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## Salvadorian-Accented English Vowels Produced by Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

Joel Alfredo Pena Coreas

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**Salvadorian-Accented English Vowels Produced by Teachers of English as a  
Foreign Language**

by

Joel Alfredo Pena Coreas

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts in

English: Teaching English as a Second Language

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### **Abstract**

English has spread in the world and it has become the international language of business and without a doubt, the most important language spoken and taught as a foreign language in Latin America. El Salvador is a country in Central America and this study presents information about the production of vowels by foreign speakers of English in this country. This is a replication of the studies conducted by Peterson and Barney (1952) and Hillenbrand, Getty, Wheeler, and Clark (1994). The participants of the study include English as a Foreign Language teachers in El Salvador. The information of Salvadorian-accented vowels includes information about six correlates including the formats F0, F1, F2, F3, duration, and intensity. The focus of the study is to assess intelligibility levels within Salvadorian-accented vowels and in comparison, with General American English which is conducted by analyzing data for the format one. Data and analysis is also conducted for the rest of the correlates because they also contribute to get an accurate representation of Salvadorian-accented vowels that can help determine how each of the vowel sounds is produced in Salvadorian Speech. The study also provides with conclusions, pedagogical implications, and potential future research in the field of Phonetics.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

English is by far the most important foreign language taught in El Salvador and most private and public schools include English as a foreign language classes in their programs. However, interaction with native speakers of English is not very common and when it occurs, communication is often difficult due to intelligibility issues.- Vowels are extremely important for intelligibility since they are what listeners rely the most on when understanding a word. Variations of English vowels can be identified by their production of vowels as stated by Ladefoged (2006) “Accents of English differ more in the use of vowels than in their use of consonants” (p. 38). If this type of variation takes place in American native speakers of English from different regions of the country and it is safe to say that they apply for nonnative speakers of English as well (Koffi, 2017, p. 107). Prator and Robinett (1985) also provided this suggestion “If you wish to understand and be understood in English, you must be able to distinguish and make the distinctions between the vowel sounds with great accuracy” (p. 13).

The issue of intelligibility can be addressed by understanding what causes the problem and one of them can be the production of English sounds, especially vowels. English vowels can be a challenge for Spanish speakers since there is a considerable difference in the number of vowels in the two languages. Spanish has five phonemic vowels while General American English has eleven-

This research project focuses on the production of vowels by Salvadorian English speakers who are teachers of English in high schools and universities. Studying their

vowels gives a window into the vowels that may cause intelligibility issues when communicating with other speakers of English.

There is significant importance attached to this research since it may be the first step in identifying Salvadorian-accented English vowels and how they compare to general American English. It may also be the beginning of a path to understand Salvadorian-accented English in general so that intelligibility can be improved and addressed properly to promote better communication with other speakers of English.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

It is important to state that, to the best of my knowledge, no acoustic analysis of sounds has been done in El Salvador and that this would be the first study conducted to determine similarities and differences between vowel sounds produced by Salvadorian Speakers of English as a foreign language and General American English speakers.

Differences in the production and perception of sounds can be attributed to the speakers and listeners' backgrounds as Peterson and Barney (1952) stated:

In the elementary case of a word containing a consonant-vowel-consonant phoneme structure, a speaker's pronunciation of the vowel within the word will be influenced by his particular dialectal background; and his pronunciation of the vowel may differ both in phonetic quality and in measurable characteristics from that produced in the word by speakers with other backgrounds. (p. 175)

Based on the previous quote it is possible to say that native languages may influence the production of vowel sounds in English as second/foreign language speakers and these differences vary in measurable characteristics, which means that it is possible to identify those differences if they are analyzed acoustically. At the same time, those differences among dialects can be contrasted to assess intelligibility.

### General American English Vowels

Peterson and Barney (1952) were the pioneers in designing a method to measure the production of vowels. They recorded a list of ten monosyllabic words which began with [h] and ended with [d] and which differed only in the vowel. The words that they used were *heed, hid, head, had, hod, hawed, hood, who'd, hud, and heard*.

In their study, Peterson and Barney (1952) considered a total of 76 participants, including 33 men, 28 women, and 15 children. They conducted an analysis in which a group of 70 observers had to identify the vowels they heard, and they collected data on the number of agreements they had had in identifying each of the vowels. After plotting these sounds in a spectrogram by contrasting first and second formant measurements, they appear in the positions they take place in the mouth. For example, high, mid, low, front, central, and back. This study represents a reference for what is now known as the production of vowels in General American English.

Another important acoustic study in the US was conducted by Hillenbrand, Getty, Wheeler, and Clark (1994) in which they replicated the one by Peterson and Barney (1952). They decided to do it because of certain limitations in the previous study including that measurements were taken from single time examples of the sound, duration of the sounds was not included, and there wasn't any information about spectral change over time. Other limitations also included that there wasn't much information about dialects that the participants represented, the listening results were not reported separately for men, women, and children, there wasn't information about the ages of the participating children, and finally, the original signals were not available for further measurements.

Hillenbrand et al. (1994) considered 45 men, 48 women, and 46 ten- to 12-year old children (27 boys and 19 children). Most the speakers (87%) were raised in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The remainder were from areas in the upper Midwest, such as Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Northern Ohio, and northern Indiana. Each of

the participants was screened by performing an acoustic analysis on them in a regular speech by focusing mainly on the difference between /a/ and /ɔ/. Another difference in this study compared to the one by Peterson and Barney (1952) was that the vowels /e/ and /o/ were also included. This study is said to represent the characteristics of vowel sounds for the Midwest in the US. The reference for general American English that is used in the present study would be the results of the study by Peterson and Barney (1952) and the results for the vowels /e/ and /o/ from the study conducted by Hillenbrand et al. (1994).

### **Intelligibility Assessment**

Assessing intelligibility can be challenging. One way to assess intelligibility is to use an impressionistic methodology in which the analysis relies on the aural perceptions of native speakers to carry out intelligibility judgements on the L2 accented English vowels (Koffi, 2017, p. 108), but there is an important disadvantage presented by Lehiste and Peterson (1959) “a listener’s own linguistic background will strongly influence his influence his judgements about any speech which he hears” (p. 281). Ladefoged (2003) also said, “early phoneticians did wonderful work relying simply on their ears” (p. 30).

An alternative methodology to the traditional impressionistic model is presented by Koffi (2012), “The methodology that I use in this paper to assess the intelligibility of SoE has been labeled ‘instrumental’ because it does not rely on human agency to assess intelligibility but rather on acoustic devices and techniques”. An instrumental methodology to assess intelligibility is also suggested by Ladefoged, (2003) because

“instrumental phonetics has made it possible to document descriptions of languages more precisely” (p. 30).

Formants provide with valuable information in the production of vowels. F1 shows a vowel’s height, F2 its backness, and F3 for lip rounding. According to Ladefoged (2006), F1 is the most relevant correlate in differentiating vowels since it contains 80% of the energy in the vowel and F2 is not as important in this role (p.188). As for F3, Ladefoged (2002) stated that “[it] has very little function in distinguishing the vowels shown” (p. 46).

Using Peterson and Barney’s (1952) and Hillenbrand et al.’s (1994) methodology, one can measure vowel intelligibility acoustically. Unintelligibility is also called masking. It takes place when the distance between two vowel phonemes in their F1s is less than 60 Hz. Koffi (2017, p. 109) presents the various levels of masking that may take place in Table 1.

Table 1

*Acoustic Distance and Intelligibility*

N0	F1 Acoustic Distance	Degrees of Masking
1.	> 61 Hz	No masking / Optimal intelligibility
2.	41 Hz – 60 Hz	Slight masking / Good intelligibility
3.	21 Hz – 40 Hz	Moderate masking / Compromised intelligibility
4.	0 Hz – 20 Hz	Complete masking / Severe unintelligibility

An important aspect in assessing intelligibility in English is how relevant confusion of two English phonemes is for communicative purposes. This is also essential for pedagogical implications because it allows teachers to focus on the sounds that cause confusion and that have the highest functional load. Catford (1987) defines

Relative Functional Load (RFL) in the following way “... the functional load of a phoneme or phonemic contrast is represented by the number of words in which it occurs in the lexicon, or in the case of a phonemic contrast, the number of pairs of words in the lexicon that serves to keep distinct” (p. 88).

Koffi (2017) explains how the Relative Functional Load is obtained:

The methodology consists in collecting about 1000 words. Ideally, these words are common vocabulary items covering various semantic domains such as the human anatomy, the environment, the fauna and flora, the landscape, celestial bodies indigenous to the language group. The analyst then transcribes the words narrowly and carefully catalogues all the lexical minimal pairs and/or all phonetically similar sounds that occur in the same environment because such segments are phonemically contrastive. If the language is a tonal language, pitch differences that are contrastive are also noted. If one wishes to know the RFL of /p/ and /b/ for example, one finds all the words in the data in which both segments constitute minimal pair or occur in the same environment. If /p/ and /b/ contrast 22 out 37 words in initial, medial, or final positions, one concludes that the RFL of /p/ and /b/ is 59%. (p. 44)

According to Koffi (2017, p. 46), it is possible to identify five distinct levels of intelligibility based on the Relative Functional Load (See appendix C). Table 2 summarizes those levels.

Table 2

*Relative Functional Load and Intelligibility*

N0	Percentage	Intelligibility Rating
1.	80 – 100%	Severe unintelligibility
2.	60 – 79%	High unintelligibility
3.	40 – 59%	Moderate unintelligibility
4.	20 – 39 %	Low unintelligibility
5.	1 – 19%	Slight unintelligibility

**L2 Accented English Vowels**

There have been many studies conducted to assess the production of vowels by L2 English speakers. All the studies listed below have been replication studies using the same methodology as Peterson and Barney (1952) and Hillenbrand et al. (1994). They also performed the acoustic analyses using Praat, a free software for acoustic analyses. The goal of the studies was to establish a comparison between the production of vowels by GAE speakers and the one by L2 English speakers.

Khalil (2014) conducted a study to compare the production of English vowels by Egyptian English speakers. The results of the study showed that Egyptian English speakers have problems with vowels that do not exist in the Egyptian vowel system which are the front vowels /e, ε, æ / and the back vowels /ɑ, ɔ, ʊ, o/ (p. 13).

Khalil (2014) also provided three distinct levels in which the problematic English vowels can be classified. The first category is non-problematic vowels [i, u, ʌ], which are the ones that would not cause intelligibility issues when interacting with other English speakers. The second category is semi-problematic vowels [ɪ, ʊ] which are the vowels



that may cause some degree of intelligibility. The last category is problematic which would cause serious unintelligibility issues for Egyptian English speakers [e, æ, ε, o, ɔ, ɑ] (p. 14).

Lucic (2015) studied English vowels produced by Montenegrin English speakers. The results were presented for male and female speakers separately. According to the study, Male speakers confuse the English vowels [æ] and [ɑ] since their F1s are 18 Hz apart from each other. The study also shows that the vowels [ɪ], [e] and [ε] can be problematic for male Montenegrin speakers because their F1s are in a range of 45 Hz. As for female Montenegrin speakers, the results show that the English vowels that may cause unintelligibility issues are [ʊ], [o], and [u] because they have F1s within 13 Hz. Finally, the vowels [ɪ], [i], and [e] may also cause unintelligibility issues for female Montenegrin speakers because their F1s are 17 Hz apart (p. 12).

Brown and Oyer (2013) studied the English vowels produced by a native Arabic speaker. The study shows that the vowels [ε] and [ɪ] produced by the participant and the sound [e] from GAE would cause confusion in a listener because their F1s are 6 Hz from each other and words like “weight”, “wet”, or “wit” would sound the same. Another pair of problematic sounds would be the sounds [o] in GAE and the participant’s [u] since they are 19 Hz apart in their F1s and the words “show” and “shoe” would sound the same. The study also shows that the sounds [i] and [e] produced by the participant and the sound [ɪ] in GAE would cause confusion because their F1s occur in a range of 19 Hz and the words “wean” and “wane” produced by the participant would sound the same as the word “win”. Finally, the sound [ɔ] produced by the participant and the

sound [ɑ] in GAE have F1s with a difference of 26 Hz causing words like “caught” and “cot” to sound the same (p. 12).

Packer and Lorincz (2013) conducted a study on the English vowels produced by Ibrahim, a 20-year-old male from Saudi Arabia whose first language is Arabic and who has been a student in an intensive English program in the US for a little over a year. The study shows that the vowels [ɪ] and [e] produced by the participant may be the cause of intelligibility issues since the vowel [ɪ] has been lowered and [e] has been raised and fronted which has caused them to merge closer than in GAE. Their F1s are 18 Hz apart from each other which means that two sounds would be perceived as the same. In addition, the student’s pronunciation of the sounds [u] and [o] are also getting closer to each other since the sound [u] has been lowered and centralized whereas the sound [o] has been raised and the two sounds are occurring closer to the sound [ʊ] produced in GAE and the proximity in these three vowel sounds may cause intelligibility issues. The sounds [ɑ] and [ʌ] produced by the participant are also very close to each other since their F1s are only 2 Hz apart from each other causing them to be perceived as the same. In addition, the sound [ɔ] has been lowered and centralized which would also cause confusion with the sounds [ɑ] and [ʌ] resulting in unintelligibility issues (p. 11).

Gordon and Hart (2013) studied the production of vowels by a native Japanese speaker. According to the study, the vowel sound [æ] produced by the participant is close to the sounds [ɑ] or [ɔ] in GAE and they would cause unintelligibility when communicating with English speakers. They also found that the sound [ɛ] produced by

the participant would sound like the sound [æ] in GAE based on their F1 and F2 measurements and it would cause intelligibility issues. The study also shows that the sounds [ɔ] and [ɒ] would cause unintelligibility since the participant's pronunciation of the sound [ɒ] is close to the sound [ɔ] in GAE because their F1s are 26 Hz apart. Finally, the sound [ʊ] produced by the participant and the sound [ʌ] in GAE have F1s occurring in a range of 50 Hz which would cause some degree of unintelligibility (pp. 13-14)

Koffi and Ribeiro (2016) studied the English vowels produced by a Speaker of Portuguese. The results of the study indicate that the sounds [ʌ] (620 Hz) and [ʊ] (603 Hz) mask each other because their F1s are 17 Hz apart which means that when the participant says the words <book> and <buck> they would be perceived as the same word and it would cause unintelligibility issues; however, intelligibility is not seriously compromised because the relative functional load (RFL) between these two sounds is only 9%. The sounds [æ] (829 Hz) and [ɑ] (826 Hz) also mask each other because their F1s are within 3 Hz and this can be the cause of serious unintelligibility since the relative functional load for these two sounds is 76% (p. 86).

Zhang (2014) studied Chinese-accented English vowels. The results of the study provide with information on the vowels that may cause unintelligibility. The first pair of sounds that are confused are the sounds [ɒ] and [ʌ] which have a difference in their F1s of 0 Hz and would make the words <cut> and <caught> to sound the same. The second pair of sounds that may cause unintelligibility issues are the vowel [i] produced by the participant and the vowel [ɪ] in GAE which would make listeners hear the word <ship>

when the participant is actually producing the word <sheep>. The third pair of problematic vowel sounds are the sound [ɛ] produced by the participant and the sound [æ] in GAE which would cause confusion when the participant says the words <beg> and <bag>. Finally, the sounds [u] and [ʊ] may cause confusion because their F1s have a difference of 12 Hz (p. 136).

Koffi and Ruanglertsrip (2013) studied the vowels produced by a Thai speaker. The results of the study show that confusion may take place when the participant produces the vowels [o] and [ɔ] because their acoustic distance in their F1s is 0 Hz, which would cause confusion when saying the words <boat> and <bought>. The vowels [e] and [ɛ] may also be confused because the distance in their F1s is 33 Hz causing the words <bet> and <bait> to be confused. The sounds [i] and [ɪ] would also be confused since their F1s are 40Hz apart from each other and it would cause confusion between the words <hit> and <heat> (p. 153).

Giacomino (2012) conducted a study to assess the production of English vowels of L1 Spanish speakers. The study included eight participants from Latin American countries including Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. The measurements that were considered by Giacomino (2012) were F1, F2, and duration. The discussion of the results was presented for male and female participants separately (p. 110). The results of the study indicate that unintelligibility takes place when male Spanish speakers produce the English vowel sounds [ɪ] and [e] since their F1s are only 35 Hz apart. The vowels [ɪ] and [i] are also problematic because they can be confused with each other. The English back vowels that may cause

unintelligibility for male Spanish speakers are [u] and [ʊ] which have a difference of 28 Hz in their F1s. Finally, the vowels [ɑ] and [ɔ] occupy the same position in the English vowels space for Spanish male speakers of English. As for Female Spanish speakers, the study shows that the pair of vowel sounds [ɪ] and [i] are also confused and the sounds [ɔ] and [ʌ] are in the same position in the acoustic vowel space. The study concludes that female Spanish speakers are more intelligible when producing English vowels (pp. 110-111).

After reviewing some of the literature, the next step is to state the research questions and the methodology that was used to answer them.

## Chapter III: Methodology

### Research Questions

1. How do L2 Salvadorian-accented English vowels compare to those produced in speakers of general American English?
2. What are the L2 Salvadorian-accented English vowels that may cause unintelligibility issues when interacting with other English speakers?

### Participants

Data from 22 participants was obtained. It included recordings from 10 female and 12 male participants. They were all Salvadorian English teachers working in private and public institutions in the eastern region of El Salvador. Participants are EFL teachers that agreed to take part in the study. After conducting the first technical analysis of the recordings, three recordings from female speakers and four from male participants were dismissed because they did not have the clarity that was required for the analysis of the study and there was too much noise in the background.

### Description of Data Collection Instruments

**A digital voice recorder** was used to gather the samples produced by the participants. The initial samples were recorded in an MP3 stereo format and then converted into WAV mono files.

**A set of headphones with a fixed microphone** was used for all participants when producing the samples. The headphones that were used were the GHB Sades model SA-708gt. They have a frequency range between 20-20000Hz. The sensitivity specifications are as follows: -112 dB to -3dB. The microphone is fixed to the

headphones and it has the following sensitivity specifications: -54 dB to +/- 3 dB with a frequency range of 50-10Khz.

**Praat 6. 0. 27** (Boersma & Weenick, 2017) is a free computer software that was used to measure the acoustic correlates of F0, F1, F2, F3, duration, and intensity of the vowels.

### **Procedures**

The methodology used in this study was the same as in the studies by Peterson and Barney (1952) and Hillenbrand et al. (1994). Each of the 22 participants was recorded reading the words *heed, hid, head, had, hod, hawed, hood, who'd, hud, heard, hoed, and hayed*. Each word was repeated 3 times to get accurate measurements of the vowels produced. In addition, they were recorded reading an elicited paragraph containing all English vowels.

The recordings were made in rooms that were quiet enough to get appropriate quality in the recordings. The position of the microphone when the participants were recorded was the same for all the recordings so that the quality of the audios remained the same. Then, each of the participant's recording was saved in an mp3 stereo format and later converted into a WAV mono file for its analysis.

### **Analysis**

Praat was the software used in the analysis of the eleven sets of words and the elicited paragraph. The first step was to splice each of the sets containing the same vowel. Then, spectrographs were created using the software, and they included

measurements for the correlates F0, F1, F2, F3, duration, and intensity of each word in the sets. Figure 1 shows an example of how each spectrograph looked like.

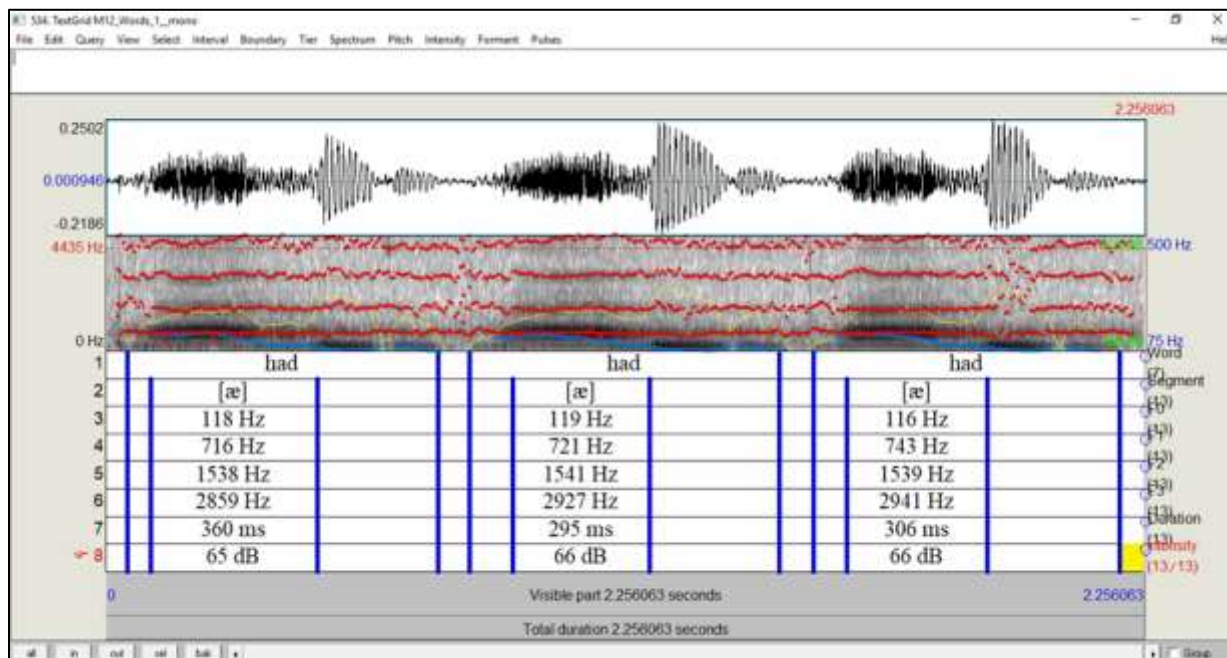


Figure 1: Annotated textGrid of "had".

After creating 11 spectrographs for each participant, each of the participants was coded with a number (1-8) and the letter M and F as identifiers for male or female. Then, data including the mean of each participant's measurements for each vowel sound and for each correlate was entered into twelve tables. Finally, all the results were added and divided by the number of participants to obtain a general mean of each measurement of the eleven English vowels. The standard deviation was also calculated for each of the correlates to obtain the variability in the results for each of the correlates. The report and analysis were conducted separately for male and female participants. The mean measurements of Salvadorian-accented vowels and General American English for F1 and F2 were entered into NORM (2017), another free online software to



produce the comparative acoustic vowels spaces. This comparison was displayed visually, and it made it possible to see which vowel sounds masked within Salvadorian-accented English vowels or in comparison to general American English (See Figure 2).

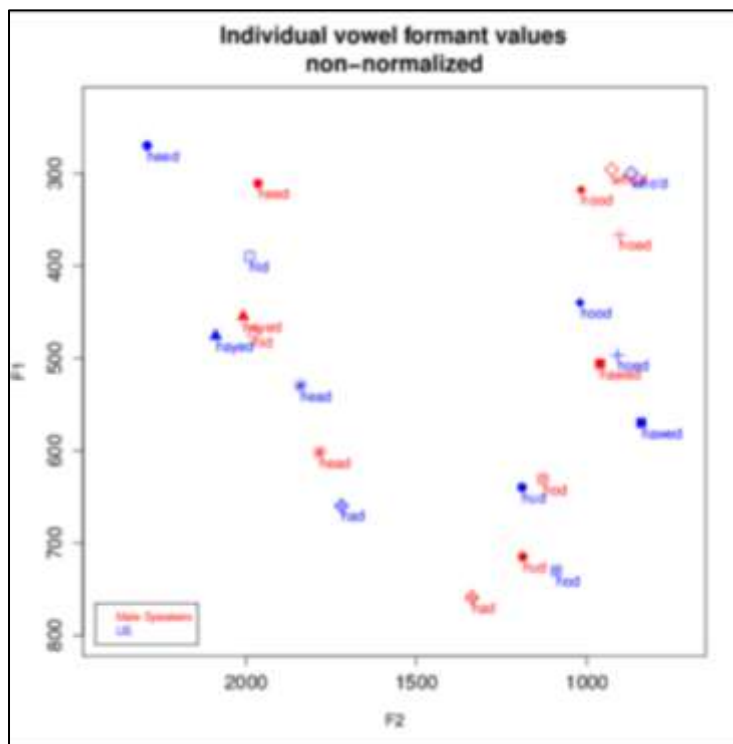


Figure 2: Acoustic vowel space for Salvadorian male speakers.

An important part of the analysis of the data was to assess the degree of masking. The analysis was conducted using the classification provided by Koffi (2017, p. 109). Masking takes place when two different vowel sounds produced by the same speaker have F1s within an acoustic distance less than or equal to 60 Hz. It can also take place when a vowel produced by an L2 English speaker masks with a different one produced in general American English; Therefore, analyses were conducted in both ways and by keeping the same  $\leq 60$  Hz reference. The degree of masking was classified as no masking if the acoustic distance in their F1s was above 60 Hz, slight masking if it was

between 41 and 60 Hz, moderate if it was between 21 and 40 Hz, or complete if it was between 0 and 20 Hz.

Once the vowels that may cause intelligibility issues were identified, an analysis was performed based on their Relative Functional Loads. This provides with valuable information on the impact of two different vowels sounds have in the English lexicon and provides information of the pair of vowel sounds. The analysis was based on the categories offered by Koffi (2017, p. 46). If the RFL of the unintelligible pairs based on their masking had an RFL between 80 and 100% unintelligibility would be identified as severe. If it was between 60 and 79%, it would be high. If it was between 40 and 59%, it would be moderate. If it was between 20 and 39%, it would be low. Finally, if it was between 1 and 19%, it would be slight (see Appendix C).

An analysis for F2 was also conducted because it was important to obtain an acoustic vowel space, but it was also part of the specific analysis since it may signal significant changes for vowel backness. Specific vowels in which changes were above 200 Hz were identified and discussed.

The next correlate to be analyzed was F0 which represents pitch. Pitch was analyzed by obtaining the average pitch in GAE for male and female participants and then comparing it to the one in Salvadorian-accented Speech for male and female participants. The analysis for F3 was done separately for front and back vowels and a comparison was made with GAE to assess the degree of lip-rounding in the production of Salvadorian-accented vowels.

Duration was also analyzed by obtaining averages from GAE and Salvadorian-accented vowels, but it was also conducted separately to identify vowel sounds that differ by more than 10 ms which indicates that two sounds would be perceived differently. Finally, the correlate of intensity was analyzed by making a comparison of averages in GAE and Salvadorian-accented vowels. The next chapter presents the results for the present study for the correlates F1 and F2 for male and female participants.

## Chapter IV: Results

### F1 and F2

This chapter presents the results of this study for the correlates F1 and F2. According to Ladefoged (2006), F1 represents the most important correlate to differentiate vowels because it contains 80% of the energy in the vowels whereas F2 does not play such an essential role (p.188). However, F2 has been included in the results because it is used as reference in the visual representation of an acoustic vowel space and it is also an indicator of changes that take place in English. The results of the study are presented separately for female and male participants.

Each of the tables below presents the results obtained from male and female Salvadorian participants. It includes the mean for each correlate in the eleven vowel sounds recorded by the participants as well as the general mean and the standard deviation of the results which provides additional information on how the results vary throughout the participants.

The analysis of the results has two parts. The first one is based on the production of vowels within Salvadorian male or female speakers and the second one is in comparison with GAE by using the reference in the studies conducted by Peterson and Barney (1952) and Hillenbrand et al. (1998). Tables 3 and 4 below present a summary for the correlates F1 and F2.

Table 3

*Summary of F1 for Salvadorian Male Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	Hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
<b>F1 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[e]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B<sup>1</sup> (1952)</b>	270	390	476 <sup>2</sup>	530	660	730	570	497 <sup>3</sup>	440	300	640
Speaker 1	317	610	541	706	800	415	365	302	285	275	670
Speaker 2	326	377	459	641	810	357	294	314	318	339	700
Speaker 3	308	341	476	631	821	742	783	415	294	293	746
Speaker 4	247	399	297	359	694	703	263	254	266	238	696
Speaker 5	364	555	505	660	743	701	686	509	445	453	728
Speaker 6	400	545	542	647	796	674	717	485	413	333	680
Speaker 7	213	546	416	644	683	730	398	298	278	199	775
Speaker 8	319	404	405	532	726	732	545	360	252	239	727
Mean	311	472	455	602	759	631	506	367	318	296	715
St. Deviation	59.4	102	81.8	109.7	54.5	153.9	203.7	93.3	71.1	79.5	35.2

Table 4

*Summary of F2 for Salvadorian Male Speakers*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	Hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
<b>F2 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[e]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	2290	1990	2089*	1840	1720	1090	840	910*	1020	870	1190
Speaker 1	1989	1947	1978	2035	1267	901	910	908	870	860	1023
Speaker 2	2021	2233	2135	2120	1572	1139	998	990	1268	1452	1189
Speaker 3	1420	1850	1711	1772	1040	1158	1100	962	971	657	1120
Speaker 4	2024	1934	1900	1843	1437	1356	772	864	1016	760	1388
Speaker 5	2029	1697	1995	1512	1379	1239	1005	962	1015	980	1208
Speaker 6	2200	1971	2032	1125	1171	1042	1072	875	1062	931	962
Speaker 7	1815	2027	2171	1788	1297	1184	943	840	1095	950	1271
Speaker 8	2227	2179	2143	2084	1539	1018	891	832	841	828	1350
Mean	1965	1979	2008	1784	1337	1129	961	904	1017	927	1188
St. Deviation	254.8	171.5	152.3	333.3	181.2	141.1	105.8	60.7	134	237.2	149.5

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<sup>1</sup> Stands for Peterson and Barney.

<sup>2</sup> Data taken from Hillenbrand et al. (1998)

<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Hillenbrand et al. (1998)

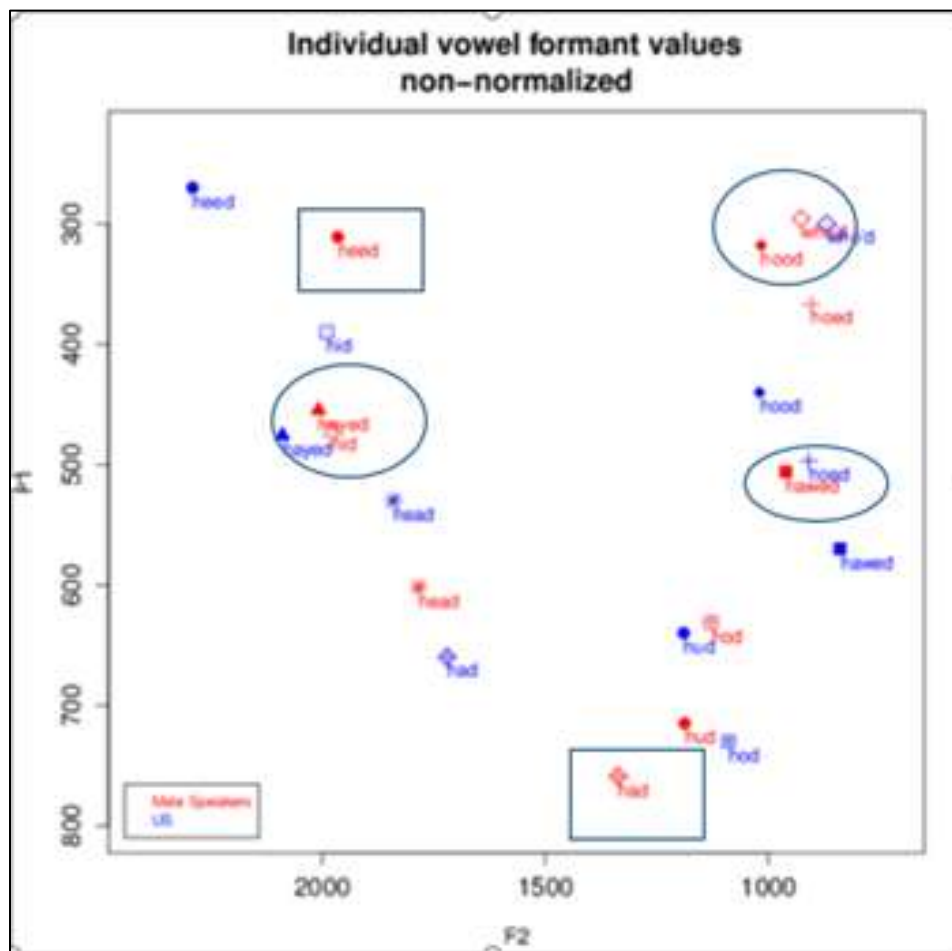


Figure 3: Acoustic vowel space for Salvadorian male participants.

### F1 and F2 for Salvadorian Male Speakers

After analyzing the results of F1 for male speakers, the study indicates that there are two pairs of vowels within Salvadorian-accented vowels that can affect intelligibility when speaking English. The first one is [ɪ] (472 Hz) and [e] (455 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 18 Hz which implies complete masking and severe unintelligibility. This is a very important finding because the relative functional load of this pair is 80%. The second pair is the vowel sounds [ʊ] (318 Hz) and [u] (296 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 22 Hz implying moderate masking and compromised intelligibility, but with a relative

functional load of only 7% which indicates that the importance in differentiating the two sounds is low in American English lexicon.

When comparing the results for male Salvadorian participants and the vowels produced in General American English, there is only one pair of vowels that may cause unintelligibility issues which is the Salvadorian-accented [ɔ] (506 Hz) and GAE [o] (497 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 9 Hz indicating complete masking and severe unintelligibility. The relative functional load of this pair is 88% denoting significant importance in American English Lexicon. However, after analyzing individual results, confusion between Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɔ] (506 Hz) and GAE [o] (497 Hz) is only caused by the average because none of the individual F1 results of Salvadorian-accented vowel sound [ɔ] is close enough to the GAE [o] (497 Hz).

The results for F2 in male Salvadorian-accented vowels indicate that there are two vowels that have moved significantly in the acoustic vowel space. The first one is [i] (1965 Hz) which has moved towards the center in comparison to GAE [i] (2290 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 325 Hz. The second one is the vowel sound [æ] (1337 Hz) which has also moved towards the center in comparison to GAE [æ] (1720 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 383 Hz. Both movements can be identified in the acoustic vowel space presented above for the Salvadorian male participants.

