Review of "An exploratory study of voicing-related differences in vowel duration as

compensatory temporal adjustment in Italian and Polish"

Overall Evaluation

The paper presents an acoustic study of the "voicing effect" in Italian and Polish. The author seeks evidence to bear on the question of where the "voicing effect" comes from. The results, particularly those of release-to-release interval in Figure 5, appear to indicate that the so-called effect is in fact a case of compensation. Overall, this is an excellent paper and can be published with only ***MINOR REVISIONS***. The methodology is solid and transparently described, save for one issue to be mentioned below. I have a few comments concerning the implications of the paper with respect to phonological aspects of laryngeal contrasts and prosodic structure. The author is invited to consider these issues, which may help in strengthening the theoretical background and discussion sections.

General comments

Page 6, line 171 regarding Polish as a voicing language: Polish VOTs for /ptk/ are longish in many cases, and for some speakers might be described as semi-aspirated. I've witnessed this many times myself. For one relatively recent published description, see e.g. Waniek-Klimczak (2011). I think the values in Keating's PhD are also a bit longer then true short-lag.

Page 7, lines 213-215. Since the recording locations were Italy and Manchester, I suppose the Polish participants were recorded in the UK? If so, how long have they been in the UK? The >6 month column is quite vague. From the table in the appendix, it appears as though all but two of the Polish speakers have lived abroad (i.e. have been out of the country for more than 6 months), and all of them have some knowledge of English. Since English has probably the most robust 'voicing effect' around, and it seems that the Polish participants are quite proficient in English, with regard to the voicing effect I think it is difficult to claim that the sample of Polish participants for this study is representative. There needs to be more information about the participants. How often do they use English/Polish? What is their education level? Do they use English in their professional lives? What about the language in which the recording sessions were conducted? Unless they were conducted in Polish (i.e. with a native Polish speaker giving instructions in Polish to the participants), I think it's almost certainly the case that these speakers' L1 Polish has been affected by English. I don't think this disqualifies the paper. It's just that the possibility of L2 influence on L1 needs to be acknowledged in the text, as well as in the discussion. For information on the effects of language mode with bilingual participants, see Grosjean (2004). If the recording sessions were indeed carried out entirely in Italian and Polish, Antoniou et al. (2010) is a study that may be used to argue that the data in the paper may indeed be representative of the L1s. For other work on L2-induced effects on L1 pronunciation, see Chang (2012, in press), Schwartz et al. (2015a, 2015b), Herd et al. (2015).

Phonological comments

Page 10, line 289. Isn't it in an interesting question why Italian has lenition but Polish doesn't? See comments below.

Page 10, lines 291-298. This is interesting, and completely goes against the predictions of Laryngeal Realism (stated explicitly I believe by Beckman et al. 2013), that intervocalic voicing should be absent from voice languages, since it would mean "adding" a feature [voice] in a weak prosodic position. Perhaps there is no feature [voice]? See Schwartz & Arndt (2018) for an account of the phonology of voicing languages in which there is no feature [voice], and some perceptual evidence in favor of that account.

Pages 20-21. It seems to me that the results of these studies suggest that Italian and Polish behave somewhat differently with regard to the voicing effect. The mean differences are greater in Italian than they are in Polish (16 ms vs. 7.5 ms as stated in 4.1). Do you think it is indeed the case that Polish and Italian differ systematically? If the difference between the languages is in fact systemic, I think phonology needs to have something to say about it. For discussion of this issue, particularly with regard to Polish, see Schwartz (2016). Essentially the claim in that paper is that Polish does not really have trochees (see Newlin-Lukowicz 2012 for phonetic evidence that is compatible with this claim). For Schwartz, true trochees show a recursive structure, which puts the second C in a CVCV in an inherently weaker position. Perhaps language-specific differences between Polish and Italian are due to prosodic differences in the structure of CVCV sequences? This might explain the earlier comment about why Italian shows lenition but Polish doesn’t?

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