

L1 and L2 Production of Non-Lexical Hesitation Particles in German and English Native Speakers



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Introduction

- Hesitation vowel (*uh/um*) in English central or the back vowel [ʌ] [1, 2], in German central or the front vowel [ɛ] [3]
- Are hesitation vowels of English and German different?
 - If yes, in which parameters, i.e. formants (F1, F2)?
- Do L2-learners adapt the vowel quality?
 - Does the language competence have an impact?

Method

- Spontaneous speech of 24 subjects
 - 12 native German speakers
 - 12 native English speakers
 - L2 competence in English/German
- Measurement of formants (F1, F2)
- Statistical analyses (t-test, ANOVA)

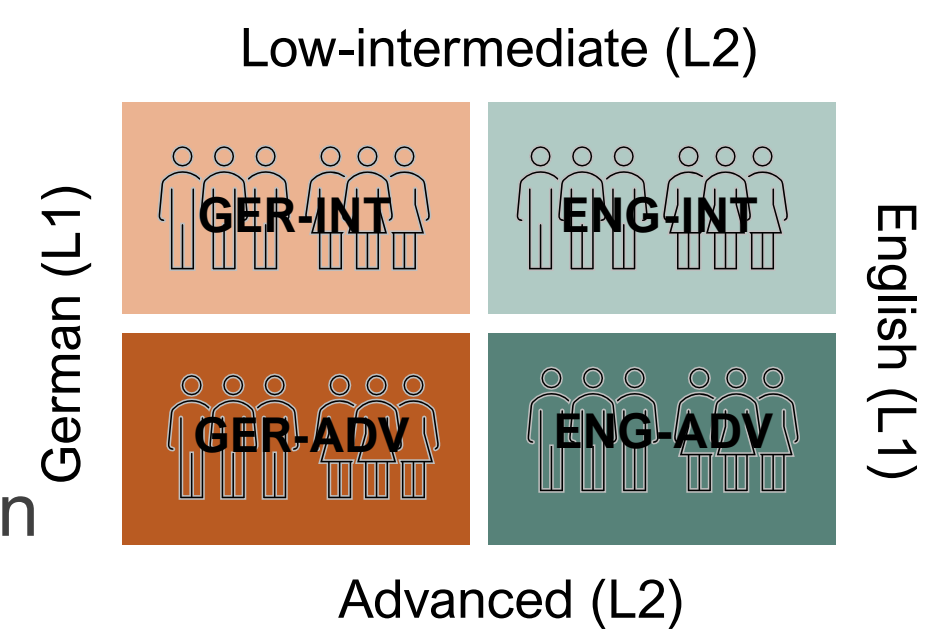


Fig. 1: Schematic representation of subject groups

Results



Discussion

- Vowels in L1 hesitation particles show significant effects for F1 but **not** for F2 (= central vowel in ENG & GER)
- Intermediate learners show larger differences in F1 than advanced learners (the effect is larger in spoken GER)
- Advanced learners seem to be able to adapt the hesitation vowel of their L2 in a native-like fashion
- Long exposure to L2 may influence L1 hesitations

Future work

- Comparison with monolingual speakers
- Speaker normalisation using point vowels
- Individual speaker performance
 - Is the vowel quality language- and/or speaker-specific?
- Expansion to other languages and language families

References

- [1] Clark, H. H. & Fox-Tree, J. E. (2002). Using uh and um in spontaneous speech. *Cognition* 84.1, 73-111.
 [2] Lickley, R. J. (2015). Fluency and Disfluency. In M. Redford (Ed.), *The Handbook of Speech Production*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
 [3] Belz, M., Sauer, S., Lüdeling, A. & Mooshammer, C. (2017). Fluently disfluent? Pauses and repairs of advanced learners and native speakers of German. *International Journal of Learner Corpus Research*, 3(2), 118-148.

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