

Aspirated Stops in Andalusian Spanish

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Aspirating dialects of Spanish have been traditionally described as substituting /s/ for a period of aspiration or breathy voice, this phenomenon being typical of coda positions (Gerfen, 2002). In preconsonantal position, this lenition process has resulted in gestural configurations comparable to the ones displayed by preaspirated stops in languages like Gaelic, Icelandic and Swedish among others. Given that preaspirated stops are known to be rare and unstable segments in the languages of the world (Silverman, 2003), a legitimate question should be why preaspiration has been maintained in aspirating dialects of Spanish across centuries. In this respect, notice that in French, which underwent a similar process, preconsonantal aspiration proved to be unstable and was quickly eliminated (e.g./testa/>/tehtə/>/tɛt/ *tête*). It has been noted that preaspirated consonants are commonly geminated in Andalusian Spanish (Penny, 2000; Gerfen, 2002), and that preaspirated voiced stops are realized as voiced fricatives (Romero, 1995). A less known fact is that preaspirated voiceless stops are realized with a significantly longer VOT than other voiceless stops: that is, they are also postaspirated. The main goal of our study is to provide instrumental evidence of this phenomenon, in an effort to draw a more complete picture of coarticulation effects between aspirated /s/ and adjacent consonants. In a pilot experiment, 2 native speakers of Andalusian Spanish were asked to read a list of 60 words containing either /VCV/ or /VsCV/ (with aspirated /s/) 3 times, for a total of 360 tokens. VOT was measured from waveforms and time-aligned spectrograms. Results from an ANOVA show a significant difference in the VOT of the stop in the two contexts (Speaker 1: $F(1049.23, 1)$, $p < 0.0001$; Speaker 2: $F(286.75, 1)$, $p < 0.0001$) with a much longer VOT for stops following aspirated /s/. These data lead us to conclude that in Andalusian Spanish aspiration in preconsonantal position relies on other cues than mere glottal frication, and that these will vary depending on articulatory and perceptual factors determined by the phonetic context. A diachronic interpretation of these data is that preconsonantal aspiration in Andalusian Spanish is stable because it is cued by significant effects on adjacent segments. From such a perspective, the lack of a right-hand environment in utterance-final position would explain why aspiration in this context usually undergoes complete deletion in some aspirating dialects such as Andalusian Spanish, while others maintain /s/ even though they display aspiration in utterance-medial position, as found in Argentinian Spanish. Finally, the tendency for preconsonantal /s/ to be completely deleted in Dominican Spanish, producing neutralization between *gasto* and *gato* (Lipski, 1994), can be attributed to the lack of h-triggered postaspiration in this dialect.

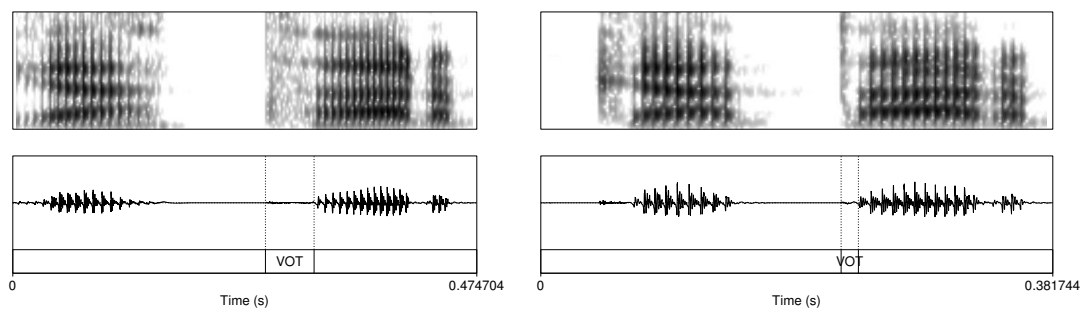


Figure 1: Spectrograms and waveforms corresponding to the words *gastar* ‘spend’ (left) and *catar* ‘taste’ (right) in the utterances of Speaker 1.

References

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