

Deconstructing Heritage Language Dominance: Effects of Proficiency, Use, and Input on Heritage Speakers' Production of the Spanish Alveolar Tap

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Abstract

This study considers language dominance as a composite of proficiency, use, and input, and examines how these constructs in Spanish influence heritage speakers' production of Spanish alveolar taps. Two aspects of Spanish tap production were examined: lingual constriction rates and the degree of lingual constriction. Multiple measures associated with Spanish proficiency, use, and input were reduced to a smaller number of dimensions using principal component analysis, and the effects of the components on heritage speakers' tap production were analyzed using mixed effects modeling. The overall findings suggest that dominance in Spanish may not have an effect on the degree of lingual constriction of heritage speakers' taps, but it does have an effect on how frequently heritage speakers produce taps with lingual constriction. Spanish use and input were found to be the main contributors to heritage speakers' target-like production of taps.

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Introduction

Bilingual Language Dominance

The effect of language dominance on bilinguals' production of L1 and/or L2 speech sounds has been attested in a large body of research. Numerous studies have demonstrated that balanced bilinguals are able to distinguish the phonemic contrasts in their L1 and L2, while bilinguals who are more dominant in one language over the other tend to show transfer from the stronger to the weaker language (Amengual & Chamorro, 2015; Bosch & Ramon-Casas, 2011; de la Fuente Iglesias & Pérez Castillejo, 2019; Piccinini & Arvaniti, 2018). However, there are also studies that did not find a clear effect of language dominance on bilinguals' L1 and/or L2 speech production (Tomé Lourido & Evens, 2018).

The term "language dominance" has often been used either without a clear definition (or defined in inconsistent ways), and different measures have been