

Variationist Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition:
Studies in Production and Perception

Organizer:
Robert Bayley
University of California, Davis

This panel offers a cross section of new work that demonstrates the dynamic results of current variationist SLA research. The studies include work on the well-studied variable of *ne* deletion (the first particle of negation) by French immersion students and teachers in Canada, the acquisition of the stylistic constraints on two morpho-syntactic variables by long time foreign residents of China, the acquisition of a phonological feature by US students in a study abroad program in Argentina, and the perception of a phonological variant by volunteers in a non-government organization who live in solidarity with the poor near Guayaquil, Ecuador. The studies to be presented break new ground by focusing on questions such as the relationship between classroom and community input and learner output, stylistic variation, the acquisition of a distinctive feature of a variety of Latin American Spanish, and the development of learners' perception of socially meaningful patterns of variation in an economically marginalized community.

Curricular and Extra-curricular Input and the Non-use of *ne* by High School and University FSL Learners

Katherine Rehner
University of Toronto, Mississauga

Raymond Mougeon
Françoise Mougeon
York University

Nevena Vasic
University of Toronto, Mississauga

A series of studies have investigated the non-use of negative particle *ne*, a discursively-frequent feature of ordinary spoken French that is approaching categoricity, but which is not yet part of the Standard written language. Some of these studies focus on L2 learners of French at the high school (e.g. Rehner & R. Mougeon, 1999) or university (e.g. F. Mougeon & Rehner 2015; Regan, Howard, & Lemée 2009) level, highlighting the role of extra-curricular contacts with L1 speakers. Other studies examine different aspects of curricular input for learners at these same levels (e.g. Étienne & Sax 2009; O'Connor Di Vito 1991) documenting the extent to which such input accurately reflects 'real-world' patterns. Yet another study (R. Mougeon & Rehner 2015) examines *ne* non-use in the speech of Francophone high school students who use French with variable levels of frequency in their daily lives and compares their use with that of their French language arts (FLA) teachers.

This paper capitalizes on this rich body of research and compares the non-use of *ne* by Ontario high school and university FSL learners and by Franco-Ontarian high school students. It also examines this feature in the teachers' classroom speech and materials used in these three contexts. In this innovative multi-level comparison of input and output involving L1 and L2 speakers, we draw on the results of several of the studies mentioned above.

The results document the range of differences in the L1 and L2 students' output in terms of frequency of *ne* non-use according to their extra-curricular use of French. This range shows a steady and sizeable increase in frequency across the different L2 cohorts (from 21% for the high school learners with little exposure, to 70% for the university learners with the most exposure). That said, these top L2

learners' rate is below that of the least-frequent L1 users of French (97%), which is not that different from that of the most-frequent L1 users who almost never use *ne* (99.6%). The results also show that there is a sizeable gap between the classroom speech of the Franco-Ontarian FLA teachers (80%) and that of the university (35%) and high school (29%) FSL teachers. Finally, the comparison of the teaching materials used in the three contexts reveals a pattern that echoes that of the classroom teachers' speech in each context (Franco-Ontarian 24%, university L2 10%, high school 1%).

In sum, this paper underscores that when the spoken norm of the L2 educational input is substantially more standard than that of 'real world' speech, this slows down the learning of a feature of ordinary speech, despite its very high discursive frequency and very low level of social markedness. Consequently, it is only the L2 learners with extensive extra-curricular contacts with L1 speakers who begin to close the gap to the L1 norms. In contrast, even those students who disuse French in their daily lives are very close behind their classmates who use French more often reflecting the fact that there is no strong conflict between the Franco-Ontarian students' curricular and extra-curricular input.

Do They Follow What We Say? Stylistic Variation in L1 and L2 Chinese

Xiaoshi Li

Michigan State University

Native speakers use variable language forms to express similar meanings all the time. Learners need to acquire not only the correct language forms but also, more importantly, they need to be able to produce variable speech styles appropriately. To this end, understanding of native speakers' and learners' patterns of stylistic variation, how and why their patterns differ, as well as the factors influencing them is necessary. In recent decades, there have been a number of variation studies, especially in French, that showed empirically that vernacular speech is not authentically represented by teachers and textbooks, which the researchers claim to be a "disservice" to the students, and students follow teachers' patterns of sociolinguistic use of variants. (Dewaele & Mougeon 2004; Li 2010; Mougeon, Nadasdi & Rehner 2010; Mougeon & Rehner 2001a, 2001b; Mougeon, Rehner & Nadasdi 2004; Nadasdi, Mougeon & Rehner 2005, 2008; Rehner & Mougeon 1999, 2003; Rehner, Mougeon & Nadasdi 2003).