Table 5

*Summary of F1 for Salvadorian Female Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
<b>F1 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	310	430	*536	610	860	850	590	*555	470	370	760
Speaker 1	582	480	604	688	828	785	809	644	555	539	835
Speaker 2	464	472	623	715	804	809	741	714	548	454	818
Speaker 3	349	383	458	702	883	846	858	447	366	360	830
Speaker 4	409	434	481	615	757	688	583	519	420	389	659
Speaker 5	313	452	419	750	878	768	643	350	361	329	772
Speaker 6	460	552	438	575	855	839	575	470	458	440	838
Speaker 7	349	502	373	644	693	652	600	379	339	370	559
Mean	418	467	485	669	814	769	687	503	435	411	758
St. Deviation	92.5	53.2	94	61.2	69.1	74	115.4	133.9	88.8	71.3	108.5

Table 6

*Summary of F2 for Salvadorian Female Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
<b>F2 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	2790	2480	*2530	2330	2050	1220	920	*1035	1160	950	1640
Speaker 1	2241	1939	2326	1167	1219	1120	1136	969	957	961	1218
Speaker 2	1388	1543	2121	1407	1706	1072	941	963	1204	1142	1057
Speaker 3	946	1184	1778	1758	1393	1361	1396	980	1238	1357	1408
Speaker 4	1458	1948	1139	1302	1147	967	998	931	833	1032	970
Speaker 5	1619	2046	1965	2106	1672	1064	1304	1191	1502	1004	1110
Speaker 6	1671	1349	1269	1436	1200	1141	1030	982	989	946	1246
Speaker 7	2057	1547	1425	1876	1234	1659	1431	954	1575	1003	1724
Mean	1625	1650	1717	1578	1367	1197	1176	995	1185	1063	1247
St. Deviation	430.7	331.3	450.8	340.2	232.5	236.5	199.8	87.8	279.8	144.2	253.6



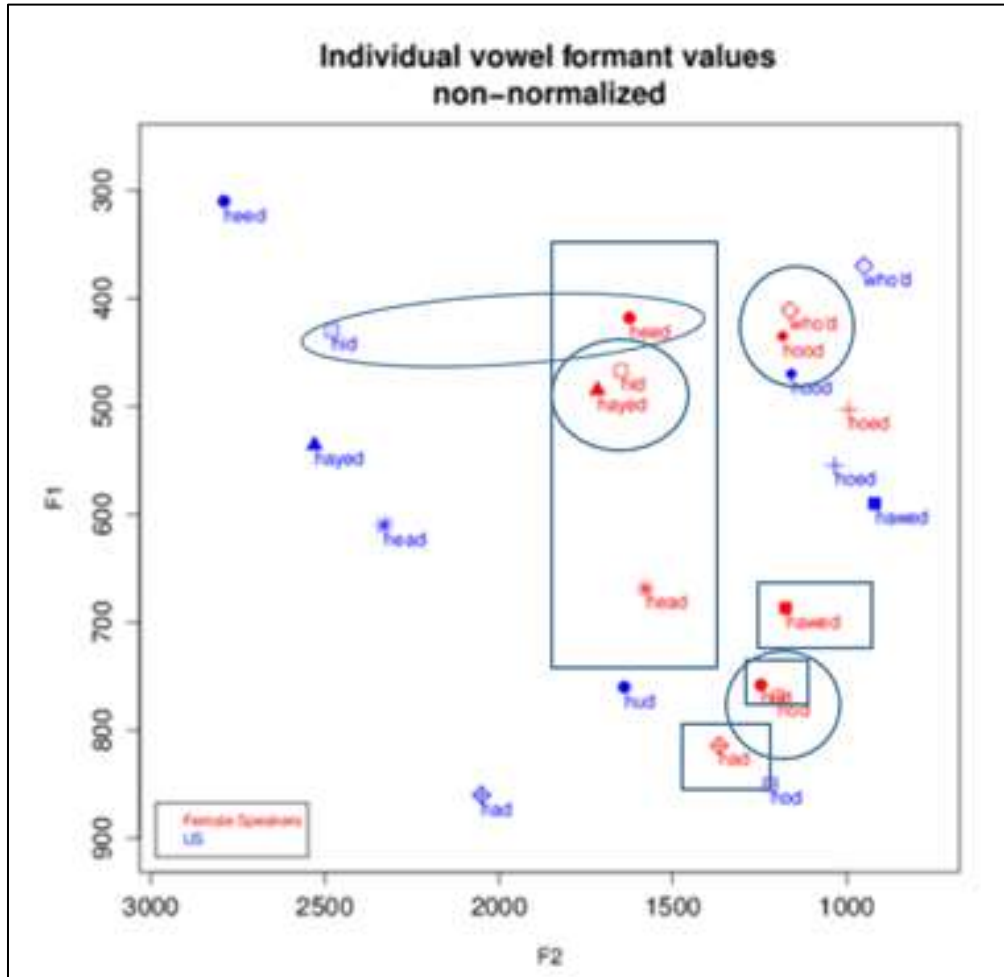


Figure 4: Acoustic vowel space for Salvadorian female speakers

### F1 and F2 for Salvadorian Female Speakers

Within Salvadorian-accented vowels, the results of the study for Salvadorian female participants show that there are three pairs of vowels that may cause unintelligibility. The first one includes the vowel sounds [ɪ] (467 Hz) and [e] (485 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 18 Hz resulting in complete masking and severe unintelligibility and with a relative functional load of 80% indicating profound impact on American English lexicon. The second pair includes the vowel sounds [ʊ] (435 Hz) and [u] (411 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 24 Hz demonstrating moderate masking and

compromised intelligibility but with a relative functional load of only 7% which is low. The last two vowel sounds are [ɑ] (769 Hz) and [ʌ] (758 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 11 Hz showing Complete masking and severe unintelligibility and with a relative functional load of 65% which would have a high impact on English lexicon.

In comparison with GAE for Female participants, the results indicate that the Salvadorian-accented [i] (418 Hz) and GAE [ɪ] (430 Hz) have an acoustic distance of 12 Hz which implies complete masking and severe unintelligibility. The relative functional load for this pair of sounds is 95% with significant impact on English lexicon. After reviewing individual results, they indicate that the acoustic distance is low enough to cause unintelligibility in only 3 of the seven participants with acoustic distances of 16, 21 and 30 Hz.

The results for F2 in female participants show that all front vowels have become centralized consistently. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [i] (1625 Hz) in contrast with GAE [i] (2790 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 1165 Hz. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɪ] (1650 Hz) in comparison to GAE [ɪ] (2480 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 830 Hz. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [e] (1717 Hz) and the GAE [e] (2530 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 813 Hz. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɛ] (1578 Hz) and the GAE [ɛ] (2330 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 808 Hz. Finally, The Salvadorian-accented vowel [æ] (1367 Hz) in contrast with GAE [æ] (2050 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 817 Hz.

It is also necessary to point out that there are two Salvadorian-accented back vowels that have changed significantly in comparison with GAE. The first one is the

Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɔ] (1176 Hz) which has been moved towards the center in contrast with GAE [ɔ] (920 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 256 Hz. Finally, the Salvadorian vowel [ʌ] (1247 Hz) is more backed than GAE [ʌ] (1640 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 393 Hz.

The next chapter presents the results for the correlates F0, F3, Duration, and Intensity.

### **F0, F3, Duration, and Intensity**

Chapter III presents finding for the rest of the correlates including F0, F3, Intensity and Duration. These correlates do not influence intelligibility, but they provide with valuable information about accentedness or particularities that take place in a variation of the English language. The analysis for these correlates is conducted by comparing the results from Salvadorian-accented English and GAE to establish differences in the production of vowels.

F0 is the measurement that represents pitch which varies according to a range of factors including gender, age, height, and complexity. According to Titze (1994), “The average speaking F0 for adult females is around 200 Hz and for adults around 125 Hz” (p. 170). Therefore, a comparison can also be made to verify if the data is consistent with the framework provided by Titze in 1994. Tables 7 and 8 present a summary of the results for F0.

Table 7

*F0 for Salvadorian Male Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
<b>F0 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	136	135	129	130	127	124	129	129	137	141	130
Speaker 1	129	120	127	124	167	122	127	127	128	128	148
Speaker 2	122	116	121	117	117	121	126	122	137	133	115
Speaker 3	155	147	140	121	123	128	131	139	151	149	137
Speaker 4	200	155	155	138	152	162	164	155	168	180	153
Speaker 5	144	145	138	130	188	160	147	136	153	161	141
Speaker 6	131	174	129	114	131	132	127	123	132	118	119
Speaker 7	163	148	138	136	142	147	150	146	153	151	151
Speaker 8	152	119	137	127	117	131	156	145	161	153	144
Mean	149	140	135	125	142	137	141	136	147	146	138
St. Deviation	23.6	19.2	10.2	8.1	24.4	15.9	14.9	11.9	13.7	18.5	13.6

**F0 for Salvadorian Male Speakers**

The results for F0 in Salvadorian male participants indicate that pitch is higher than in GAE in ten of the eleven vowel sounds. [ɛ] is the only vowel sound in Salvadorian-accented vowels for male participants that shows an F0 that is 5Hz lower than its counterpart in GAE. By obtaining an average in F0 values in all vowel sounds, the average for GAE is 131 Hz and the one for Salvadorian male participants is 139 Hz. The results indicate that F0 is in average 8 Hz higher in Salvadorian male participants in comparison with GAE. The 139 Hz average pitch in Salvadorian participants is consistent with the value of 125 Hz provided by Titze in 1994.

Table 8

*F0 for Salvadorian Female Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	Hud
<b>F0 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	235	232	*219	223	210	212	216	*217	232	231	221
Speaker 1	242	229	211	220	217	250	249	235	251	256	252
Speaker 2	239	195	193	202	232	245	198	188	235	209	225
Speaker 3	203	195	187	187	226	174	194	197	200	191	163
Speaker 4	199	200	174	192	186	193	181	179	212	195	190
Speaker 5	205	185	187	190	167	162	188	199	207	210	184
Speaker 6	215	198	200	197	190	175	198	209	236	232	177
Speaker 7	213	212	186	187	226	158	193	189	209	201	184
Mean	216	202	191	196	206	193	200	199	221	213	196
St. Deviation	17.2	14	11.7	11.7	25	38.3	22.3	18.3	19	23	30.9

**F0 for Salvadorian Female Speakers**

The results also indicate significant differences when comparing F0 for Salvadorian female participants and GAE. The data shows that F0 is consistently lower in all vowel sounds. The average for GAE is 222 Hz and the one for Salvadorian-accented vowels for female participants is 203 Hz. F0 for Salvadorian female participants is 19 Hz lower than that of GAE for all vowel sounds. The 203 Hz average for Salvadorian female participants is also consistent with the value of 200 provided by Titze in 1994.

The next correlate to be analyzed is F3 which does not have foremost importance when distinguishing vowels, but it can provide with information about additional information that can be used to determine accentedness in a language. F3 provides information about lip rounding as West (1999) defines it "F3 lowers with tongue retraction and lip rounding (protrusion and lowering of the upper lip, raising of the lower

lip) (p.1902). Since lip rounding takes in place in most English back vowels, the analysis is presented separately for front and back vowels. Tables 9 and 10 present a summary for F3.

Table 9

*F3 for Salvadorian Male Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	Hud
<b>F3 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	3010	2550	*2691	2480	2410	2440	2410	*2459	2240	2240	2390
Speaker 1	3137	3348	2891	3414	2665	2994	2988	2823	2675	2680	2811
Speaker 2	3279	3260	3280	3319	3212	3129	3057	3018	3187	2247	3177
Speaker 3	2878	2937	2999	2881	2634	2998	2917	2961	2825	2856	2775
Speaker 4	3438	3245	3270	3134	3171	3052	2865	2847	3093	2739	3158
Speaker 5	3113	2826	3126	2421	1973	2487	2850	2834	2672	2702	2342
Speaker 6	3131	3095	3109	2455	2426	3135	2952	3112	2977	3045	2953
Speaker 7	3070	3131	3103	2873	2606	3080	2959	2813	2673	2673	2925
Speaker 8	2871	3240	2937	3052	2909	2822	2716	2793	2535	2688	2334
Mean	3114	3135	3089	2943	2699	2962	2913	2900	2829	2703	2809
St. Deviation	188.8	177.4	142.2	364.6	404.5	216.2	103.5	116.3	232.6	224	324.3

**F3 for Salvadorian Male Speakers**

The first part of the analysis is for F3 in front vowels. F3 in GAE for the vowel sound [ɪ] is 2550 Hz and the one for Salvadorian male speech is 3135 Hz with a difference of 585 Hz. F3 for the vowel sound [e] in GAE is 2691 Hz and the one in Salvadorian General English is 3089 Hz with a difference of 398 Hz. F3 for the vowel sound [ɛ] in GAE is 2480 Hz and the one is Salvadorian male speech is 2943 Hz with a difference of 463 Hz. The results indicate that lips are more spread in Salvadorian male speech than GAE when producing the vowel sounds [ɪ], [e], and [ɛ].

The results for back vowels show that the vowel sound [ɑ] in GAE has an F3 of 2440 Hz and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 2962 Hz with a difference of 522 Hz. F3 for the vowel sound [ɔ] in GAE is 2410 Hz and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 2913 Hz with a difference of 503 Hz. The vowel sound [o] in GAE has an F3 of 2459 Hz and the one for Salvadorian male Speech is 2900 Hz with a difference of 459 Hz. F3 for the vowel sound [ʊ] in GAE is 2240 Hz and the one in Salvadorian male Speech is 2829 Hz with a difference of 589 Hz. F3 for the vowel sound [u] in GAE is 2240 Hz and the one in Salvadorian male Speech is 2703 Hz with a difference of 463 Hz. Finally, F3 for the vowel sound [ʌ] In GAE is 2390 Hz and the one in Salvadorian male Speech is 2809 Hz with a difference of 419 Hz. The results clearly indicate that lips are more spread in Salvadorian male Speech than in GAE in the production of the back vowels [ɑ], [ɔ], [o], [ʊ], [u], and [ʌ].

Table 10

*F3 for Salvadorian Female Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
<b>F3 Correlate</b>	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[e]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
<b>P&amp;B (1952)</b>	3310	3070	*3047	2990	2850	2810	2710	*2828	2680	2670	2780
Speaker 1	3131	3121	3130	2598	2432	3145	2990	3110	3042	2991	2906
Speaker 2	2953	2983	2973	2684	2785	3022	2964	2993	2975	2821	2990
Speaker 3	3007	2994	3116	2893	2454	2557	2695	2988	3027	3059	2997
Speaker 4	3037	3024	2953	2634	2248	2944	2881	2871	2767	2853	2817
Speaker 5	2930	3232	3107	3123	3210	2939	3008	2931	3086	2776	2967
Speaker 6	2982	2718	2909	2635	2674	2888	2970	2787	2778	2768	2980
Speaker 7	3314	2951	3112	3350	2681	3298	3196	2845	3140	2787	3299
Mean	3050	3003	3042	2845	2640	2970	2957	2932	2973	2865	2993
St. Deviation	133.3	158.7	93.7	291.5	310.9	230.8	150.2	108.6	146.5	114.7	148.9

### **F3 for Salvadorian Female Speakers**

Data for female speech indicates that the front vowel sound [i] in GAE has an F3 of 3310 Hz and the one in Salvadorian female speech 3050 Hz with a difference of 260 Hz. The vowel sound [æ] in GAE has an F3 of 2850 Hz and the one in Salvadorian female speech 2640 Hz with a difference of 210 Hz. The back vowel [ɔ] in GAE has an F3 of 2710 Hz and the one on Salvadorian female speech 2957 Hz with a difference of 247 Hz. The vowel sound [ʊ] in GAE has an F3 of 2680 Hz and the one in Salvadorian female speech 2973 Hz with a difference of 293 Hz. Finally, the vowel sound [ʌ] in GAE has an F3 of 2780 Hz and the one in Salvadorian female speech 2993 Hz with a difference of 213 Hz.

The data mentioned above shows that in Salvadorian female speech lips are more rounded in the production of the front vowel sound [i] and more spread in the production of the vowel sound [æ]. Regarding back vowels, Data also shows that lips are more spread in the production of back vowel sounds [ɔ], [ʊ], and [ʌ]. In conclusion, spreading is not as prominent in Salvadorian female speech as it is in Salvadorian male speech.

The following correlate to be analyzed is “Duration” which does not play a significant role in distinguishing vowels, but it provides with valuable information about the length of a vowel in a speech. Duration is a correlate that can be easily perceived by a listener if the difference is above 10 milliseconds (Koffi, 2017, p. 93). Differences in duration can be identifiers of accentedness since they can be perceived by other speakers of English. The analysis will be conducted by comparing duration averages in



GAE and Salvadorian-accented vowels and by comparing individual differences. Tables 11 and 12 bellow summarize the data for the correlate of “Duration”.

Table 11

*Duration for Salvadorian Male Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	Hud
Duration	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
P&B (1952)	243	192	*267	189	278	267	283	*265	192	237	188
Speaker 1	221	191	253	197	243	231	204	244	219	210	205
Speaker 2	245	205	280	243	266	264	255	271	222	224	207
Speaker 3	173	135	218	219	215	163	156	248	190	215	153
Speaker 4	190	176	331	205	273	248	167	239	197	222	229
Speaker 5	215	186	271	193	207	171	191	196	177	187	174
Speaker 6	255	148	178	186	214	207	185	247	235	230	188
Speaker 7	246	201	340	298	317	230	255	346	141	278	201
Speaker 8	234	169	259	265	320	241	160	271	164	261	157
Mean	222	176	266	225	256	219	196	257	193	228	189
St. Deviation	28.8	24.7	53.7	39.6	45	36.2	39.4	42.6	31.8	28.8	26.3

**Duration for Salvadorian Male Speakers**

The average duration for male speakers in GAE is 236 ms and the one for Salvadorian male participants is 220 ms with a difference of 14 ms lower which indicates that the difference would be perceived by listeners. By looking at individual results, duration is consistently lower in Salvadorian male speech. The analysis for front vowels indicates that the duration of vowel sound [i] in Salvadorian male speech is 222 ms and the one in GAE is 243 ms with a difference of 22 ms. The duration of the vowel sound [ɪ] in GAE is 192 ms and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 176 ms with a difference of 16 ms. The duration of the vowel sound [æ] in Salvadorian male speech is 256 ms and the one in GAE is 278 ms with a difference of 22 ms. The only front vowel

that is longer in Salvadorian male speech is the vowel [ɛ] with a duration of 225 ms and the one in GAE is 189 ms with a difference of 36 ms.

The analysis for back vowels indicate that duration of the vowel sound [ɑ] in GAE is 267 ms and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 219 ms with a difference of 48 ms. The duration for the GAE vowel sound [ɔ] is 283 ms and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 196 ms with a difference of 87 ms.

Table 12

*Duration for Salvadorian Female Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
Duration	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
P&B (1952)	306	237	*320	254	332	323	353	326	*249	303	226
Speaker 1	168	214	313	212	296	266	201	201	196	194	222
Speaker 2	281	223	356	224	263	251	255	274	250	243	225
Speaker 3	271	195	268	259	281	249	246	319	267	317	193
Speaker 4	164	88	305	147	122	116	283	287	149	204	162
Speaker 5	261	223	280	211	229	173	266	260	215	180	174
Speaker 6	365	226	435	251	384	276	239	272	154	377	254
Speaker 7	151	119	265	184	199	189	243	262	201	94	187
Mean	237	184	317	212	253	217	247	267	204	229	202
St. Deviation	79	56.6	60.6	38.4	82.2	59.1	25.5	35.5	44.3	93.3	32.4

**Duration for Salvadorian Female Speakers**

The average duration for female speakers in GAE is 293 ms whereas the one in Salvadorian female speech is 233 ms with a difference of 60 ms. When looking at individual results, they indicate that vowel sounds in Salvadorian female speech are consistently shorter than GAE. The analysis for front vowels indicates that the duration of the vowel sound [i] in GAE is 306 ms and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 237 ms with a difference of 69 ms. The duration for the vowel sound [ɪ] in GAE is 237 ms

and the one in Salvadorian female speech is 184 ms with a difference of 53 ms. The vowel sound [ɛ] has a duration of 254 ms in GAE and 212 ms in Salvadorian female speech with a difference of 42 ms. Finally, the vowel sound [æ] has a duration of 332 ms in GAE and 253 ms in Salvadorian female speech with a difference of 79 ms.

The analysis for back vowels also shows that vowels in Salvadorian female speech is shorter. The vowel sound [ɑ] has a duration of 323 ms in GAE and 217 ms in Salvadorian female speech with a difference of 106 ms. The vowel sound [ɔ] has a duration of 353 ms and the one in Salvadorian female speech is 247 ms with a difference of 106 ms. The duration of the vowel sound [o] in GAE is 326 ms and the one for Salvadorian female speech is 267 ms with a difference of 59 ms. The vowel sound [ʊ] in GAE has a duration of 249 ms and the one in Salvadorian female speech is 204 ms with a difference of 45 ms. The vowel sound [u] in GAE has a duration of 303 ms and the one in Salvadorian female speech is 229 ms with a difference of 74 ms. Finally, the vowel sound [ʌ] in GAE has a duration of 226 ms and the one in Salvadorian female speech is 202 ms with a difference of 24 ms.

The last of the correlates to be analyzed is “Intensity” which is defined by Koffi (2017), “The acoustic correlate of intensity consists of two acoustic events: tympanic pressure + particle velocity” (p. 88). Intensity is not a relevant correlate when assessing intelligibility, but it can provide with information about how “loud” speech was when it was recorded. The analysis for this correlate is conducted by getting the averages in GAE and Salvadorian-accented Vowels. Tables 13 and 14 provide a summary for the correlate of Intensity.

Table 13

*Intensity for Salvadorian Male Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	Hud
Intensity	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
L&P (1959)	75.1	78.1	78.6	79.3	79.4	80.2	80.6	79.7	78.4	78.2	79.7
Speaker 1	64	57	61	55	57	57	58	60	62	63	58
Speaker 2	71	68	65	60	59	61	63	63	71	69	59
Speaker 3	69	67	60	62	64	62	64	64	67	67	63
Speaker 4	83	77	82	77	72	72	76	79	80	80	73
Speaker 5	62	58	60	58	63	60	60	58	59	58	63
Speaker 6	65	59	61	65	66	68	69	61	62	61	67
Speaker 7	74	66	70	62	64	65	67	69	70	72	66
Speaker 8	72	70	72	68	65	69	69	70	71	72	69
Mean	70	65.2	66.3	63.3	63.7	64.2	65.7	65.5	67.7	67.7	64.7
St. Deviation	6.2	6.4	7.3	6.3	4.2	4.7	5.3	6.4	6.3	6.6	4.7

Table 14

*Intensity for Salvadorian Female Participants*

Words	heed	Hid	hayed	Head	had	hod	hawed	hoed	hood	who'd	hud
Intensity	[i]	[ɪ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[æ]	[ɑ]	[ɔ]	[o]	[ʊ]	[u]	[ʌ]
L&P (1959)	75.1	78.1	78.6	79.3	79.4	80.2	80.6	79.7	78.4	78.2	79.7
Speaker 1	54	56	54	57	56	59	61	57	55	56	58
Speaker 2	54	55	55	57	55	58	59	59	56	56	59
Speaker 3	61	59	59	55	56	58	61	58	61	62	56
Speaker 4	60	61	58	57	58	58	56	58	59	59	58
Speaker 5	57	53	56	50	51	52	52	54	54	55	51
Speaker 6	53	53	55	55	53	58	56	55	59	54	52
Speaker 7	62	55	58	53	53	55	54	57	63	58	53
Mean	57.2	56	56.4	54.8	54.5	56.8	57	56.8	58.1	57.1	55.2
St. Deviation	3.7	3	1.9	2.6	2.3	2.4	3.4	1.7	3.2	2.7	3.2

### **Intensity for Salvadorian Male and Female Speakers**

The average intensity for male participants in GAE is 78.7 dB and the one in Salvadorian male speech is 65.8 dB with a difference of 12.9 dB. The 12.9 dB indicates that Salvadorian male speech would be perceived as quieter in comparison to GAE.

The average intensity for Female participants in GAE is 78.8 dB and the one in Salvadorian female speech is 56.3 dB with a difference of 22.5 dB. The 22.5 dB difference shows that Salvadorian female speech would be perceived as much quieter than GAE.

Following the analysis of the six correlates, the next chapter presents the conclusions of the study, pedagogical implications, and future research.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

This is to the best of my knowledge the first acoustic study of Salvadorian-accented vowels and this study provides with information about vowels that may cause unintelligibility when communicating with other speakers of English. The analysis of intelligibility is based on the correlate F1 which contains 80% of the vowel energy according to Ladefoged (2006, p. 188). The analysis is made by assessing the degree of masking which takes place when two different sounds cannot be differentiated because they mask each other allowing unintelligibility to take place. It also includes data for their RFL.

The findings indicate that the Salvadorian-accented vowels that may cause unintelligibility for male participants include the front vowel sounds [ɪ] (472 Hz) and [e] (455 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 18Hz implying complete masking and severe unintelligibility and with a RFL of 80% which means differentiation of this pair is essential in the English language lexicon. The second pair of vowel sounds that may cause unintelligibility is [ʊ] (318 Hz) and [u] (296 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 22 Hz which indicates moderate masking and compromised intelligibility, but with a low relative functional load of only 7%. Lastly, when comparing Salvadorian-accented vowels for male participants and GAE the pair of vowel sounds [ɔ] (506 Hz) and GAE [o] (497 Hz) shows an acoustic distance of 9 Hz resulting in complete masking and Severe unintelligibility and with a high RFL of 88%.

The study also presents the vowel sounds that may cause unintelligibility issues in Salvadorian Female participants. Results show that there are three pairs of

vowels that may cause unintelligibility. The first vowel sounds include [ɪ] (467 Hz) and [e] (485 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 18 Hz showing complete masking and severe unintelligibility and with a high RFL of 80%. The second pair of the vowel sounds are [ʊ] (435 Hz) and [u] (411 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 24 Hz indicating moderate masking and compromised intelligibility but with a low RFL only 7%. The last 2 vowel sounds are [ɑ] (769 Hz) and [ʌ] (758 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 11 Hz showing complete masking and severe unintelligibility and with a high RFL of 65%. When comparing Salvadorian female speech with GAE, the results show that the Salvadorian-accented vowel sound [i] (418 Hz) and GAE [ɪ] (430 Hz) have an acoustic distance of 12Hz implying complete masking and severe unintelligibility and a high RFL of 95%.

The second correlate that is included in the study is F2 which represents backness which does not influence intelligibility, but it becomes important when plotting vowels in an acoustic vowel space. Data shows that there are two vowel sounds that show significant changes in Salvadorian male speech in comparison to GAE. The front vowel sound [i] (1965 Hz) which has moved towards the center in contrast with GAE [i] (2290 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 325 Hz. The second one is the vowel sound [æ] (1337 Hz) which has also moved towards the center in comparison to GAE [æ] (1720 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 383 Hz.

The results for Salvadorian female participants also show significant changes because all front vowels have become centralized in comparison to GAE. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [i] (1625 Hz) in comparison to GAE [i] (2790 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 1165 Hz. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɪ] (1650 Hz) and the

GAE [ɪ] (2480 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 830 Hz. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [e] (1717 Hz) in comparison to the GAE [e] (2530 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 813 Hz. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɛ] (1578 Hz) in contrast with GAE [ɛ] (2330 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 808 Hz. Finally, The Salvadorian-accented vowel [æ] (1367 Hz) and the GAE [æ] (2050 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 817 Hz. The results of this centralization are consistent for all front vowels in Salvadorian female speech. There are also two back vowels which also show changes in comparison to GAE. The Salvadorian-accented vowel [ɔ] (1176 Hz) with movement towards the center in comparison to GAE [ɔ] (920 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 256 Hz and the Salvadorian vowel [ʌ] (1247 Hz) is more backed than its counterpart in GAE [ʌ] (1640 Hz) with an acoustic distance of 393 Hz.

The results for the correlate F0 also provide with valuable information that can determine accentedness in a variation of English. The results for F0 in Salvadorian male speech show that pitch is higher than in GAE. The average F0 of 131 Hz in GAE and 139 Hz in Salvadorian male speech indicate that F0 is in average 8 Hz higher in Salvadorian male participants in comparison to GAE. When comparing F0 for Salvadorian female participants and GAE, data shows that F0 is lower. The average for GAE is 222 Hz and the one for Salvadorian-accented vowels for female participants is 203 Hz with a difference of 19 Hz.

The results for the correlate F3 in Salvadorian male speech that represents lip rounding show that F3 in Salvadorian male speech for the front vowel sounds [ɪ] 3135 Hz, [e] 3089 Hz, and [ɛ] 2943 Hz are higher than the same sounds in GAE [ɪ] 2550 Hz,



[e] 2691 Hz, and [ɛ] 2480 Hz. The results show that lips are more spread in Salvadorian male speech than GAE when producing the vowel sounds listed above.

The results for all back vowels show that the vowel sounds in Salvadorian male speech [ɑ] 2962 Hz, [ɔ] 2913 Hz, [o] 2900 Hz, [ʊ] 2829 Hz, and [u] 2703 Hz, and [ʌ] 2809 Hz are also higher than their counterparts in GAE [ɑ] 2440 Hz, [ɔ] 2410 Hz, [o] 2459 Hz, [ʊ] 2240 Hz, and [u] 2240 Hz, and [ʌ] 2390 Hz. The results also show that lips are more spread in Salvadorian male speech than in GAE in the production of all the back vowels.

The results for Salvadorian female speech show that the front vowel sound [i] 3050 Hz in Salvadorian female speech is lower than the same sound in GAE which is 3310 Hz. The vowel sound [æ] in Salvadorian female speech is 2640 Hz and it is lower than the same sound in GAE which is 2850 Hz. The results indicate that lips are more rounded in Salvadorian female speech in the production of [i] and more spread in the production of [æ].

F3 for the back-vowel sounds [ɔ] 2957 Hz, [ʊ] 2973 Hz, and [ʌ] 2993 Hz in Salvadorian female speech is higher than the same sounds in GAE [ɔ] 2710 Hz, [ʊ] 2680 Hz, and [ʌ] 2780 Hz which indicates that lips are more spread in the production of the back-vowel sounds [ɔ], [ʊ], and [ʌ] in Salvadorian female speech.

The next correlate that is presented is duration which can affect accentedness and rhythm in a variation of English. The results indicate that in average duration for the eleven vowel sounds is 220 ms and 236 ms in GAE which shows that vowels produced in Salvadorian male speech is in average 14 ms lower than those in GAE and the

difference could be perceived by listeners. The results for female participants indicate that in average duration for the eleven vowels sounds is 233 ms and the one in GAE is 293 indicating that Salvadorian female speech is in average 60 ms shorter and the difference would be clearly perceived by listeners.

The last of the correlates to be analyzed is intensity which can be interpreted as how loud speakers were when they were recorded. The average intensity in Salvadorian male speech is 65.8 is lower than the one in GAE which is 78.7. The results indicate that Salvadorian male speech would be perceived as quieter. The results in Salvadorian female speech show that the average intensity is 56.3 dB and the one in GAE is 78.8. The difference is clear, and it would result in the perception of Salvadorian female speech as much quieter than GAE.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Direct instruction for individual sounds when students are learning English as a second language has not been very common in the past in El Salvador. This can be attributed to various factors including that instructors do not have the knowledge of English sounds and they avoid teaching them, but it can also be explained as lack of research and instruments to accurately assess and teach sounds in English. This study provides with an overview that will set the base for the assessment and instruction of English vowels which are the most important sounds in the English language in achieving the goal of intelligibility.

The use of acoustic vowel spaces provides with information that in the past was just an ideal representation and theory of English vowels, but now it can become a

valuable instrument to assess individual production of vowels and a comparison with GAE by keeping in mind that the goal in communication should be to be intelligible. This study can also be important in the improvement of English as a foreign language teaching in El Salvador by using acoustic vowel spaces.

### **Future Research**

More research can be conducted to determine accurately the production of Spanish vowels by Salvadorian speakers and establish possible correlations with the production of English vowels. This study also opens the door for future studies for more English sounds including consonants so that a complete picture of Salvadorian-accented English can be determined.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Consent

### Salvadorian-Accented English Vowels Produced by Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Consent to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research study about **the production of Salvadorian-Accented English Vowels by Teachers of English as a Foreign Language.**

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to read aloud and be recorded reading eleven sets of English words and a short-elicited paragraph containing all English vowels.

**Benefits of the research:** This research will provide with information about how Salvadorian-accented English vowels are produced by English as a foreign language teachers, which will lead to identify vowels that may cause intelligibility issues when communicating with other speakers of English. The results of the study will also benefit you as a teacher to identify and address unintelligibility when communicating with other English speakers, and also to encourage future studies on the subject.

**Risks and discomforts:** The risks in the study are minimal. They are not greater than the risk of speaking or reading aloud in an everyday life situation.

**Data collected will remain confidential.** Data will be kept confidential since it will be stored in a password protected computer and the only people who will have access to it will be me, the researcher, and my advisor. All the data will be converted into numbers by using the software PRAAT (A phonetic analysis software) so your identity will be FULLY protected. In the study, data will be presented as general categories which will be male and female or a general category as English teachers. Your name WILL NOT be used and your information WILL NOT be quoted individually in the study. All the data from the study will be generalized so no individual referenced will be made.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research study now, you may ask them now. If you have additional questions later you may contact me at (320) 3132102/[joelalfredo85@gmail.com](mailto:joelalfredo85@gmail.com) or my advisor Dr. Ettien Koffi at (320) 308-3539/[enkoffi@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:enkoffi@stcloudstate.edu). Results of the study can be requested from the researcher or they can be downloaded from the St. Cloud State University Repository.

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate.

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Signature

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Date

### Appendix B: List of Words to be Recorded

**Directions: Say each of the words below three times (x3) as naturally as possible.**

- |     |                     |  |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| 1.  | heed, heed, heed    | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “ee” in <fleece>) |
| 2.  | hid, hid, hid       | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “i” in <kit>)     |
| 3.  | hayed, hayed, hayed | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “a” in <face>)    |
| 4.  | head, head, head    | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “e” in <dress>)   |
| 5.  | had, had, had       | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “a” in <bath>)    |
| 6.  | hod, hod, hod       | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “o” in <lot>)     |
| 7.  | hawed, hawed, hawed | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “o” in <cloth>)   |
| 8.  | hoed, hoed, hoed    | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “oa” in <goat>)   |
| 9.  | hood, hood, hood    | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “oo” in <foot>)   |
| 10. | who’d, who’d, who’d | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “oo” in <goose>)  |
| 11. | hud, hud, hud       | (Note: the vowel sounds like the “u” in <hug>)     |

### Elicited Paragraph

**Directions: Read the following text as naturally as possible. You might want to practice it several times before recording it so that you get a smooth reading that resembles how you talk.**

Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: Six good spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a foot-long sandwich as a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake, the little yellow book, a rubber duck, a paper I-pad, the dog video game, a big toy frog for the kids, but not the faked gun. Don’t forget the ten sea turtles, the mat that my mom bought and the silver nun. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and two old backpacks, and we will go meet Sue, her, Jake, and Jenny Monday, Wednesday, or Sunday at the very last train station at the edge of the zoo which is in Zone four by the zebra sign. The entrance is for sure near York’s Treasure Bank.



