This book is a collection of 13 studies addressing different aspects of Romance-Germanic bilingual phonology and phonetics. The studies focus on the following questions: to what extent does the phonological knowledge of early bilinguals, consecutive bilinguals, late bilinguals, and adult L2 learners differ? How do cross-linguistic interactions impact the phonetic patterns observed in the speech of bilinguals? What is the effect of the age of acquisition of both systems on the native-like phonological/phonetic patterns? What is the role of environmental input on the phonetic/phonological acquisition process in bilinguals?

In the first study (Chapter 2), Kehoe & Lleó investigate the acquisition of quantitative and qualitative patterns of stressed vs. unstressed vowels of Spanish-German bilingual children. They analyze to what extent Spanish-German bilinguals reduce and centralize German but not Spanish vowels. The study reports bi-directional interactions and presents new insights on the mutual influence between the two systems that bilinguals develop in parallel during childhood.

In Chapter 3, Dodane & Bijeljac-Babic investigate stressed syllables produced by English-French early bilinguals. As in Chapter 2, the authors hypothesize mutual influences of metrical patterns. In French, stress is not distinctive and its placement is phrase-final. In contrast, stress in English is a distinctive feature. The obvious question is how these differences affect the acquisition of metrical patterns in both languages in bilinguals. The authors suggest that children capture the metrical patterns of each of the two languages, but differently from monolinguals: final lengthening seems to be easier to learn and develops rapidly, whereas initial pitch movements seem to be more difficult to learn (even for monolinguals).

Chapter 4 is a semi-longitudinal study investigating productions of voice onset time (VOT) in French and Swedish at three points during the phonological development. French uses short lag and lead lag for distinguishing voiced vs. voiceless stops, respectively, while Swedish uses long lags for voiceless stops and short or lead lag for voiced stops. Splendido aims to clarify whether Swedish learners of L2 French produce short instead of long lags. She studies three different populations: three simultaneous bilinguals, three successive bilinguals (Swedish children acquiring L2 French at primary school) and two monolinguals. In her
data, VOT patterns in consecutive bilinguals show cross-linguistic influences: VOT in L2 French in initial stages is similar to the speakers’ VOT in Swedish, but after 19 months of exposure, consecutive bilingual children produce similar VOT to simultaneous bilinguals.

While the first three studies report bi-directional cross-linguistic influences in childhood, Chapter 5 focuses on uni-directional cross-linguistic interactions in adulthood. Kupisch & Lleó compare VOT values in simultaneous adult Italian-German bilinguals who grew up in Italy (where German is the minority language) to German bilinguals who grew up in Germany (where Italian is the minority language). German has long lags for voiceless stops, but Italian does not. The authors report that uni-directional influences are activated from the stronger language to the weaker: long lags in German produced by bilinguals living in Italy are shorter than the ones produced by monolinguals. Conversely, short lags in Italian are longer when produced by bilinguals living in Germany than by monolinguals. The study also shows that, whenever bi-directional cross-linguistic influences are observed (influence of the non-dominant language on the dominant one), they concern long lags.

The three following studies deal with the validation of several postulates of the Speech Learning Model (SLM; Flege, 1995) and the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM; Best, 1995). In Chapter 6, Yavaş examines the production of laterals by adult sequential Spanish-English bilinguals. The study shows that bilinguals do not always produce dark laterals in a native-like manner despite their early age of acquisition. In fact, dark laterals in L2 American English are better acquired in coda positions after back vowels than in onset positions before front vowels. Such results support the postulate that dissimilar sounds (i.e., dark vowels in coda positions after back vowels) are easier to learn, in compliance with Flege (1995).

Garibaldi and Bohn in Chapter 7 engage in the validation of the SLM model, but examine some postulates of the PAM-L2 model (Best & Tyler, 2007) as well. This contribution focuses on the production and perception of the vowels /i, u, y/ in Danish by very experienced Spanish and English speakers of Danish. The authors show that Spanish speakers are in general able to produce and perceive /y/ like native Danish speakers. The authors argue that the Danish vowel /y/ is dissimilar or uncategorized in their Spanish L1 vocalic space, and therefore easier to learn. However, in the case of English speakers, the vowel /y/ is often assimilated to the English vowel /u/ because of their acoustic similarities. The authors show that similar sounds are more difficult to acquire than dissimilar ones.

Kartushina, in Chapter 8, focuses on how French learners acquire the Danish vowel /ɔ/ and evaluates the effects of training sessions (L2 experience) during the early stages of learning. The author provides acoustic evidence showing that the French vowel /o/ and the Danish vowel /ɔ/ are acoustically similar, so
that, unsurprisingly, phonetic transfer from L1 to L2 can be observed in the data. Interestingly, the author shows that training sessions in L2 have an effect on the production of L1 vowels. This fact suggests that early learners may experience their native categories drift toward similar L2 sounds in early stages of acquisition. Such results are in line with bi-directional cross-linguistic effects reported in the previous chapters.