This study aims to contribute to this line of research in the context of Mandarin Chinese (hereafter Chinese). The study investigates the general stylistic variation patterns of L2 Chinese learners and compares with variation patterns demonstrated by Chinese native speakers, learners' instructors and textbooks, aiming to explore the role of instructional factors in L2 Chinese stylistic variation. The study focuses on variation in the use of two linguistic forms: the morphosyntactic particle DE (use and non-use of DE) and subject pronouns (overt and null forms) in Chinese. The research questions include: What are the general patterns of the use of stylistic variants by L2 Chinese learners, Chinese native speakers, Chinese language teachers and textbooks? Are they different? If so, how?

The data were collected from 23 high-intermediate and advanced L2 Chinese learners at two universities in northern China, 13 Chinese native speaker peers, four Chinese language instructors and four Chinese language textbooks. Conversational speech of approximately 43 hours from CSL learners and eight hours from native speakers were collected in addition to 16 hours of teachers' in-class speech and 31 texts from the textbooks. Variation analyses with frequency description were conducted on the data.

Results show four general patterns. First, teachers use overt forms of stylistic variants in class at a significantly higher rate than native speakers do in conversations. Second, learners tend to overuse the overt forms compared with their native speaker peers. Third, learner patterns align with their teachers' patterns closely. Finally, unlike teacher input, textbook input demonstrated mixed results comparing with learner patterns. For DE use, learners' speech patterns aligned with those in textbooks significantly but did not for subject pronoun use.

The implications for foreign language instruction are 1) Appropriate materials of target language forms that native speakers demonstrate variability are needed; 2) Sociolinguistic variants and their stylistic/social meanings need to be incorporated into foreign language education and explicitly taught; 3) Clear goals need to be set up regarding target language modality; and 4) Authentic materials need to be appropriately included into the curriculum.

The Development of Regional Phonological Features during a Semester Abroad in Argentina

Rebecca Pozzi
Robert Bayley
University of California, Davis

The study abroad (SA) experience is often viewed as a time to gain proficiency in a foreign language due to the unique opportunity it provides for immersion in the target language and culture. Nevertheless, an increasing amount of research conducted on SA over the last two decades reveals that it does not necessarily lead to L2 gains in all areas (e.g., Collentine & Freed 2004; Lafford & Uscinski, 2014; Segalowitz, Freed, Collentine, Lafford, Lazar, & Díaz-Campos, 2004). Recent research has suggested that one area in which gains are made is in the acquisition of dialectal features during SA. However, the limited amount of research that has been conducted on this topic in Spanish-speaking contexts has focused primarily on second language (L2) learner development of features specific to North-Central Spain, particularly [θ], and has not been able to fully explain why some participants produce these features to varying degrees and others never produce such features at all (see Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008; George, 2013, 2014; Knouse, 2012; Reynolds-Case, 2013; Ringer-Hilfiger, 2012, 2013). Since Argentina is one of the top study abroad destinations (Institute of International Education, 2015), learner production of features characteristic of Argentine Spanish and the factors that influence this production should be investigated.

This paper examines the L2 learner production of previously unexplored phonological features characteristic of Buenos Aires Spanish, [ʃ] and [ʒ], and the linguistic and social factors that constrain this production. Participants are 24 learners of Spanish studying abroad for a semester in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Over 2,000 tokens of [ʃ] and [ʒ] were gathered prior to and at the end of the semester by means of sociolinguistic interviews, a reading passage, and a word list. These data were analyzed with Rbrul for the influence of linguistic and social factors (Johnson, 2009). Specifically, these data were correlated with social networks using the results of a *social network strength scale* (SNSS, Milroy, 1980) and with attitudes towards the target features and culture using the results of a matched guise test (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960).

