

TITLE

Second Language Comprehensibility Ratings: The Case of ESL and EFL Teachers.

ABSTRACT

Second language (L2) speech ratings have been associated with phonological factors such as segmental errors (Munro & Derwing, 2006); word and sentence stress (Field, 2005; Hahn, 2004); pausing, articulation rate and speech rate (Munro & Derwing, 2001; Trofimovich & Baker, 2006); as well as pitch range and pause length (Kang et al., 2010). Additionally, studies that have examined the different components of comprehensibility in speech (i.e., the perceived ease or difficulty of understanding a message, see Derwing & Munro, 2009) have linked not only phonological but also lexical and grammatical factors to the perception of comprehensible L2 speech (e.g., segments, word stress, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary, see Crowther et al., 2015; Saito et al., 2015; Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2012).

Studies on the way native and nonnative listeners rate L2 speech for comprehensibility have reached different results. For example, nonnative listeners have been found to rate L2 speech either more severely (e.g., Fayer & Krasinski, 1987; Kang, 2013; Rossiter, 2009) or less severely than native listeners in different studies (e.g., Brown, 1995). In contrast, other investigations have not found significant differences between both groups of listeners (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2013; Flege, 1988; MacKay, Flege, & Imani, 2006). Although these studies have reached conflicting results, and there are still several aspects that need to be studied to better understand what constitutes intelligible and comprehensible L2 speech (Derwing & Munro, 2015), no investigation so far has analyzed the way native and nonnative language teachers rate comprehensibility in L2 speech. Thus, language teachers' reasons for rating speech in one way or another have remained mostly unexamined.

This mixed-method investigation examined the way native ESL and nonnative EFL teachers rated the comprehensibility of ESL learners from different L1 backgrounds. It investigated two different questions: (1) Do ESL and EFL teachers rate

comprehensibility in the same way? (2) What linguistic aspects (i.e., phonological, lexical, grammatical) do ESL and EFL teachers base their ratings on? Using spontaneous speech samples from ESL pronunciation learners, two groups of ESL and EFL teachers rated these speech samples in terms of comprehensibility. A set of quantitative analyses indicated that the group of nonnative EFL teachers rated the speech samples more severely than the native ESL teachers. Additionally, qualitative analyses of stimulated-recall interviews carried out after the rating task revealed differences in the perception of linguistic aspects that constitute comprehensibility for both groups of teachers. Such perception of different linguistic aspects seemed to be rooted in teachers' pedagogical knowledge, teacher training, and familiarity with different types of accented L2 speech. The results of this investigation are discussed in terms of their implications for L2 pronunciation teaching and teaching training. (438 words)

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BIOGRAPHY

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