

Foreign language learners' use of pronunciation strategies for phonological loans

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Case study: the influence of the German mother tongue of NT2 learners on the choice of a pronunciation variant of the phonological loan [g] in English loan words

Core of the research problem:

- Native speakers can use two strategies when pronouncing loan words: adaptation and imitation.
- Second language learners have a third approach: adding their native phonological rules.

Theoretical background:

- Adaptation vs. Imitation
Two strategies for the pronunciation of phonological loans; speakers can adapt the pronunciation of the words using the pronunciation rules of their mother tongue/recipient language (rl) or they can imitate the pronunciation from the source language (sl) (Van Coetsem 1988)
- Phonetic gap in the Dutch phoneme system: the phonological loan [g]:

	Dutch	German & English
Fricatives	/v, f, s, z, h/ North: /x/ South: /ɣ/ & /x/	- Not relevant -
Plosives	/b, p, d, t, k/ → without /g/	/b, p, d, t, g, k, ʔ/

Section of the Dutch, German and English phoneme system with the gap in the Dutch of the voiced velar plosive /g/ and the alternative fricatives used in Dutch (Ruigendijk et al 2021; Eisenberg 2020; Furhop & Peters 2013; Odgen 2017)

- In both Dutch and German, a voiced phone becomes a voiceless at the end of the syllable because of the final devoicing; English does not have this phonological process

State of Research:

- No consistent use of the pronunciation of /g/ in the Dutch-speaking area; Regional differences between North (preference for imitation: [g]) and South (preference for adaptation: [ɣ] & [x]) (Van de Velde en Van Hout 2002)
- In addition, word-specific influence on pronunciation strategy (Hamann & De Jonge 2015; Bezooijen & Gerritsen 1994):
 - time of introduction in the recipient language
 - word frequency
 - exogenous character of the word
- Complexity in the choice of pronunciation especially for second language learner

Case study: The influence of the NT2 learners' German mother tongue on the decision of the pronunciation variation of the phonological loan [g] in English loan words

Research question:

- Which strategies do the native speakers of NT2 (Dutch as second language speakers) use when realizing the loan phoneme [g] in English loan words while speaking Dutch, and how does their pronunciation differ from the pronunciation of native speakers of Dutch?

