The Acoustic Correlates of Stress-Shifting Suffixes in Native and Nonnative English: An Overview

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THE ACOUSTIC CORRELATES OF STRESS-SHIFTING SUFFIXES IN
NATIVE AND NONNATIVE ENGLISH: AN OVERVIEW

PAUL KEYWORTH

ABSTRACT
Although laboratory phonology techniques have been widely employed to discover the interplay between the acoustic correlates of English Lexical Stress (ELS) – fundamental frequency, duration, and intensity - studies on ELS in polysyllabic words are rare, and cross-linguistic acoustic studies in this area are even rarer. Consequently, the effects of language experience on L2 lexical stress acquisition are not clear. This investigation of adult Arabic (Saudi Arabian) and Mandarin (Mainland Chinese) speakers analyzes their ELS production in tokens with seven different stress-shifting suffixes; i.e., Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations to phonologists. Stress productions are then systematically analyzed and compared with those of speakers of Midwest American English using the acoustic phonetic software, Praat. In total, one hundred subjects participated in the study, spread evenly across the three language groups, and 2,125 vowels in 800 spectrograms were analyzed (excluding stress placement and pronunciation errors). Nonnative speakers completed a sociometric survey prior to recording so that statistical sampling techniques could be used to evaluate acquisition of accurate ELS production. The speech samples of native speakers were analyzed to provide norm values for cross-reference and to provide insights into the proposed Salience Hierarchy of the Acoustic Correlates of Stress (SHACS). The results support the notion that a SHACS does exist in the L1 sound system, and that native-like command of this system through accurate ELS production can be acquired by proficient L2 learners via increased L2 input. Other findings raise questions as to the accuracy of standard American English dictionary pronunciations as well as the generalizability of claims made about the acoustic properties of tonic accent shift.

1.0 Introduction
It is widely accepted that certain suffixes in English cause a shift in stress in the root morpheme to the syllable directly preceding the suffix (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Kreidler, 2004). These stress-shifting suffixes have been labeled Level 1 [+cyclic] suffixes by generative phonologists (Kisparsky, 1982; Halle and Kenstowicz, 1991). Pronunciation experts, including Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), have claimed that the resultant shift in stress in turn causes a change in the neutralization or vowel reduction in the unstressed syllable. Koffi (personal communication, September 11, 2012) has affirmed that these claims about lexical stress shifts have not yet been supported quantitatively by the subfield of laboratory phonology.

In addition to this concern about validity, although various studies on the acoustic properties of English word stress do exist, there is a lack of consensus in the literature as to the relative importance of the acoustic correlates of stress -- fundamental frequency (F0) (i.e., pitch), duration, intensity, and spectral reduction. Indeed, various contrasting versions of what the author hereby coins the Salience Hierarchy of the Acoustic...
Correlates of Stress (SHACS) have been proposed: F0 > duration > intensity (e.g., Fry, 1955, 1958; Ladefoged, 2003), duration > F0 > intensity (e.g., Adams & Munro, 1978), and duration > intensity > F0 (e.g., Beckman & Edwards, 1994). The latter have reasoned that F0 is only a relevant acoustic correlate of stress with regards to sentential pitch accent.

Furthermore, most studies have not explored the acoustic properties of the full range of Level 1 [cyclic] suffixes in the lexicon. In fact, studies on English Lexical Stress (ELS) in polysyllabic words in general have largely been ignored in favor of disyllabic minimal stress pairs, as in Fry’s original studies (1955, 1958).

Moreover, there is a dearth of cross-linguistic acoustic data on comparisons of productions of Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations by native speakers of English (NES) and nonnative speakers of English (NNES) of different proficiencies and first language (L1) backgrounds. Although the extent of L2 accentedness is related to many determinants, including language environment and age of speakers, the main mediator of individual differences in L2 accents is the “sound system” of their L1 (Zhang, Nissen, & Francis, 2008, p. 4498). For example, there is growing evidence to suggest that Mandarin L1 speakers have problems pronouncing L2 English stress contrasts because of “strong interference from the Mandarin tonal system” (Zhang et al., 2008, p. 4500). As Zhang et al. have stated, even when syllabic stress is placed appropriately by Mandarin NNES, they have problems manipulating the acoustic correlates of stress in a native-like manner. Conversely, various phonetic studies on rhythmic typology strongly indicate that Arabic is a stress-timed language that is “a very likely language to exhibit the same correlates to stress as does English” (de Jong & Zawaydeh, 1999, p.5).