### Appendix C: Summary of the Relative Functional Load

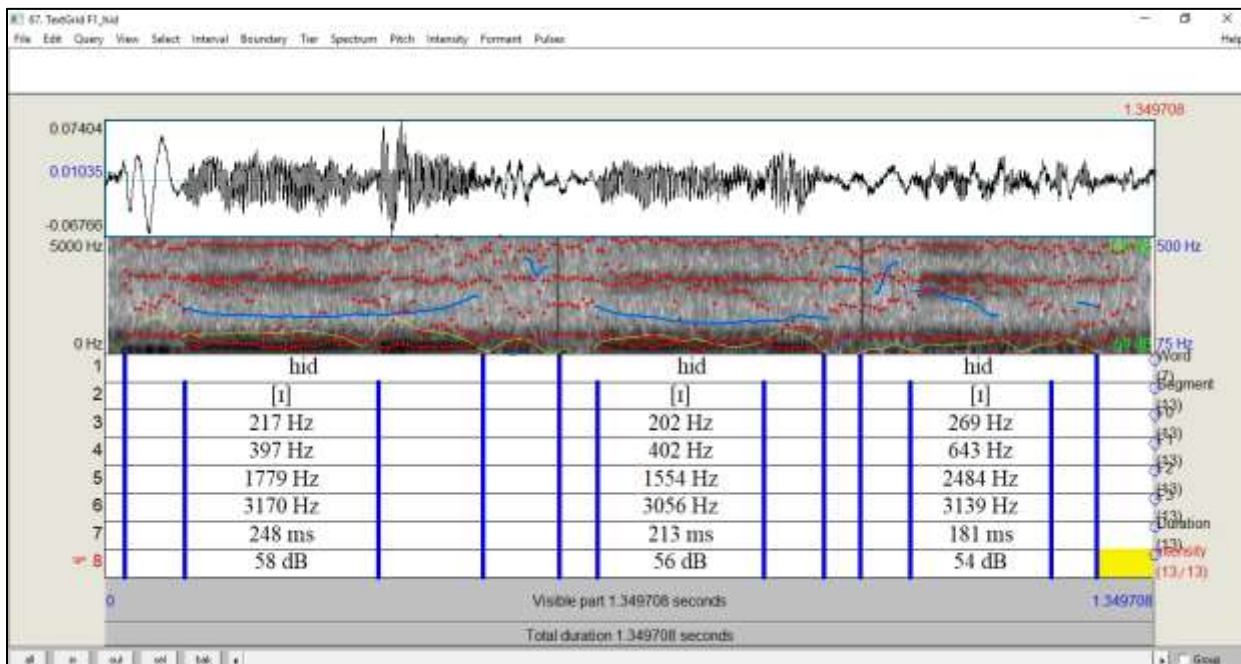
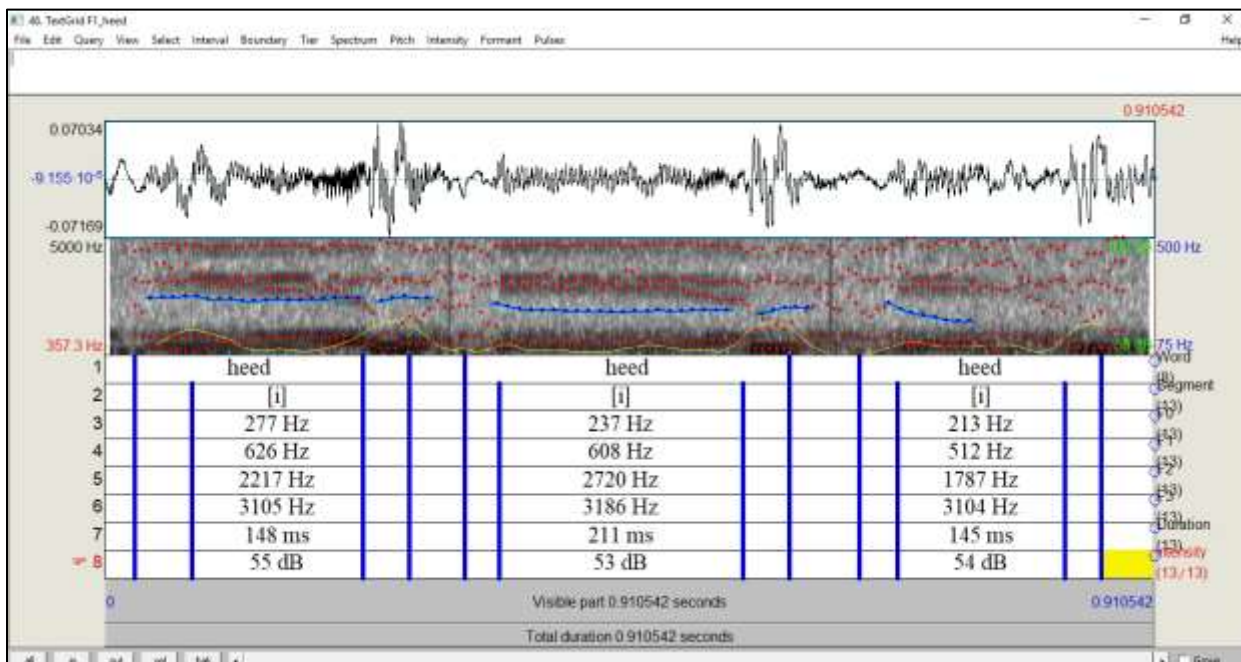
The following table provides a summary of the Relative Functional Load applied to the eleven vowel sounds in the English language. Table adapted from Koffi, (2017, p. 45-46)

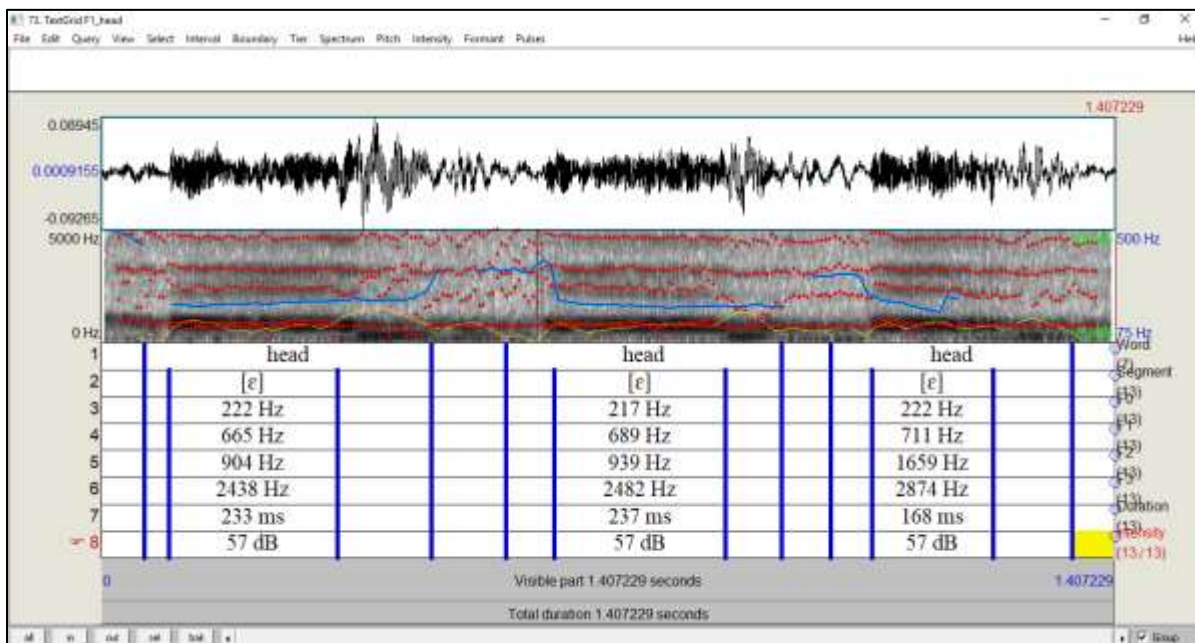
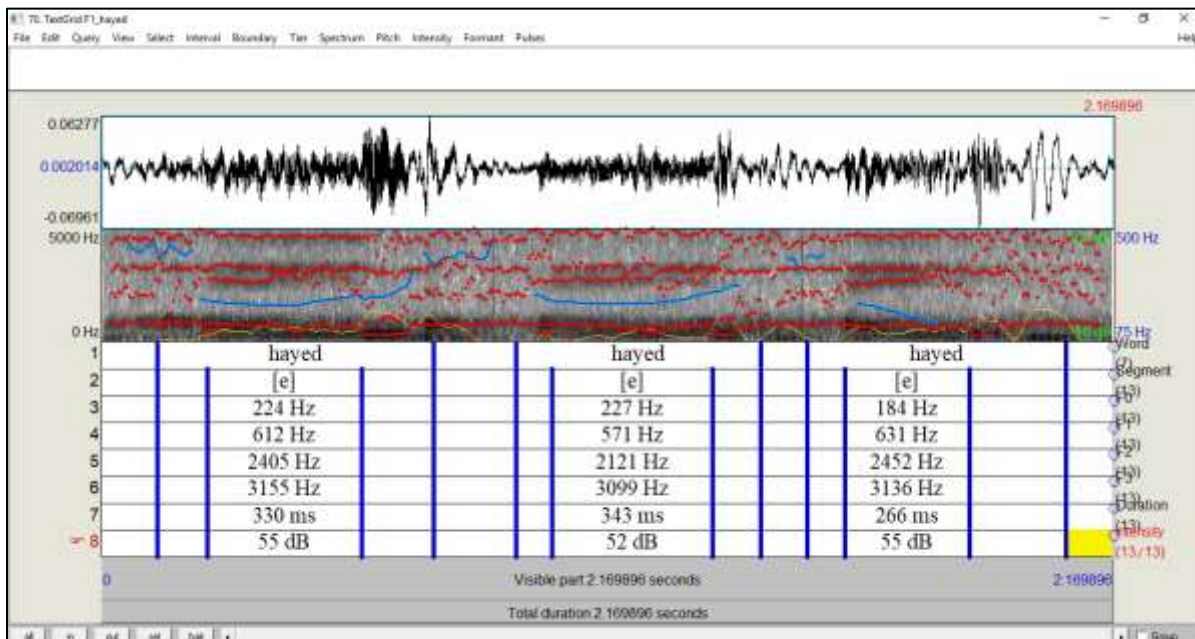
Words	Vowel Phonemes	Percentage
bit / bat	/ɪ/ vs. /æ/	100
beet / bit	/i/ vs. /ɪ/	95
bought / boat	/ɔ/ or /ɑ/ vs. /o/	88
bit / but	/ɪ/ vs. /ʌ/	86
bit / bait	/ɪ/ vs. /e/	80
cat / cot	/æ/ vs. /ɔ/ or /ɑ/	76
cat / cut	/æ/ vs. /ʌ/	68
cot / cut	/ɔ/ or /ɑ/ vs. /ʌ/	65
bit / bet	/ɪ/ vs. /ɛ/	54
bet / bait	/ɛ/ vs. /e/	53
bet / bat	/ɛ/ vs. /æ/	53
coat / coot	/o/ vs. /ʊ/	51
beet / boot	/i/ vs. /ʊ/	50
bet / but	/ɛ/ vs. /ʌ/	50
bought / boot	/ɔ/ or /ɑ/ vs. /ʊ/	50
pet / pot	/ɛ/ vs. /ɑ/	45
*cot / caught	/ɔ/ vs. /ɑ/	26
box / books	/ɑ/ or /ɔ/ vs. /ʊ/	18
pill / pull	/ɪ/ vs. /ʊ/	13.5
pull / pole	/ʊ/ vs. /o/	12
*put / putt	/ʊ/ vs. /ʌ/	9
*pull / pool	/ʊ/ vs. /u/	7
cam / calm	/æ/ vs. /ɑ/	4.5

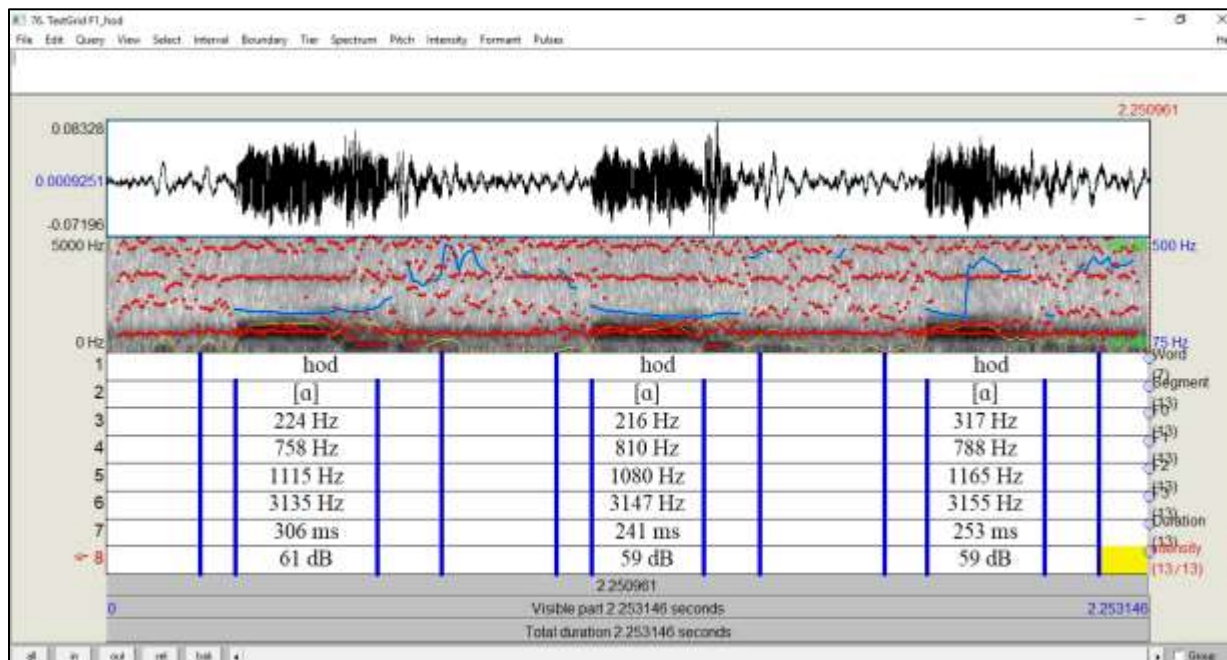
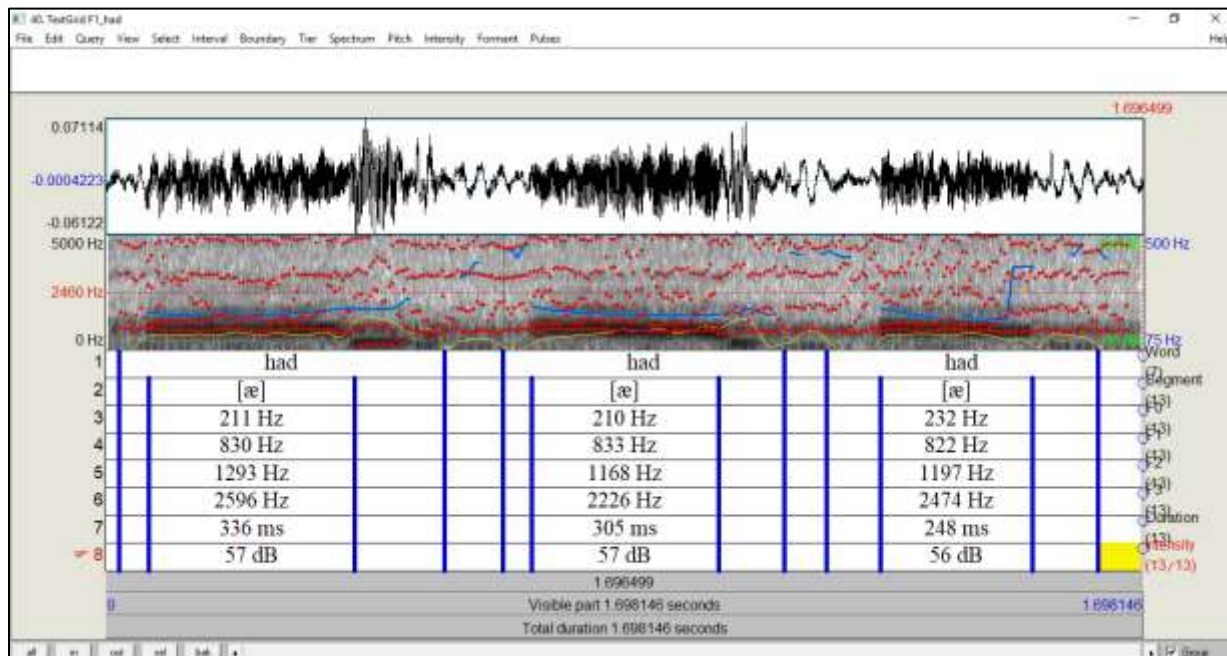
\*Stands for variable pronunciations among different dialects of English. /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ are listed together because they have merged or are merging many dialects of American English.

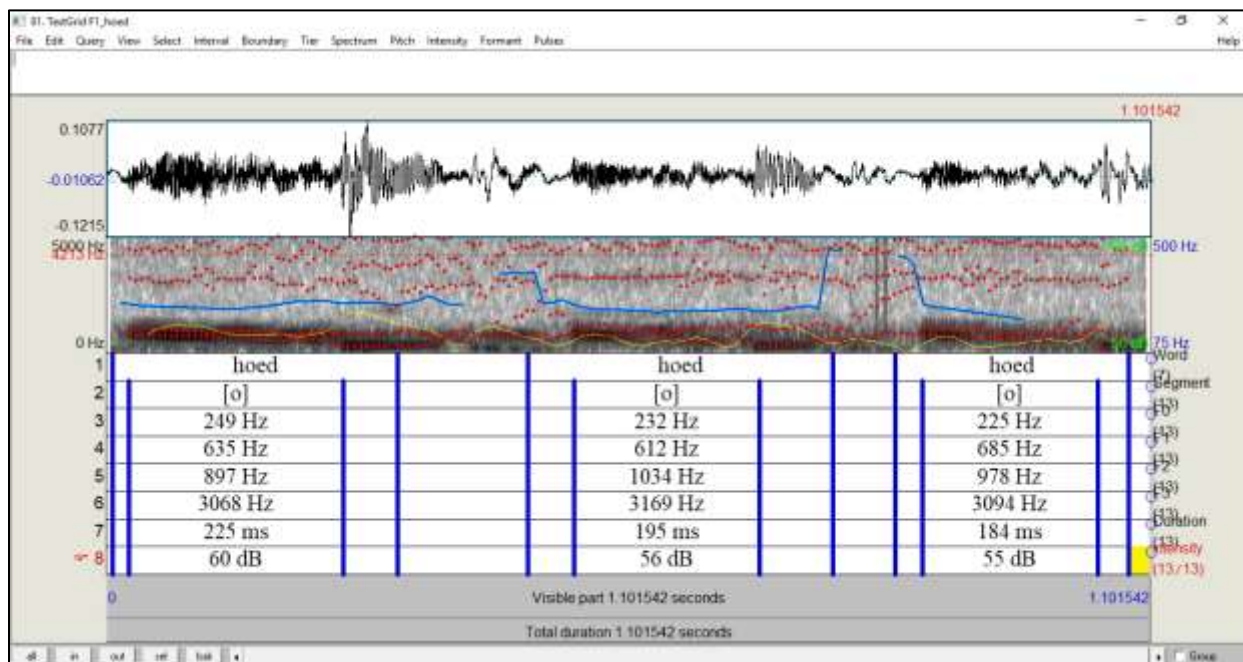
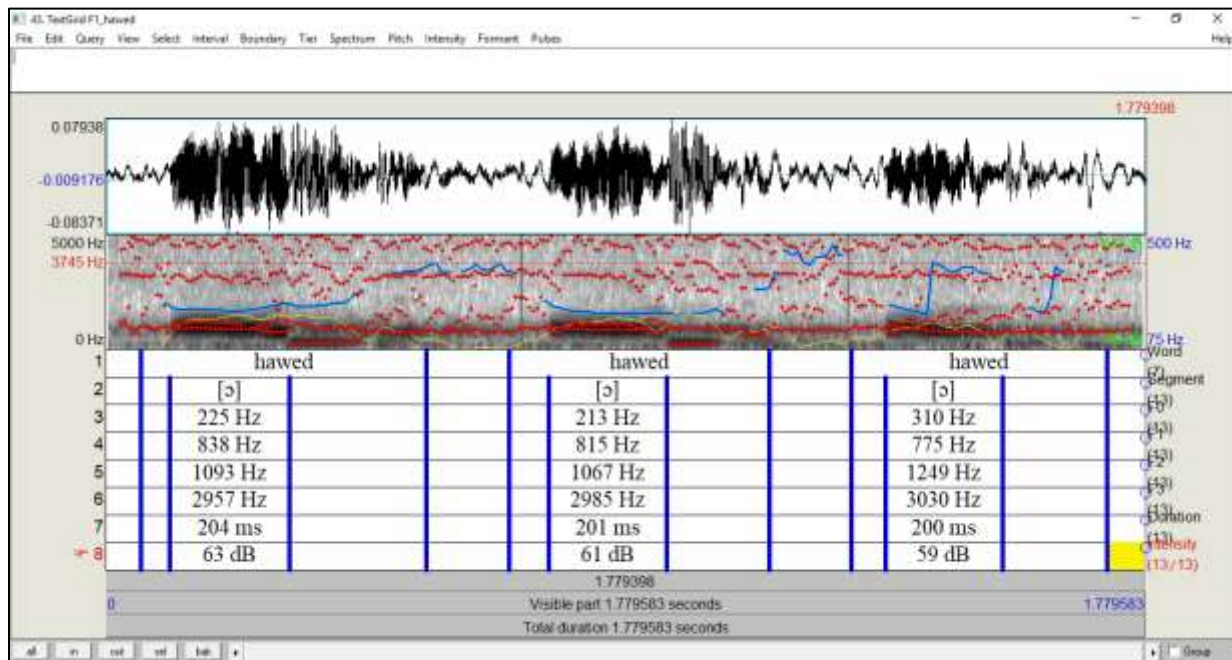
### Appendix D: Spectrographs

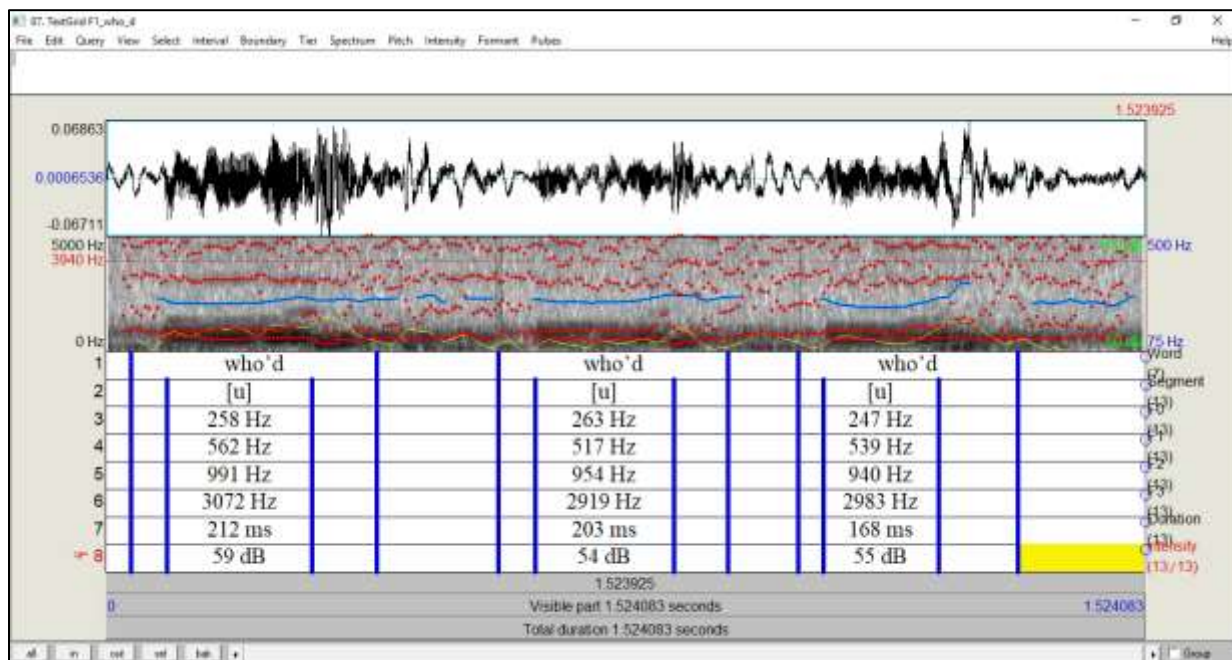
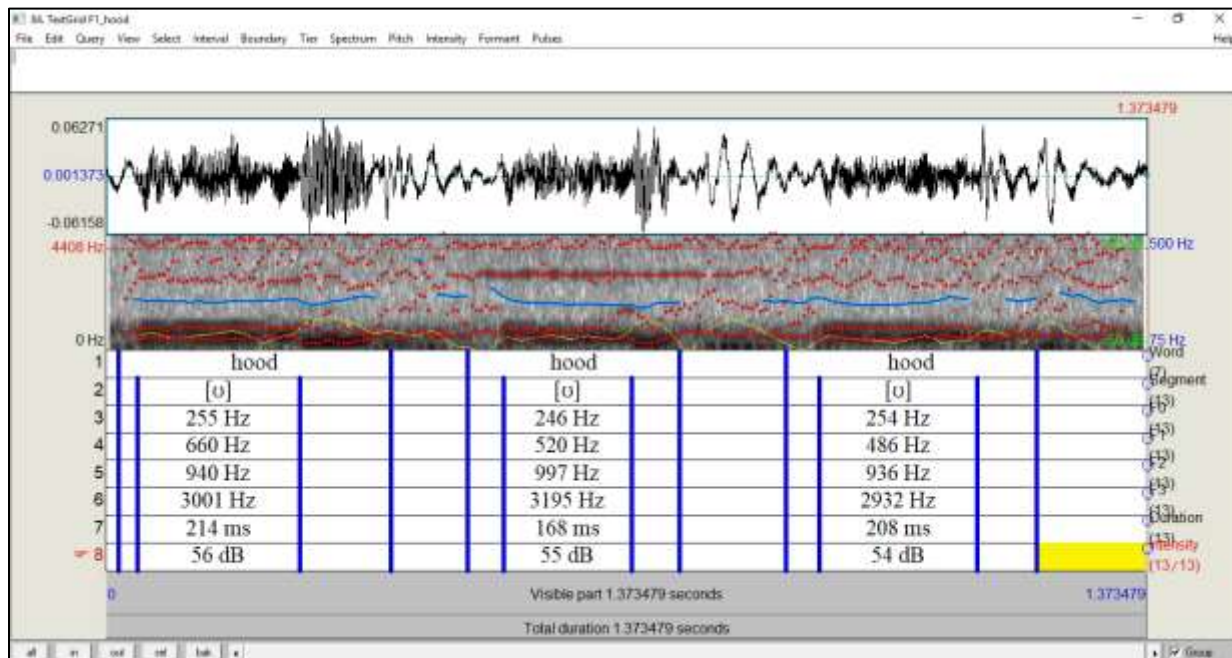
F1

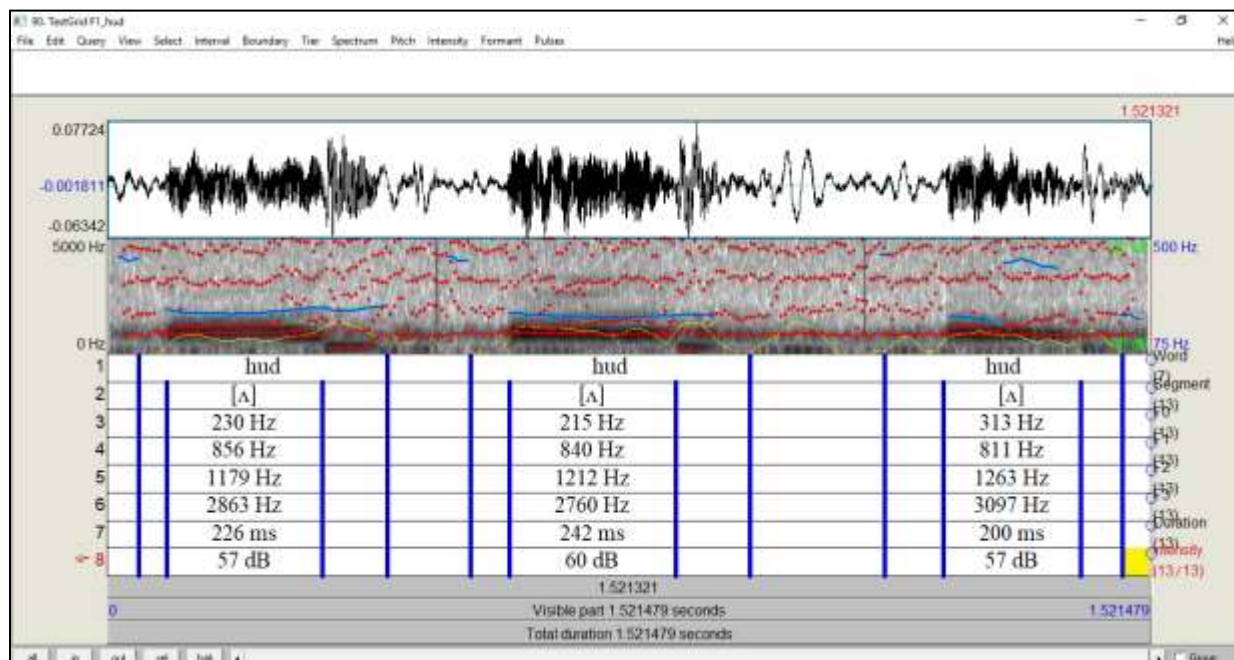




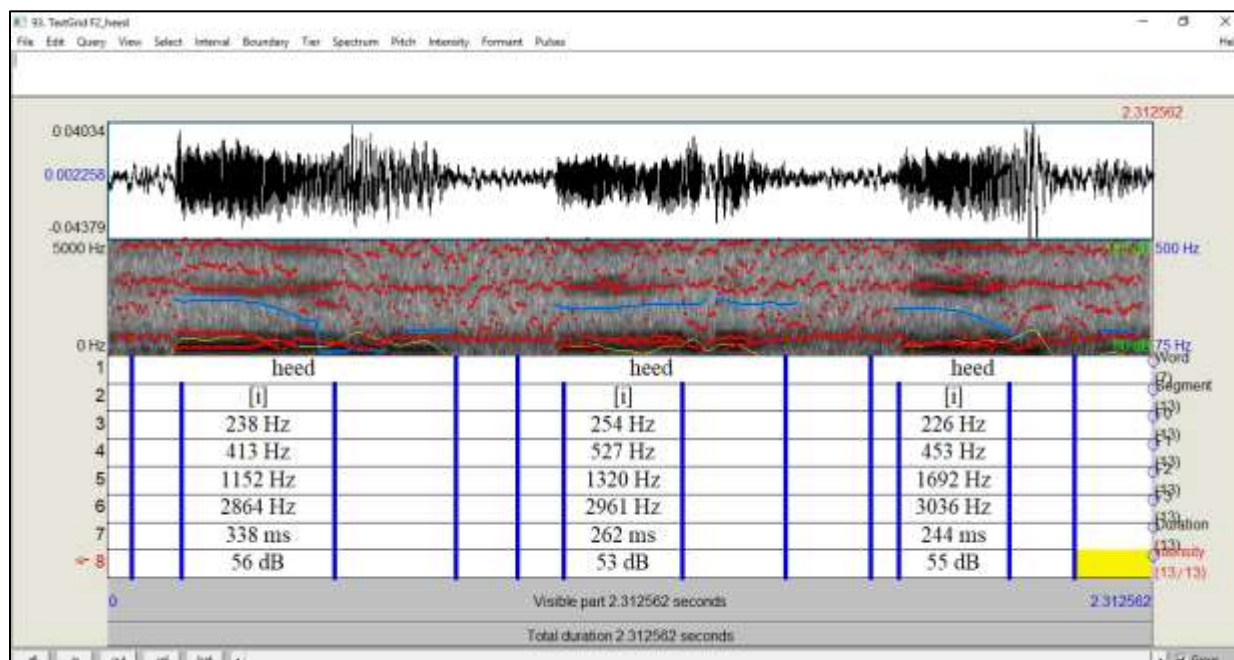


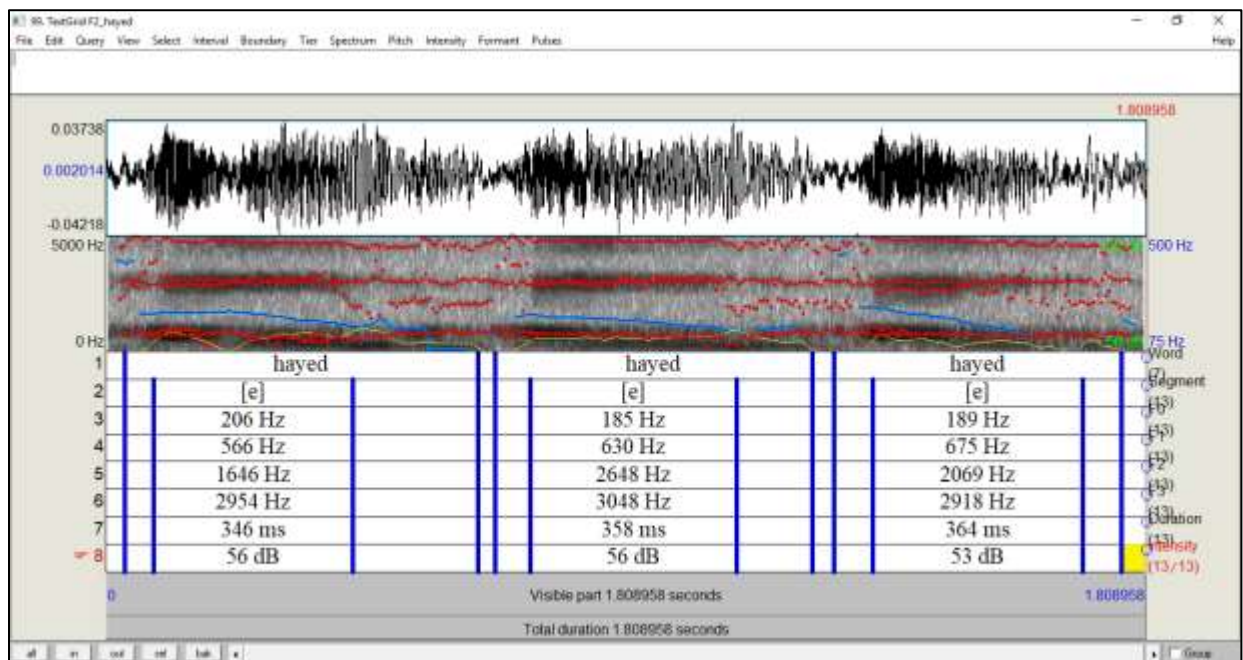
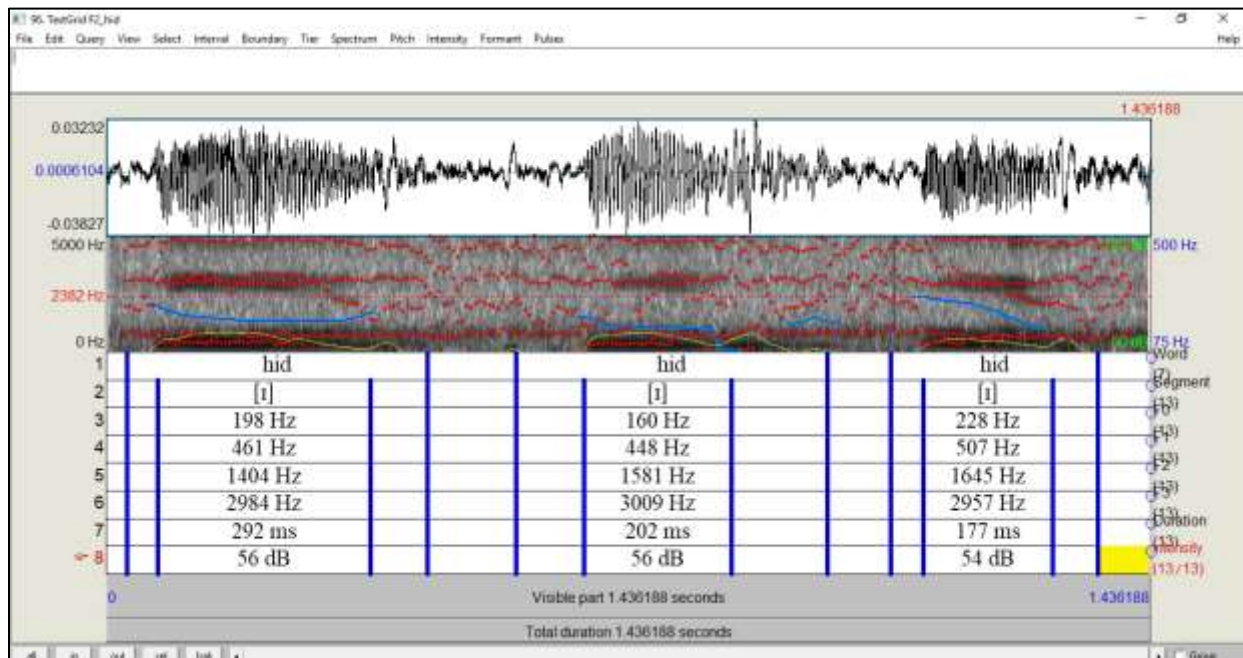




