (Logistic mixed-effect model) in each speaker condition
  - Dependent Variable: PO production (versus DO and Other responses)
  - As a function of prime condition (DO vs. PO vs. Baseline), the number of previously completed DO & PO production, Familiarity with the accent

1) Immediate Priming Effect

- Am. English speaker condition
  - Priming effect for both DO/PO structure
- Non-native speakers (i.e., Korean L2 & Indian speaker) condition
  - Priming effect only for PO structure

2) Cumulative Priming Effect

- Found only in Am. English & Korean L2 speaker

Table 1. Priming in each speaker condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English speaker</th>
<th>Korean speaker</th>
<th>Indian speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>-3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO/PO</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 1. PO proportion in each speaker condition

- Prime:
  - DO Prime: The farmer throws the driver a pumpkin
  - PO Prime: The farmer throws a pumpkin to the driver
  - Baseline (intransitive): The girl is singing

Target:

- the girl a ball → DO completion
  - a ball to the girl → PO completion

- Other

Fig 1. PO proportion in each speaker condition

Prime: DO Prime: The farmer throws the driver a pumpkin
PO Prime: The farmer throws a pumpkin to the driver
Baseline (intransitive): The girl is singing

Target:

- the girl a ball → DO completion
  - a ball to the girl → PO completion
- a ball; fast → Other

- The boy throws

REFERENCES


CONTACT

eunjinchun@ufl.edu