The study of second language (L2) speech involves the examination of perception and production. The relationship between these two speech domains in L2s has been investigated but results have been inconsistent. Many studies claim that perception precedes or is a pre-requisite for production (Trubetzkoy, 1939; Neufeld, 1988; Cortés Pomacondor, 1999). The notion of ‘phonological deafness’ (Flege, 1987; Flege & Eefting, 1987; Flege, 1991) supports this view as it states that a sound must be adequately perceived so that it can be adequately produced. However, in some studies L2 sound production has been found to surpass perception (Strange, 1995; Sheldon & Strange, 1982; Gass, 1984; Bohn & Flege, 1996; Kluge et al. 2007), indicating that production of L2 sounds can be more accurate than perception. The studies which have explored this relationship more closely generally report moderate correlations between perception and production (Flege, 1999; Cebrián, 2002; Rauber et al., 2005; Koerich, 2006).

This interrelationship has also been explored in phonetic training research. In line with the idea that perception precedes production, many perception-based training studies have shown positive effects on production (Pimsleur, 1963; Rochet, 1995; Yamada et al., 1996; Bradlow et al., 1997; Bradlow et al., 1999). Less frequent are those studies which have investigated production-based training effects on perception (Mathews, 2007; Hazan & Sennema, 2007), but these have also reported positive carry-over effects of production-based training to perception skills. Finally, those few studies which have analysed cross-modal training effects of perception training on production skills and vice-versa (Catford & Pisoni, 1970; Leather, 1990; Gómez Lacabex, 2009) have found a mutually facilitative relationship, although not always fully aligned, between perception training and production training.

This paper reviews the relationship between second-language speech perception and production from the leadership (one skill leads or emerges before the other one), interdependence (correlation studies) and training perspectives. It addresses some of the caveats in the study of speech perception and production such as the difficulty of measuring the domains in a balanced way and the great methodological diversity in the literature, factors which may account for the diverging results obtained so far.
References


