

RHYTHMIC TRANSFER AND ACQUISITION OF L2 RHYTHM IN GALICIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Abercrombie (1967) defines linguistic rhythm as *isochrony of speech intervals*. A substantial amount of phonological research (Pike, 1945; Abercrombie, 1967; Dauer, 1983; Bertinetto, 1989, among others) has explored the rhythmic characterisation of languages as predominantly stress-timed, where stressed syllables are perceived to fall at roughly isochronous intervals, syllable-timed languages, where all syllables are perceived to be isochronous, and mora-timed languages, where morae are taken to be isochronous. In recent years, researchers (Ramus, Nespors & Mehler, 1999; Grabe & Low, 2002; Dellwo, 2006, among others) have discussed and put to practice some quantifiable measures to prove the phonetic reality of such classification and thus confirm the existence of objective, acoustically measurable differences between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages.

As much as the research on the rhythmic differences between languages has evolved, the production of L2 in contrast to L1 rhythmic patterns has been paid little attention in the literature on L2 acquisition and linguistic transfer (see Ordin & Polyanskaya, 2015). The existing literature on prosodic acquisition proves that the acquisition of second language speech rhythm is demonstrably a challenge for language learners (Kinoshita & Sheppard, 2011). Besides, the transfer of certain prosodic features from L1 to L2 is implicitly or explicitly supported by the view that the phonic elements making up the phonetic subsystems of the languages in question exist in a common phonological space, and so will necessarily influence one another (Flege, Schirru, & MacKay, 2003). As a natural consequence of such view, L1 transfer is an important factor in L2 prosody learning (Rasier & Hiligsmann, 2007).

The analysis of the potential influence of the rhythm of L1 on L2 must be carefully explored so as to come to a sound conclusion regarding the role of prosodic transfer in the acquisition of the rhythm of an L2. The present study analyses the production of speech rhythm in the English language classroom by two groups of bilingual learners whose dominant language is Galician. The aim of the study is to verify a) whether the production of the foreign language is affected by rhythmic transfer from the native language of the learners, and b) whether the degree of rhythmic transfer decreases as the amount of formal instruction in the foreign language increases.

In order to conduct this investigation, two groups of native speakers of Galician currently studying a degree in Translation and Interpreting were recorded. The first group comprised 6 subjects who, at the moment of recording, certified a B1 level of English. The second group comprised 6 subjects who certified a C1 level. Besides, a control group of 6 Southern British English (SBE) speakers was also recorded. The data were obtained by means of a reading task where students had to read the text *The North Wind and the Sun* in Galician and the same text in English. The acoustic analysis was carried out with *Praat* (Boersma & Weenink, 2019). For each recording, the vocalic and consonantal intervals were annotated in a textgrid. The statistical analysis was carried out by means of *Correlatore 2.3.4* (Mairano & Romano, 2010), a software used to calculate the global metrics V%, ΔC and ΔV (Ramus, Nespors, & Mehler, 1999), and the local metrics CrPVI and VnPVI (Grabe & Low, 2002).

The results obtained prove a) that there is rhythmic transfer from L1 (Galician) to L2 (English) in both the consonant and the vowel intervals, and b) that the degree of rhythmic transfer from Galician L1 to English L2 decreases as the level of the foreign language increases.

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