Towards a Model of Second Language Word Production and Recognition in Mandarin

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Abstract

The production and recognition of Mandarin words by Cantonese speakers are influenced by the pronunciation correspondences between Cantonese and Mandarin in all sublexical levels (i.e., onset, rime and tone). A three-route second language word production and recognition model is proposed using these pronunciation correspondences. A concept route links the concept and the L2 Mandarin phonological representation directly, while a lexical route links the concept and the L2 Mandarin phonological representation through the L1 Cantonese phonological representation. A sublexical route activates the concept and/or the L2 Mandarin phonological representation through the mediation of L1 Cantonese phonological and sublexical representation using Cantonese-Mandarin pronunciation correspondences. Beginning learners of Cantonese mainly use the sublexical route in L2 Mandarin word production and recognition. Advanced learners gradually shift from the sublexical to lexical/concept route in producing Mandarin words while both lexical/conceptual and sublexical routes are still in active use to generate possible word candidates in L2 Mandarin word recognition. Evidence for the proposed model is drawn from a Mandarin word production task, a Mandarin disyllabic word transcription task, a Mandarin pinyin transcription task, and a character-sound matching task. Further testing of the model in the neurolinguistics and computational domain are also proposed.