This paper aims to validate the widely-held impressionistic assertions in the literature about the morphophonemic properties Level 1 [+cyclic] suffixes by providing quantifiable data. Therefore, the current study is based on quantitative acoustic analyses of the data using laboratory phonology techniques which have the advantage of “replicability and robustness” (Post & Nolan, 2012, p. 544) if suitable sampling and statistical methods are employed. In addition, this project investigates the dichotomous claims made my acoustical phonetics experts about SHACS. To do this, syllabic F0, duration, and intensity productions are analyzed in Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations by native speakers of Midwestern American English (MWAE) dialect. Due to limitations of time, the researcher does not measure the acoustic correlate of vowel quality (i.e., first and second formants (F1 and F2), which is in accordance with Lieberman’s study (1960).

From a second language acquisition (SLA) research perspective, the other purpose of this study is to observe whether there is a correlation between exposure to the L2 and/or L1 background and production accuracy of Level 1 [+cyclic] suffix derivations. As Zhang et al. (2008) have succinctly noted, most research in the area of English lexical stress “confound the phonological issue of stress placement with the phonetic problem of native-like stress production” (p. 4498). Thus, production accuracy here refers to a twofold distinction: 1) L2 knowledge of where to place the stress in derived words, and 2) native-like production of the acoustic correlates of stress. More specifically, this study
examines the acoustic correlates of productions of English Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations by Arabic L1 and Mandarin L1 NNES.

Ancillary findings also raise questions as to the accuracy of IPA pronunciations of certain Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations provided by Standard American English (SAE) dictionaries as well as the generalizability of claims made about the acoustic properties of tonic accent shift. The latter is a theory proposed by Ladefoged and Johnson (2010, p. 119) that suggests primary-stressed vowels only differ from secondary-stressed vowels with regards to an increase in F0, making the syllable [+tonic].

2.0 Data Collection

The researcher digitally recorded productions of Level 1 [+cyclic] tokens by L1 speakers of Midwest American English, Saudi Arabian Arabic, and Mainland Chinese Mandarin. Participants read aloud eight tokens inside a carrier phrase “Say __________ again”. The stimuli included the stem word <HISTORY> in addition to seven derived words formed by the addition of seven different stress-shifting suffixes: <hisTORic>, <hisTORical>, <histoRICity>, <hisTORian>, <hisTORify>, <hisTORial>, and <HisTORious>. Each of these suffixes has a corpus frequency of approximately 1% (Carroll, Davies, & Richman, 1971). The suffix, <tion>, which has a corpus frequency of around 4% (Carroll, Davies, & Richman, 1971), was purposefully omitted to keep this variable constant. The carrier phrase was designed so that the words to be studied did not carry an onset rise or a pitch accent (Maeda, 1976; Ladefoged & Johnson, 2010; Post & Nolan, 2012). To limit ordering effects (See Cowart, 1997), tokens were presented randomly by shuffling the cards.

Prior to recording, subjects completed a short sociometric survey so that statistical sampling techniques could be used to evaluate acquisition of accurate ELS production. The speech samples of native speakers were analyzed to provide norm values for cross-reference and to provide insights into the proposed SHACS. In total, 100 subjects participated in the study, spread evenly across the three language groups (Figure 1).
3.0 Data Analysis

The acoustic phonetic researcher analyzed productions using *Praat*, delineated vowels, and measured the *relative primary stressed to non-primary stressed vocalic ratios*\(^1\) for: mean F0 (Hz), mean intensity (dB), and duration (ms). This methodology is similar to Flege and Bohn (1989), Zhang et al. (2008), and Lee and Cho (2011) using *Praat* Version 5.3.31 (Boersma & Weenink, 2013). However, to the best of the author’s knowledge, the proposed method of comparing vowels was novel in that the acoustic correlates in vowels with primary stress were examined in relation to those of *all* the other vowels in the utterance – as opposed to just one of the unstressed vowels (e.g., Flege & Bohn, 1989; Lee & Cho, 2011). In other words, the [+tonic acc.] vowel in each token was acoustically compared to the [-tonic acc.] vowel (Ladefoged, 2001). The rationale being, that if a vowel has primary stress, the acoustic cues should be prominent to all the other vowels in word. Scripts were used to semi-automate delineation of vowels (Ryan, 2005) and retrieve stress analysis data (Yoon, 2008) which greatly reduced the potential for human error. In total, 2,125 vowels in 800 spectrograms were analyzed as in Figure 2, which excluded stress placement and pronunciation errors which were entered into a separate data pool. The latter error type could also include stress placement errors but is was deemed more serious with regards to intelligibility as it could (also) include a deletion, and/or addition, and/or substitution of a segment or cluster of segments. Naturally, any productions containing errors had to be excluded from the main dataset as it would not be a fair test to compare the vocalic relative stress values in words which had been pronounced differently.