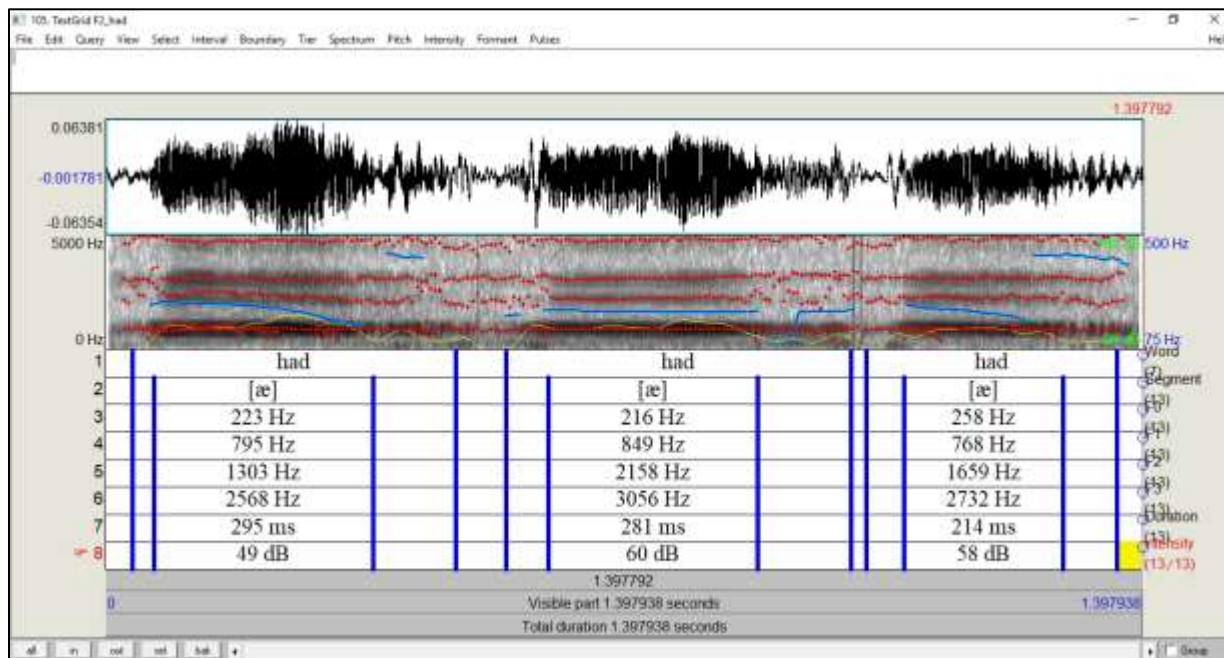
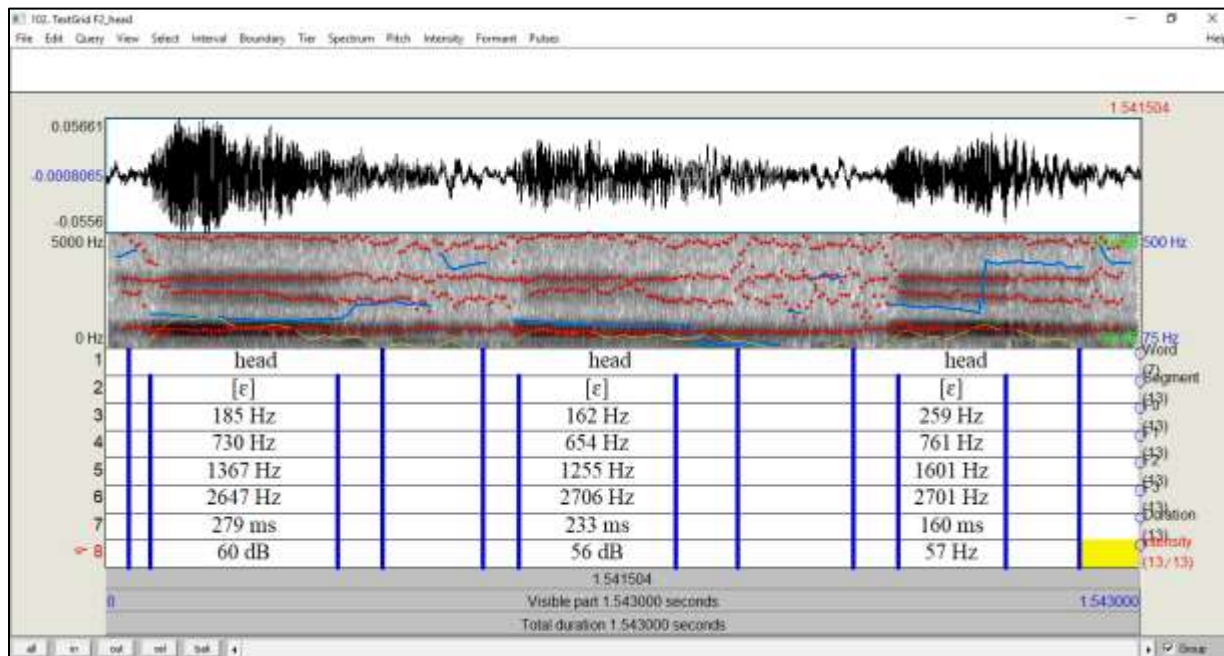


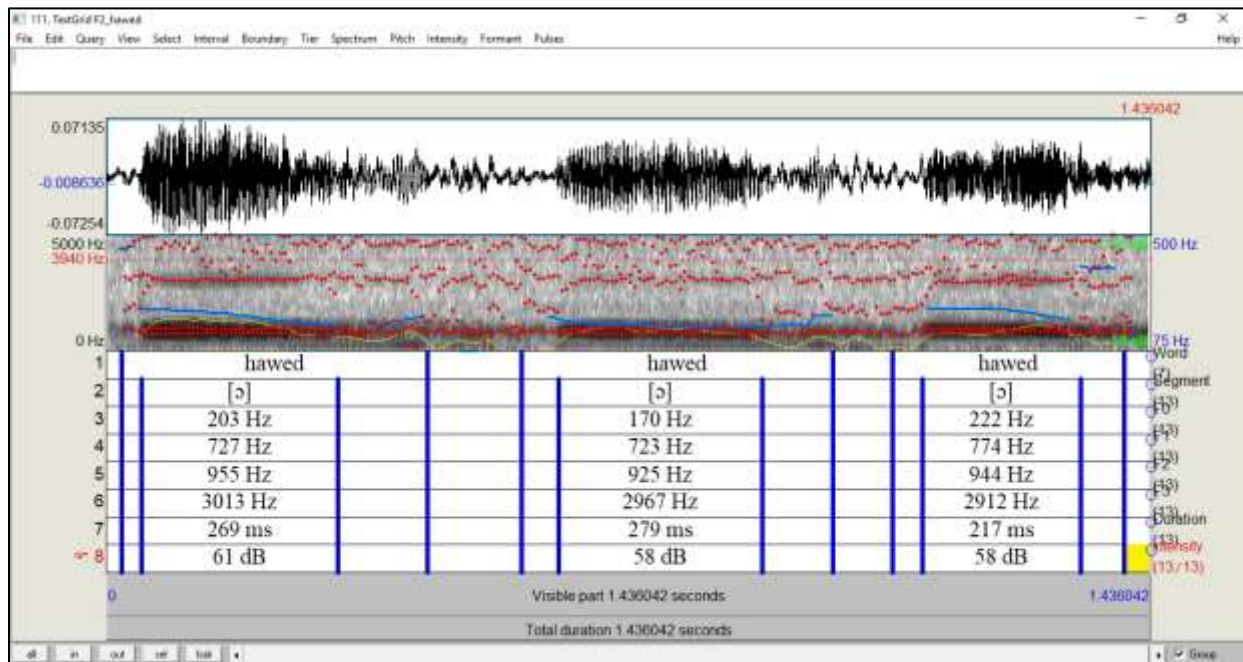
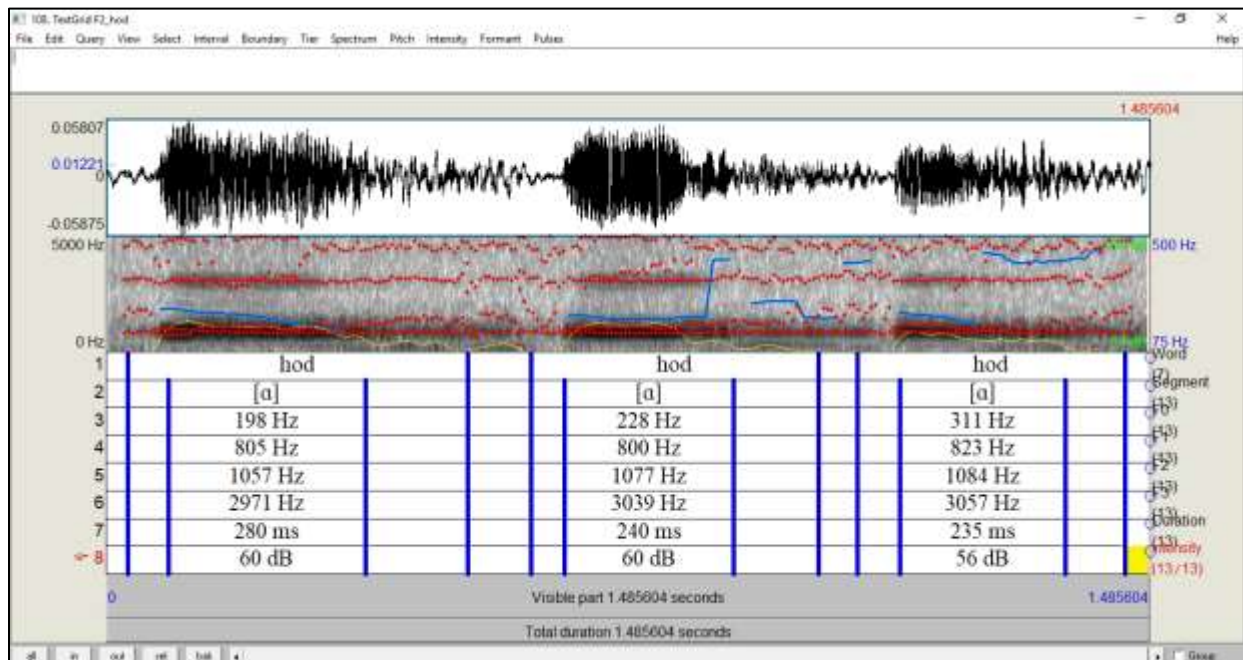
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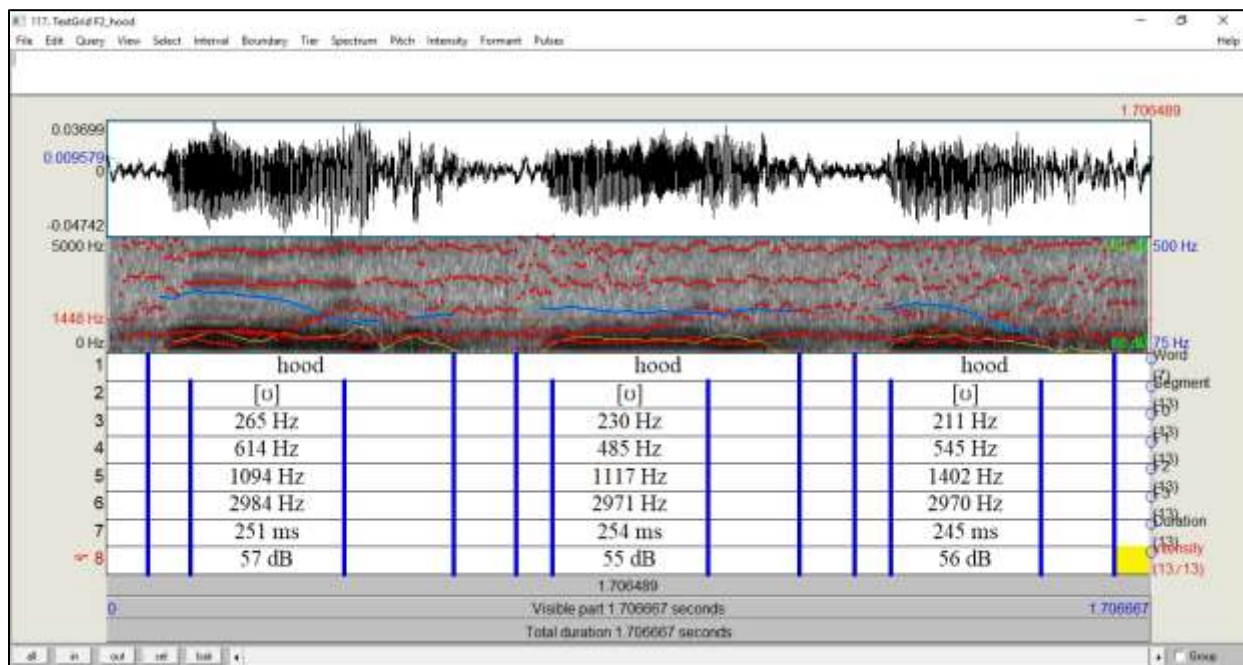
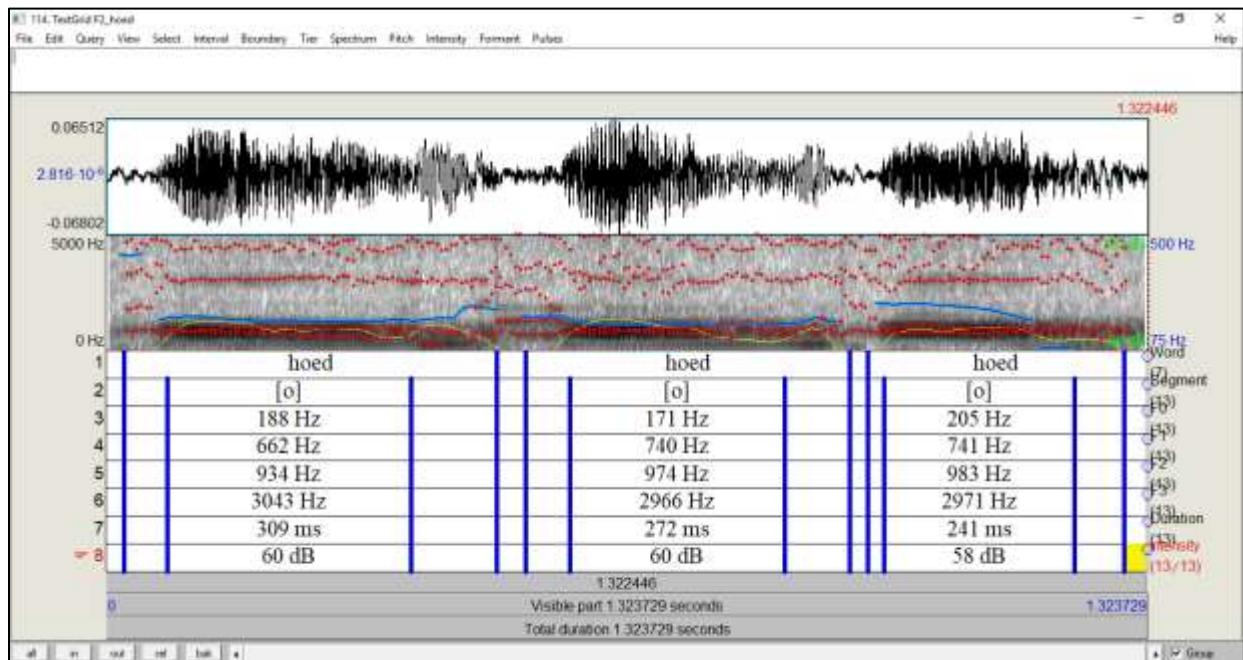


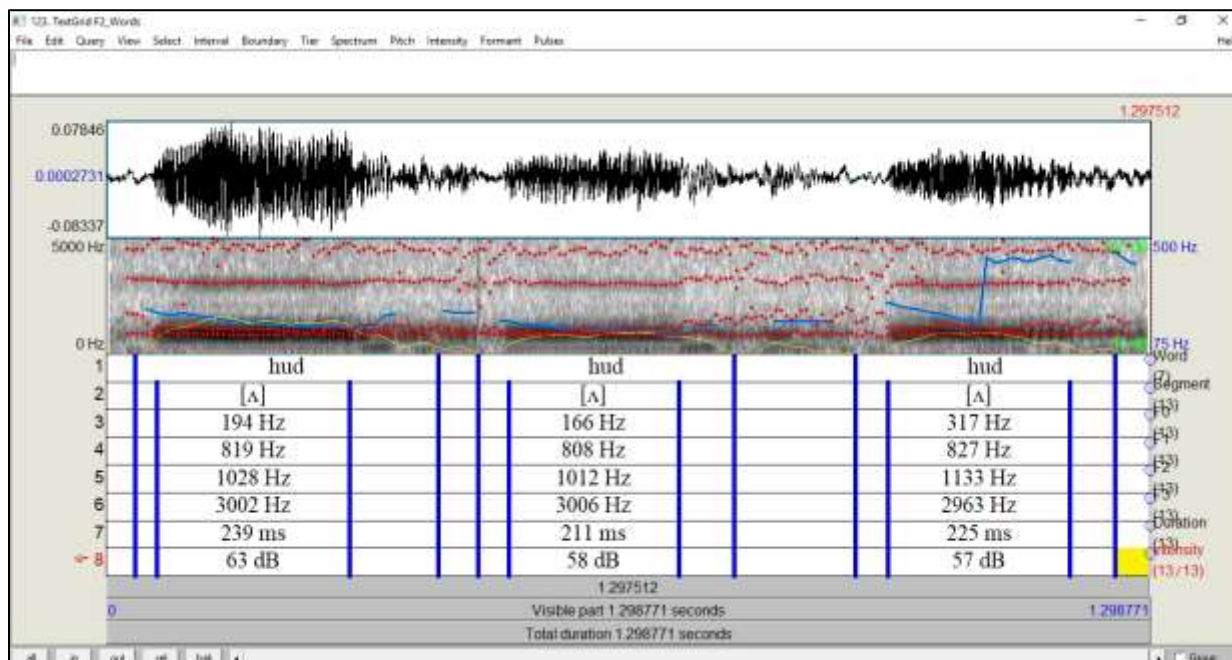
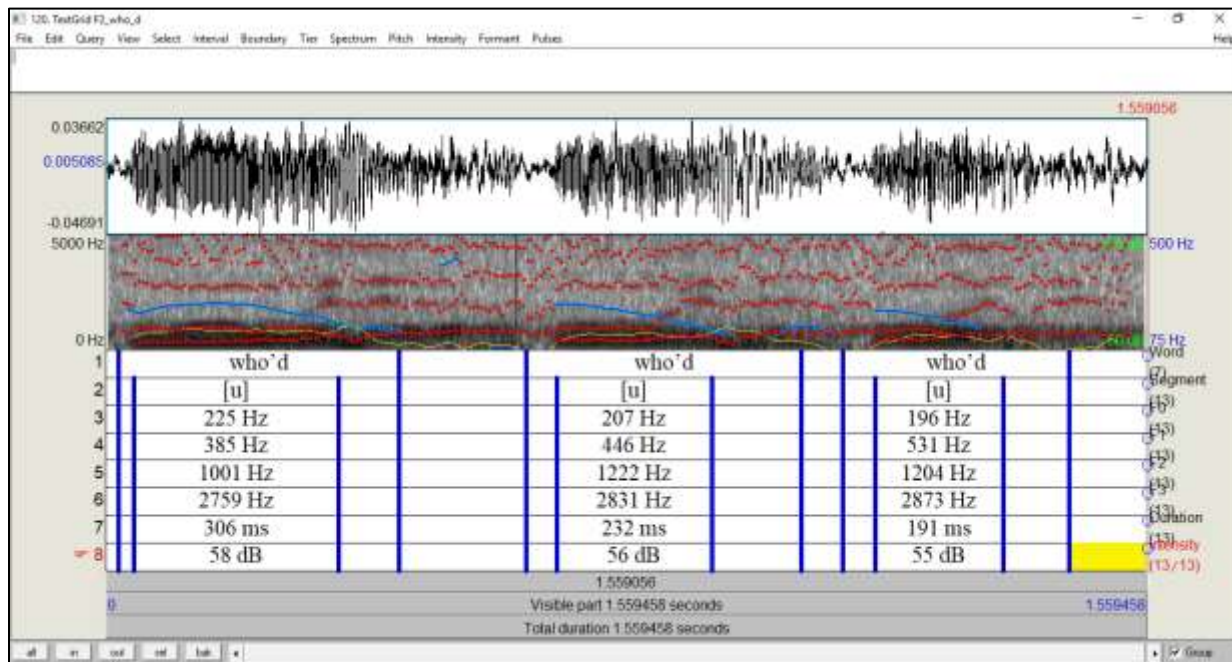




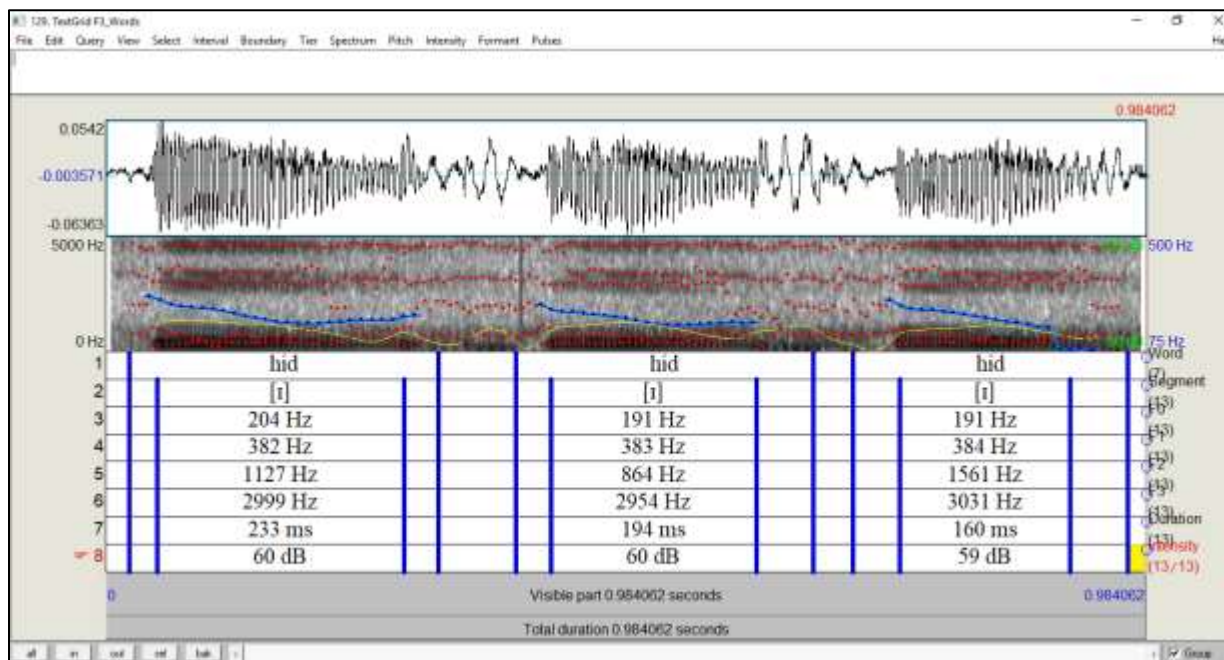
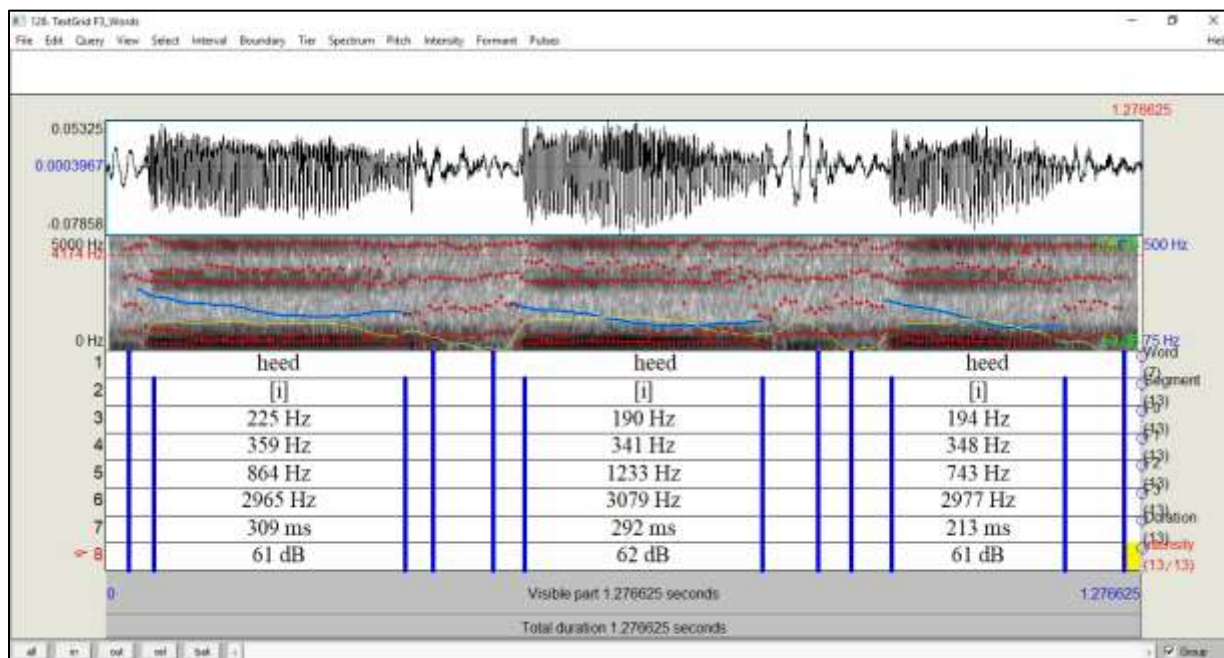


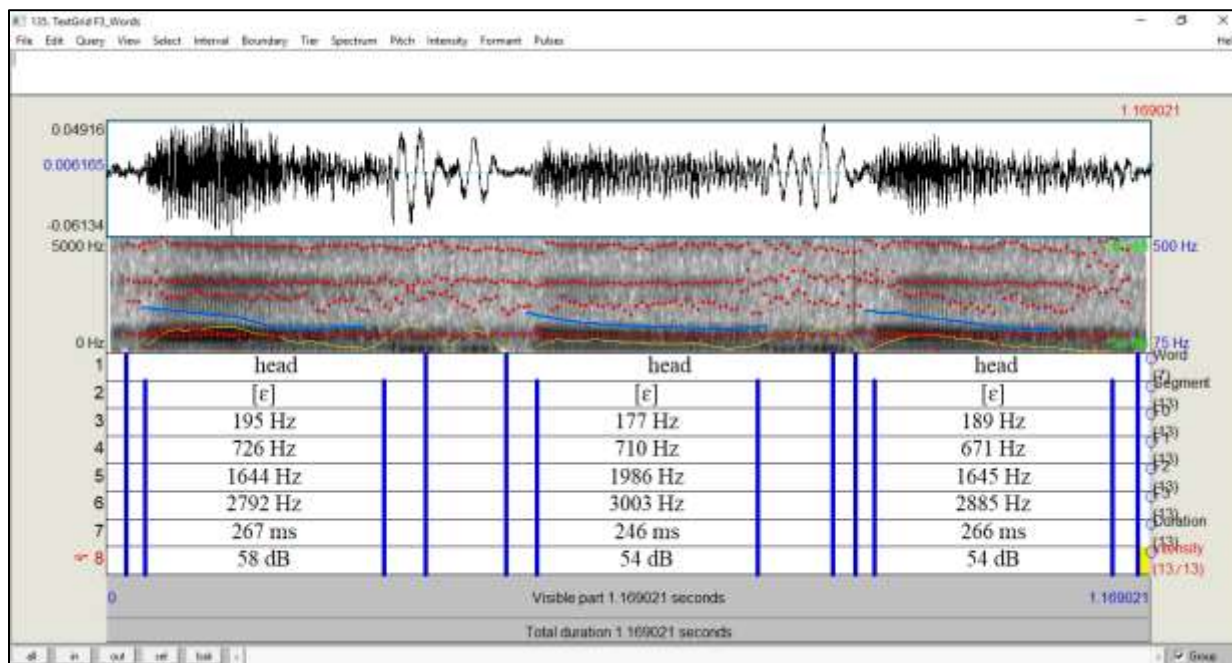
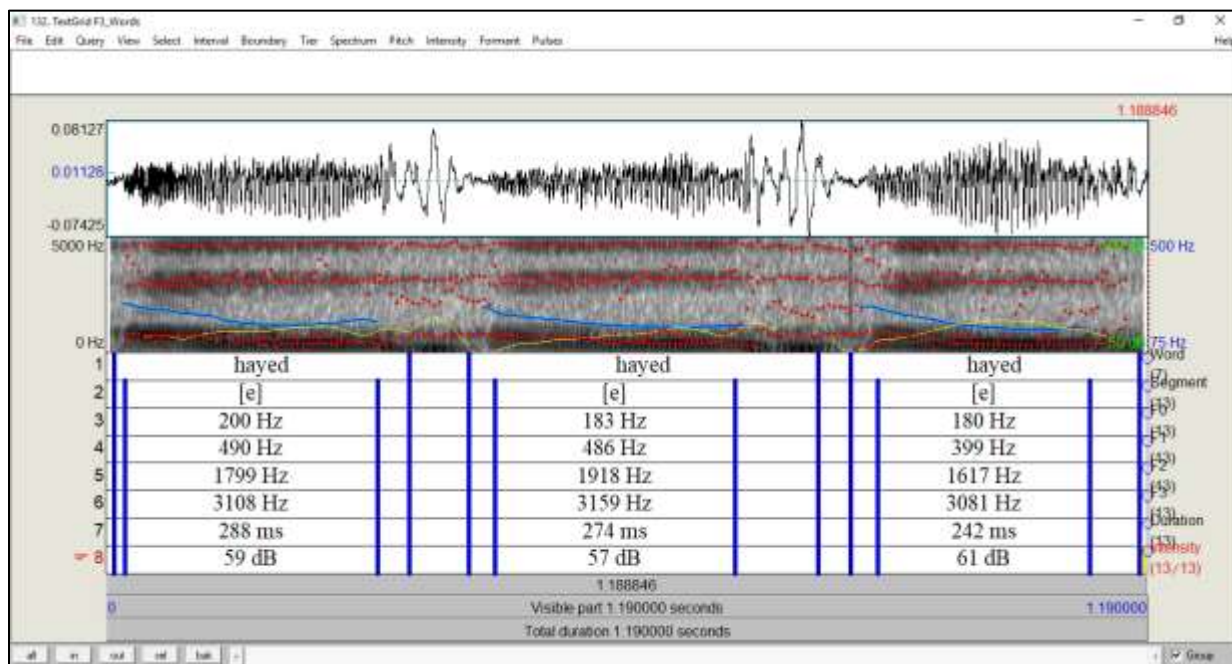


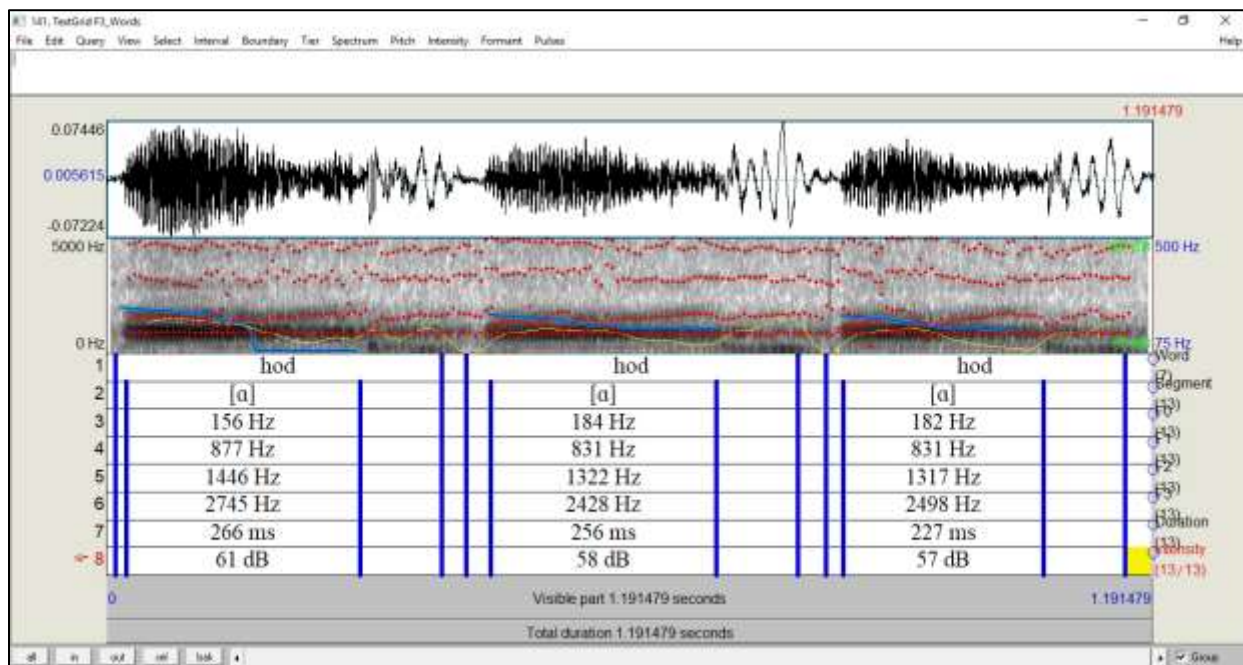
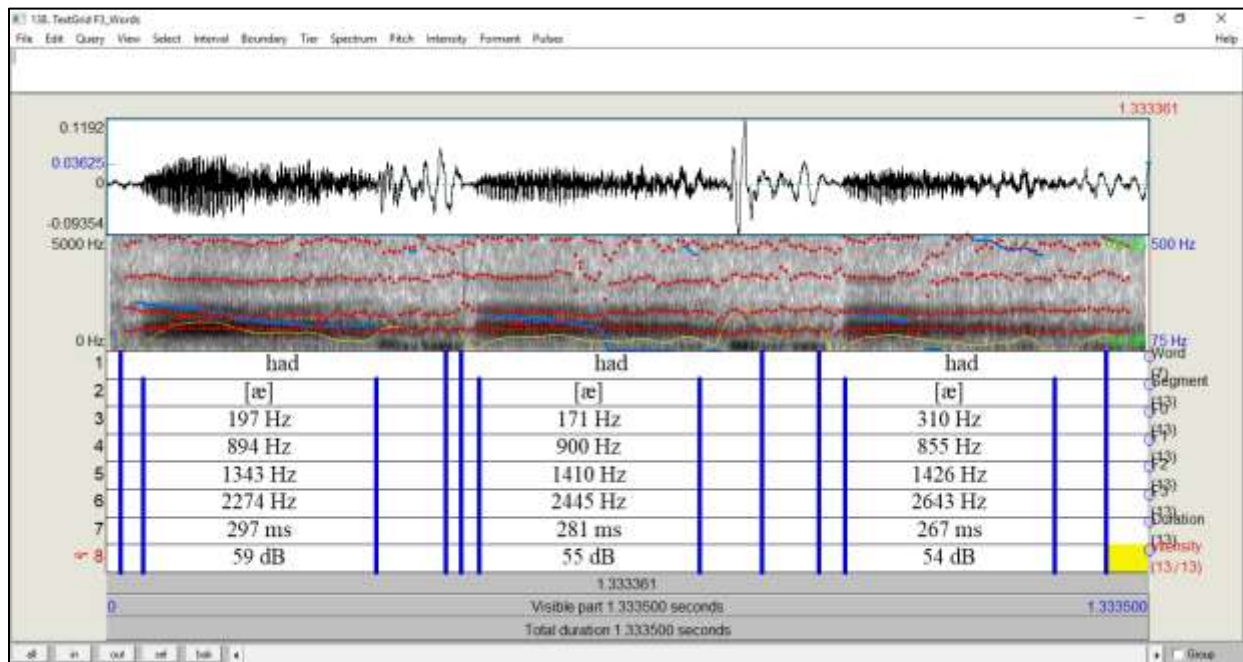


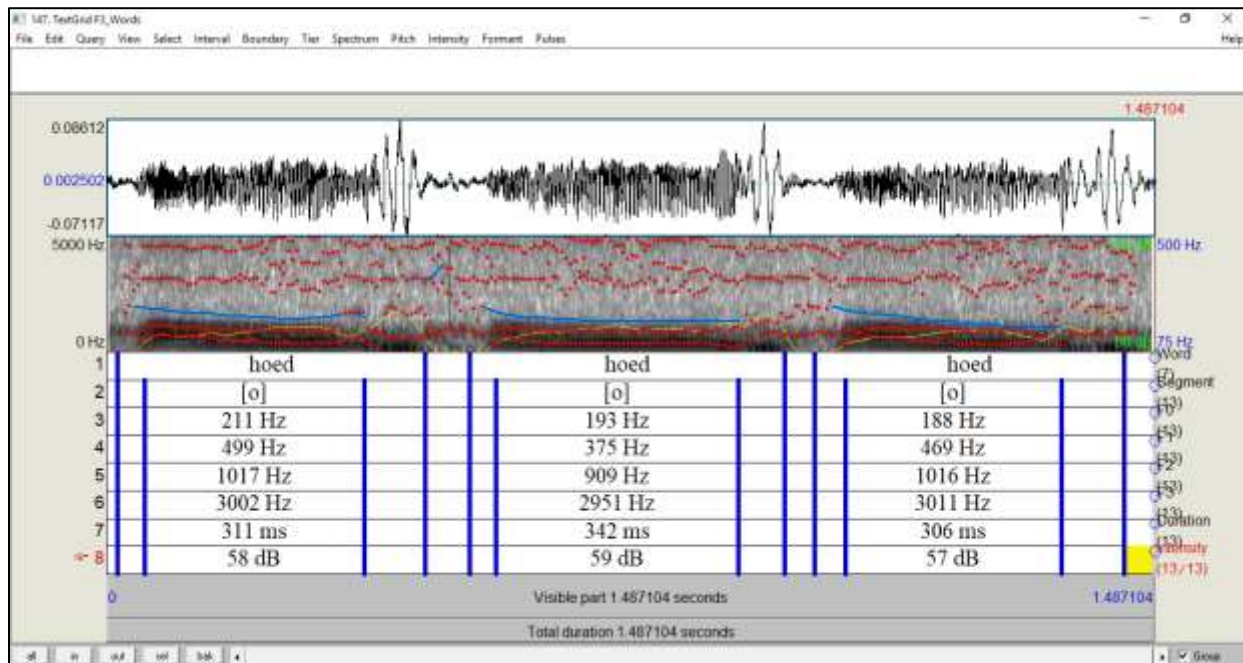
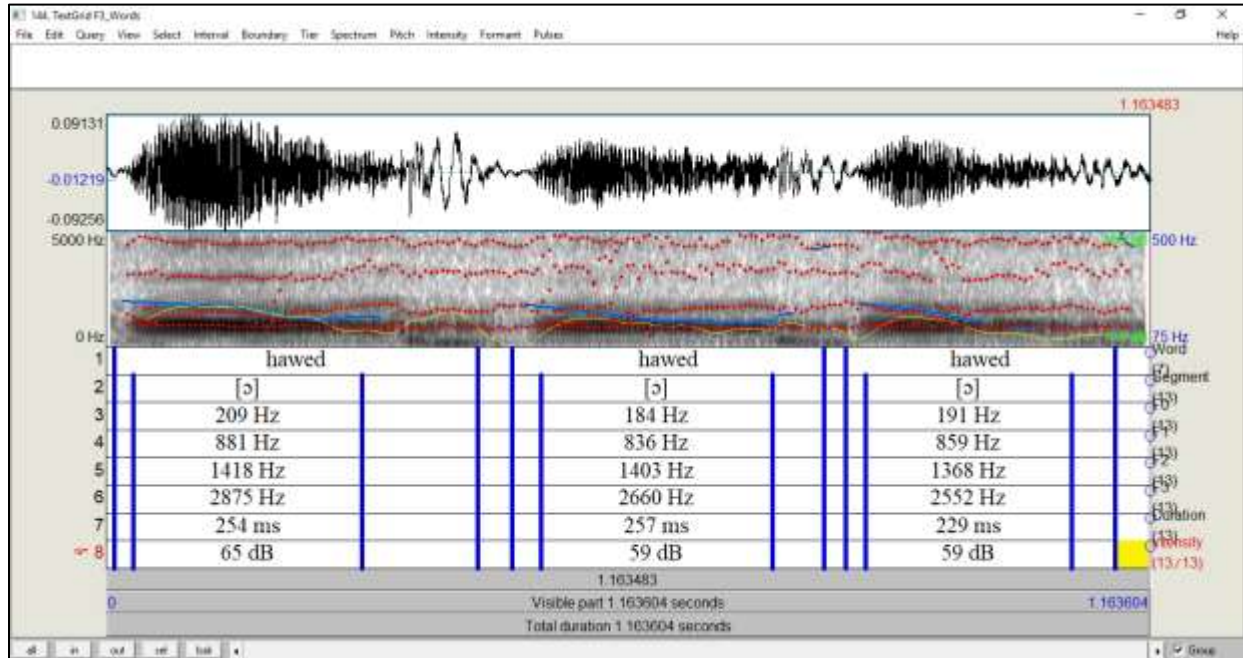


