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MISSISSAUGA

The Department of Language Studies Speaker Series

The Department of Language Studies invites you to join us for the first talk in this academic year's Speaker Series on:

Thursday, October 2nd, 2014 at 11 AM at DV 2094D
(University of Toronto Mississauga, Davis Building)

Tanja Kupisch received her PhD from the Research Centre of Multilingualism in Hamburg, and worked as a post-doc researcher and professor at the Universities of Calgary, McGill, Hamburg and Lund. She is now professor of Romance Linguistics at the Department of General Linguistics in Konstanz (Germany). Her research is concerned with child and adult bilingualism, L2 acquisition, L3 acquisition and bilingual acquisition, focusing on morphosyntax and phonology.

ABSTRACT

Phonological transfer in heritage speakers acquiring L3 English

The present study looks into the relative role of proficiency and age of onset for global foreign accent in L3 English in heritage speakers. Global accent is understood as a combination of segmental and suprasegmental features that are perceived to be foreign by native speakers of a language. This study investigates 20 adult heritage speakers of Turkish in Germany. These speakers had been exposed to Turkish from birth, while German has been acquired either as a second L1 or an early L2. English was acquired as a foreign language at school. Three separate accent rating studies were carried out. In the first and second experiment, the HSs were rated by native speakers of German when speaking German, and by native speakers of Turkish when speaking Turkish. Ratings were based on naturalistic speech samples of 10 seconds, presented in randomized order, and mixed with samples from monolinguals and late L2ers. Results show perceived phonological proficiency to be independent of AoO in German. The HSs' speech was deemed either (i) native in German but foreign in Turkish (Group G), or (ii) native in Turkish but foreign in German (Group T), or (iii) native in both languages (Group B). HSs were classified accordingly in the third experiment, where the HSs' English was judged. Fifteen seconds of speech from each HS were presented to native English teachers at German language schools, whose task was to judge foreign accent on a 7-point Likert scale, and to classify the speakers' accent as German, Turkish, English or "other". The third experiment on the HSs' English accent showed speech samples of Group B to be considered overall most native-like, and group T most foreign-sounding. Moreover, samples of Group G tended to be classified as German-sounding, while categorizations for Group B were most heterogeneous. Group T was mostly classified as "other". Although all HSs attended German schools and were exposed to German-accented English, only some were identified as speakers of German, which provides reasons to question the role of input and excludes the possibility that transfer is systematically conditioned by typological proximity. Results generally indicate that L1 and L2 proficiency are crucial for phonological transfer into L3.