Different language norms for different genders: L1 attrition and L2 acquisition in German-English late consecutive bilinguals as a function of gender

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Within languages, some aspects of intonation carry social meaning, which are indexed differently across languages (Britain, 1992; Ohara, 1999; Van Bezooijen, 1995). However, very little is known about how bilinguals express social meaning in their different languages through intonation. For example, how do bilinguals produce gendered languagespecific norms within their various languages?

The present research investigated this question through an analysis of pitch level and span in German L1–English L2 late bilinguals (*n*=10). Previous research suggests that on average German men have a higher pitch level than English men (Scherer, 1974), whilst German women have a lower pitch level than English women (Mennen, Schaeffler, & Docherty, 2012). Moreover, research suggests that pitch span is narrower in German women than in English women, which is not necessarily the case for German and English men (Mennen et al., 2012).

It was asked whether male German L1 bilinguals acquired the *lower* pitch level, and female German L1 bilinguals the *higher* pitch level, characteristic of English L2. Additionally, it examined whether the male German L1 bilinguals acquired the narrower span, and the female German L1 bilinguals the wider span, characteristic of English L2. As these German L1 – English L2 bilinguals had been living in an English environment for an average of 40 years, it was also investigated whether the acquisition of potentially gendered language specific norms in English might have impacted their German L1.

The results from the monolinguals (*n*=20) indicated that pitch level was lower and pitch span narrower for the German females than for the English females; and that pitch level was higher and pitch span wider for the German males than the English males. As expected under the long-term influence of English, the pitch level of the bilingual females was higher in both their German and English, than the German monolingual females; however, the pitch level of the bilingual males *also* increased in both German and English. Similarly, the pitch span of the bilingual females was wider in both German and English than the German monolinguals, as expected; however, the pitch span of the bilingual males *also* widened in both German and English. Although these preliminary results deserve further analysis, their initial interpretation is that, if pitch range is more gendered in English than in German, the surprising results on the part of the German bilingual males may indicate that they had potentially acquired the more marked female language specific normsof English.

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