Chapters 9 to 11 focus more closely on some phonological aspects in L2 learners in different learning contexts. In Chapter 9, Carlisle tests the Sonority Cycle (Clements, 1990) in the speech of Brazilian learners of L2 English in light of the markedness hierarchy. The study reports the production of sc(C) onset sequences in L2 English by Brazilian learners whose L1 does not allow word-initial sc(C) onsets. The results of the production experiment confirm that protheses before these sequences are more frequent after consonants than vowels. The final analysis presents interesting arguments on how the influence of syllable universals may be observed during the SLA process.

In Chapter 10, John and Cardoso look at the acquisition of /p, k/ stops in L2 English by Brazilian Portuguese speakers. In Brazilian Portuguese, these consonants are not allowed in word-medial coda (doctor) and word-final position (magic). L1-Portuguese learners tend to employ an i-epenthesis process when they produce these English words (i.e. do[ki]ter, magi[ki]). The L2 English data show that learners acquire /p, k/ differently in these two positions. The authors analyze carefully the syllabic status of word-final clusters from a phonological point of view in English, and conclude that in word-medial coda these stops are analyzed as codas, but in word-final positions they are seen as onsets of empty nuclei rather than codas. The use of L2 data is interestingly analyzed by the authors and clarifies some aspects of the phonological theory of the syllable.

Duarte Garcia and Guzzo in Chapter 11 deal with the acquisition of English stress by Québec francophones in the French-English contact context. Pursuing the same hypothesis as in Chapter 2, the authors try to clarify to what extent Canadian French speakers learn the phonological and phonetic parameters of stress in L2 English in adulthood. Similarly to European French, Canadian French does not have word-level stress, nor word-internal constituency. The results of L2 English data, however, suggest that Canadian French speakers are able to acquire feet and word stress in L2 English, even if their phonetic implementations are not the same as those produced by native speakers.

In several studies, it has been argued that linguistic factors such as L1 transfer are not enough to explain why certain L2 learners or bilinguals perform more accurately than others. In this context, Chapters 12 and 13 deal with extra-linguistic factors that could affect the success of L2 pronunciation. In particular, in Chapter 12, Baker Smemoe focuses on the age of acquisition (AoA) effects on
the production and perception of L2 English vowels by Spanish speakers in the United States. The goal is to analyze the correlations between social, experiential, and cognitive factors, and L2 accuracy of speech pronunciation. The study shows that AoA is a good predictor of L2 pronunciation accuracy. However, a more complex picture emerges when correlations are computed with late vs. early learners separately. It appears that pronunciation abilities of early learners (AoA before 14) are more affected by cognitive factors, whereas the performance of late learners (AoA after 14) is influenced by social variables (social network circles in the L2 and cultural identification).

In Chapter 13, Silveira and Gonçalves explore different hypotheses that could explain the pronunciation of L2 English word-final nasals /m/ and /n/. In particular, they investigate how orthography influences L2 pronunciation. Brazilian speakers have a tendency to vocalize L2 nasals (replacing the consonant by a nasal vowel) or to produce an epenthetic i-vowel. In their experiment, the participants produced two types of words: words ending with a nasal such as green, and words ending with a nasal followed by a silent e-grapheme such as time. Again, they show that different levels of L2 proficiency are a good predictor of the accuracy of pronunciation. They also show that i-vowel insertions are more common in correspondence of silent e-graphemes, thereby showing an effect of orthography.

The last chapter highlights the importance of social factors in bilingual phonological systems. Bullock and Olson address the effect of language mode and education level on the production of different phonetic patterns (VOT values and labial fricative [v]) in the speech of Spanish-English bilinguals. They argue that the phonetic variation across bilinguals could be related to social factors, an issue that has not been studied with consistency. The authors report that bilinguals produce different VOT values according to the mono- or bilingual audience. Moreover Spanish-English bilinguals produce the labial fricative /v/ in Spanish instead of the bilabial one showing the transfer from English to Spanish. However, better educated speakers produce more [v] sounds. They conclude that such social factors must be taken into consideration in order to explain the variation observed in bilinguals’ speech.

Researchers in the fields of second language acquisition, phonetics, phonology, prosody, psycholinguistics and didactics will benefit from reading this book. The articles address the validation of different hypotheses on how bilinguals (children or adults) and L2 learners develop or acquire two different phonological/phonetic systems. The range of topics addressed in the volume is rich; the studies concern different phonological aspects, rhythmic and metrical patterns, segmental phenomena, and perception abilities. The wide range of experimental methods used in the studies is an asset for this edited volume. Many of the findings in Romance-German bilinguals’ speech support some of the postulates in models of
L2 phonological acquisition. However, many studies also raise new hypotheses that could explain the full or partial acquisition of native-like patterns. There is no doubt that this book is an important contribution to the research on bilingualism and the acquisition of L2 phonology.

References


