

## **Is seeing believing? The influence of L1 written forms on L2 perception and production.**

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Recent research has demonstrated that print-to-sound L2 decoding occurs at a deeper level than the individual grapheme. For example, while the spelling body <ou> is pronounced consistently with the /u/ vowel by native French speakers, English learners of French often vary their pronunciation when reading aloud French words containing the cluster <ou> due to the inconsistent pronunciation of <ou> in their native language English (e.g. *four*, *route*) (Woore, 2014).

The current study builds on recent developments in the field which suggest that such L1 print-to-sound mappings not only affect reading aloud in the L2 but also impact on *spontaneous production* of the foreign language (Woore, 2016; Young-Scholten & Langer, 2015) as well as influencing learners' *perception* of the L2 (Escudero & Wanrooij, 2010). Furthermore, this research considers to what extent naturalistic exposure to the L2 can aid learners in implicitly overcoming this type of L1 transfer.

Data were drawn from 20 English university students learning L2 French (10 pre-year abroad & 10 post-year abroad in France) and 10 native French speakers (as a control). All participants undertook the experiment across both perceptual and production trials. These trials were differentiated by an 'easy' and a 'hard' condition. In the easy condition, participants heard a word in French, e.g. /bɔl/, and chose between two graphical representations e.g. *bol* /bɔl/ vs. *boule* /bul/. Here, there was no competing grapheme-phoneme mapping from their native language. In contrast, for the hard condition there was competition: when hearing /kɔʁ/, the choice between *corps* /kɔʁ/ and *cours* /kɔʁ/ is more difficult – the latter option contains the <our> cluster which can correspond to the English CAUGHT vowel (e.g. *your*, *four*), thus the correct option *corps* is less likely to be chosen. Participants were also recorded producing words of both 'easy' and 'hard' condition types in speech where the written form was not present at the time of production. Required French words were elicited through L1 to L2 oral translation of carefully chosen phrases. The possibility of L1 priming is acknowledged and discussed.

Significant results were found for the effect of L1 decoding on production, where /u/ was realised with a lower articulation in French <our> words (corresponding to a higher first formant in the sound wave), and perception, where larger error rates were observed for the hard condition. More broadly, this research supports previous work (e.g. Escudero and Wanrooij, 2010) indicating that phonological information is not stored independently of orthographic forms in our mental representation of language. Indeed, results suggest that this process occurs at a sublexical level and that access to L2 phonology is not devoid of L1 decoding strategies.

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Woore, R. (2014). Beginner learners' progress in decoding L2 French: Transfer effects in typologically similar L1-L2 writing systems. *Writing Systems Research* 6(2), pp. 167–189.

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