
Abstract

An increasing number of studies has already investigated the phonetic first language attrition and cross-linguistic influence in the L1 speech of late bilinguals. Nevertheless, none of these studies has yet to examine the phonetic first language attrition and cross-linguistic influence in the L1 speech of late Czech-French bilinguals, although Czech and French languages represent interesting phonetic differences both at segmental and suprasegmental level. This thesis aims to fill this gap. Based on the models of L2 speech production and perception, results of studies on phonetic cross-linguistic influence and phonetic differences between Czech and French language, the hypothesis of this thesis predicts that phonetic cross-linguistic influence will occur in L1 speech of late Czech-French bilinguals. This hypothesis is tested in two studies by comparing the L1 speech production in a reading aloud task and semi-spontaneous speech of late Czech-French bilinguals with that of Czech monolinguals. The first study consists of a perception experiment that investigated if the L1 speech of 14 late Czech-French bilinguals may be perceived as less typically Czech sounding compared to that of 11 Czech monolinguals by Czech monolingual listeners. The second study is composed of acoustic analyses comparing the acoustic proprieties of 17 late Czech-French bilinguals' vowels, /r/, /fi/, /x/ with those of 17 Czech monolinguals. The properties of non-conclusive intonation patterns and the use of final schwa is also compared. Following this, the relationship between phonetic cross-linguistic influence found in these two studies, the frequency of use of Czech by the bilinguals, their length of residence in France, proficiency in French and their preferences for either Czech or French country culture and language is analysed. The tested hypothesis was predominantly confirmed. The results of the perception experiment showed that the bilinguals' semi-spontaneous speech was perceived as significantly less typically Czech sounding compared to that of the monolinguals by the Czech monolinguals listeners. The results of the acoustic analyses suggest that phonetic cross-linguistic influence occurred in spectral characteristics of several of the bilinguals' vowels, the spectral characteristics of their /r/, /fi/ and /x/, the temporal characteristics of their /r/ and in their non-conclusive intonation patterns as well as in their use of final schwa. The results also showed that the phonetic cross-linguistic influence examined by the acoustic analyses, in general, occurred more in the bilinguals' semi-spontaneous speech than in their production in the reading aloud task. Further, the phonetic cross-linguistic influence found in /fi/ in semi-spontaneous speech and in /x/ in the reading aloud task was significantly linked to the proficiency in French of the late bilinguals. Interestingly, a certain number of our results suggests that the dissimilation and assimilation effects may coexist in the same L1 phoneme of a late bilingual, a consideration which is not included in the models of L2 speech production and perception. Therefore, this thesis presents a proposal of a three-stage development of L2 phoneme classified in the L1 category.