![Figure 2: <Historical> as spoken by a Midwest American female](image)

\(P = \) primary-stressed vowel \hspace{1cm} \(S = \) secondary-stressed vowel \hspace{1cm} \(US = \) unstressed vowel

3.1 Statistical Analyses

- Paired sample \(t\)-tests were used to identify significant differences \((p < .05)\) between the primary [+tonic] and non-primary stressed [-tonic] vowels \((P vs. All)\) in each token.

- Paired sample \(t\)-tests were used to identify significant differences \((p < .05)\) between the primary [+tonic, +stress] and secondary stressed [-tonic, +stress] vowels \((P vs. S)\) in each token.

\(^1\)Two ratios used: a) [+tonic]/[-tonic] \((P vs. All)\) \hspace{1cm} b) [+stress, + tonic]/[+stress, -tonic] \((P vs. S)\)
- Mean vocalic relative stress ratios of each factor were submitted to ANOVAs, as well as Tukey HSD post hoc tests, to see if there were significant differences in stress production among the language groups. Productions of the stem token, <history>, were omitted from comparisons.

- Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were used to determine strength of relations and effect sizes for the operationalized variables of: L1 background, L2 exposure, L2 input, and L2 proficiency. Productions of the stem token, <history>, were omitted from comparisons.

**4.0 Results and Discussion**

**4.1 Quantitative Observation of Stress-Shifts in ES Level 1 [+cyclic] Word Productions**

NES produced primary-stressed vowels with higher F0, greater intensity, and longer duration than the average of the rest of the vowels combined as indicated by the positive ratios in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Group</th>
<th>F0</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Mean Relative Stress Ratios of Primary [+tonic acc.] to Non Primary Vowels [-tonic acc.] for the Three Acoustic Correlates by Language Group

Paired sample $t$-tests revealed that, for each token, at least one correlate had a significantly different value in the primary-stressed vowel than in the mean of all the other vowels combined. Notwithstanding, the *pentasyllabic* token <historicity> was idiosyncratic as it was only significantly different (negatively) with regards to duration. Since primary vowels were prominent due to the contrast in one or more acoustic features, we can conclude that stress-shifts in Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations can be observed quantitatively, at least in words with fewer than five syllables. Table 2 summarizes the significant findings from all the $P$ vs. *All* paired-sample $t$-tests for all three language groups, so that the reader may have a better overall picture of the ways in which lexical stress manifests itself in the speech of the different L1 groups.
Table 2: Most Salient Acoustic Correlates of Primary Stressed [+tonic] Vowels in Level 1 [+cyclic] Derivations per Language Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Token</th>
<th>Language Group</th>
<th>F0</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;history&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historial&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historian&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historic&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historical&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historicity&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓ (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historify&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (negative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historious&gt;</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Salience Hierarchy of the Acoustic Correlates of Stress (SHACS)

Paired sample t-tests on the P vs. All analyses of MWAE NES productions (Table 2) provide a more convincing description of SHACS than the mean vocalic relative stress ratios alone. Antithetically, at least with regards to many of the leading theories on SHACS (e.g., Fry, 1955, 1958; Adams & Munro, 1978), the results from this study suggest that intensity is at least the most reliable, if not the most salient, cue to ELS. Intensity of the primary-stressed [+tonic, +stress] vowel was statistically greater than the mean intensity of the non-primary [-tonic, +stress] vowels in all eight tokens. Based on frequency of significances, duration was the next most salient cue to ELS as it was also statistically different in P vs. All in all the tokens, albeit with a shorter duration in three of the tokens. In sum, SHACS in Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations in MWAE appears to be:

intensity > duration > F0
4.3 Nonnative Ordering of the Acoustic Correlates of Stress

On average, both Arabic L1 NNES and Mandarin L1 NNES produced primary-stressed vowels with higher F0, greater intensity, and longer duration, albeit with smaller vocalic relative stress ratios for each of the acoustic correlates than NES (Table 1). These ratios were in roughly the same proportions as for NES; i.e., duration > F0 > intensity. However, since the ratios for each acoustic cue are measured in different units (i.e., Hertz, decibels, and milliseconds) which are not calibrated to be perceptively equivalent or directly comparable, one cannot assert that this is the SHACS for these speakers. Thus, further statistical tests were conducted for both NNES groups.

