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# Prosody in Second Language Acquisition: French and Vietnamese

## Research Questions

### Direction French → Vietnamese

How do L1 speakers of Vietnamese reproduce French intonational features?

### Direction Vietnamese → French

How do L1 speakers of French reproduce Vietnamese tonal features?

## Background

### French

- No lexical tone
- One correlate of intonation is f<sub>0</sub>

### Vietnamese (Northern varieties)

- Each syllable gets assigned a lexical tone
- Six tones exist in non plosive-ending syllables, two in plosive-ending syllables (cf. Michaud 2004)
- One correlate of tone is f<sub>0</sub>

## Methods

### Direction French → Vietnamese

49 French stimulus lexemes

- 34 Monolingual speakers of Vietnamese
- 21 speakers with L1 Vietnamese, L2 French, French level A2-B1

### Direction Vietnamese → French

16 Vietnamese stimulus lexemes

- 10 L1 French speakers without knowledge of any lexical tone language

### Production experiments with three conditions

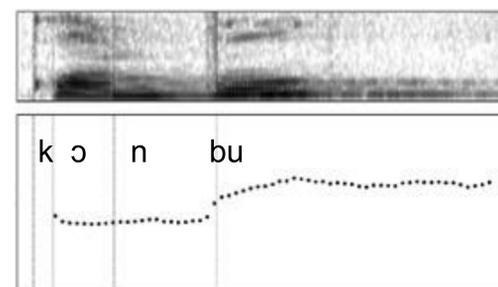
- 1: Repetition in isolation
- 2: Embedding in a carrier sentence of the L1
- 3: Writing down according to L1 orthography

## Results Direction French → Vietnamese

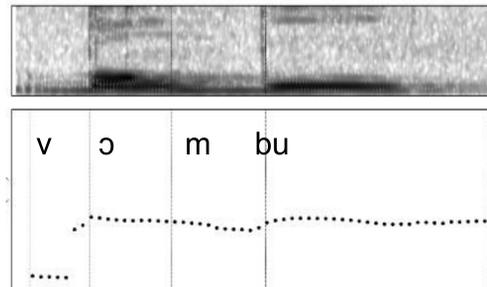
- Monolingual speakers of Vietnamese reproduce French f<sub>0</sub> movements faithful to the stimulus in the oral conditions and use tone diacritics which come closest to stimulus f<sub>0</sub> movements in the writing condition
- Vietnamese French learners abstract from perceived f<sub>0</sub>-movements and do not faithfully reproduce them
- Selected frequency distributions cf. Michaud, Nguyễn, & Scholvin, 2021

Oral responses for French stimulus *bambou* [bãbu] 'bamboo' with rising f<sub>0</sub>

Monolingual speaker of Vietnamese



Vietnamese French learner



## Discussion

- Speakers in their first learning stages perform badly with structures that are similar to their L1 but not the same
- In line with the PAM (Best 1995)
- Speakers of Vietnamese who have acquired French as an L2 perform very differently from the monolingual Vietnamese speakers

## Conclusion

- Speakers have difficulties with tonal and intonational features if they share a correlate
- Little knowledge of the L2 a makes a difference

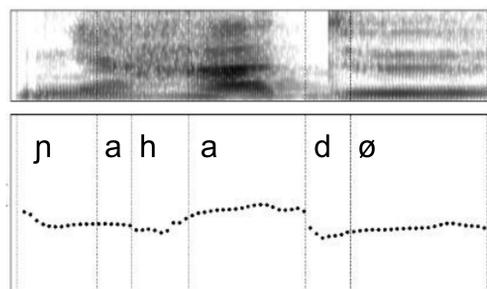
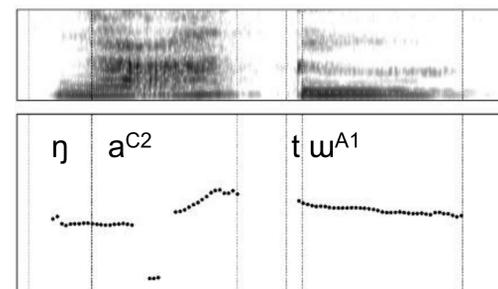
## Application to Language Teaching

- Intonational and tonal features should be focussed on in very early learning stages
- Application of our results in the pronunciation training App *Sylby*

## Results Direction Vietnamese → French

- Speakers of French have difficulties to reproduce Vietnamese tone
- Rising and falling movements of the tones B1 (sắc) and A2 (huyền) are frequently overridden by French intonational patterns in condition 2
- Features of complex tones like C2 (ngã) where laryngalization is an additional correlate of tone, have a higher chance to be preserved, sometimes on a segmental level

Vietnamese stimulus *ngã tư* 'crossroads' Response by L1 French speaker



## Selected References

Best, C. T. (1995). A direct-realist view of cross-language speech perception. In W. Strange (Ed.), *Speech perception and linguistic experience: Theoretical and methodological issues* (pp. 171–204). Timonium, MD: York Press.

Michaud, A. (2004). Final consonants and glottalization: new perspectives from Hanoi Vietnamese. *Phonetica, Karger*, 61(2–3), 119–146.

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Sylby – AI-powered pronunciation and language learning. <https://sylby.com> Accessed 19/09/21