# IMPROVING SERVICE TO THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY THROUGH PRONUNCIATION TRAINING OF MARQUETTE STUDENTS

SUMMARY

Develop and pilot a technique that uses modified auditory feedback to reduce the accent of MU students speaking Spanish as a second language.

DESCRIPTION

A large number of Marquette students study Spanish as a second language (L2). While these students gain proficiency, their spoken Spanish is hindered by an English 'accent' that reinforces perceived socio-cultural barriers, undermining engagement with Spanish-speaking communities. Using digitally modified auditory feedback of individuals' own speech, this project aims to develop innovative pronunciation teaching tools that would reduce the perceived non-nativeness of L2 Spanish speakers, improving their social and professional interactions with the Hispanic community.
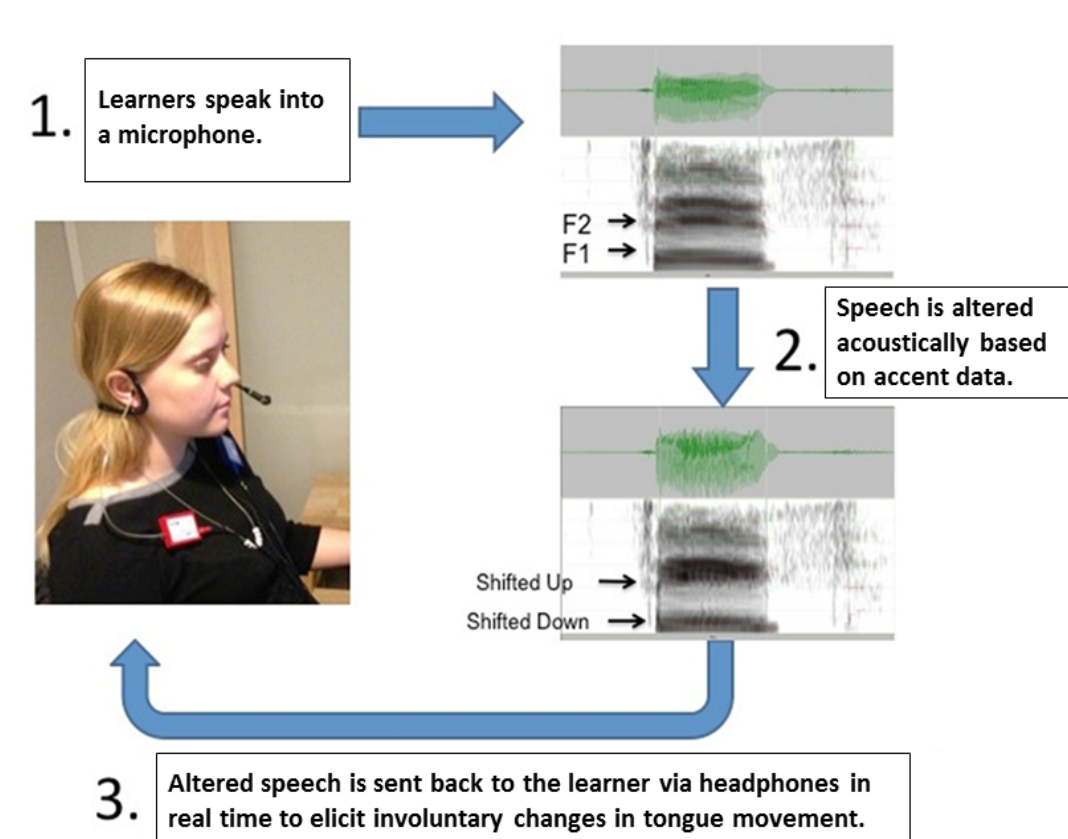
MILESTONES

Spring and Summer 2017 - Participant recruitment and data acquisition for acoustic analysis of L1 and L2 Spanish vowels.

Fall 2017 - Completion of spectrographic analysis of all vowel segments and comparisons between language groups.

Spring 2018 - Pilot study on auditory feedback driven pronunciation modification, using BIES students as participants.

ABOUT OUR TEAM

Dr. Jeff Berry, Co-PI
Associate Professor in Speech Pathology and Audiology

Dr. Sonia Barnes, Co-PI
Assistant Professor in Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Dr. Steven Long, Co-PI
Associate Professor in Speech Pathology and Audiology

When Dr. Barnes arrived at Marquette she brought expertise in Spanish phonology and experience with methods of acoustic analysis. She also taught Spanish Phonetics, a course taken by many SPPA students interested in bilingual clinical practice. Dr. Long enrolled in this same class in Fall 2014 and this eventually led to conversations including his colleague Dr. Berry regarding research in the area of modified auditory feedback, Dr. Berry's expertise, as a means of reducing the accentedness of speech.

BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Pronunciation training methods reflect a confluence of knowledge in multiple academic disciplines: speech pathology, linguistics, engineering, computer science, auditory perception, and sensorimotor learning. This project will foster interdisciplinary research, where students and faculty in multiple colleges will work together to further our understanding of English-accented Spanish and evaluate the use of technology to improve the pronunciation of L2 Spanish. By improving the speaking skills of members of the MU community who are L2 speakers of Spanish, they will be able to engage more effectively with the Hispanic community, as they will be less marked by their accents as outsiders.

Community Impact