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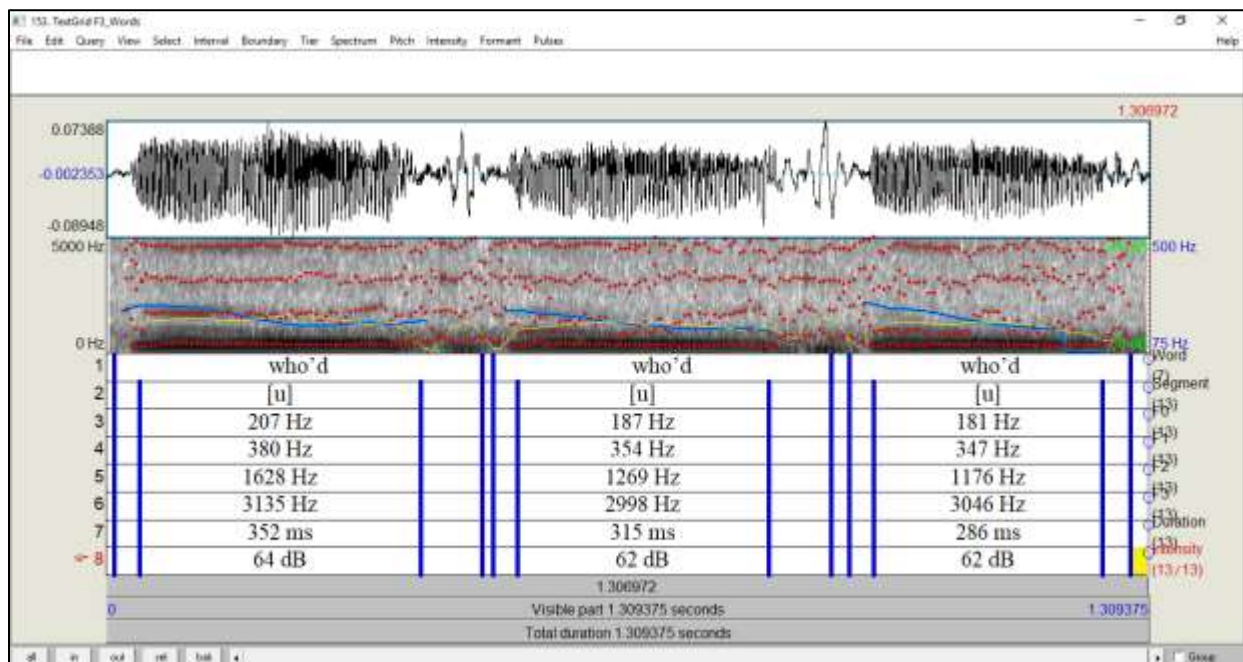
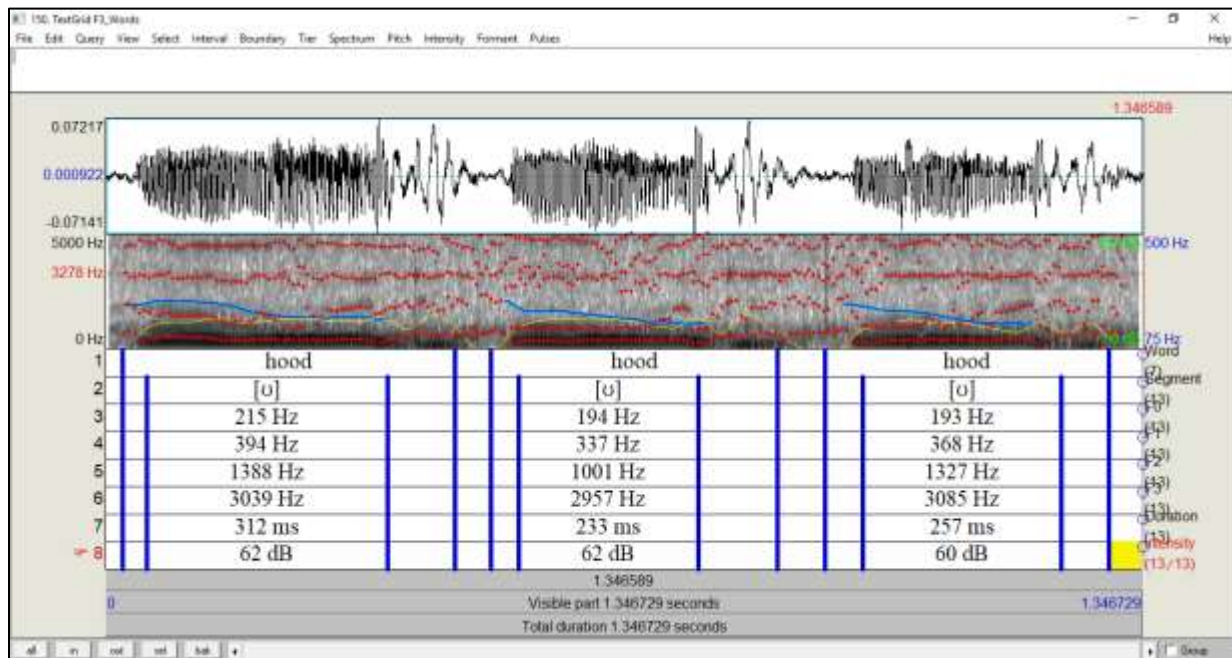


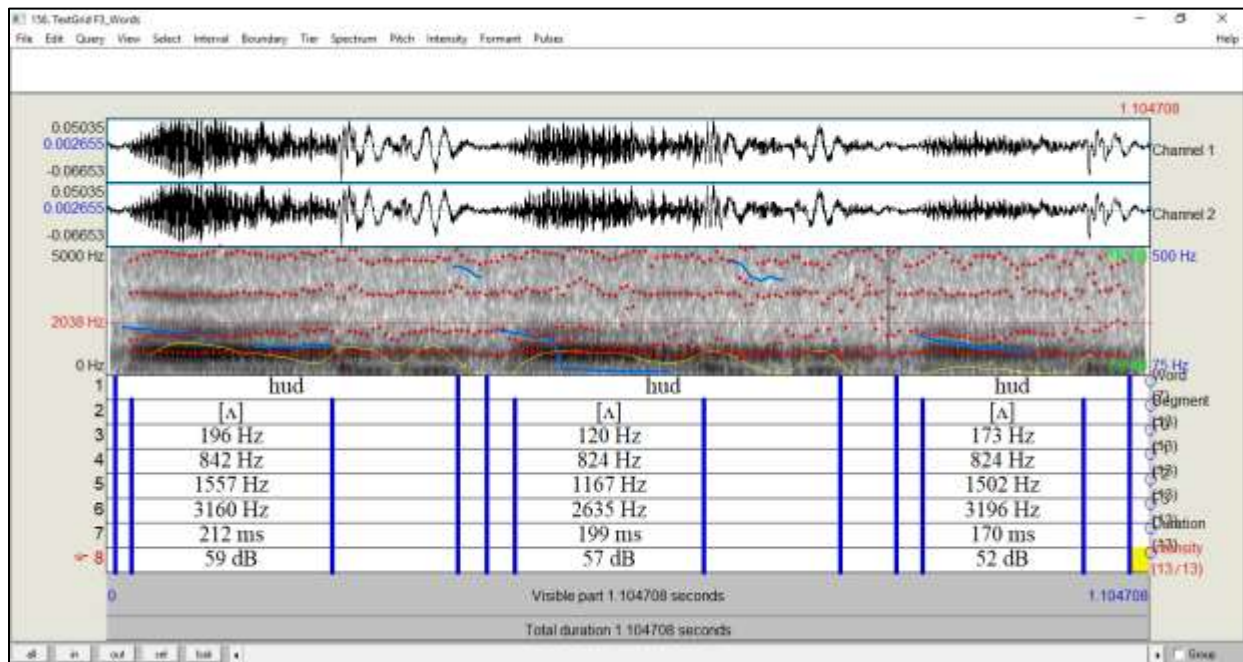




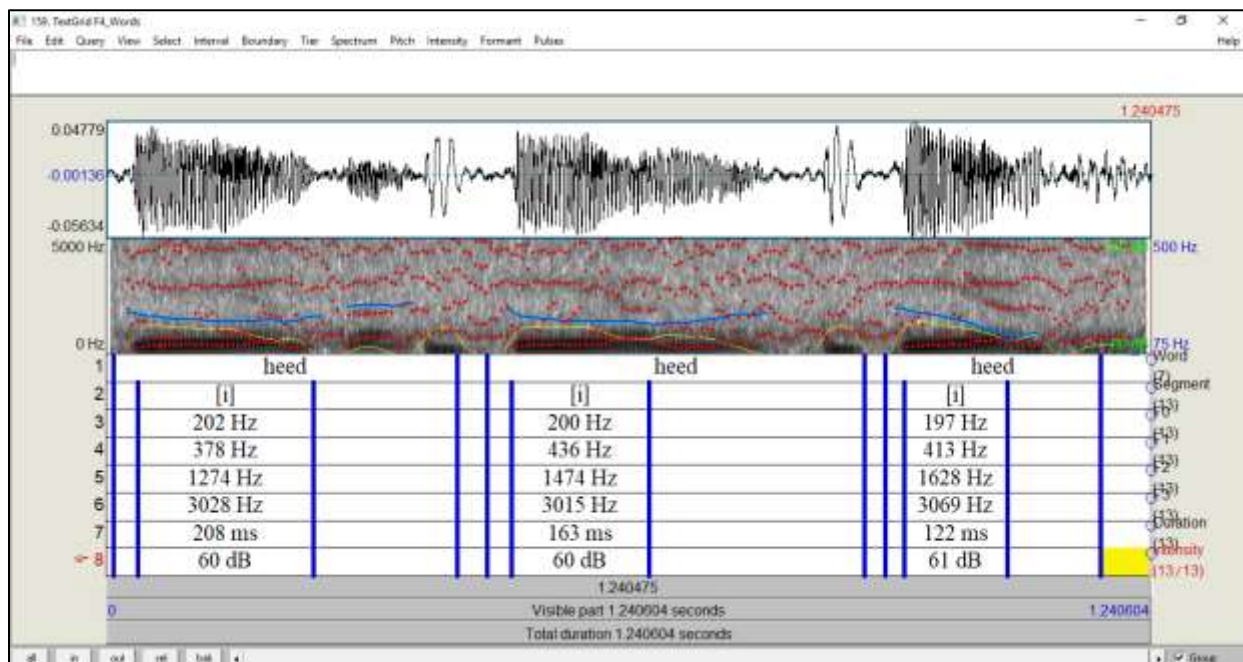


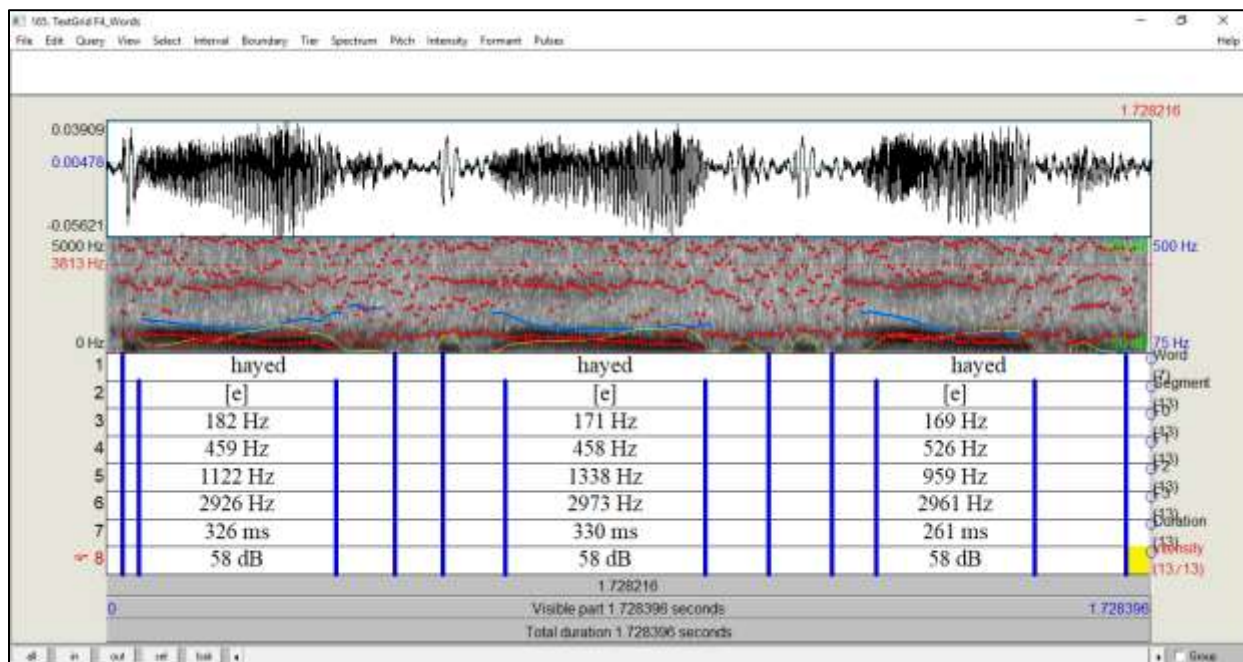
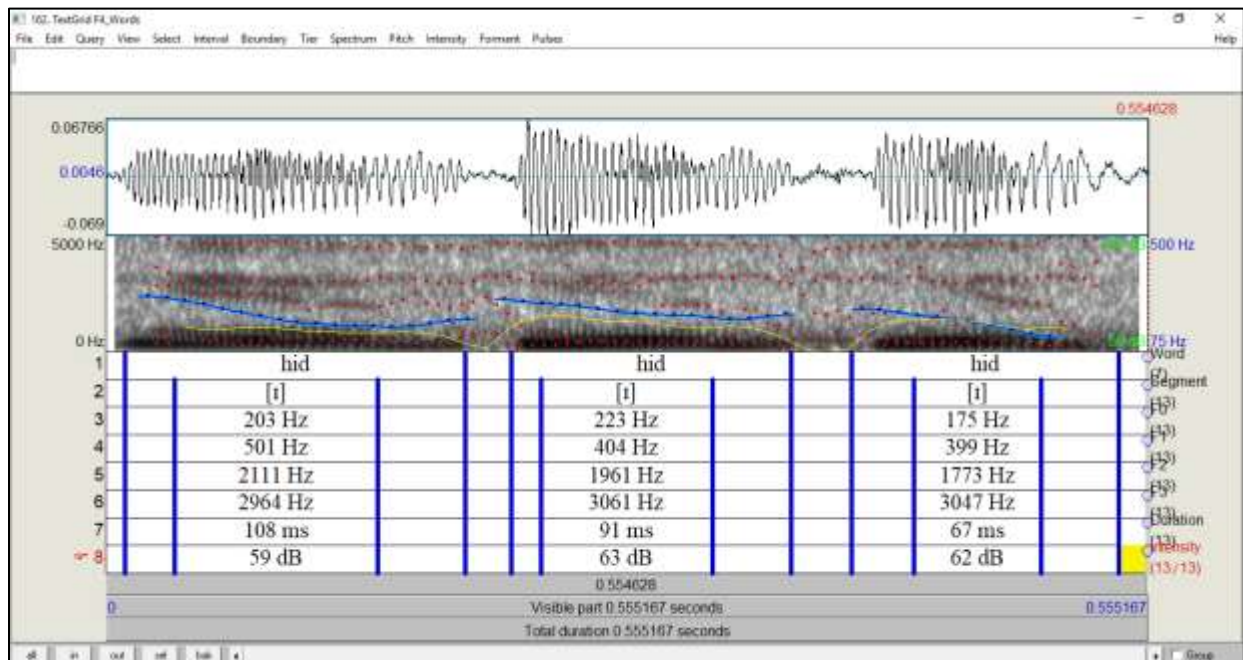


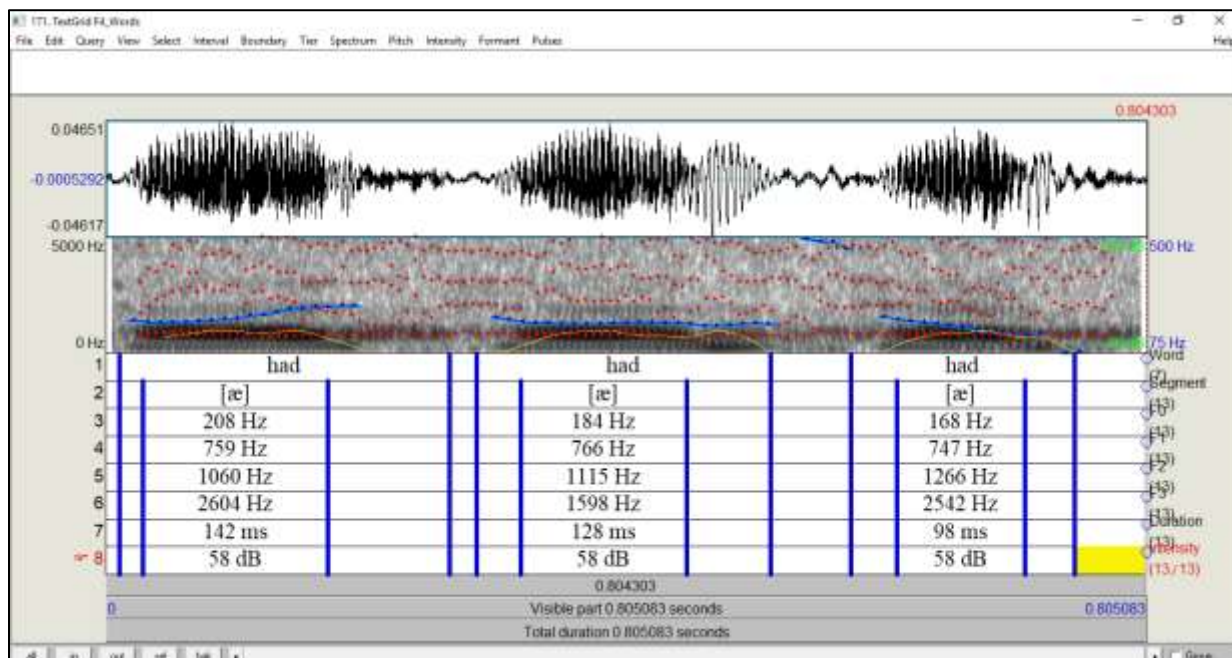
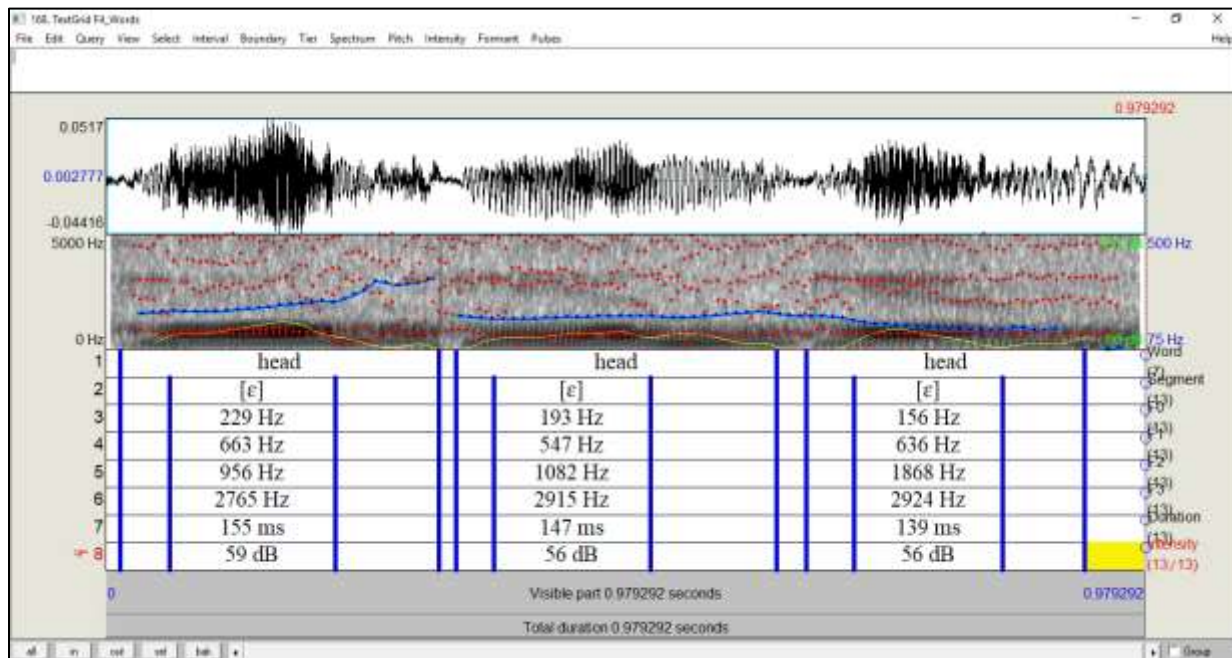


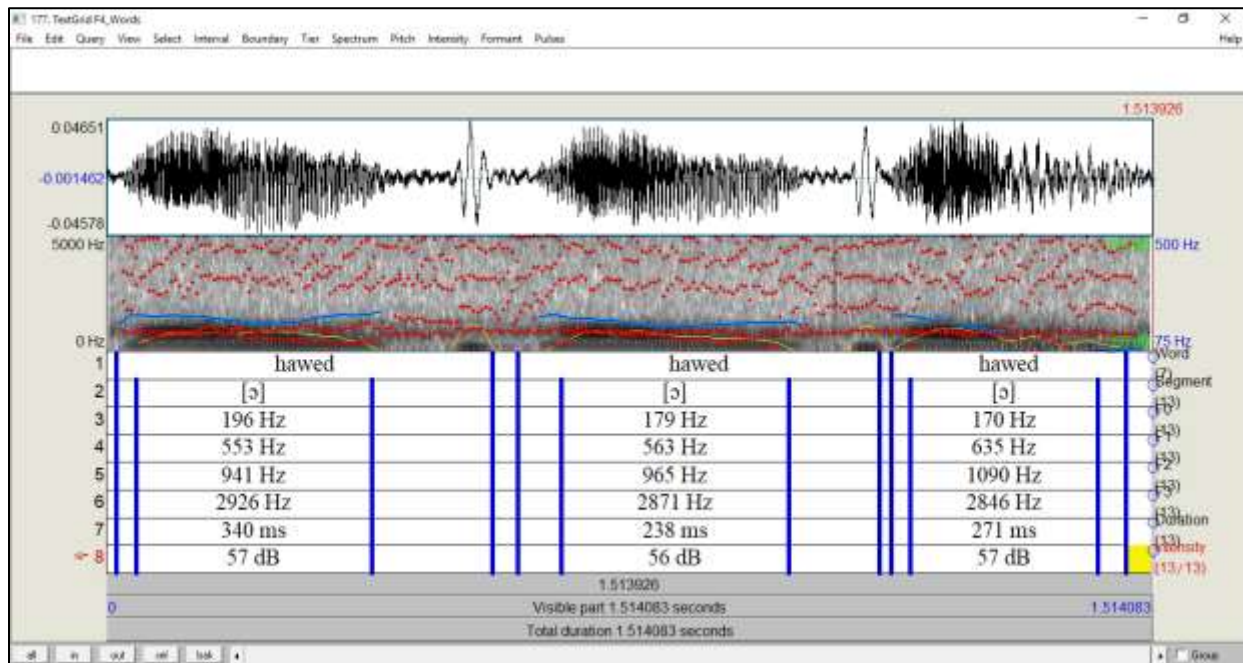
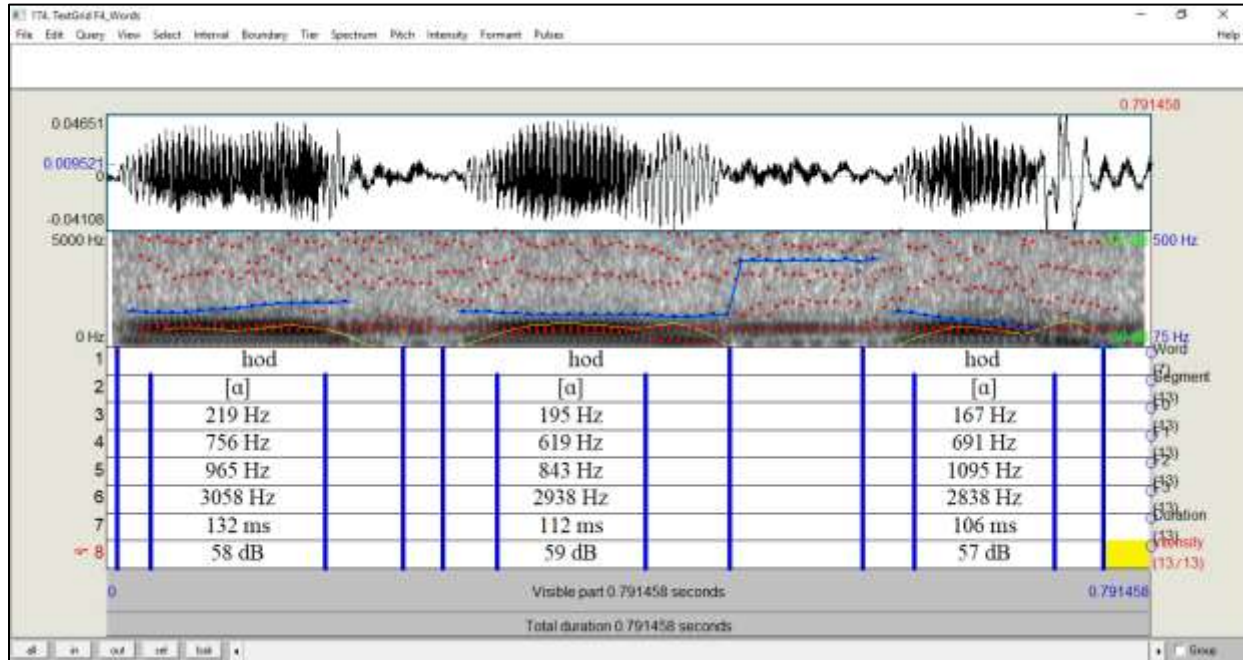


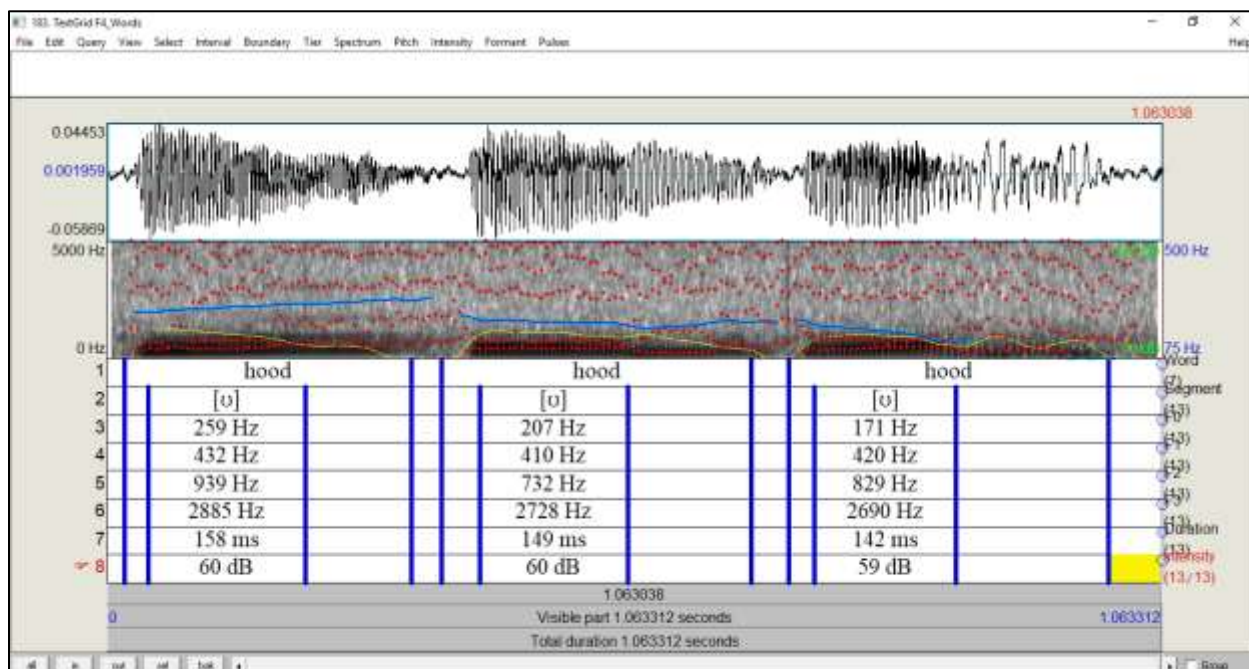
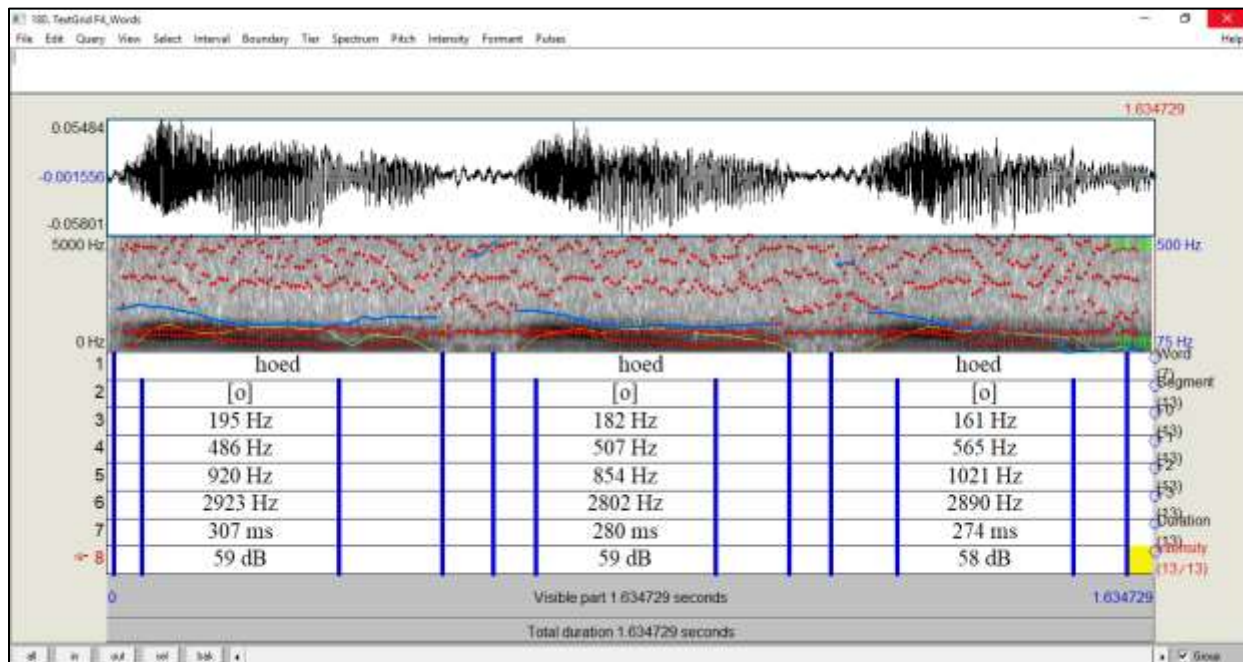
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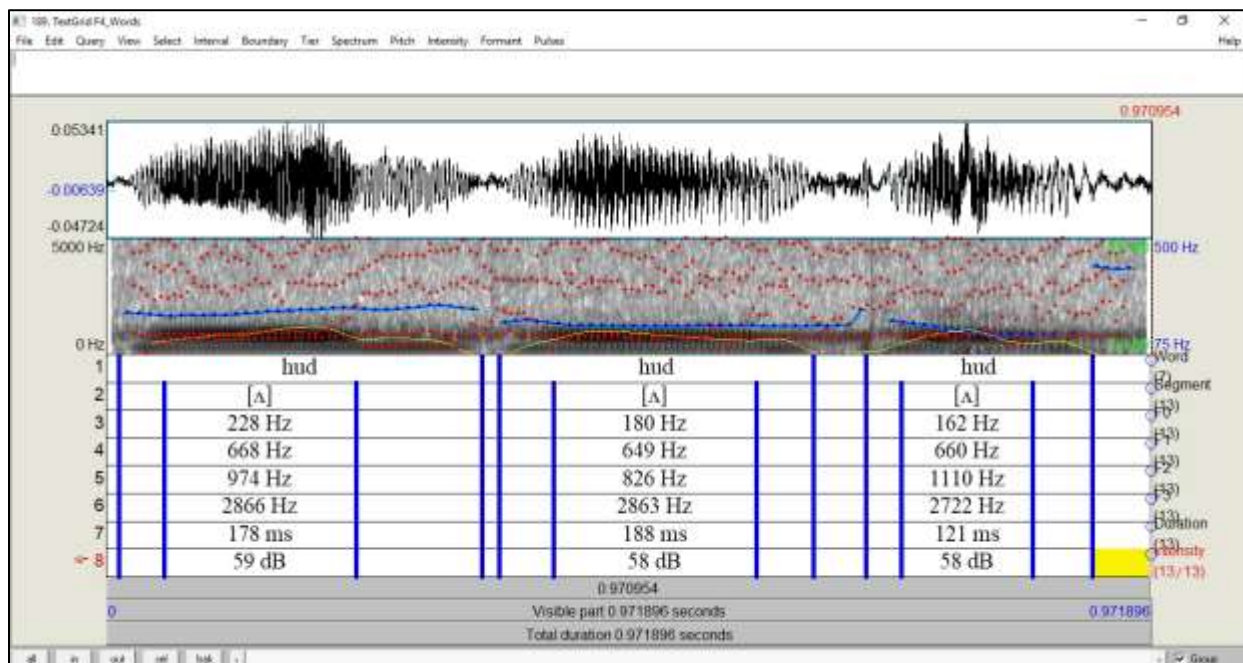
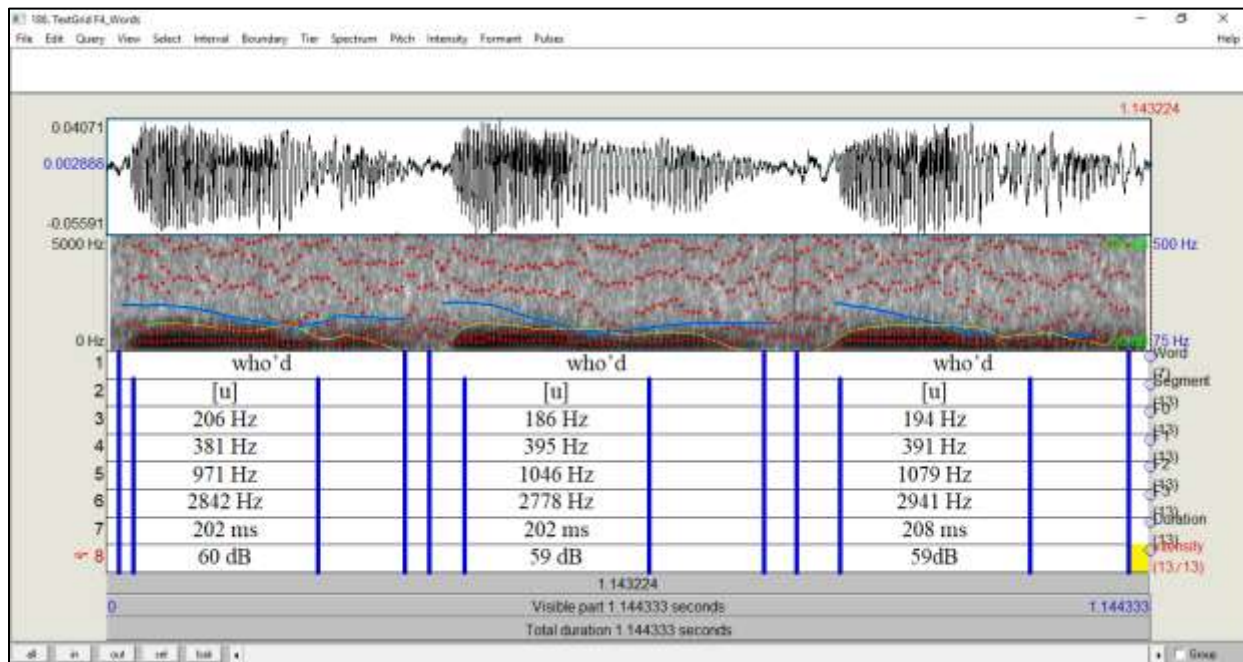




