



Helping L2 Learners Improve their Understanding of Different Accents

Aimée Johansen

► To cite this version:

Aimée Johansen. Helping L2 Learners Improve their Understanding of Different Accents. 2e Journées du Réseau Français d'Acquisition des Langues Secondes (ReAL2) - Dimension sonore et acquisition des L2, Dec 2018, Nantes, France. 2018. [hal-01978626](https://hal.science/hal-01978626)

HAL Id: hal-01978626

<https://hal.science/hal-01978626v1>

Submitted on 19 Mar 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



HAL Authorization



IMT Atlantique
Bretagne-Pays de la Loire
École Mines-Télécom

Helping L2 Learners Improve their Understanding of Different Accents

An in-class experiment adapting methods used in laboratory settings

Related research

- ▶ **Unfamiliarity** – L2 listeners typically find it difficult to understand speakers with an unfamiliar, often non-standard accent (Major et al. 2005, Ockey et al. 2016, inter alia)
- ▶ **Intelligibility vs. comprehensibility** – Speech can be rated highly for intelligibility but low for comprehensibility. (Derwing & Munro 1997)
 - **Intelligibility** – Whether an utterance can be understood
 - **Comprehensibility** – The amount of perceptual and cognitive effort required to understand an utterance
- ▶ **Accent intelligibility training** – Intelligibility can be improved through training for L1 listeners
 - ESL teachers acquire this skill naturally (Gass & Veronis 1984)
 - L1 listeners can be trained in a lab setting (Floccia et al. 2009 inter alia)
- ▶ **Kasperek (2008)** – Sentence-level training showed better results for L1 listeners of an unfamiliar accent than word-level training.

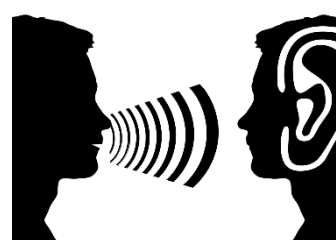
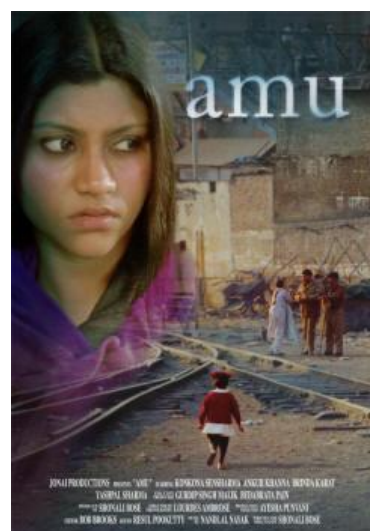


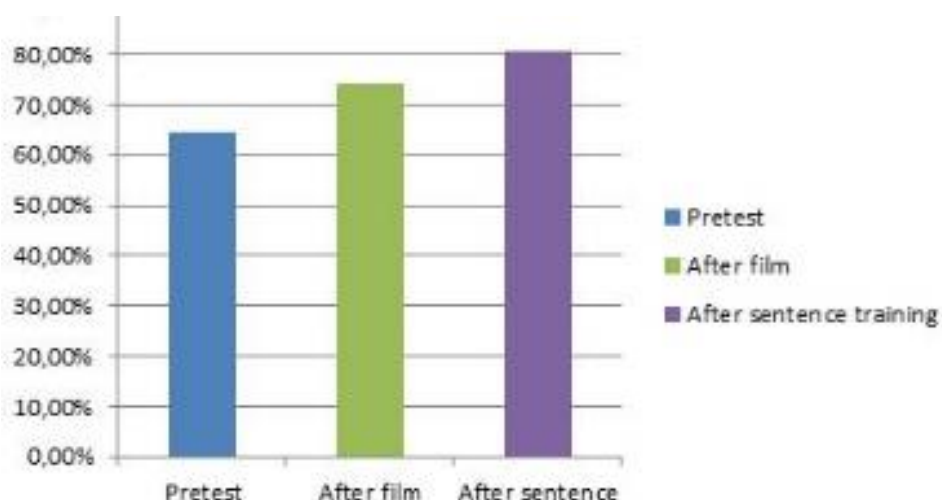
Image: pixabay.com (Creative Commons)

Experiment: Adaptation to an L2(+) classroom setting

- ▶ **Context** –
 - Half-semester C1 class on accents in English (16 hours).
 - Mix of L1 languages (French, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, German). Included in study: eight men, three women.
- ▶ **Two-phase experiment** –
 - 1) Watching a film mostly in Hindi-speaking Indian accent (*Amu*)
 - 2) Two 30-minute transcription sessions with sentences borrowed from film



Results



Percentage of correctly transcribed syllables in a recording of a speaker with the accent being studied.

Statistical significance ($p=0.0199$) between Pretest and after both film and sentence training. (No statistical significance for each step individually.)

Discussion and Future Work

- ▶ Working with full sentences seems to help **improve intelligibility** for L2(+) students in classroom setting
- ▶ **Challenges**: Maintaining student interest; similar level of difficulty in tests
- ▶ **Future work**: Testing sentence-level training before watching film
 - Removing influence of film in testing for significance
 - “Rewarding” students with film

References

- DERWING, T.M., & MUNRO, M.J. (1997). Accent, intelligibility, and comprehensibility: Evidence from four L1s. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, 1-16.
- FLOCCIA, C., BUTLER, J., GOSLIN, J., & ELLIS, L. (2009). Regional and foreign accent processing in English: Can listeners adapt? *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 38, 379-412.
- GASS, S., & VARONIS, E. (1984). The effect of familiarity on the comprehensibility of non-native speech. *Language Learning* 34(1), 65-89.
- KASPAREK, D.J. (2008). *Improving the Perception of Foreign-Accented Speech through Training: A Comparison of Word and Sentence Materials* (Unpublished Masters thesis). University of Kansas, Lawrence.
- MAJOR, R.C., FITZMAURICE, S.M., BUNTA, F., & BALASUBRAMANIAN, C. (2005). Testing the effects of regional, ethnic, and international dialects of English on listening comprehension. *Language Learning* 55(1), 37-69.
- OCKEY, G.J., PAPAGEORGIOU, S., & FRENCH, R. (2016). Effects of strength of accent on an L2 interactive lecture listening comprehension test. *The International Journal of Listening* 30, 84-98.

Helping L2 Learners Improve their Understanding of Different Accents

Author

Aimee Johansen

aimee.johansen@imt-atlantique.fr

Réal 2
Nantes
October 6-7, 2018