

Task effects in the production of English sentence-types by native Inuktitut speakers

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Research on early and late bilinguals' intonation has revealed differences with monolinguals not only in the realization of pitch accents (PA) and boundary tones, but also in how these realizations vary across tasks. Particularly, cross-linguistic influence (CLI) has been shown to be greater in tasks that require access to contextual meaning when compared to elicited imitation (Ortega-Llebaria & Colantoni, 2013). Thus, we explore here the role of CLI and task choice in the production of English sentence types (statements (Ss), inverted interrogatives (AQs) and non-inverted interrogatives (DQs)) by sequential Inuktitut-English bilinguals. This language pairing is particularly interesting because in Inuktitut, intonation is restricted to phrasing; i.e., boundary tones are mapped to finality vs. continuity in turn-taking (Fortescue, 1984; Shokeir, 2009). While a rising contour may also be used in questions, the distinction between statements and questions is morphologically marked (e.g., *ilisuisi* 'teacher' vs. *ilisuisiuvit* 'are you the teacher'; see Spalding, 1969). In English, although AQs are syntactically marked, the difference between Ss and DQs is purely prosodic. Thus, we make two general predictions: (1) bilinguals will resemble controls more closely in a controlled than in a semi-spontaneous task; (2) bilinguals will use syntax more reliably than prosody to mark sentence type, especially in the semi-spontaneous task.

Thirteen advanced L1 Inuktitut-L2 English speakers and 15 controls performed two production tasks. Task 1 was a delayed repetition task involving 10 stimuli per sentence type plus 30 distractors. In Task 2, a semi-spontaneous task, participants listened to a short story and had to produce a sentence appropriate to the context (18 stimuli, six per sentence type). Utterances were transcribed and coded for target vs. non-target-like realizations. Acoustic measurements included the F0 maximum, minimum and the F0 change associated with the first PA and the nuclear contour (NC) – (i.e., nuclear accent plus final boundary tone). Preliminary results revealed that bilinguals resembled controls in the selection of sentence types in Task 2, albeit having a higher proportion of non-target-like realizations (14% vs. 1%). Overall, the largest difference between groups was in their use of pitch, with Inuktitut-English bilinguals showing a more restricted use of pitch in the realizations of PAs and NCs. Results of two conditional inference tree models (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012), with F0 change in the PA and NC as the dependent variables, showed that: (i) groups differed in the mean F0 change in the first PA (primary division); task differences were only significant for the control group and sentence type was not selected as a significant predictor; (ii) as concerns the F0 change over the NC, after the expected effect of sentence type (primary division between statements vs. questions), the second division was obtained for language (English vs. Inuktitut); (iii) task type was a significant predictor; for both groups the F0 change was larger in Task 1 than in Task 2. These results revealed interesting patterns of cross-linguistic variation and its interaction with task type. Although L1 Inuktitut speakers showed a restricted use of pitch in their realization of the first PA, a significantly larger F0 excursion in the realization of the NC was observed in the imitation task when compared to the semi-spontaneous task, thus approaching more closely the realization observed in the control group. This suggests that, as expected from CLI, L1 Inuktitut speakers are particularly attuned to tonal changes in utterance-final position.

Works Cited:

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