McGURK EFFECT IN POLISH LISTENERS

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The phenomenon of a multi-modal interaction between audio and video stimuli, called the McGurk effect, was investigated for the Polish subjects. Two experiments were performed. In the first experiment the occurrence of McGurk effect for Polish speech was examined. The results of the first experiment for which over 94% of listeners’ answers were consistent with the audio stimuli indicated that generally it is very difficult to evoke the McGurk effect in Polish listeners. In the second experiment the stimuli for which the McGurk effect was distinctly present were subjected to different kind of audio or video distortions and presented to the listeners. The distortions in the visual signals resulted in an increase of the answers consistent with the audio stimuli while the distortions in the audio signals resulted in an increase of the answers consistent with the visual stimuli.

Keywords: McGurk effect, Polish speech.

1. Introduction

We are living in the world where the incoming information may be perceived by many senses. Our brain selects and connects the sensory information in order to create a distinctive picture of the surrounding environment. A problem arises when our senses perceive inconsistent stimuli. In such a case a new information, which is not in agreement with the perceived signals, may be generated.

In the case of speech perception this what we hear depends also on the information received by our eyes. The phenomenon of a multi-modal interaction between audio and visual stimuli has been observed by Harry MCGURK [4] as the result of the experiments on speech perception in infants, when the visual stimulus of the mother’s face saying “ga” was synchronously presented with the aural stimulus “ba”, what was perceived by the listeners as “da”. From the discovery of McGurk effect in 1976 this phenomenon has been widely investigated [1–3, 5–7] in order to explain its mechanism, to establish the conditions under which it occurs and to find out if it appears in the same degree in any language.
The present study consists of two experiments. In the first experiment the occurrence of the McGurk effect for Polish speech was examined. In the second experiment, the stimuli for which the largest number of answers that were not in agreement with either audio or video stimuli was obtained, i.e. the stimuli for which the McGurk effect was distinctly present, were subjected to different kind of audio or video distortions to find out what kind of influence on McGurk effect such distortions may have. This should permit to determine what influence has McGurk effect in multi-modal telecommunication systems, where some distortions related to audio and video signals (e.g. a time delay between audio and video signals, echo or noise in speech signal) may appear.

2. Experimental procedure

The test material consisted of 25 utterances produced three times by 10 speakers (males and females). The list of test utterances is presented in Table 1. The consonants (positions 19–25) were spoken with the accompanying “schwa”.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| ba | ga | da | ka | na | ta | ag | ak | ek | eg | be | de | ke | te | aba | aka | ada | ata | p | k | t | d | w | f | g |

The recordings were made in an ordinary room in a very good day light. The speakers’ faces were recorded with DVCAM SONY DSR PD-150P camera and compressed by means of Indeo Video 5.1 codec. The speech samples were exported to separate sound files and recorded in PCM format with 16 bit resolution and 44.1 kHz sampling frequency. Next, utilizing Adobe Premiere Pro program, each video file was synchronously combined with each audio file.

In the experiments the audio-visual pairs containing the same number of phonemes were used. Since, however, some of these audio-video pairs indicated a striking inconsistency of the speech signal with the moving lips, the selected 167 audio-video pairs of stimuli, presented in Table 2, have been finally used to examine the occurrence of McGurk effect in Polish. Since each of the selected audio-visual pairs was produced by 10 speakers, a total amount of 1670 different audio-video stimuli was examined.

In the first experiment randomized pairs of audio-video stimuli were presented to a group of 12 Polish subjects of normal sight and hearing. The audio-visual sessions were carried out in an acoustic laboratory. The subject was sitting in a 75 cm distance from a 21” monitor where a natural size head of the speaker was presented. At the same time the subject was hearing the speech sample from a good quality loudspeaker system. Each audio-visual pair of stimuli was presented three times and next there was a few seconds break to give the subject time to write down in a special answer sheet what he has heard and to mark his opinion in the case of a substantial inconsistency between sound and vision in a three dimensional scale. The experiment was carried out during 10 sessions divided into 15 minutes subsessions. After each subsession a 10 minutes
break took place to give the subjects time for a rest. Thus, each session, including breaks, lasted about four hours.

Table 2. The list of audio-visual pairs of stimuli.