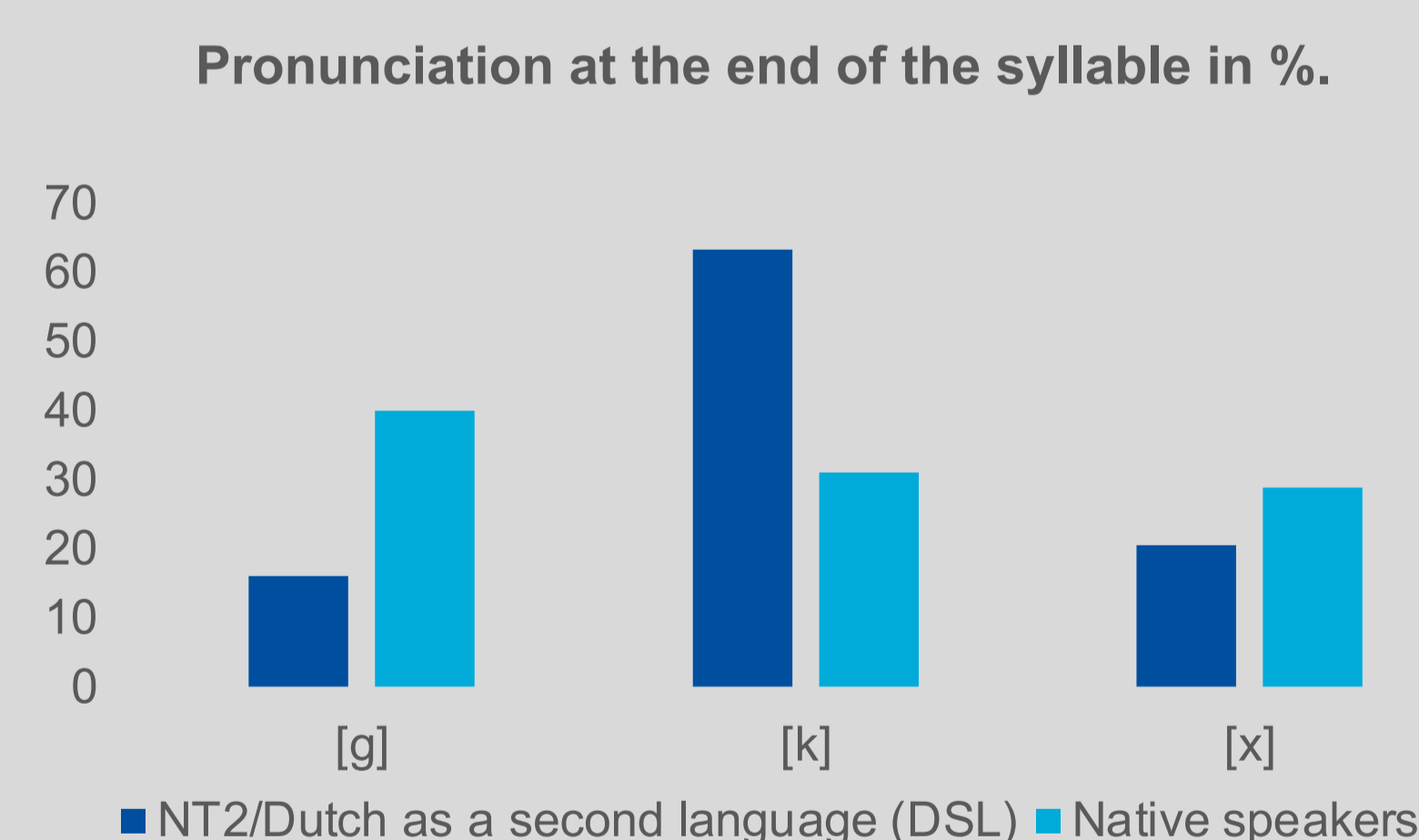
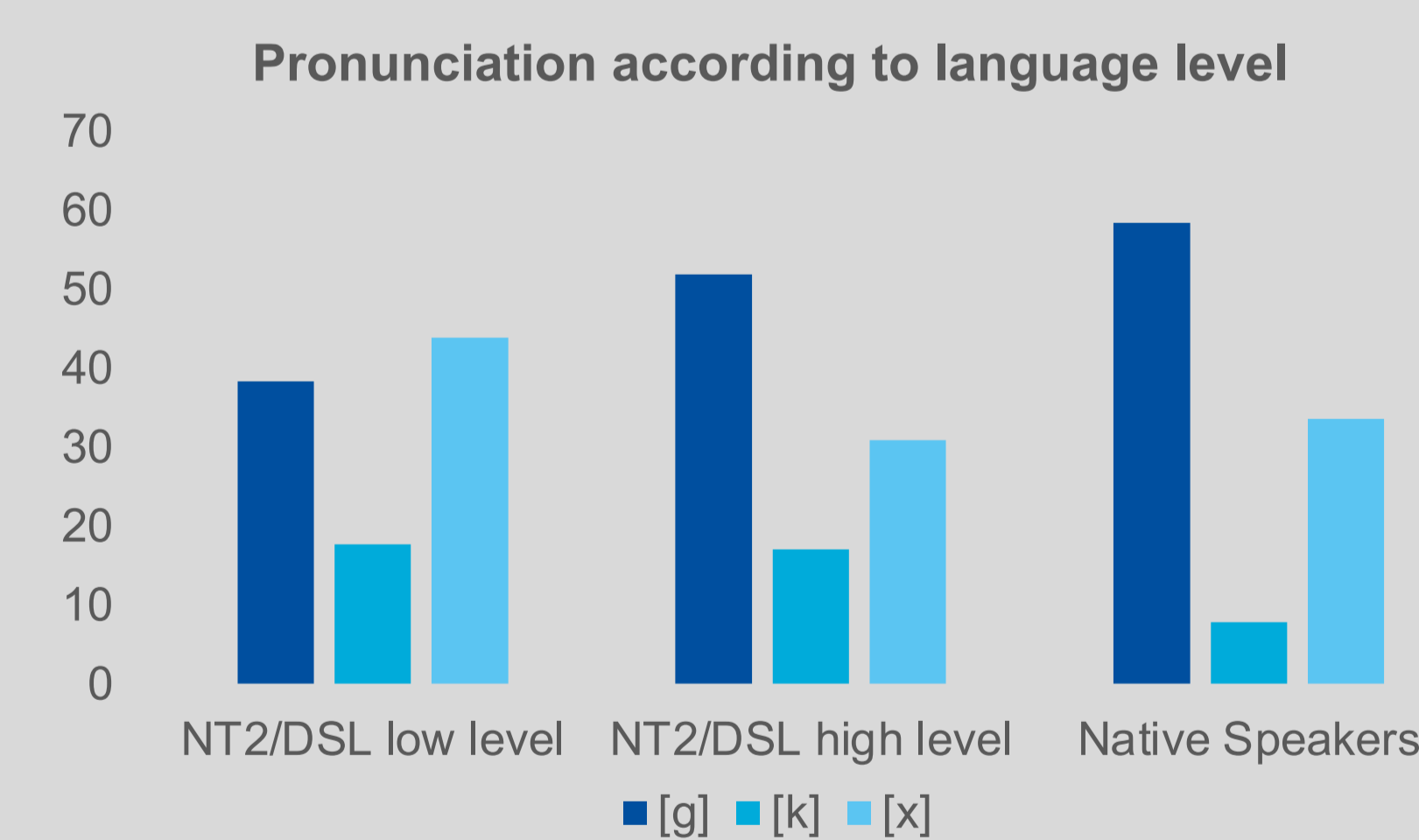