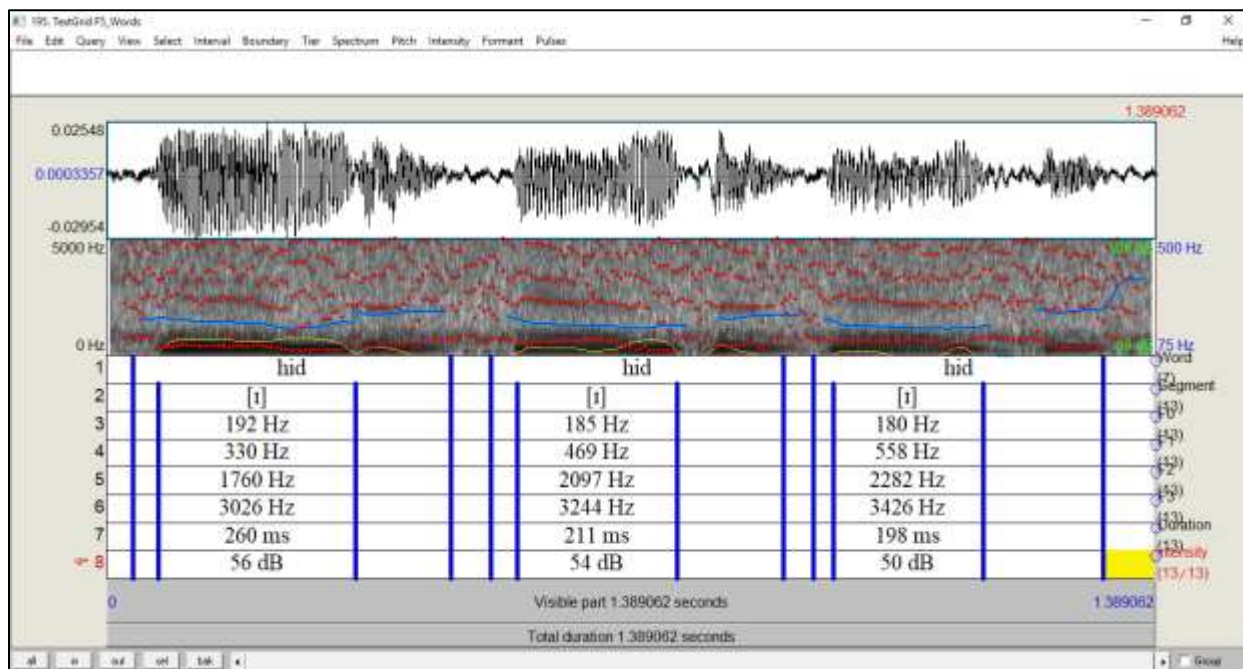
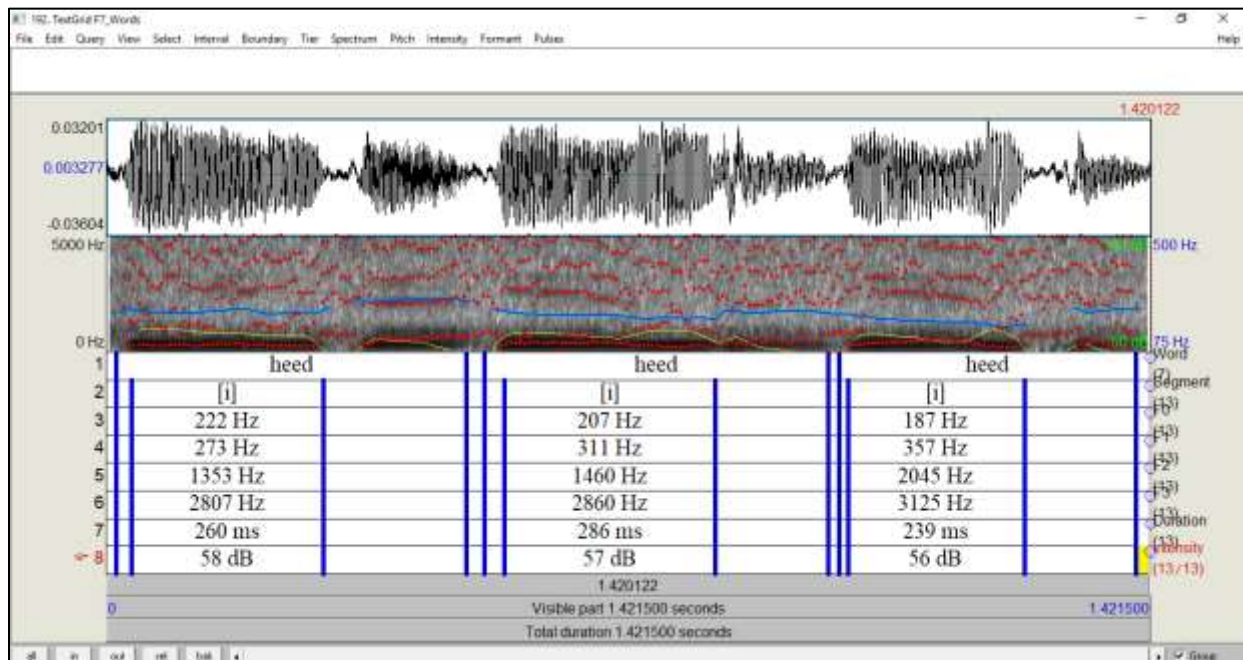




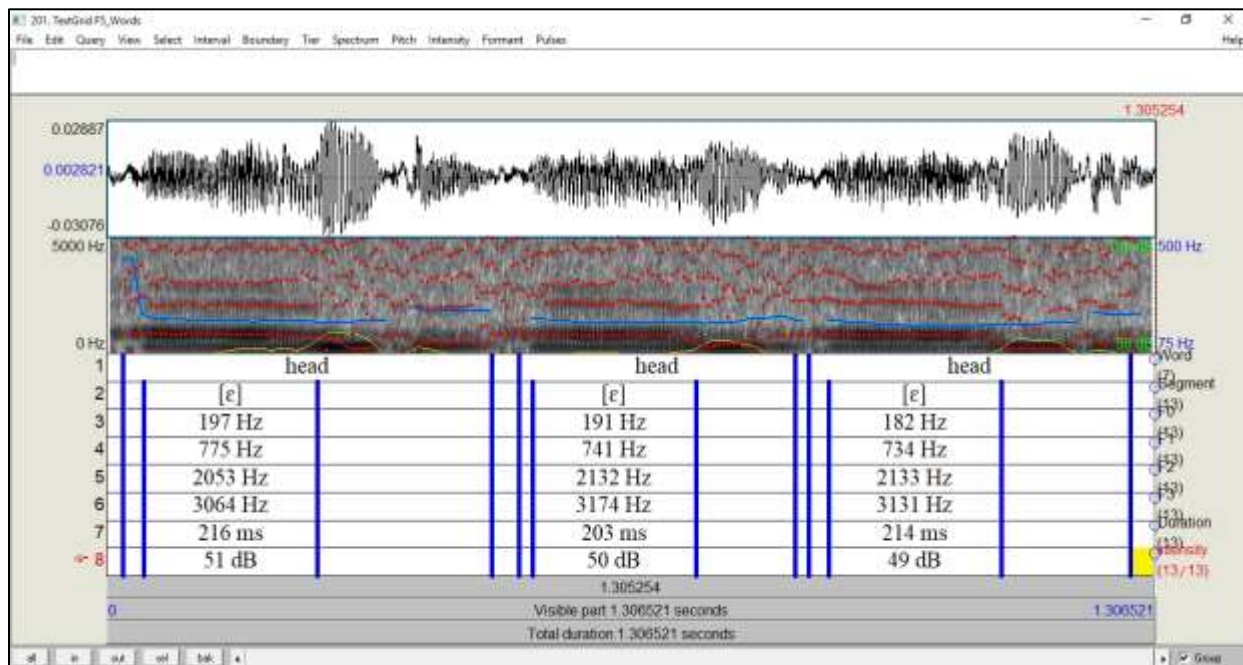
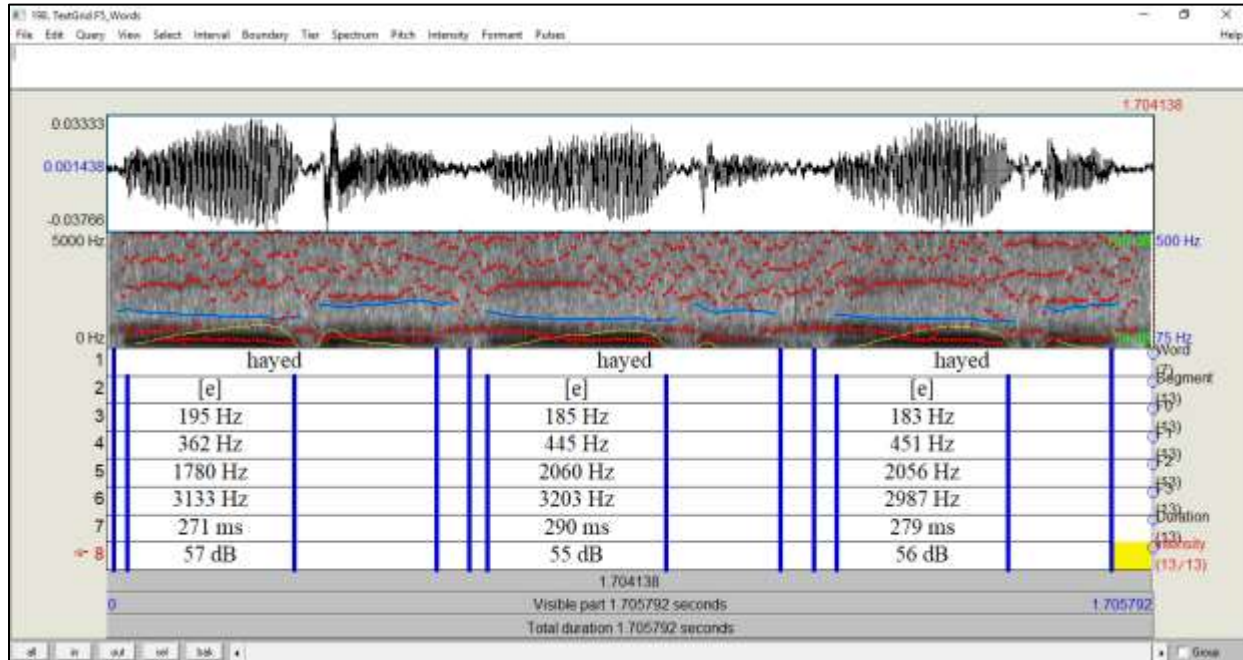


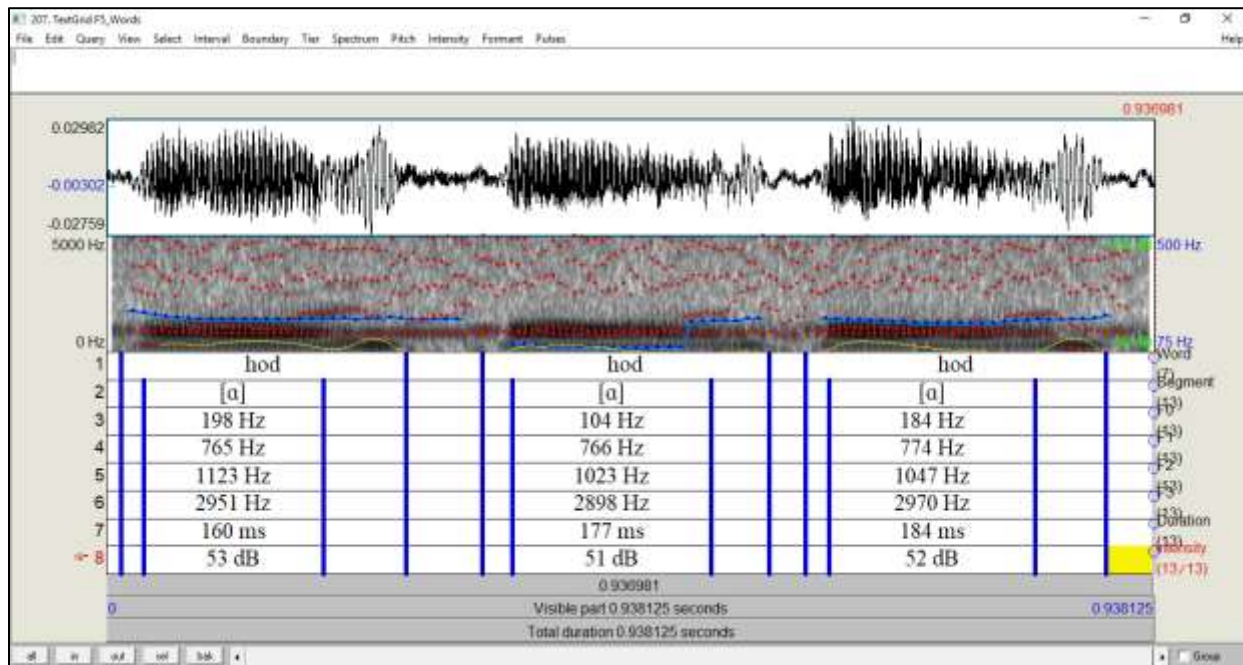
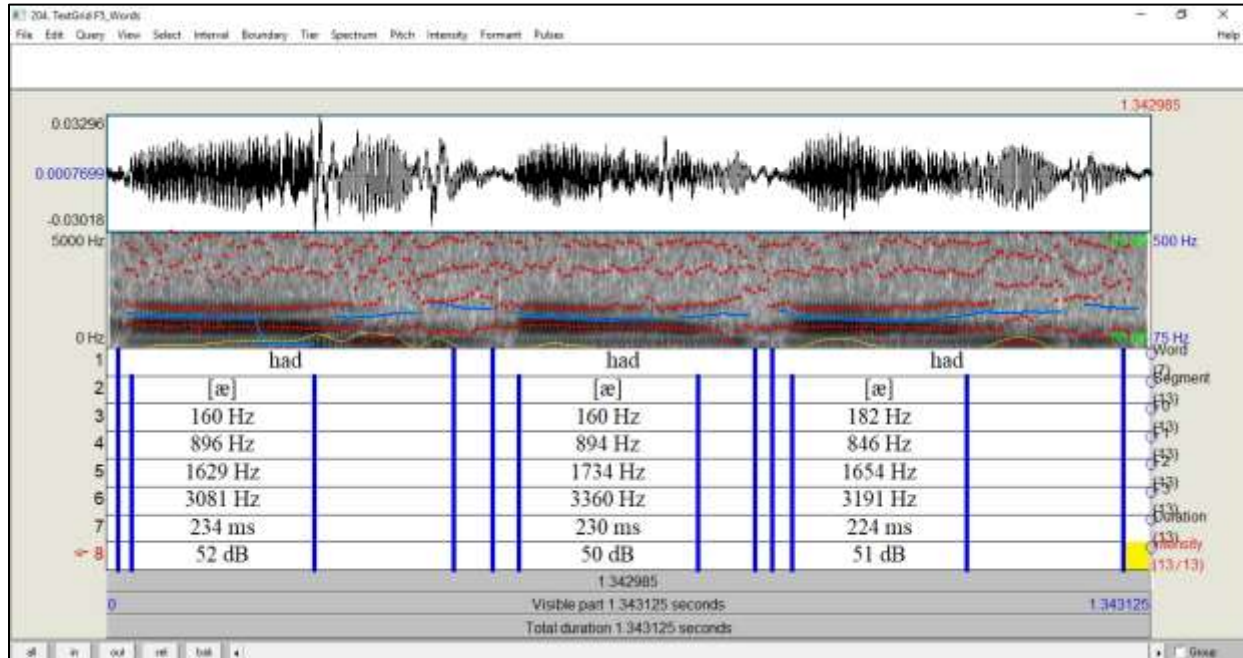


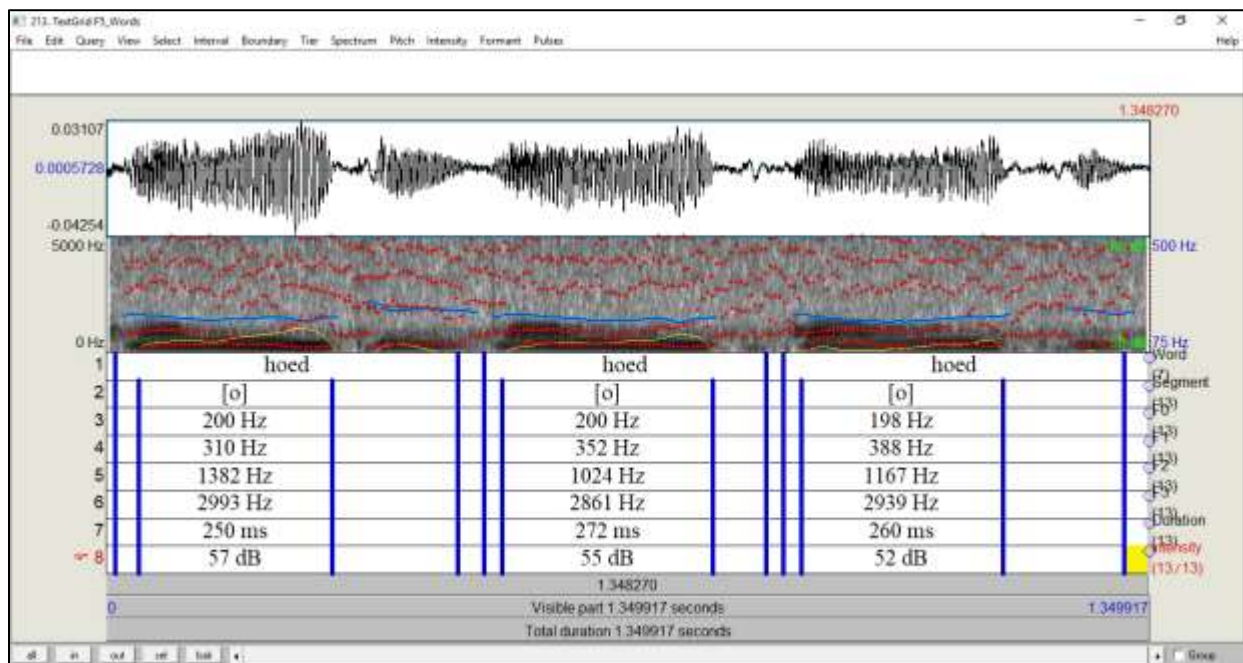
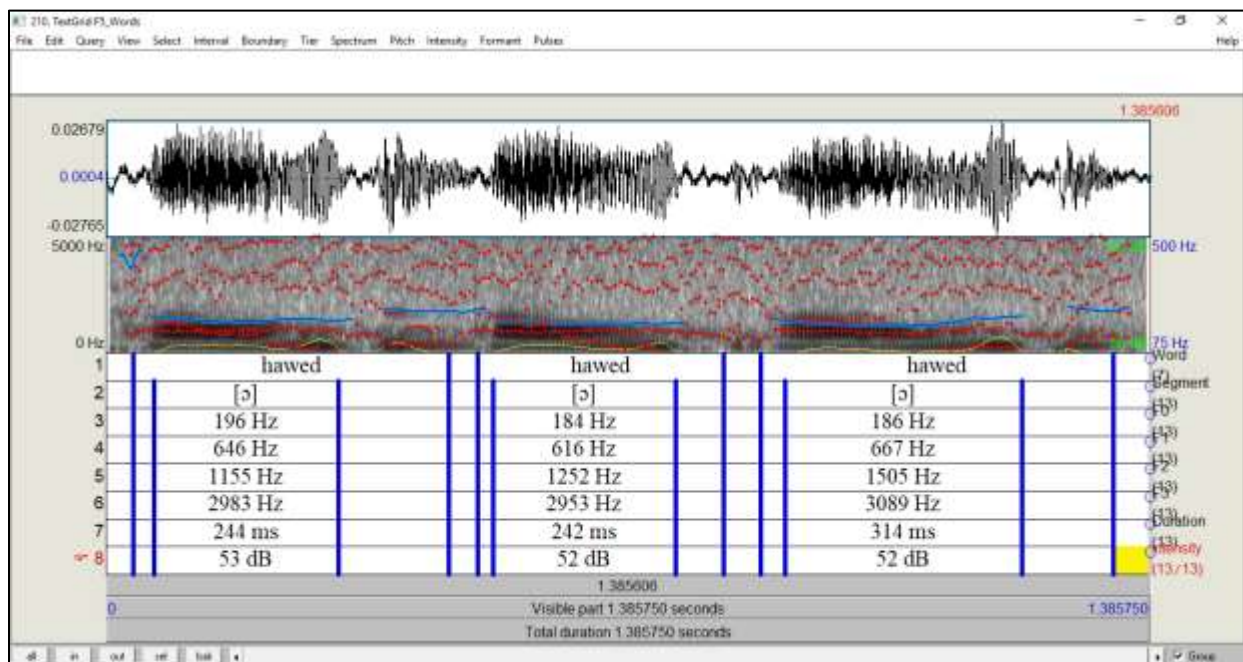
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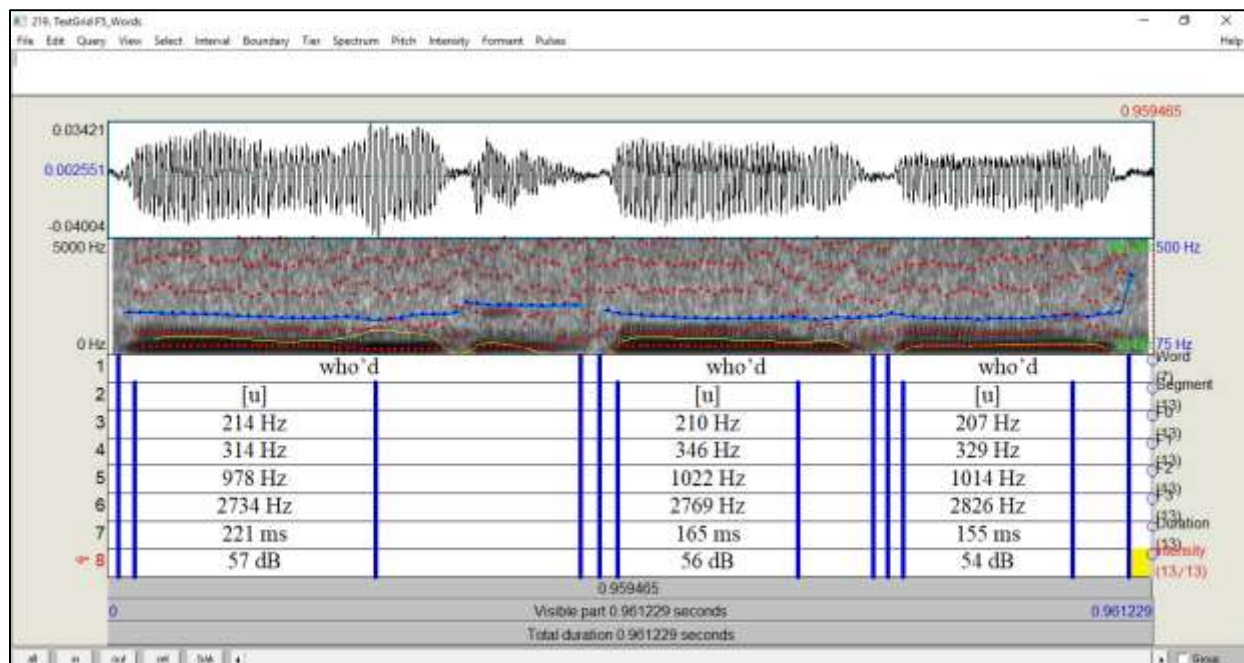
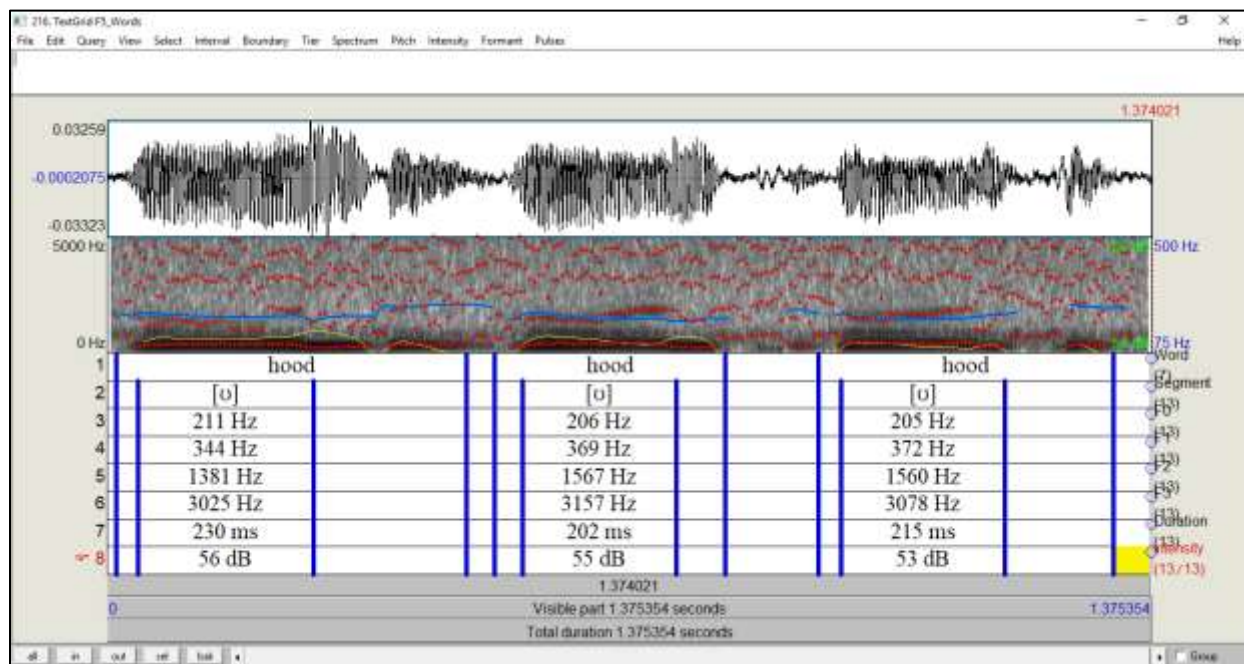


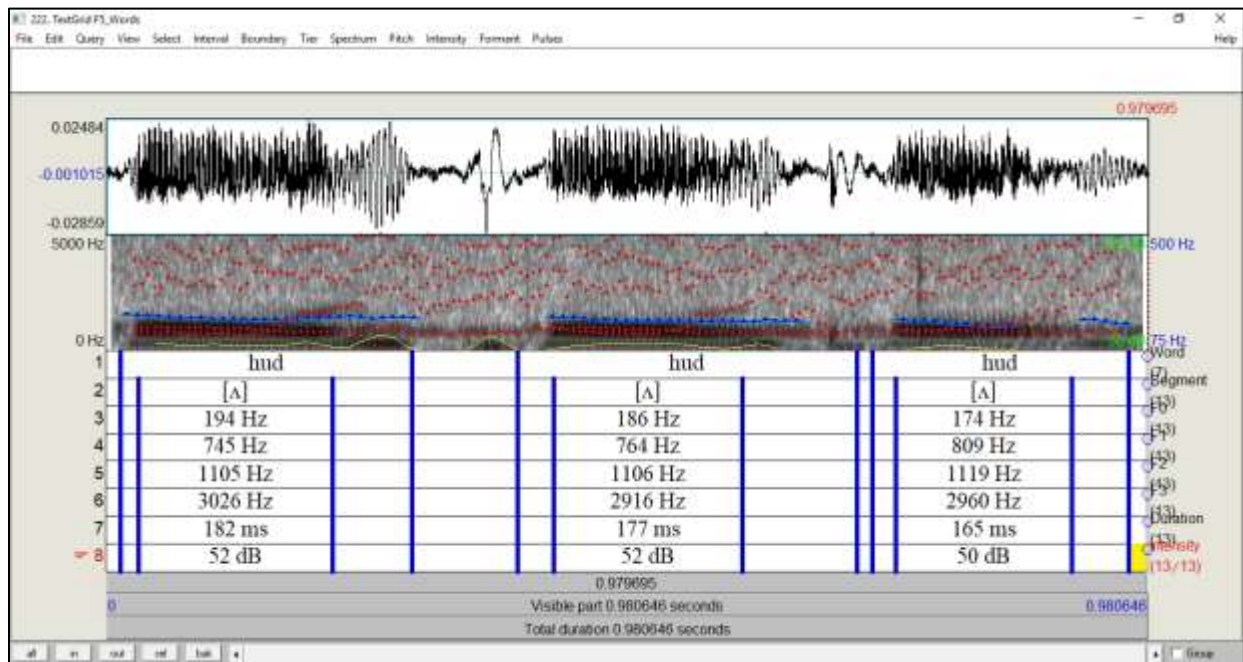




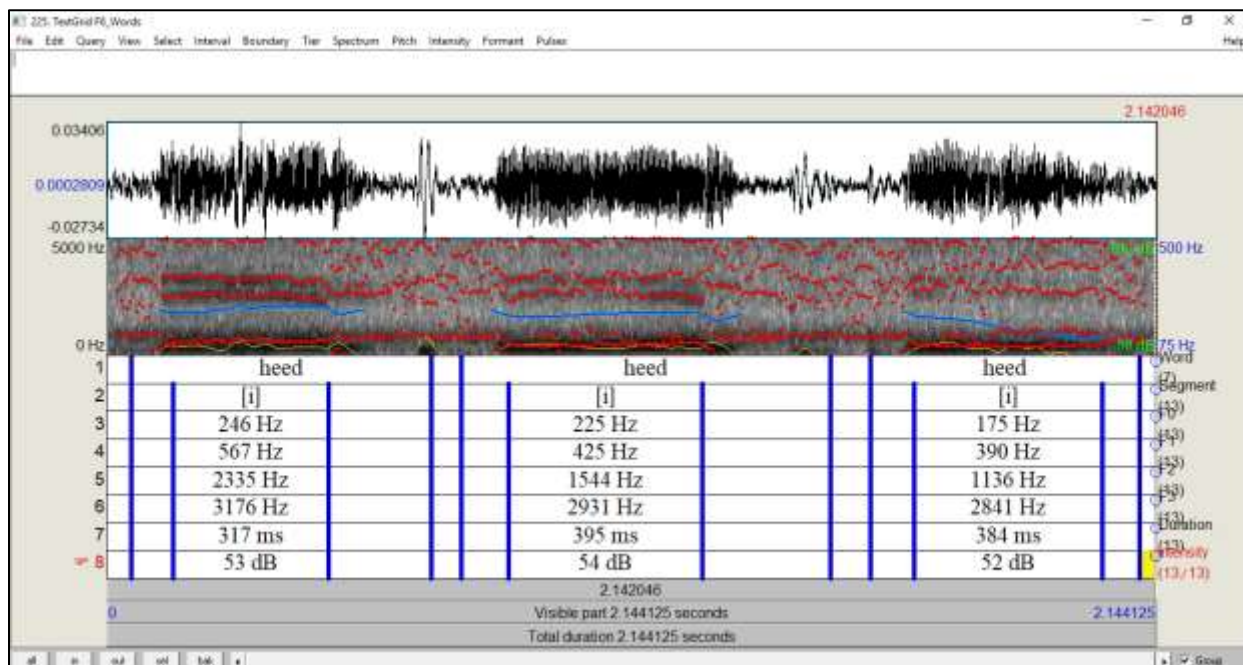


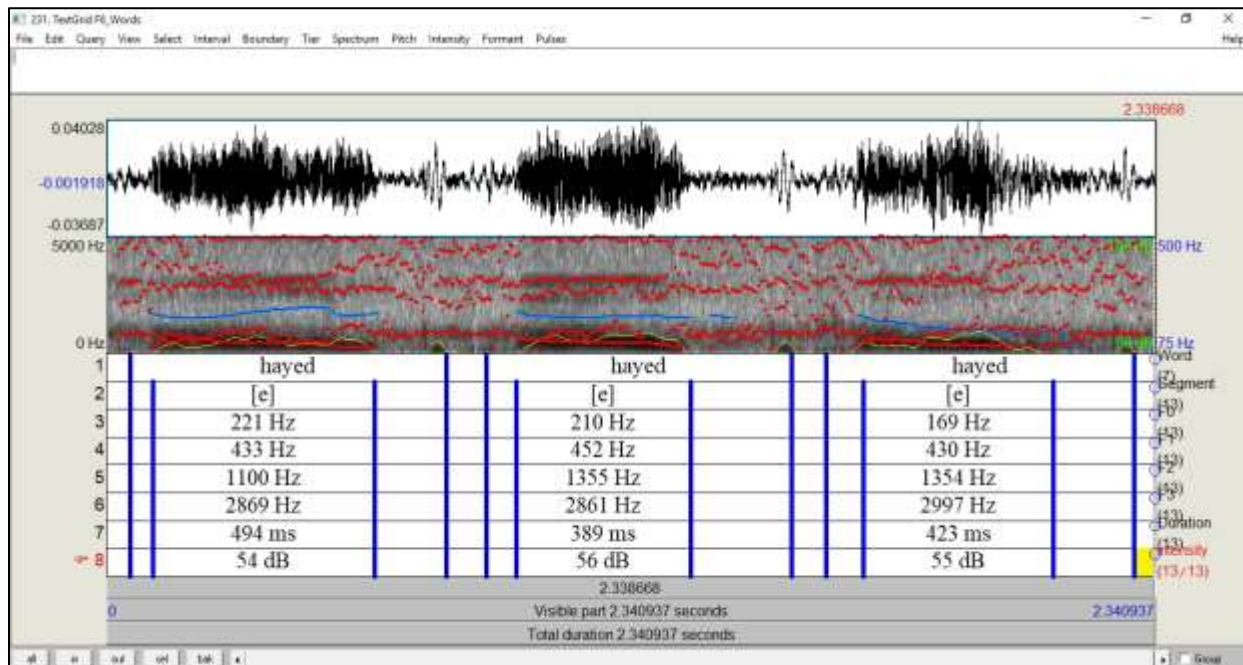
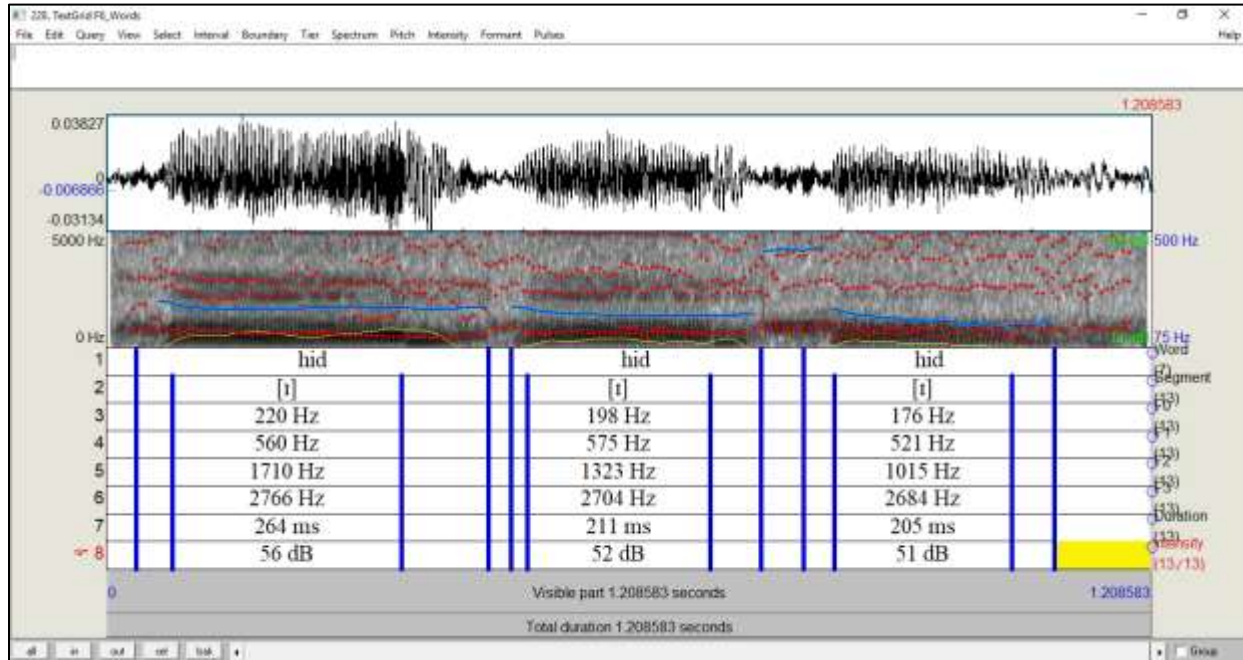