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After the first experiment was completed and the results analyzed, the second experiment was carried out. First, on the basis of the results obtained in the first experiment, such pairs of audio-video stimuli have been selected for which 50% or more answers of the listeners were not in agreement with both audio and video stimuli. 9 pairs of such stimuli, which are presented in Table 3, were next subjected to 20 different audio or video modifications and presented to 10 subjects, five of which were new subjects and the remaining five participated also in the first experiment. The experimental procedure
was almost the same as in the first experiment. Three repetitions of a given audio-video stimulus were presented to the subject, who next had few seconds to write down what he has heard. The only difference was that the opinion on the inconsistency between sound and vision was not collected. The second experiment was run during one session, because the selected 9 stimuli were presented to the subjects under 21 different conditions (one without any modification plus 20 modifications realized by Audacity or Adobe Premiere Pro) giving in sum 189 different audio-video stimuli.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 3.</th>
<th>The test material selected for the second experiment.</th>
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The experimental procedure was executed within the diploma work [8] supervised by the author of the present paper.

3. Results and discussion

The total results of the first experiment are presented in Table 4 (as the percentage of the listeners’ answers consistent with video stimuli, audio stimuli or inconsistent with any of them. The inconsistent answers are considered as being caused by the McGurk effect. As it may be seen from the data presented in Table 4 the prevailing majority of answers (over 94% of 20400 stimuli) was consistent with the acoustic signal heard during the experiment. Only 1% of the answers was consistent with the visual signal. The McGurk effect was observed in roughly 4.5% of the examined cases. This result is far away from that what was expected and it suggests that under adopted measuring conditions it was very difficult to obtain the McGurk effect in Polish listeners.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 4.</th>
<th>The overall distribution of answers in the first experiment (in percent).</th>
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<tr>
<td>Answers consistent with audio stimuli</td>
<td>94.35</td>
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It is necessary to add that in the case of inconsistent answers there was a large dispersion in the listeners’ answers ranging from one to six different variants of answers. The distribution of listeners’ answers for given number of variants of inconsistent answers is presented in Table 5. From the data presented in this Table it may be seen that in 32% of cases the listeners perceived the stimuli in two variants, in 27% of cases in three variants and in 19% of cases in one variant only. These results show an individual

<table>
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<th>Table 5.</th>
<th>The percent of listeners’ answers for given number of variants of inconsistent answers.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of answers</td>
<td>19</td>
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reaction to the presented stimuli and indicate that it is difficult to select one variant of answers confirming the McGurk effect in Polish listeners.

The distribution of answers for particular listeners is presented in Table 6 and the distribution of answers for particular speakers is presented in Table 7. The distribution of answers for particular listeners is very similar. The only exception was the subject no. 6 with substantially larger amount of answers consistent with the visual stimuli and inconsistent with both stimuli what may indicate that he belongs to so called “visualizers”. As far as the speakers are concerned (see Table 7), large amount of inconsistent answers was obtained for speaker no. 6, 7 and 9, and because of that the utterances of these speakers were utilized in the second experiment.

The results of the second experiment are summarized in Table 8. Since the second experiment was carried for 9 specially selected pairs of audio-video stimuli (see Table 3) the percentage of the inconsistent answers (i.e. the McGurk effect) was much higher in

Table 6. The distribution of answers for particular listeners (in percent).

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<tr>
<th>Listener number</th>
<th>Answers consistent with audio stimuli</th>
<th>Answers consistent with video stimuli</th>
<th>Answers inconsistent with audio and video</th>
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Table 7. The distribution of answers for particular speakers (in percent).

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<th>Answers consistent with video stimuli</th>
<th>Answers inconsistent with audio and video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>96.21</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>96.81</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>96.11</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>96.76</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>96.41</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>88.97</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>10.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>87.82</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>10.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>96.16</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>90.37</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>8.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>96.66</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
comparison to the results obtained in the first experiment and the overall mean of the inconsistent answers reached almost 44%. Substantially larger was also the number of answers consistent with the visual stimuli. Moreover, the percentage of the inconsistent answers for the audio-video stimuli without any modification was even higher (almost 48%) what indicates that an increase of the McGurk effect was mainly caused by the audio-video stimuli applied in the second experiment, i.e. by a proper selection of the phonetic material and a selection of the speakers.

