

ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF ARGENTINE SPANISH VOICELESS FRICATIVES

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The present work attempts to examine the perceptual load carried by the frequency position of the most prominent energy-density maximum in the identification of Argentine-Spanish voiceless fricatives. The results are compared with those obtained by Fry (1973) from a group of English-speaking listeners.

Procedure

The test tape consisted of 13 synthetic syllables formed by a fricative voiceless consonant plus a vowel (transitionless), repeated eight times and randomized.¹

The vowel values were fixed and the fricative portion was obtained by filtering a wide-band noise in order to obtain a set of 13 frequency variable bands ranging from 1.250 to 7.500 Hz.

Two groups of Argentine Spanish-speaking listeners and one of English-speaking listeners were tested under two experimental conditions: free-choice and forced-choice. The latter method was employed in order to allow the comparison between our results and those obtained by Fry.

Results and Discussion

Spanish-speaking listeners identified high and low frequency bands as /f/ and middle ones as /s/. Two noise-bands in between /s/ and low /f/ were sometimes identified as /ʃ/.

These results are not in agreement with those obtained from English-speaking listeners who divided the voiceless continuum in two sections: /s/ for high and /ʃ/ for low frequency values.

Both English and Spanish-speaking listeners' responses were only slightly influenced by the forced-choice condition. Thus, the difference between the two sets of data cannot be accounted for by the method employed and may probably be attributed to a different use of the acoustic properties due to the peculiarities of each linguistic system.

Reference

Fry, D.B. (1973): "Acoustic cues in the speech of the hearing and the deaf", Proc. Royal Soc. of Medicine, 66, 959-969.

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