

Mid vowel variation in /s/ aspiration contexts in Havana City spoken Spanish

Edgar Madrid (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-I)

This communication presents the results of a study about the phonetic variation of mid vowels /e/ and /o/ in /s/-aspiration contexts in Havana City spoken Spanish. It is a common statement that vowels are object of a lengthening process in /s/-aspiration contexts, in those cases in which /s/ is deleted by lenition, v. gr.: /peska/ → pehka → pe ka → [pe:ka] ‘fishing’, or /kosta/ → kohta → ko ta → [kɔ:ta] ‘coast’. That is, /s/-aspiration would be the trigger for a compensatory lengthening process. The lost /s/ would leave an empty X-slot, or a free mora which would become associated to previous vowel, as a fulfillment of the *Template Satisfaction Condition* (McCarthy and Prince 1995). Another common statement is that vowels in such contexts tend to suffer an opening process, so previous examples phonetic forms would be [pɛ:ka] and [kɔ:ta], as it has been found in other Spanish variants where /s/-aspiration is a common process.

However, acoustic evidence shows that the expected vowel lengthening and opening processes in /s/-aspiration contexts are subject of a wide phonetic variation. Acoustic analysis of the data, obtained from native Cuban Spanish speakers, reveals that vowel lengthening doesn't occur in every case of /s/-aspiration. In fact, vowel /e/ shows just a slightly lengthening in some cases, whereas /o/ never does. This result becomes in a challenge for compensatory lengthening and syllabic weight phonological hypotheses. On the other hand, only /o/ shows a statistically significant opening, but, once again, just in certain contexts. This facts lead to the conclusion that neither vowel lengthening nor vowel opening can be considered categorical processes in any sense, at least in the analyzed Spanish variant.

McCarthy, John and Alan Prince. 1995. “Prosodic morphology”, in *The Handbook of Phonological Theory*, ed. John A. Goldsmith. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995, pp. 318-366.