4.3.1 Mandarin L2 English

One-way ANOVA tests showed that there were significant differences between the language groups with regards to intensity as a prosodic cue, $F(2, 481) = 5.25, p < .01$. The Tukey HSD post hoc comparison revealed that Mandarin L1 NNES ($M = 1.04, SD = .05$) were statistically different from NES ($M = 1.06, SD = .04$) as they used a significantly lower ratio of intensity in stress contrasts (Figure 3). Notwithstanding, intensity was still the most reliable cue to stress according to the P vs. All $t$-tests (Table 2).

Paired sample $t$-tests also revealed that Mandarin English L2 speakers deviated more from the NES norm in that they tended to use F0 as a salient acoustic cue to ELS more often (Table 2). Thus, the results seem to concur with earlier studies (e.g., Zhang, Nissen, & Francis, 2008; Keating and Kuo). In general, SHACS for Mandarin English L2 speakers appears to be:

intensity > F0 ≥ duration
4.32 Arabic L2 English

One-way ANOVA tests showed that there were significant differences between the language groups with regards to duration as a prosodic cue, $F(2, 481) = 11.90$, $p < .01$. The Tukey HSD post hoc comparison revealed that Arabic L1 NNES ($M = 1.29$, $SD = .70$) were statistically different from both NES ($M = 1.61$, $SD = .63$) and Mandarin L1 NNES ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .58$) in their usage of durational stress contrasts (Figure 4); i.e., their relative vocalic stress ratios were much smaller.

![Figure 4: Comparative Usage of Duration as an Acoustic Cue to ELS in Level 1 [+cyclic] Derivations](image)

Paired sample $t$-tests revealed that durational contrasts between $P$ and $All$ were not as numerous as they were for NES although Arabic English L2 speakers also produced negative duration ratios for $<$historicity$>$ and $<$historify$>$ (Table 2). In sum, SHACS for Arabic L1 NNES appears to be:

intensity >> duration > F0

4.4 Problematic Acoustic Correlates for Arabic L1 and Mandarin L1 Speakers

4.41 Fundamental frequency

Paired sample $t$-tests of $P$ vs. $All$ indicated that Chinese subjects tend to use more pitch contrasts than NES to differentiate ELS, which almost certainly leads to accentedness (Table 2). However, one-way ANOVA found that neither Arabic L1 NNES ($M = 1.07$, $SD = .30$) nor Mandarin L1 NNES ($M = 1.08$, $SD = .18$) were statistically different from NES ($M = 1.13$, $SD = .34$) with regards to F0 usage although the $p$ value was close to being significant, $(F(2, 481) = 2.80$, $p = 0.6)$. Therefore, differences in relative vocalic stress ratios of F0 production in $P$ vs. $All$ were very small; that is,
Mandarin L1 speakers use a slightly smaller F0 range than NES which seems to confirm the findings of Li and Shuai (2011).

4.42 Intensity

As reported in 4.31, one-way ANOVAs revealed that Mandarin L1 NNES significantly under-use intensity contrasts between $P$ and $All$ to emphasize primary stress. This was somewhat unexpected based on previous studies of Mandarin English L2. Still, paired sample $t$-tests revealed that intensity was significantly different in $P$ vs. $All$ in all but one of the tokens (Table 2). Thus, it seems that although intensity is an important acoustic cue for Mandarin L1 NNES, they still do not employ it in a native-like manner.

4.43 Duration

As reported in 4.32, one-way ANOVAs revealed that Arabic L1 NNES significantly under-use durational contrasts between $P$ and $All$ to emphasize primary stress. This may be due to the fact that Arabic English L2 speakers tend not to reduce vowels as suggested by Zuraiq and Sereno (2005). Not reducing the unstressed vowels in a token would certainly result in smaller durational contrasts between the primary [+tonic] and non-primary [-tonic] vowels. The ANOVA results also support Bouchhioua's (2008) study which found that duration is not an important correlate of lexical stress in Tunisian Arabic as it is in English and negative transfer may lead to non-native accentedness, if not unintelligibility.