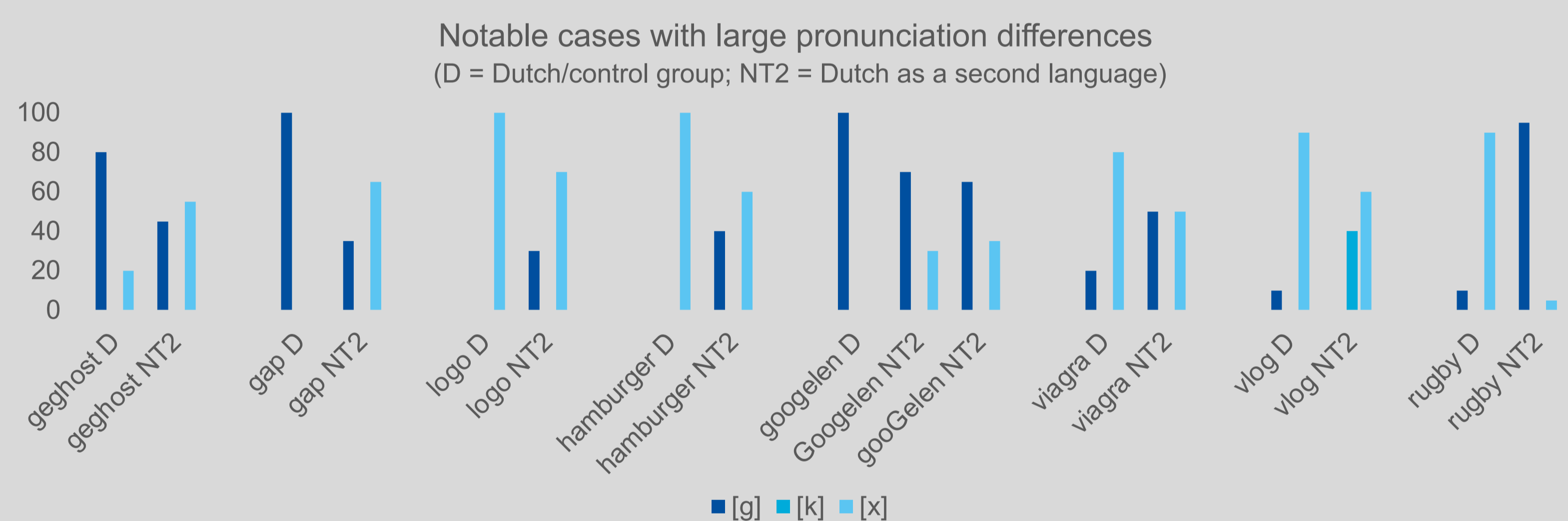
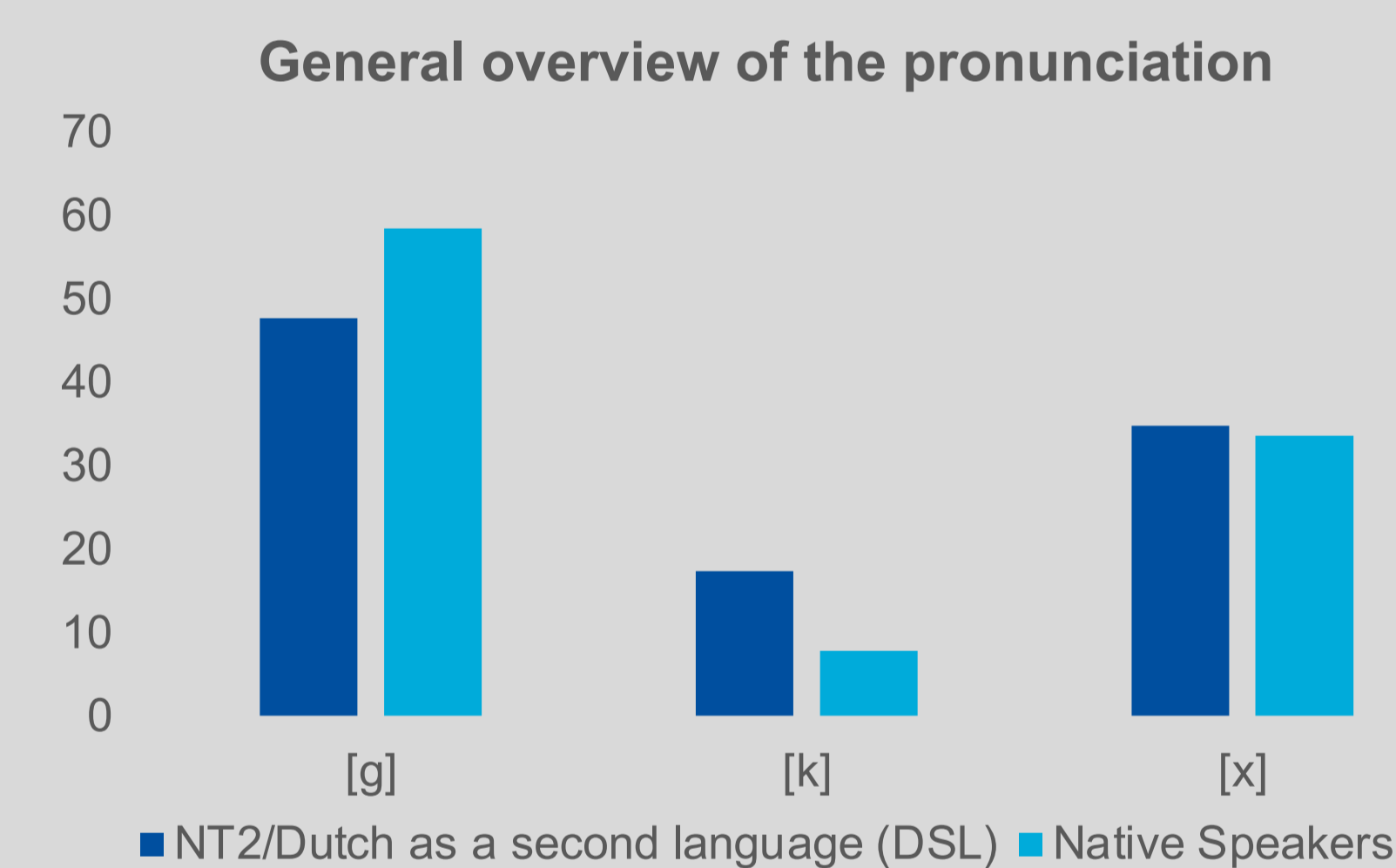
Hypotheses:

- H1: Due to complexity, L2 speakers are inconsistent in the choice of a and differ from L1 speakers in the pronunciation of loan phonemes.
- H2: As the language level increases, the sense of the language increases, bringing the choice of pronunciation strategy closer to that of L1 speakers.
- H3: German and Dutch speakers equally adapt the [g] at the end of a syllable to their own phonological rule of final devoicing by articulating a voiceless [k].

Experiment:

- Pronunciation experiment in which participants have to read out sentences with phonological loan [g]
- Participants:
 - 20 Germans learning Dutch at global level (B1-B2) and high level (C1-C2)
 - Comparison group consisting of 10 native Dutch speakers (5 from the northern and 5 from the southern language area)
- Material:
 - Word list with 32 English loan words containing the phonological loan [g] 33 times
 - Division into old (21 words and 22x [g]) and new from 1999 (9 words) and position within the word (beginning of a syllable 21 words and 22x [g] and end of a syllable 9)

Results:



Discussion:

- NT2 speakers show uncertainty in pronunciation of loan phonemes; as a group, they choose much less consistently a uniform pronunciation than the control group
- Word-specific factors (period of time, how long the word has been established, exogenous character, etc.) play a lesser role in the choice of pronunciation by German-speaking NT2 learners than by the Dutch native speakers
- NT2 speakers imitate less the pronunciation based on the sl; instead they adopt their own pronunciation conventions (mother tongue) and those of the rl
- The lower the language level of the rl, the more these statements apply; NT2 speakers approximate native speakers' language behaviour

Conclusion:

Among foreign language learners, a lack of language leads, on the one hand, to a stronger orientation towards their own language conventions, while on the other hand, to an over-generalization of the pronunciation rules of the foreign language, which makes them less attentive to the original pronunciation conventions of the source language.

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