Shifty processes: the relationship between topic-based shifting and second dialect acquisition.

Abby Walker (*Virginia Tech*)

Love & Walker (2013) propose that speakers with more second dialect (D2) exposure may exhibit more topic-based shifting from D1-D2 than speakers with less exposure. This study explicitly investigates and compares the long and short term flexibility of participants' production, by looking at the relationship between topic-based shifting and second dialect acquisition. Specifically, I look at how speakers shift in the moment and over time between Standard American English, and Standard British English, on two consonantal variables.

Data was collected in London, UK, and Columbus, OH. The analysis below comes from 93 participants who belonged to one of six categories: English expatriates living in the US (19), American expatriates living in the UK (21), English fans of American football (13), American fans of the English Premier League (15), and English (11) and American (14) controls. Each participant did the same experiment, which included a reading task where they read aloud words containing intervocalic /t/ and non- prevocalic /r/, embedded in lists of words about English and American topics (U.S. government/history, American football, U.K. government/history, English football).

To measure degree of rhoticity, the lowest F3 (Hz) values in rhotic environments were extracted, and normalized relative to each speaker's mean non-rhotic F3 (Hagiwara 1995). To measure for flapping, the durations of intervocalic /t/ were extracted, and normalized on each speaker's local speech rate. These measures successfully separated the English and American control groups.

Linear mixed effects models with design driven maximal slopes (Barr et al. 2013) were built for each variable. There is evidence of second dialect acquisition on both variables in American participants, including non-migrants with substantial second dialect contact. Additionally, the more positive American expats attitudes about England were, the higher their F3 values on rhotic tokens (i.e., more English-like). English participants only show effects of acquisition for intervocalic /t/. We find a robust effect of topic on rhoticity for all speaker groups, though the effect size is small (~ 20 Hz). We also find an effect of topic on intervocalic /t/, which appears to be carried by American fans and controls. This latter fact, combined with a significant negative correlation for English participants between how American-like their /t/ is overall, and how much they topic-shift on /t/, suggests that we see more topic-based shifting in participants with the least transatlantic experience (c.f. Bell 1984).

This study shows that transatlantic contact, even non-migrant contact, results in changes to production, but that the shifts are not symmetrical for D1 American, and D1 English speakers. This study is the most extensive to date exploring how topic can effect speech production, finding robust effects in read speech. Comparing topic-based shifting to second dialect acquisition suggests that the two processes are either not, or are negatively, related.