4.44 Summary of distinct features of nonnative stress production

To recapitulate the findings in 4.4, Arabic L1 NNES use significantly smaller durational contrasts to denote primary stress, perhaps caused by a tendency to not reduce unstressed vowels in Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations. Conversely, Mandarin L1 NNES use F0 more often than NES as a salient marker of primary stress while significantly under-using intensity contrasts. The author hypothesizes that these features of Arabic and Mandarin accented English are direct results of transfer from the predictable stress and tonal L1 sound systems, respectively.

4.5 Correlations between Amount of L2 Exposure, Amount of L2 Input and L2 Proficiency

4.51 Accurate placement of stress in Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations

Figure 5 shows the percentage of correct responses by token and language group. Also, as one might expect, <historicity> caused the most problems.
In fact, NES were no better at accurately producing this word than Mandarin speakers. However, it is important to note that for the two nonsense words (i.e., <historious> and <historial>), the NES performed much better. It is the researcher’s contention that although these are not real words, NES were able to use the stress-shifting rules that are stored in the lexicon. Nevertheless, the smooth curve in Figure 6 shows that a significant correlation was found ($r = - .26$, $p < .05$.) for years of English language study and frequency of errors. Therefore, the longer learners of English have spent studying the language (i.e., increased L2 input), the fewer pronunciation and stress-placement errors they make in stress-suffixed words.

From a psychological viewpoint, this strong correlation may relate to how many years of English L2 education subjects feel they have received. When L2 exposure (i.e., years of residence in L2 country) was plotted against number of errors, it did not yield significant correlations. However, the author posits that the study did not have a large enough range for this variable. As expected, Arabic and Mandarin L1 NNES produce fewer errors.
higher the level of their English L2 proficiency with a significance of $p < 0.00$ and a medium effect size of $r = -0.05$ (Figure 7).

![Figure 7: Frequency of Pronunciation and Stress-Placement Errors vs. English Proficiency Level]

4.52 Native-like production of the acoustic correlates of stress in Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations

Correlations did not find any significant relationship between any of the independent variables and native-like production of intensity. However, based on the paired sample $t$-tests, it is suggested that intensity is already employed as a prosodic correlate in almost every token by both groups of NNES. Perhaps this is why previous studies have claimed that intensity is the least important cue to ELS; i.e., because it is not hard for NNES to manipulate, it is not a determinant of accentedness, comprehensibility, or intelligibility. Nevertheless, F0 and duration did yield interesting distinctions.

4.53 Mandarin L2 English

Figure 8 represents a statistically significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) and a moderate effect size ($r = -0.5$) between amount of L2 input (i.e., years of English L2 study) and Mandarin L1 NNES’ ability to produce native-like F0 contours in lexical stress contrasts.
Figure 8: Difference of Mean Mandarin L1 Speaker Ratio of F0 from Mean Native Speaker Ratio of F0 vs. Years of L2 English Study

Figure 9 shows significant correlations were also found when native-like production of F0 was correlated with English L2 proficiency level, albeit with a very small effect size ($r = -0.0, p < 0.05$).

Encouragingly, the results suggest that Chinese learners of English are able to overcome their innate difficulties when producing F0 as an acoustic cue to ELS through increased L2 study.

4.54 Arabic L2 English

Correlations of production accuracy of duration versus amount of L2 study and proficiency level both yielded significances, approximately $r = -0.3, p < 0.05$ in each case (Figures 10-11).
Comparing these results with those from the ANOVA (Figure 4), it is proposed that through increased acquisition of the English language, Saudi learners are also able to overcome the detrimental effects of negative transfer from their L1 sound system.

4.6 Palatal glide epenthesis in the stress-shifting suffixes: <ian>, <ious>, and <ial>

The researcher identified a surprisingly high incidence of /j/ epenthesis in the tokens <historian>, <historious>, and <historial> (Figure 12).
The results suggest that \[\text{hi'stori'zən}\] be included as an alternative pronunciation to \[\text{hi'stori'zən}\] in standard American English dictionaries since almost half of the MWAE NES subjects pronounced it this way (Figure 13-14). The author concludes that American English dictionary pronunciation entries for words containing Level 1 [+cyclic] suffixes, <ian>, <-ial>, and <-ious> may need to be revised.