Table 8. The distribution of answers for particular modifications of audio and video stimuli (in percent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modification</th>
<th>Answers consistent with audio stimuli</th>
<th>Answers consistent with video stimuli</th>
<th>Inconsistent answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low pass filter – 2000 Hz</td>
<td>32.22</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>58.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low pass filter – 600 Hz</td>
<td>21.11</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>70.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echo</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink noise – amplitude 0.02</td>
<td>32.22</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink noise – amplitude 0.05</td>
<td>25.56</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>64.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cracks</td>
<td>17.78</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>72.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture turn – 90 degrees</td>
<td>47.78</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>47.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture turn – 180 degrees</td>
<td>53.33</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimness – 50%</td>
<td>53.33</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimness – 80%</td>
<td>57.78</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>38.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture duplication – 4 times</td>
<td>44.44</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>51.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture duplication – 9 times</td>
<td>56.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture reeling</td>
<td>68.89</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>25.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smeary picture – 10%</td>
<td>54.44</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>42.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smeary picture – 20%</td>
<td>65.56</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>32.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowy picture – 50%</td>
<td>52.22</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>43.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowy picture – 100%</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>25.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time delay audio-video – 350 ms</td>
<td>57.78</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>38.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time delay audio-video – 450 ms</td>
<td>76.67</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time delay audio-video – 500 ms</td>
<td>85.56</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. modification</td>
<td>45.56</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>47.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall mean</td>
<td>51.12</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>43.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As far as the influence of particular modifications is concerned some general trends may be observed in comparison to the “no modification” case. Audio distortions resulted in an increase of the inconsistent answers and in a decrease of the answers consistent with the audio stimuli. The only exception was the echo with a reverse influence. On the other hand, video distortions resulted in an increase of the answers consistent with the audio stimuli and in a decrease of the inconsistent answers. Similar trend was observed for a time delay between audio and video stimuli. For large values of time delay (450 and 500 ms) an increase of the answers consistent with the audio stimuli was especially...
large and a decrease of the inconsistent answers and the answers consistent with the video stimuli was also very large.

The results obtained in the second experiment for each of 9 examined pairs of stimuli were also analyzed. The mean results for all modifications of the stimuli applied in the second experiment obtained for each pair of audio-video stimuli are presented in Table 9. Looking at these results it may be easily seen that almost all the answers are consistent with the aural stimuli or inconsistent with the aural and visual stimuli. Only for the pair “da – ba” spoken by speaker no. 6 there was a large amount of answers consistent with the visual stimuli. The answers for the 8 remaining pairs of stimuli are distributed almost evenly among the answers consistent with audio stimuli or inconsistent with audio and video.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker number</th>
<th>Video stimulus</th>
<th>Audio stimulus</th>
<th>Answers consistent with audio stimuli</th>
<th>Answers consistent with video stimuli</th>
<th>Inconsistent answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>da</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>eg</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ga</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>ag</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the variants of inconsistent answers obtained in the second experiment were analyzed. The variants of inconsistent answers and the number of answers for each of the variants are presented in Table 10. The number of these variants is restricted to 8 syllables and the number of answers for particular syllables is spread from few answers to more than 100. Thus, considering the set of examined pairs of audio-video stimuli and the applied modifications, the most distinctive cases of the McGurk effect in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Audio</th>
<th>da</th>
<th>de</th>
<th>pa</th>
<th>ba</th>
<th>be</th>
<th>ak</th>
<th>ta</th>
<th>ga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>da</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>eg</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ga</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>ag</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Polish listeners under examined conditions seems to be the audio-visual pair of stimuli “ga – be” perceived in inconsistent answers unanimously as “de” and the audio-visual pair of stimuli “na – ba” perceived almost unanimously as “da”.

4. Conclusions

The results of the first experiment for which over 94% of answers were consistent with the audio stimuli indicate that generally it is very difficult to evoke the McGurk effect in Polish listeners. Thus, the McGurk effect in Polish seems to be a marginal phenomenon and there is no danger to distort the perception of complex audio-visual signals. Since, however, the McGurk effect depends on the interaction between aural and visual stimuli, it was possible to obtain – by a selection of phonetic material and the speakers – an increase in the McGurk effect to over 40% of the examined stimuli.

The results of the second experiment indicated also that distortions in audio and video signals have an influence on the perception of audio-video stimuli. The distortions in the visual signals result in an increase of the answers consistent with the audio stimuli, while the distortions in the aural signals result in an increase of the answers consistent with the visual stimuli.

Acknowledgments

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References