The Role of Morphology in L2 Speech: Production of English Intervocalic /d/ by Catalan Speakers in Derived and Non-derived Words
Susana Cortés Pomacóndor, Mitsuhiko Ota and Alice Turk
TAAL, University of Edinburgh
susana@ling.ed.ac.uk, mits@ling.ed.ac.uk, turk@ling.ed.ac.uk

In Lexical Phonology it was shown that processes affect derived and non-derived words differently. For example, the velar softening process, by which a voiceless velar stop becomes a fricative, occurs in the alternation ‘electric’ /ɪlɛktrɪk/ ~ ‘electricity’ /ɪlektrɪsɪti/ but not in ‘king’ /kɪŋ/ (i.e. we do not obtain /sɪŋ/). The difference is due to the fact that ‘electricity’ is a derived word whereas ‘king’ is not and cannot, therefore, undergo the velar softening process, which is a postlexical process. While L2 phonology is known to be influenced by the rules and processes of the learner’s L1, not all L1 patterns transfer to L2 to the same extent. Some studies indicate, for instance, that postlexical processes of L1 are more likely to affect L2 than do lexical alternations (Altenberg & Vago, 1983; Weinberger, 1994; Zsiga, 1995). Moreover, effects of postlexical processes do not appear equally in all L2 contexts that satisfy the conditions of the application (Major & Faudree, 1996; Cebrián, 2000). Assuming that rules exist, and by combining all the different possibilities of L1 postlexical rule transfer to L2 interlanguage, L1 postlexical rules can target (i) both derived and non-derived contexts, or (ii) only derived contexts, or (iii) only non-derived contexts, or (iv) none of them (i.e. the rule is eliminated).

In an attempt to characterize the L2 contexts that are more prone to L1 transfer, Eckman and Iverson (1997, also Eckman et al., 2003) hypothesized that (i), (ii) and (iv) could be the case but ruled (iii) out, since it is less likely for postlexical L1 processes to affect L2 lexical entries only. In support of their hypothesis, none of the Spanish-speaking learners of English in their study showed a higher rate of intervocalic spirantization in non-derived English words (e.g., ladder) than in derived words (e.g., madder). That is, case (ii) was supported. This paper attempts to test their hypothesis further by looking at the production of English intervocalic /d/ by Catalan speakers.

Catalan has a spirantization rule which makes /d/ surface as a voiced interdental fricative in intervocalic position. Therefore, the word ‘dia’ is pronounced with an initial stop whereas the word ‘cada’ is pronounced with a fricative between the vowels. We might find that they apply their L1 spirantization rule to (i) both derived and non-derived context, or to (ii) derived contexts only (i.e. to madder, but not to ladder), or to (iii) non-derived contexts only (i.e. to ladder, but not to madder), or to (iv) none of them, when speaking English.

Two tasks similar to those in Eckman and Iverson’s experiments (i.e. a fill-in-the blanks task to elicit the derived words, and a word list to elicit the non-derived words) and two new tasks were used in our experiment. The two new tasks elicited both derived and non-derived words each. In the first new task, our 10 Catalan speakers with an advanced level of English were presented with pairs of sentences and were asked to read the sentence they preferred aloud. The second new task involved reading sentences aloud. The results in the tasks replicating Eckman and Iverson’s study supported their findings. Speakers seemed to transfer L1 postlexical rules more when pronouncing L2 derived words than L2 lexical entries (i.e. case (ii)). However, the results in the new tasks did not show a significant difference in the production of intervocalic /d/ in derived and non-derived words (i.e. case (iv)). Eckman and Iverson’s findings (and our results in the replication of their study) are triggered by the tasks used. When eliciting both derived and non-derived words in the same task, as in our new tasks, no difference in production is found. Therefore, here we show that the morphological configuration of words does not play a role in the transfer of L1 postlexical rules to L2.