Results suggest that participants move towards native-like norms of use of these features during the sojourn abroad, that social networks with native speakers are statistically significant predictors of phonological variation patterns, and that attitudes towards the target language and culture are not statistically significant predictors of phonological variation patterns among L2 learners of Spanish.

This paper contributes to the understanding of the role of SA in language learning by providing answers to questions about the importance of social factors in this context. The findings are significant in the areas of L2 acquisition of sociolinguistic variation and SA, as research regarding learner development of dialectal features in the SA context is limited to a small set of sociolinguistic variants. Additionally, this study provides one of the first accounts of the acquisition of dialectal features specific to Argentina.

A Longitudinal Approach to the Perception of /s/-weakening among L2 Spanish Speakers

Chelsea Escalante
University of California, Davis

This investigation lies at the intersection of second language acquisition (SLA), sociophonetic variation, and speech perception. Specifically, it investigates the perception of /s/-aspiration, a dialectal feature characteristic of *Guayaquileño* (coastal Ecuadorian) Spanish, within a specific community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991; Eckert 2006): a group of 15 young-adult English speakers who travel to Ecuador as humanitarian volunteers. The study investigates the participants' ability to perceive an aspirated variant as a legitimate /s/ over time as they are further exposed to the local variety.

Despite the attention paid to /s/-weakening among native speakers within the sociolinguistic literature (Brown 2006; Brown 2008; Brown & Torres Cacoulios 2003; Bybee 2000; Erker & Otheguy 2015; File-Muriel 2007; Lipski 1999; Terrell 1979, among others), few studies have analyzed how second-language (L2) speakers perceive, process, and produce this stigmatized variant and none, to my knowledge, have considered its analysis through a longitudinal perspective. Additionally, of the studies that have investigated how L2 speakers perceive non-standard /s/ (George 2014; Rasmussen & Zampini 2010; Schmidt 2011; Trimble 2011), all have remained within the university context. This study departs from the norm by investigating the perception of the variable among L2s who purposely enter a disadvantaged community, tracking the development of their mapping system as they attempt to become genuine, contributing members of the community.

Quantitative data was gathered at four different intervals (months 0, 2, 4, and 6) via a perception task based on Schmidt (2011), where participants identify an aspirated variant as 's' or 'nothing'. Independent variables considered are time in-country, proficiency level, phonological context, and individual speaker. After the coding, 2,956 tokens were analyzed with Rbrul (Johnson 2009), a specialized application of logistic regression that allows the researcher to include individual speakers as random effects. The results suggest that all independent variables are significant predictors, with higher proficiency, greater exposure, and word-internal position correlating with more accurate identification of [h] as /s/. However, exceptions are found for two native bilinguals of non-/s/-aspirating dialects who, despite high proficiency levels, perceive aspiration at a level similar to novice L2 speakers. Data also suggests that the greatest jumps in positive identification occur within months 0-2, with perception gains leveling off between months 4-6, especially among higher-proficiency speakers.

In sum, L2 speakers are found to be able to acquire new mappings within their interlanguage phonological system over time and through exposure to the variable. However, results vary according to proficiency, phonological context of /s/, and at the individual level. Heritage speakers do not follow the same patterns as L2 speakers, underscoring another difference between these two groups.

Key words:

Second language acquisition, study abroad, perception, stylistic variation, input

Email addresses :

Organizer:

Robert Bayley, University of California, Davis. rjbayley@ucdavis.edu

Paper 1:

Katherine Rehner, University of Toronto, Mississauga. katherine.rehner@utoronto.ca

Raymond Mougeon, York University. rmougeon@yorku.ca

Françoise Mougeon, York University. fmougeon@yorku.ca
Nevena Vasic, University of Toronto, Mississauga. nev.vasic@mail.utoronto.ca

Paper 2:

Xiaoshi Li, Michigan State University. xli@msu.edu

Paper 3:

Rebecca Pozzi, University of California, Davis. rmconley@ucdavis.edu
Robert Bayley, University of California, Davis. rjbayley@ucdavis.edu

Paper 4 :

Chelsea Escalante, University of California, Davis. cescalante@ucdavis.edu