

**Desarrollo fonético-fonológico y dificultades del desarrollo - Phonetic and phonological  
development and development difficulties- Desenvolupament fonètic i fonològic i  
dificultats del desenvolupament**

**The acquisition of Spanish and English /l/ by Spanish heritage speakers and L2 learners**

Mark Amengual

Department of Languages & Applied Linguistics; University of California, Santa Cruz, USA.

[amengual@ucsc.edu](mailto:amengual@ucsc.edu)

This study aims to bridge the divide between the heritage language and second language acquisition literatures with regard to the investigation of Spanish-English bilinguals' acoustic realization of /l/ in English and Spanish. Spanish /l/ is typically described as "clear", in that it is perceived as more consonantal in quality, whereas American English /l/ is characterized as being "dark", and perceived as more vowel-like in quality (Barlow, 2014; Whitley, 2002). These laterals manifest acoustically via differing resonant frequencies: clear /l/ has a high F2 value and a large difference between F2 and F1 whereas dark /l/ is associated with lower F2 values and a smaller F2-F1 difference (Barlow, 2014). Forty heritage Spanish and twenty L2 Spanish speakers from northern California (USA) participated in a reading-aloud task. Each participant produced 320 laterals in word-initial and word-final position (160 Spanish and 160 in English) in three different sessions to elicit monolingual and bilingual modes (Grosjean, 2001): a Spanish session, English session, and a mixed Spanish/English session. The results show that language dominance influences these bilinguals' F2 range in their lateral production (i.e., either clear or dark). The acoustic analyses also reveal phonetic convergence as a result of language mode: in the bilingual session Spanish-dominant and English-dominant heritage speakers produced laterals in Spanish and English that displayed intermediate F2 values in comparison to their productions in the monolingual English and Spanish sessions. These results provide evidence of language dominance effects on the acoustic realization of laterals in Spanish and English, and of the impact of language mode on the phonetic abilities of early and late bilinguals. These findings add to our understanding of the sources of cross-language phonological influence in heritage and L2 pronunciation by investigating a heterogeneous and understudied bilingual population.

### References

- Barlow, J.A. (2014). Age of acquisition and allophony in Spanish-English bilinguals. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1-14
- Boersma, P. (2001). Praat, a system for doing phonetics by computer. *Glott International*, 5(9/10), 341-345.
- Grosjean, F. (2001). The bilingual's language modes. In J. L. Nicol (Ed.), *One mind, two languages: Bilingual language processing*. (pp. 1-22). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Whitley, M.S. (2002). *Spanish/English Contrasts*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.