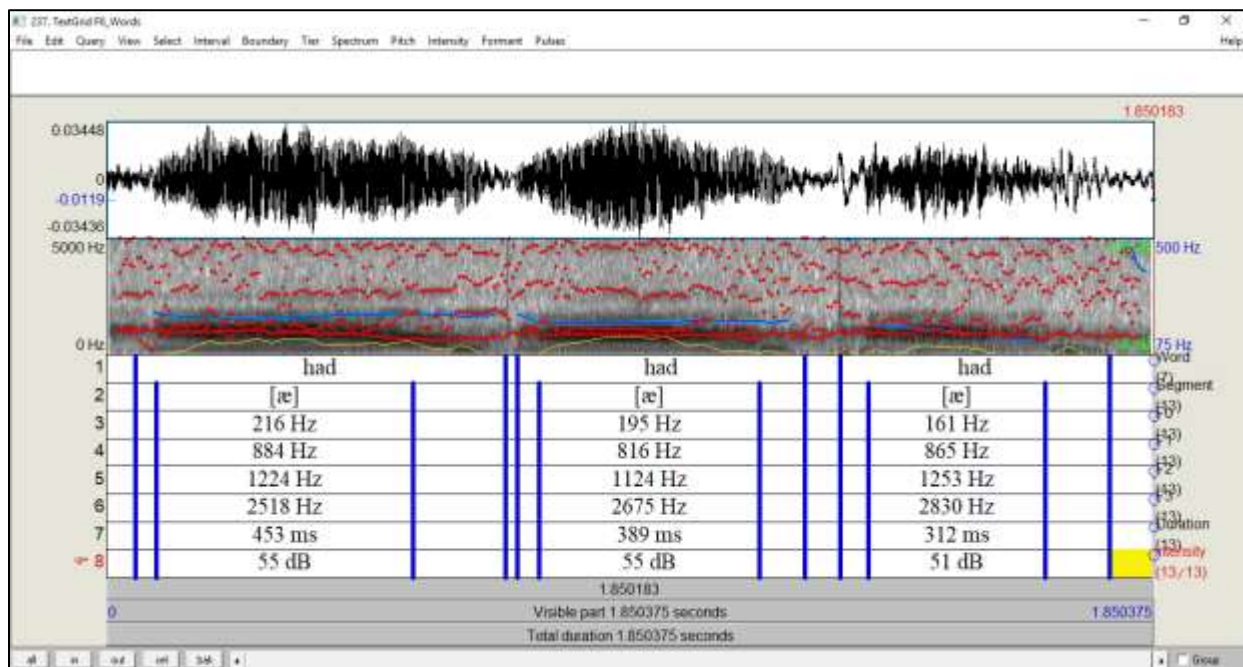
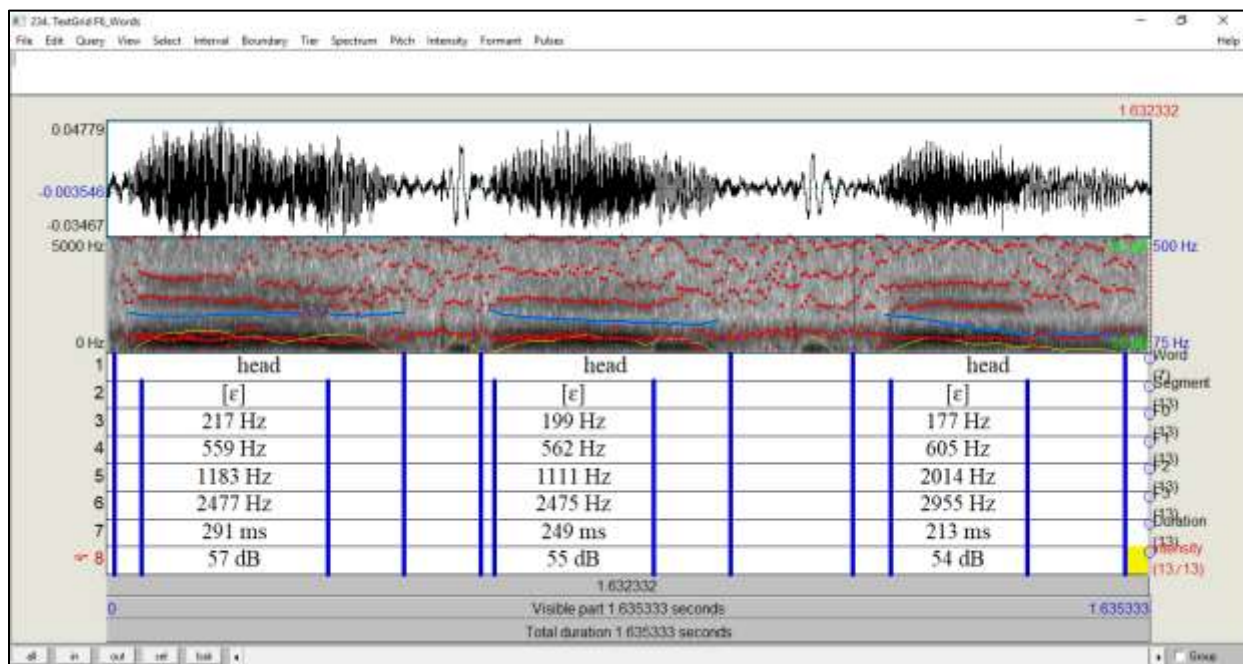


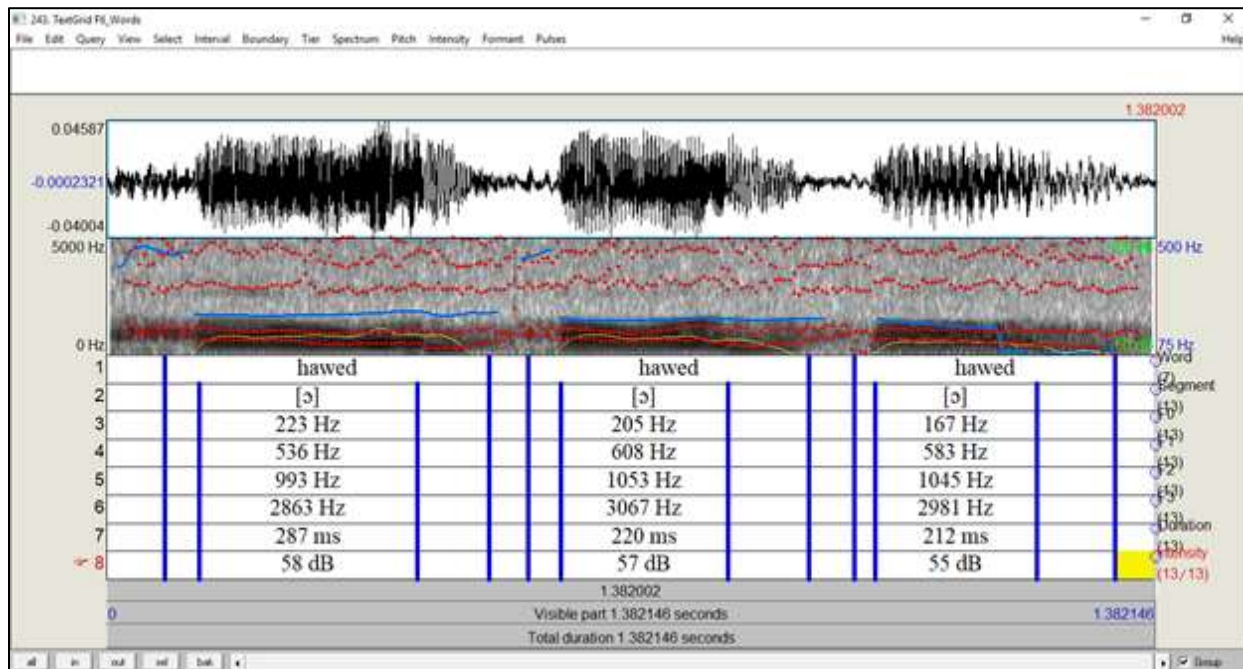
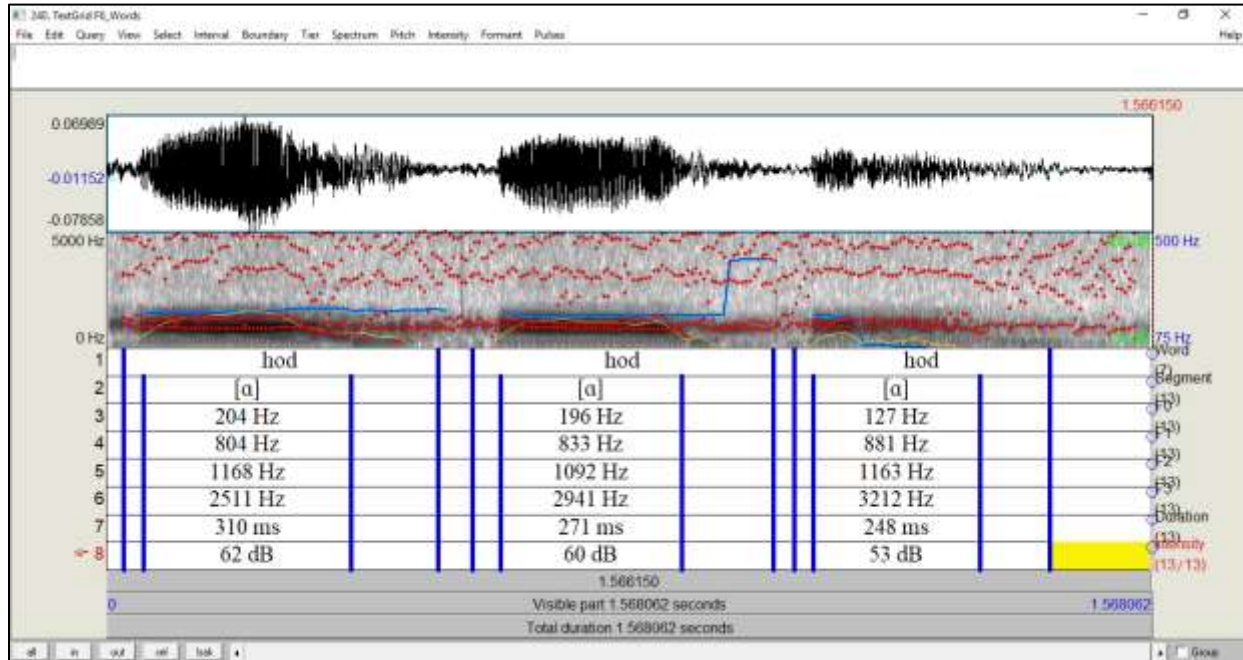


F6

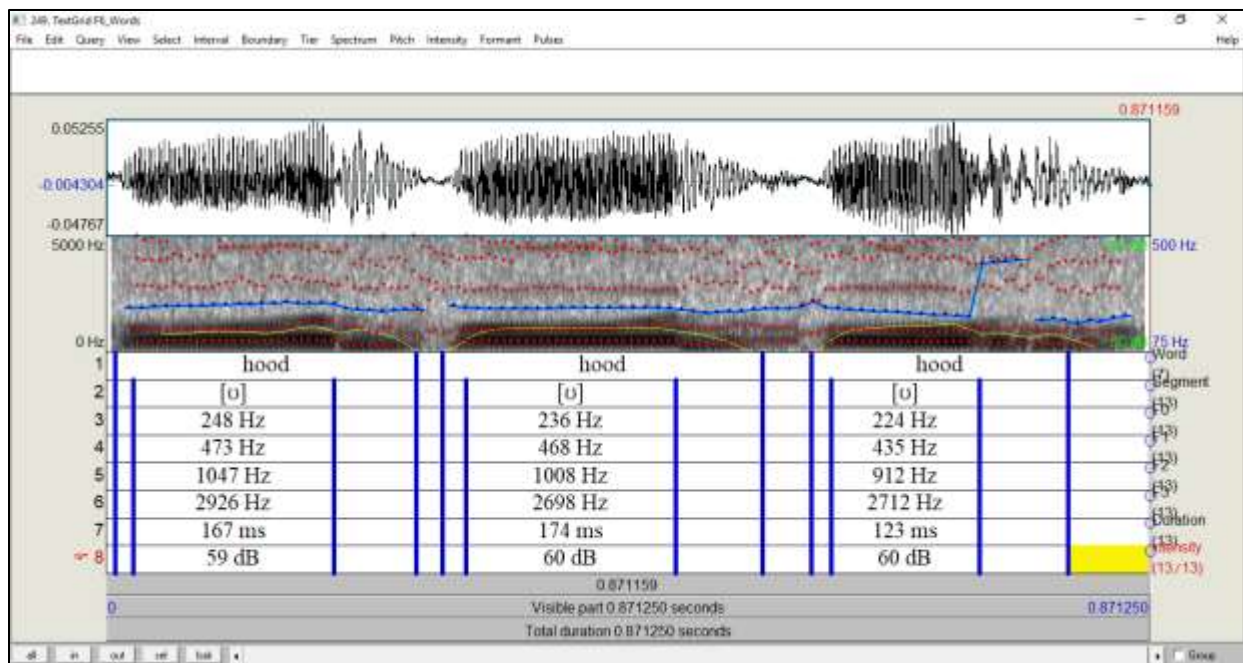
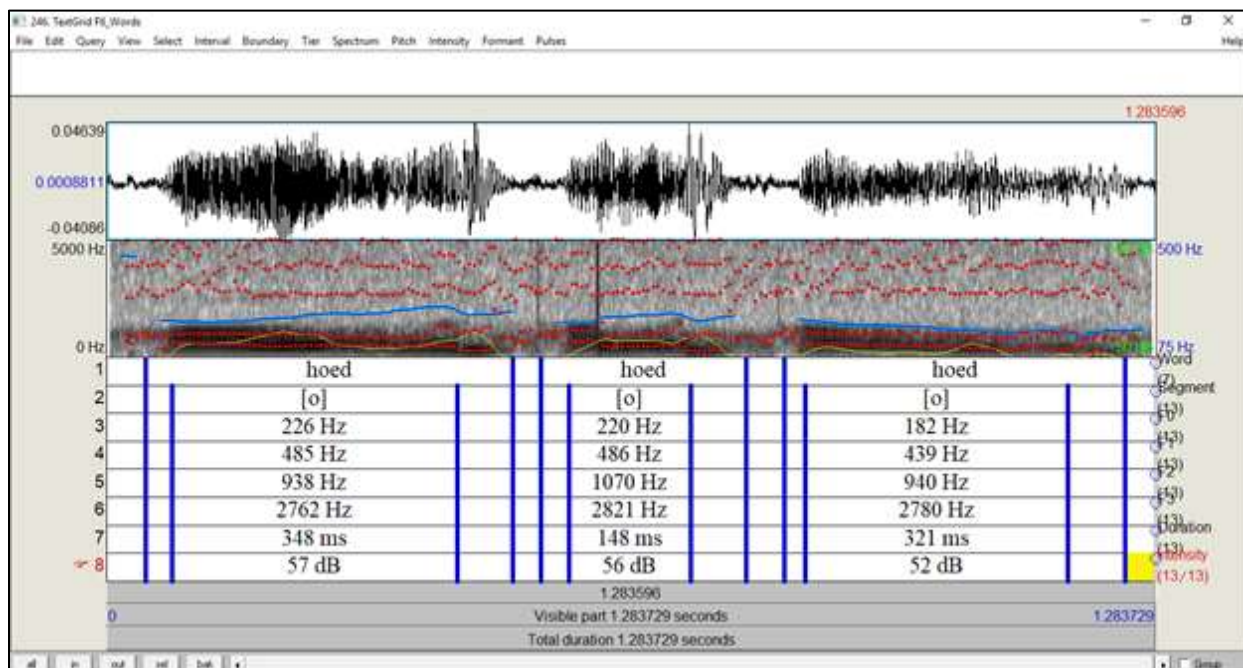


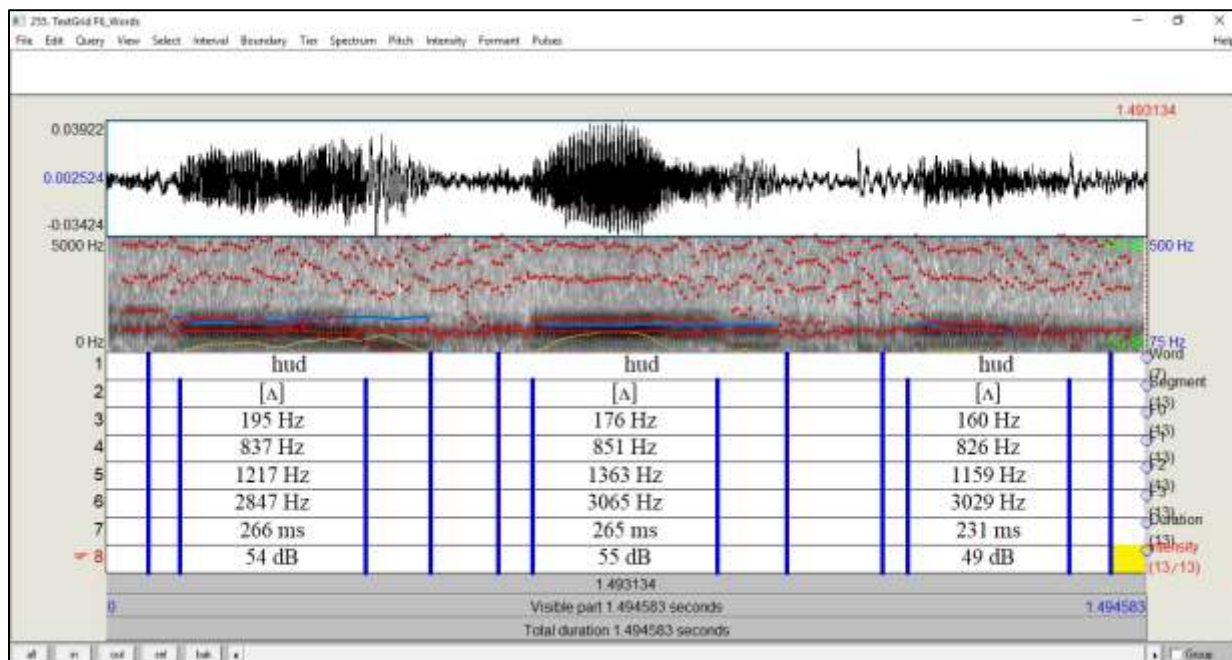
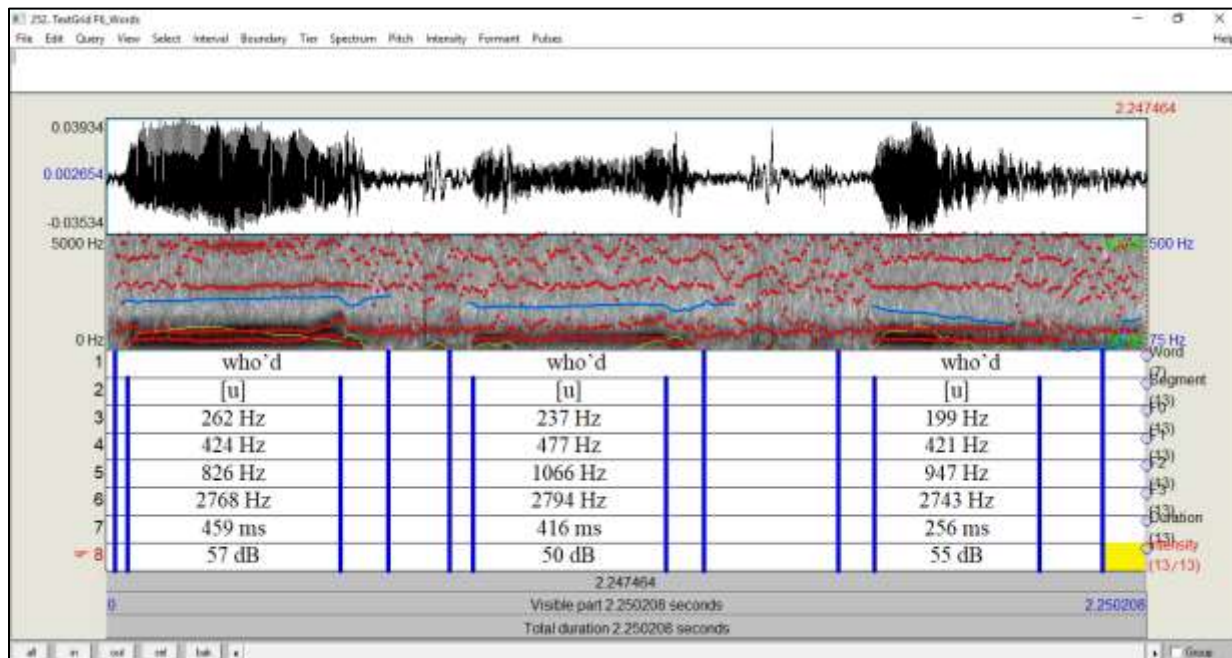




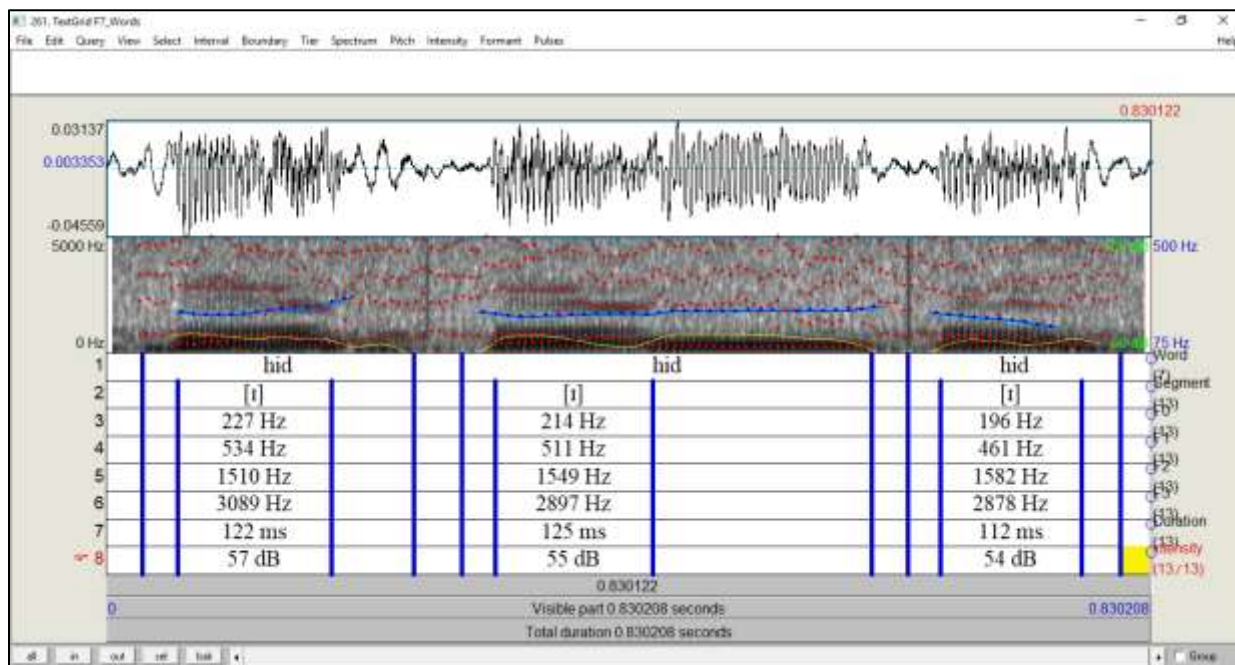
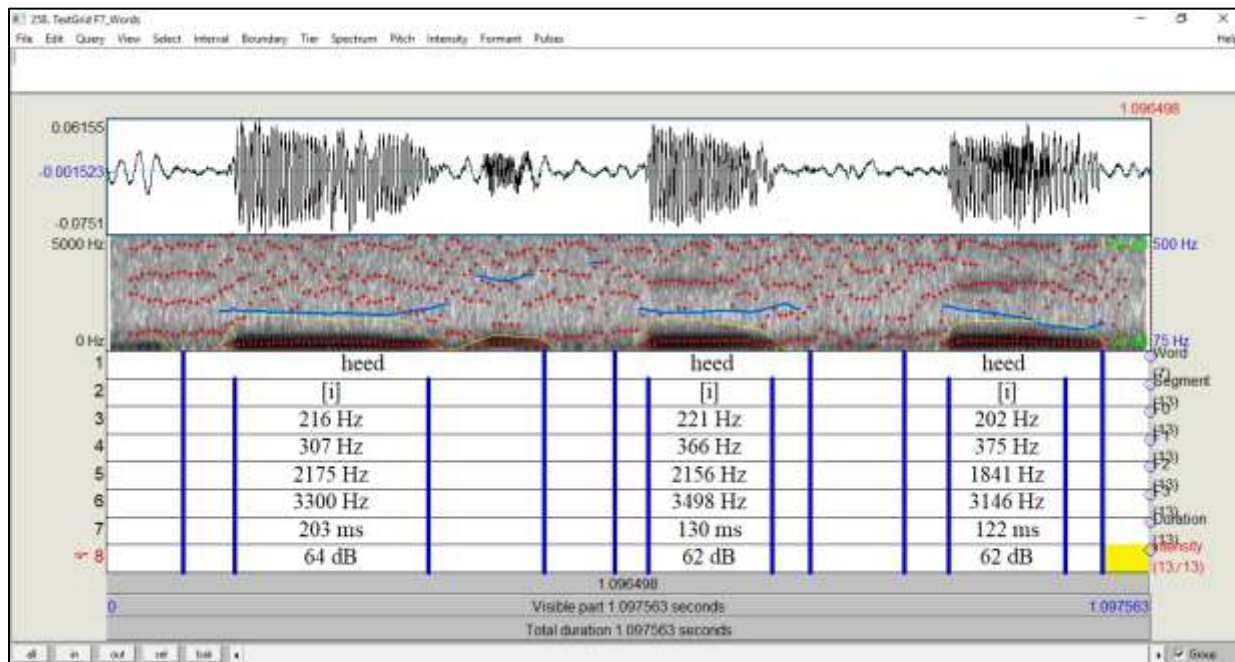


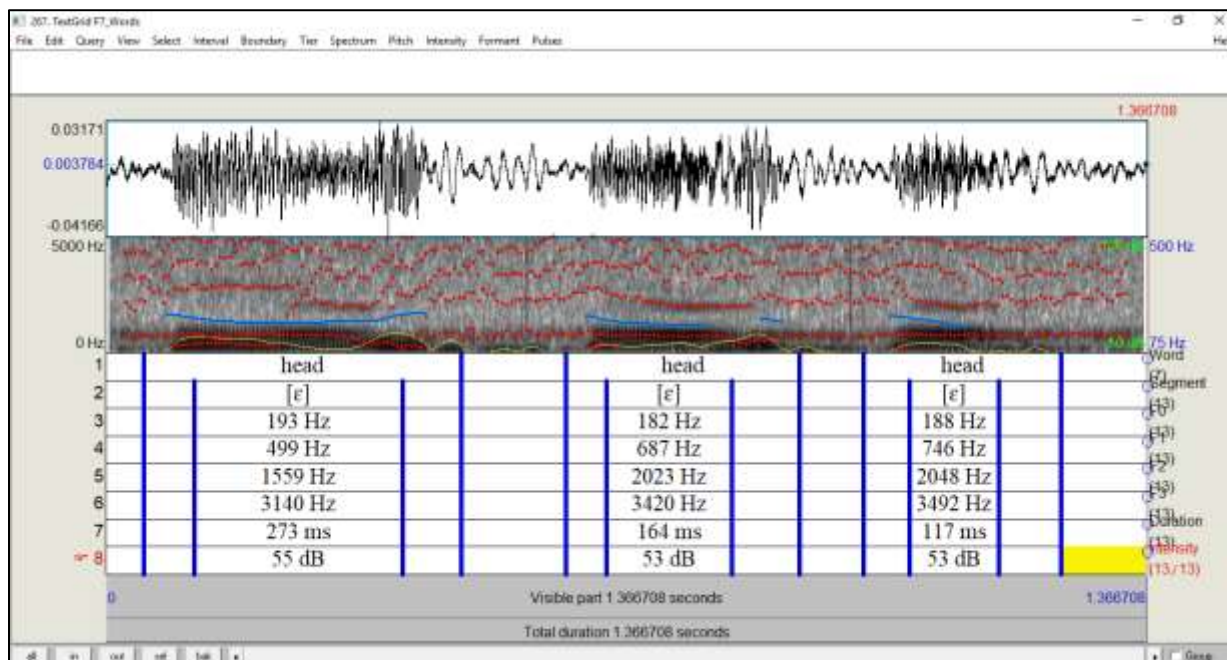
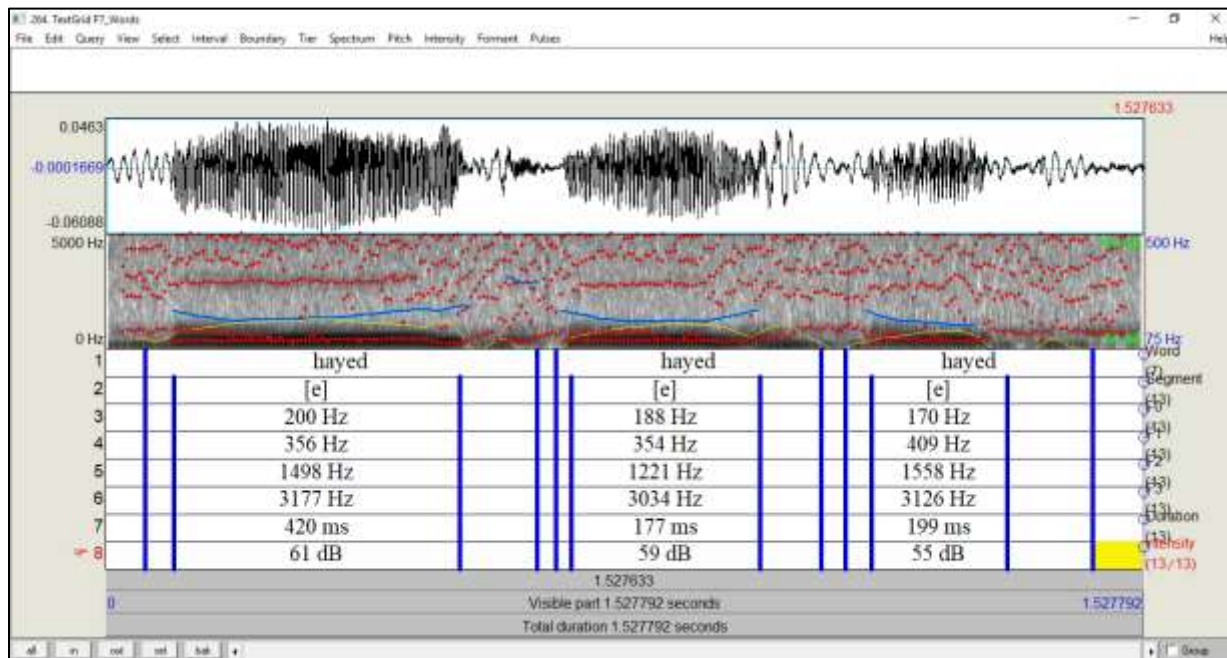


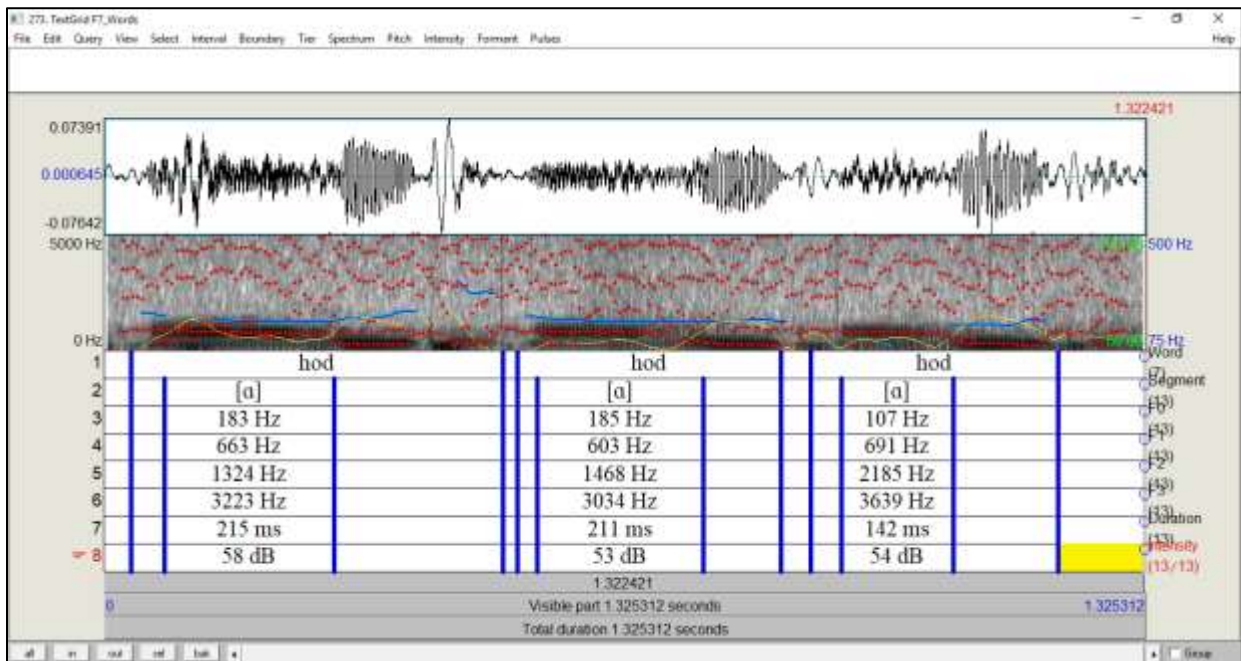
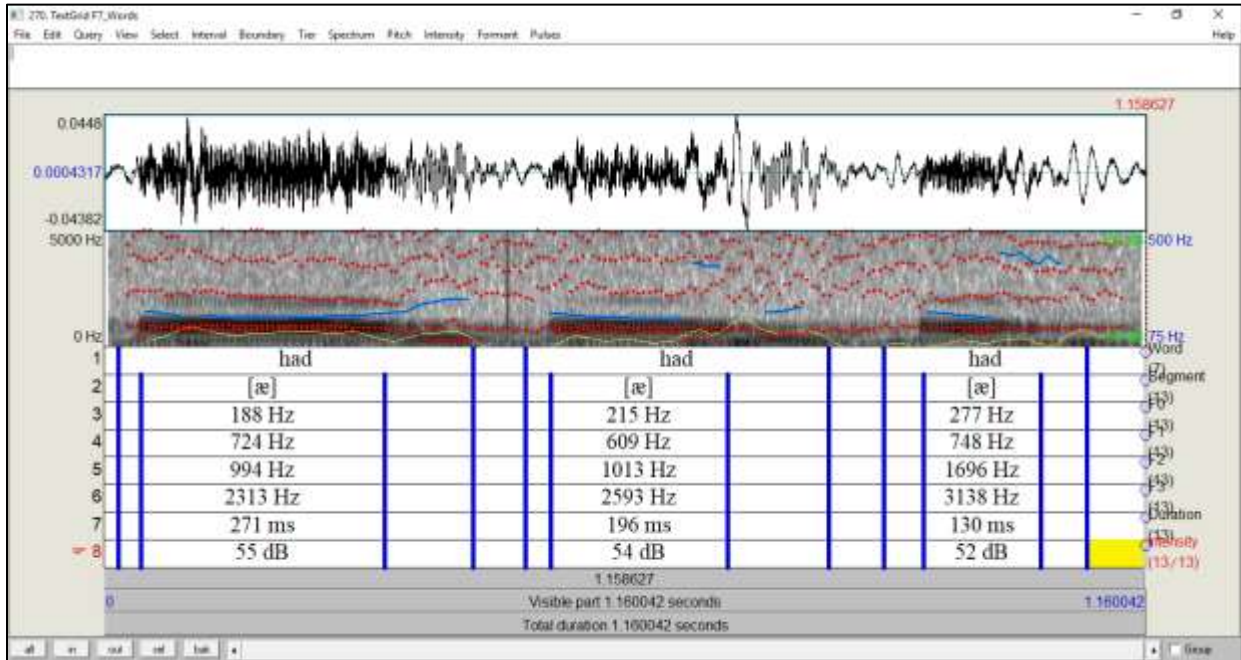


