

## Vowel insertion in the Italian adaptation of English loanwords

The present study tackles loanword adaptation and the influence that input from the source language can have on the production of said loanwords. English loanwords ending with consonants are adapted into Italian with the optional insertion of a schwa-like vocalic element at the end of the word (Repetti 2012). Previous studies state that linguistic factors, such as voicing, intonation (Grice et al. 2015), and stress (Broniś 2016) influence the insertion of these vocalic elements. Inter-speaker variation has been noticed as well, although its conditions are still something unexplored.

It has already been established by the literature that the first and second language of a speaker interact (Flege 2007; Flege et al 2003) and that knowledge of the L2 has some effect on how loanwords are adapted (Kang & Schertz 2017; Kwon 2017; Nomura & Ishikawa 2018). Moreover, stochastic models of speech processing theorize that speech categories are formed and modified thanks to repeated input. The main aim of this research is then to establish whether the production of vowel insertion in Italian is influenced by the amount of native English input received through both passive and active interaction. This was tested by estimating the amount of input received by the participants of the study and correlating it with the amount of vocalic elements inserted in word-final position. 21 native speakers of Italian with different level of English proficiency participated in the experiment. In the phonetic task, they were asked to produce singular/plural pairs of the English loanwords (ending with a consonant) appearing in the screen. The amount of input received in native English was calculated in hours through adding any period of time spent in English-speaking countries, and average exposure to TV shows and movies in English.

Results indicate that input shows a significant correlation to the amount of vocalic elements inserted (Figure 1). The odds of vocalic elements being produced decrease by 0.91 times every 100 hours of English native input received (95% confidence interval 0.83..0.99 times,  $Pr(>/z/) = 0.039$ ). As can be seen in Figure 2, proficiency does not have significant results (95% confidence interval 0.46..6.80 times,  $Pr(>/z/) = 0.39$ ). This means that the production of vocalic elements in word-final position decreases as the native English input received increases. This study therefore determines that the input received from English does influence vocalic insertion in the adaptation of loanwords in Italian, regardless of the speaker's English proficiency.

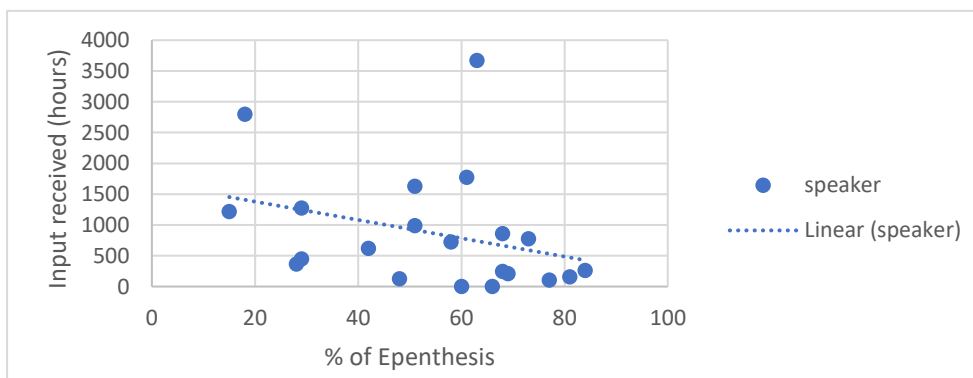


Figure 1. Distribution of speakers by input received and percentage of vocalic elements inserted.

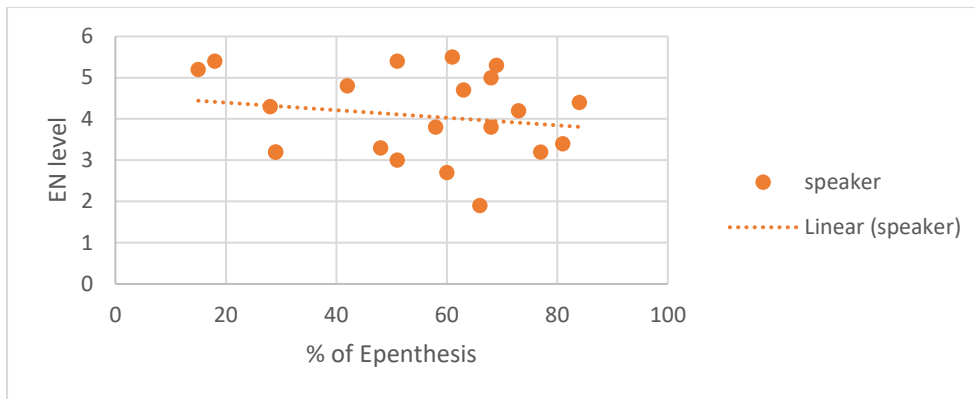


Figure 2. Distribution of speakers by English proficiency and percentage of vocalic elements inserted.

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