Figure 13: <Historian> Produced by a Midwest American Male in Accordance with the Standard Dictionary Pronunciation, [hi'stori'zən], without an Epenthetic /j/
4.7 Lack of evidence for “tonic accent shift” in polysyllabic Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations

Paired sample t-tests failed to support Ladefoged and Johnson’s (2010) notion that tonic accent shift (i.e., the differentiator between primary (P) and secondary-stressed (S) syllables) is caused by a “major pitch change” (p. 119) in the primary-stressed vowel, at least with respect to polysyllabic Level 1 [+cyclic] derivations. Contrarily, the results reveal that intensity and duration are the relevant prosodic correlates in assigning primary status to a vowel. Even in the disyllabic stem word, <historic>, these two correlates were the most salient. Table 3 provides an overview of the relevant acoustic correlates for each token with respect to tonic accent shift (i.e., primary vs. secondary stress). Clearly, more studies on the features of tonic accent shift in polysyllabic words should be conducted to determine whether the theory is tenable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Token</th>
<th>F0</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;history&gt;</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historial&gt;</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;historian&gt;</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>&lt;historic&gt;</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt;historious&gt;</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Most Salient Acoustic Correlates of Tonic Accent Shift in Primary-Stressed Vowels [+tonic, +stress]

✓ = salient acoustic correlate  ✗ = non-salient acoustic correlate

5.0 Conclusion

The results presented in this paper yield insight into several interdependent issues related to lexical stress in polysyllabic English words containing stress-shifting suffixes. First and foremost, this study provides support to the view that the acoustic correlates of
stress do indeed have a hierarchy of relative salience, hereinafter named SHACS. The SHACS proposed here is intensity > duration > fundamental frequency (F0). While this does not exactly match any of the schemes described in the literature, it most closely resembles the SHACS postulated by Beckman and Edwards (1994): duration > intensity > F0. Most likely, SHACS is context dependent. For instance, Fry’s (1955, 1958) notion of SHACS (i.e., F0 > duration > intensity>) may only be relevant to disyllabic homographs while intensity may only be the most salient acoustic cue in three and four syllable words. Clearly, more studies on English lexical stress (ELS) in a wide range of polysyllabic words are needed to validate this hypothesis. What is certain though is that relative vocalic stress ratios of the three acoustic cues play an important role in differentiating lexical stress patterns, and there does appear to be a native-norm for ordering these acoustic signals. Indeed, the various significant correlations described in this paper support this notion.

From a second language acquisition perspective, there is good evidence to suggest that native-like command of the acoustic correlates is attainable for English language learners. Although speakers with different inherent L1 sound systems encounter different problems when trying to acquire native-like stress production, it favorably appears that they can overcome these difficulties through increased input of the L2. Not only do experienced English language learners produce fewer pronunciation errors, they also produce prosodic contrasts in a more native-like manner. For instance, although Saudi speakers inherently under-use duration as acoustic cue to ELS - perhaps by not fully reducing vowels as a result of L1 transfer from the predictable stress system as suggested by other researchers (Zuraiq & Sereno, 2005; Altmann, 2006; Bouchhioiu, 2008) - they are able to use this acoustic correlate more accurately as their language skills progress. Similarly, Chinese learners of English are able to overcome the negative transfer of their tonal system by producing pitch in a more native-like manner as they advance in their studies.

Furthermore, the present results do not support Ladefoged and Johnson’s (2010) theory of tonic accent shift. Instead, the results actually suggest the opposite; that is, intensity and duration appear to be responsible for contrasts between primary and secondary stressed vowels. It will be interesting to observe whether these findings can be replicated, and whether the variables of token length (disyllabic vs. polysyllabic words) and/or token delivery method (read utterances vs. natural speech) have any effect.

Finally, with regards to pronunciation, this investigation provides convincing evidence for a possible revision of standard American English dictionary IPA transcriptions. At least for the words in this study, the suffixes <-ial>, <-ian>, and <-ious> were more commonly pronounced by native and nonnative speakers with the epenthetical insertion of a palatal glide, [j]. Thus, future studies should explore the presence or absence of this phenomenon in other dialects of English, both native and nonnative.

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**References**