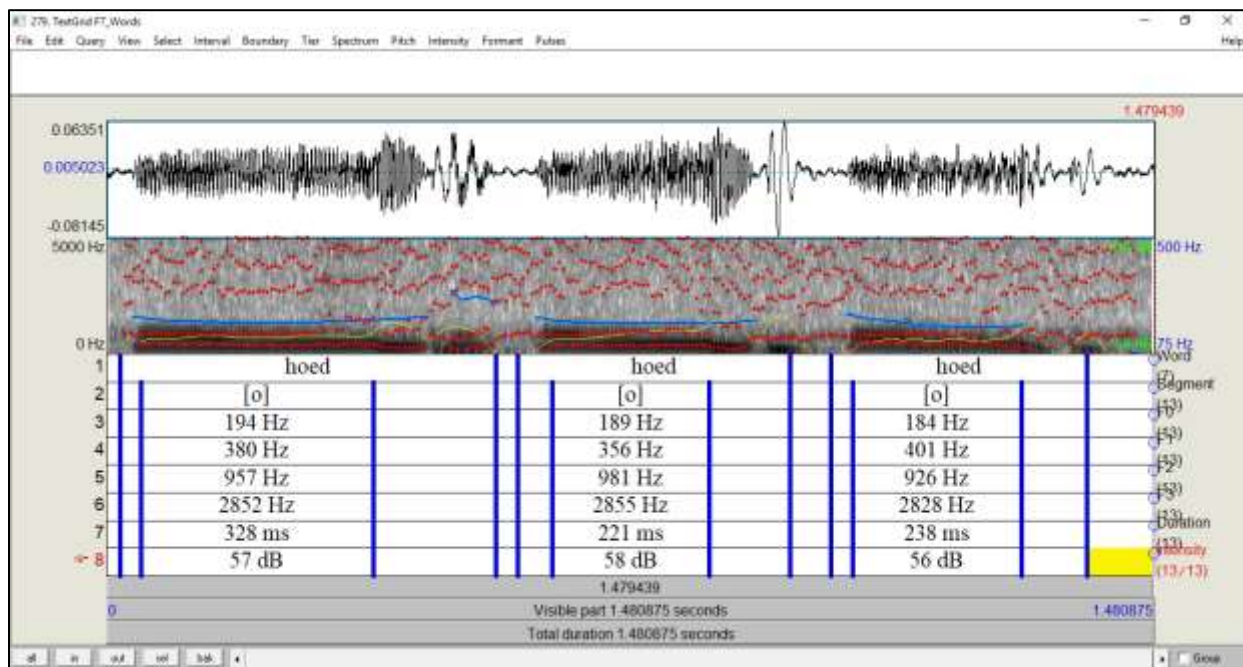
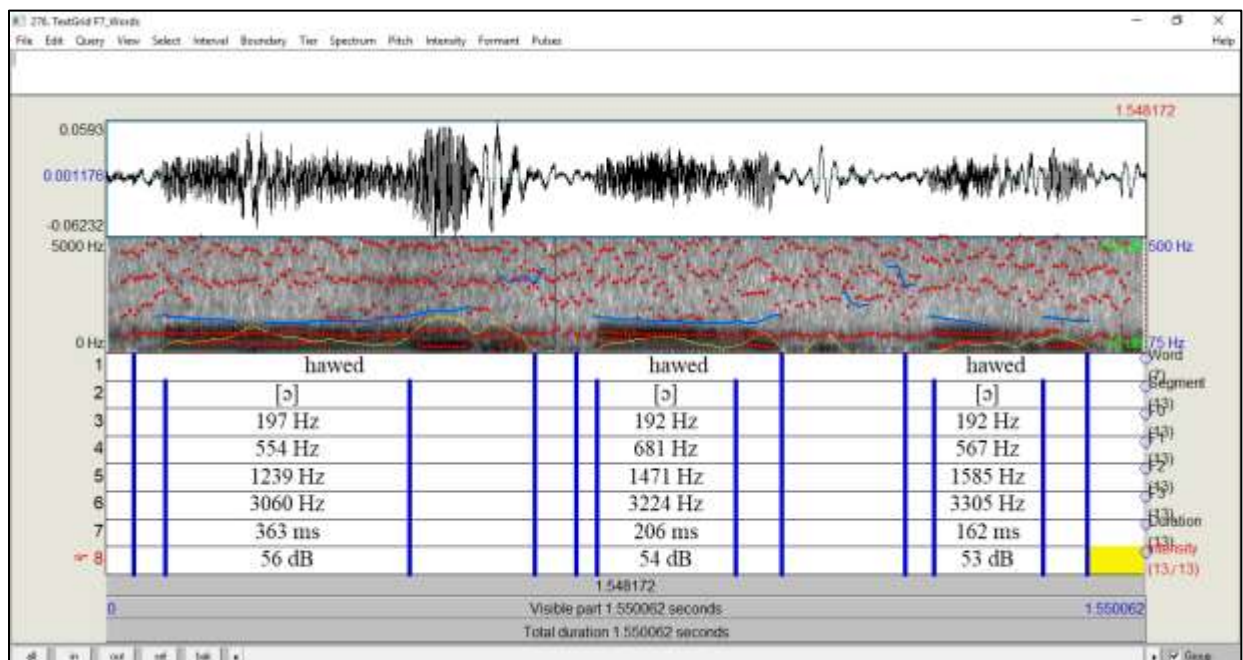


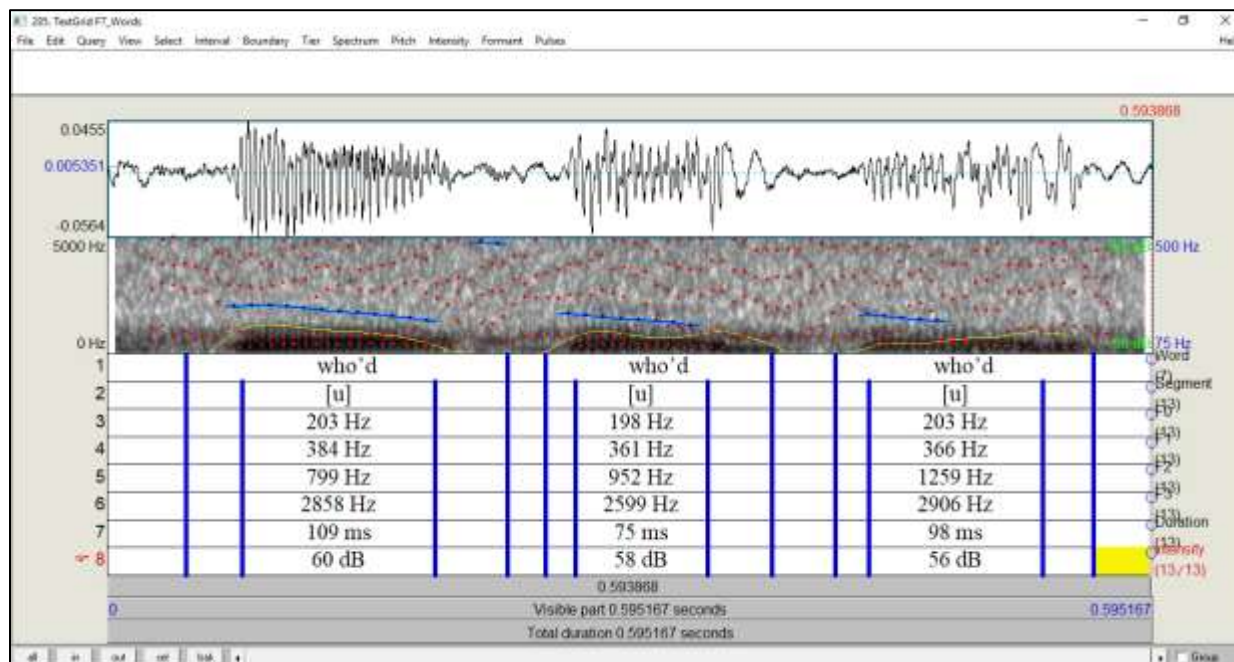
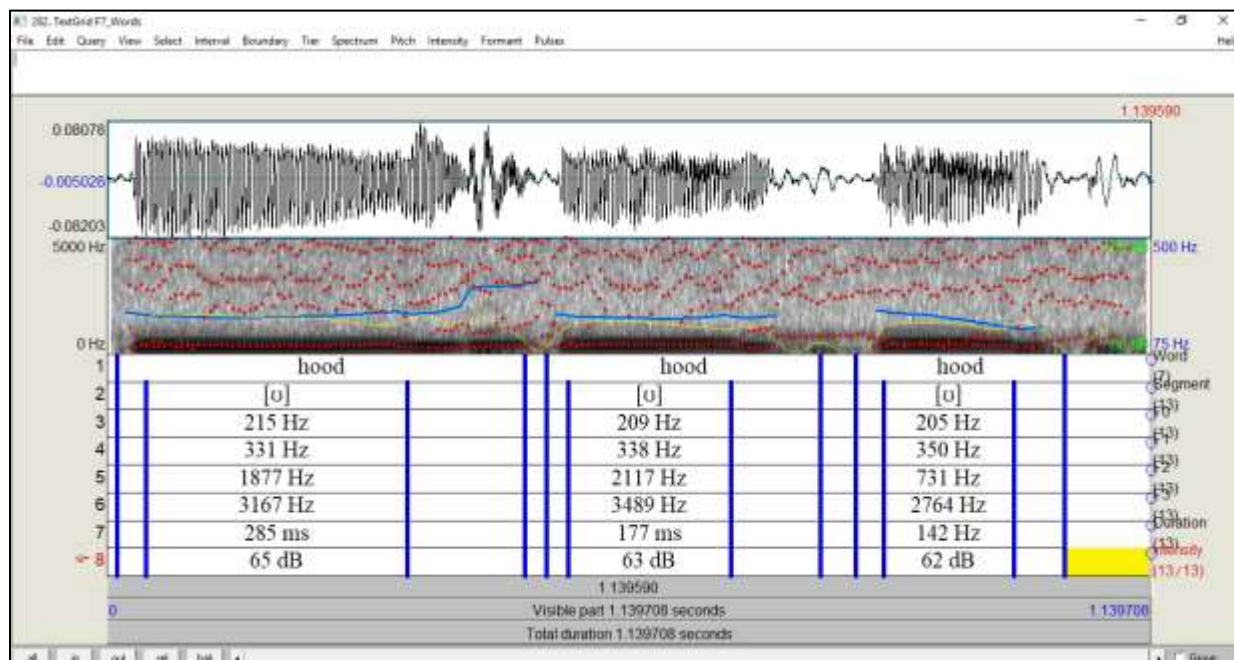
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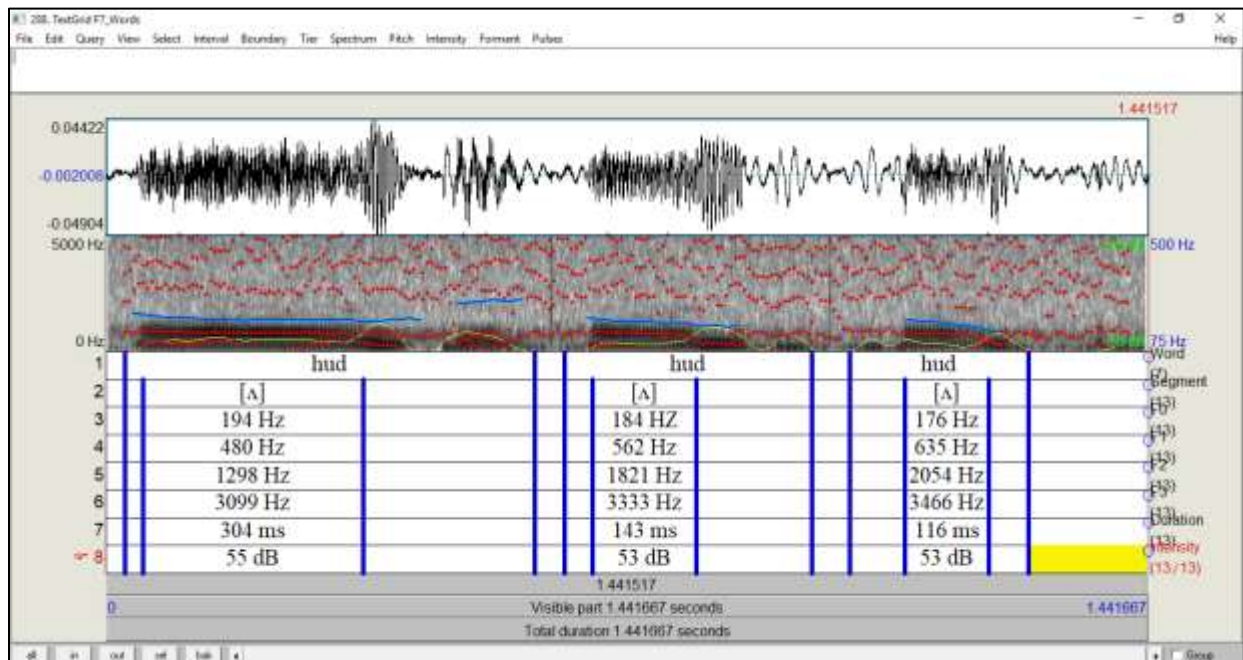




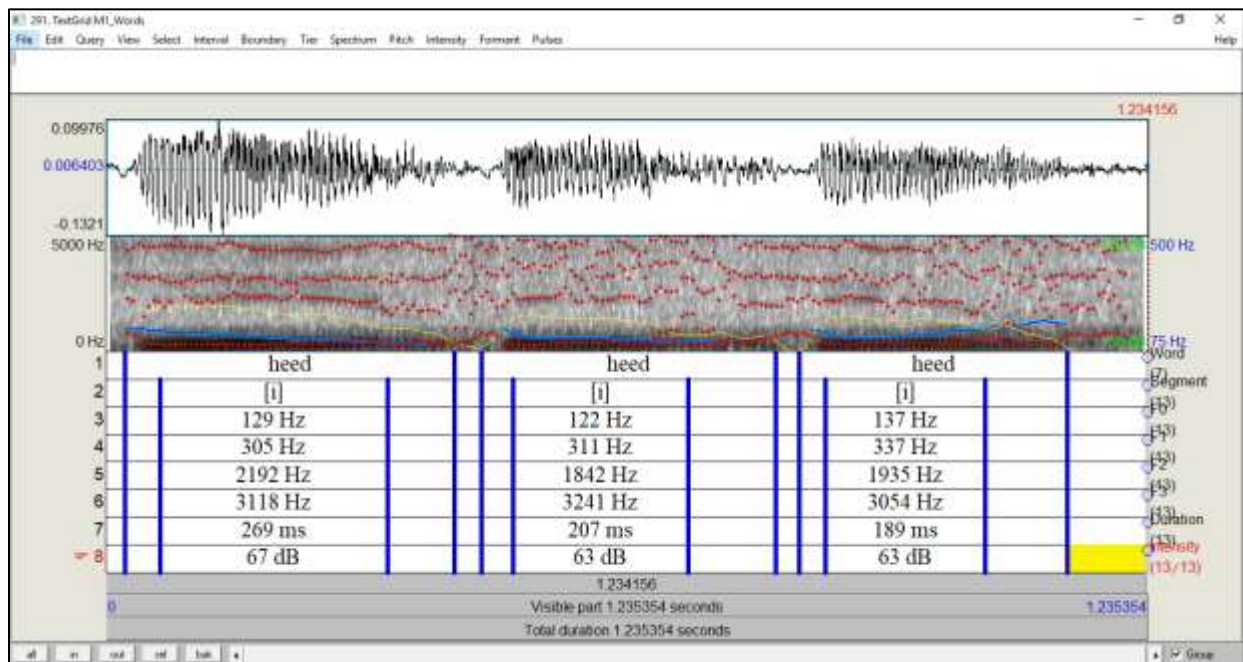




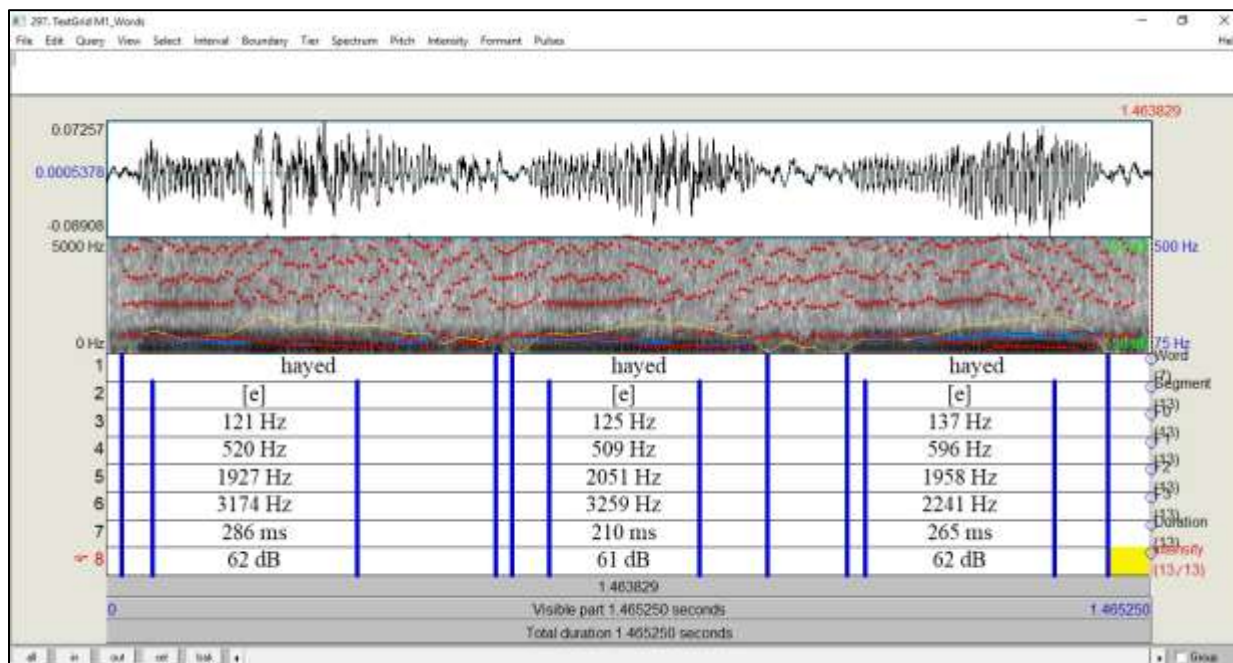
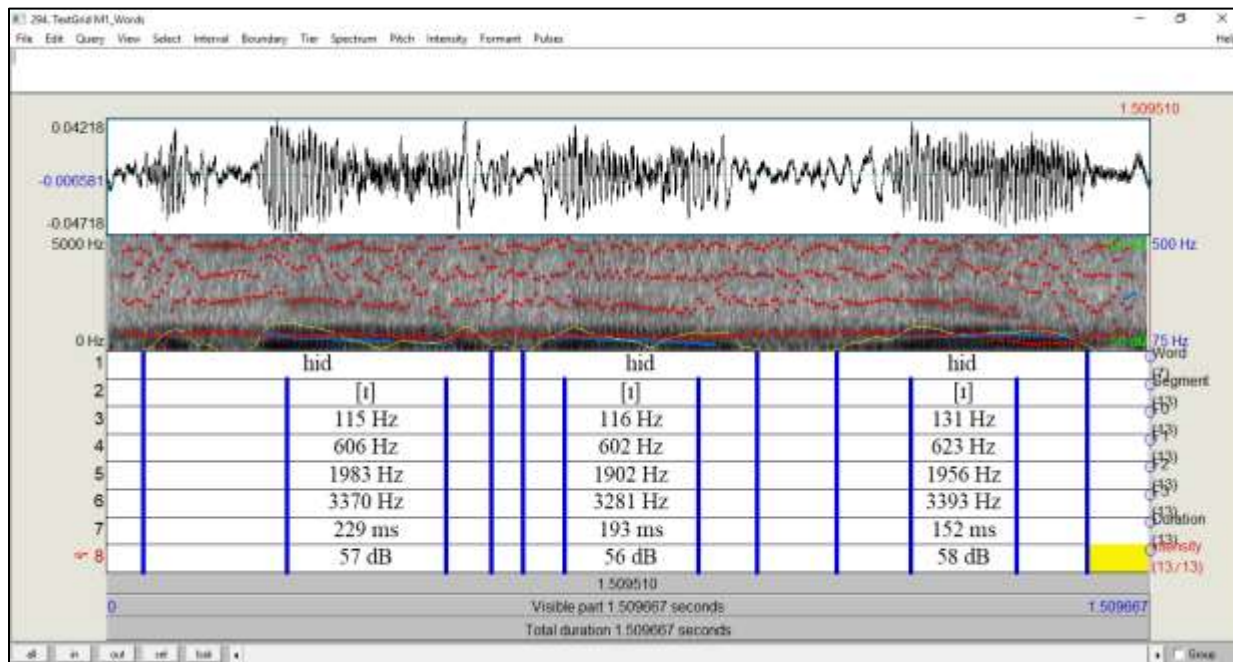


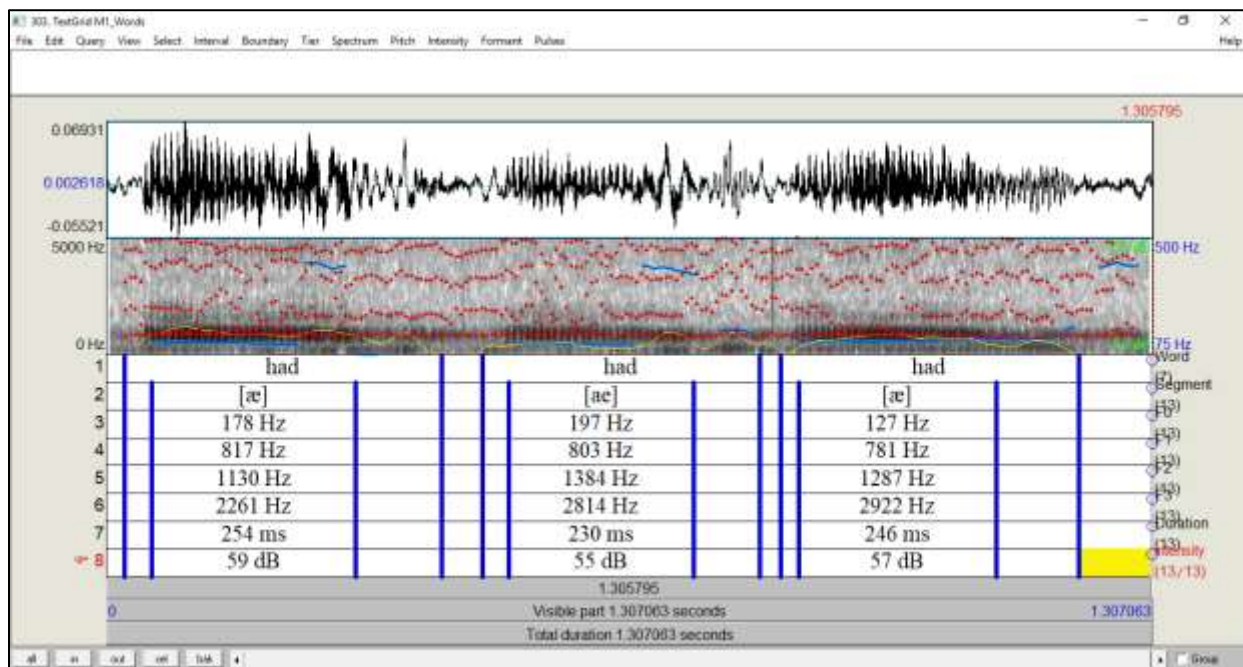
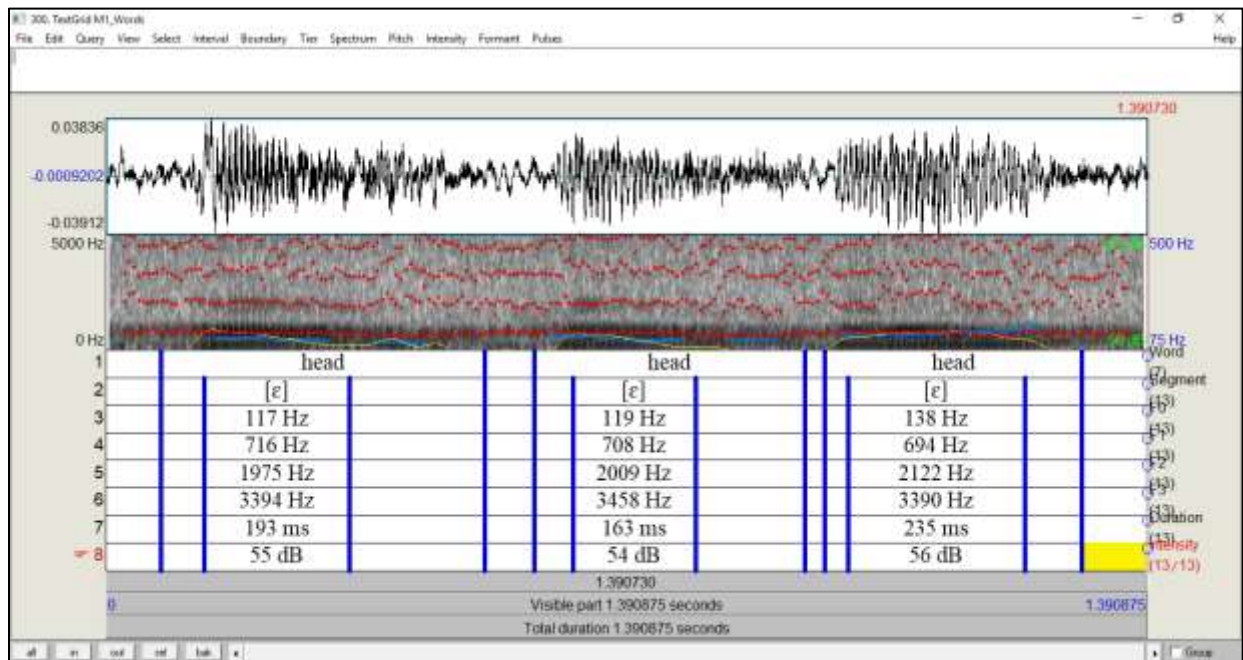


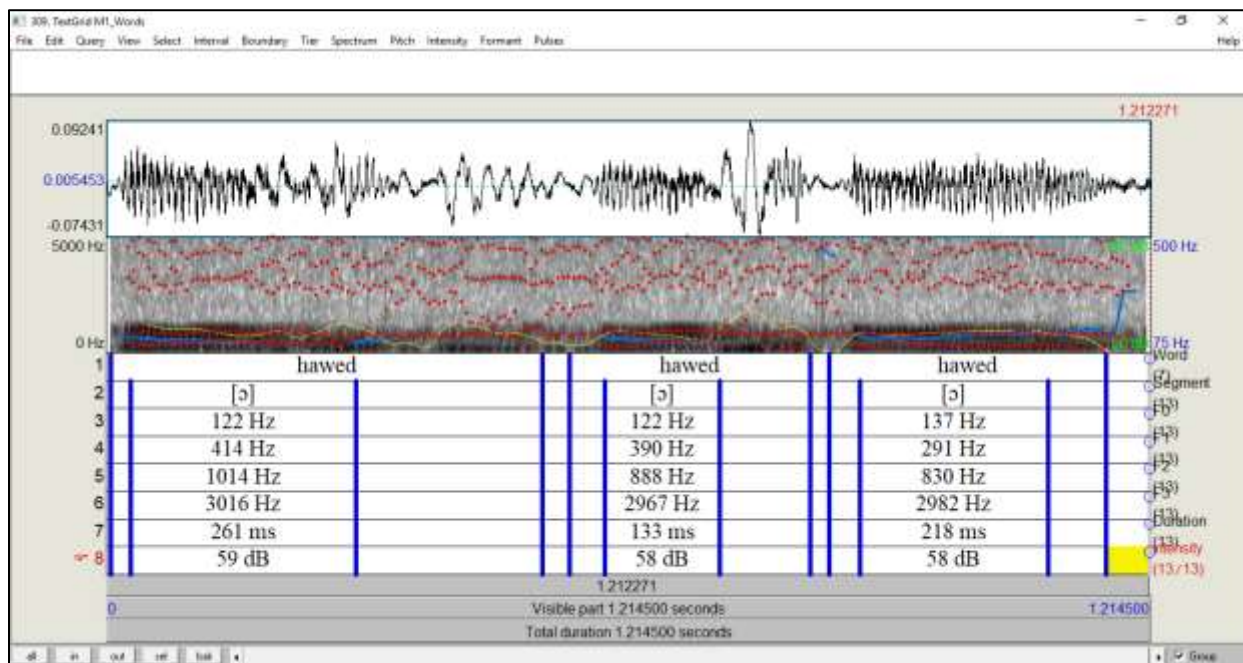
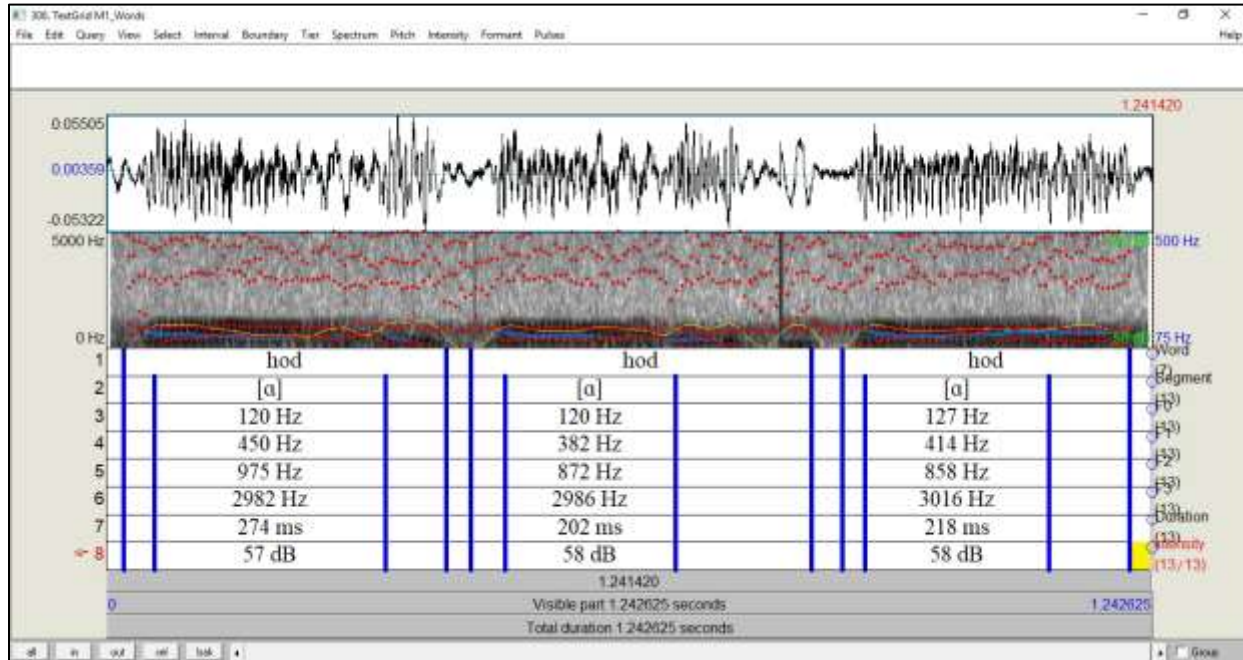
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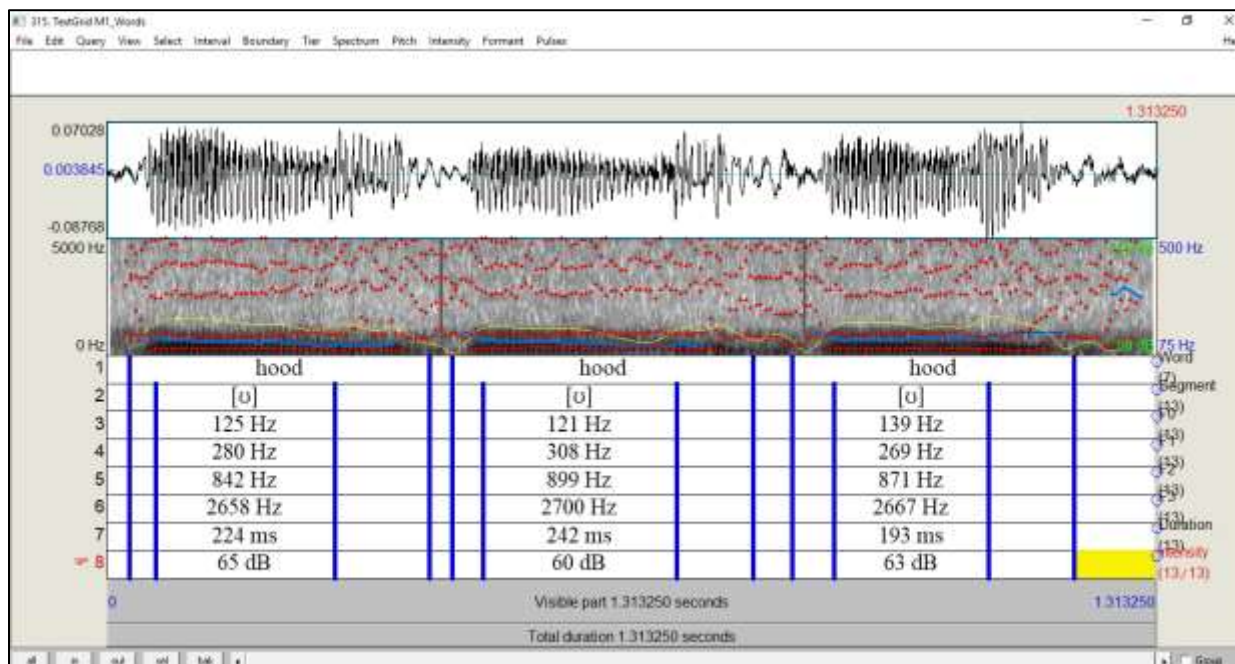
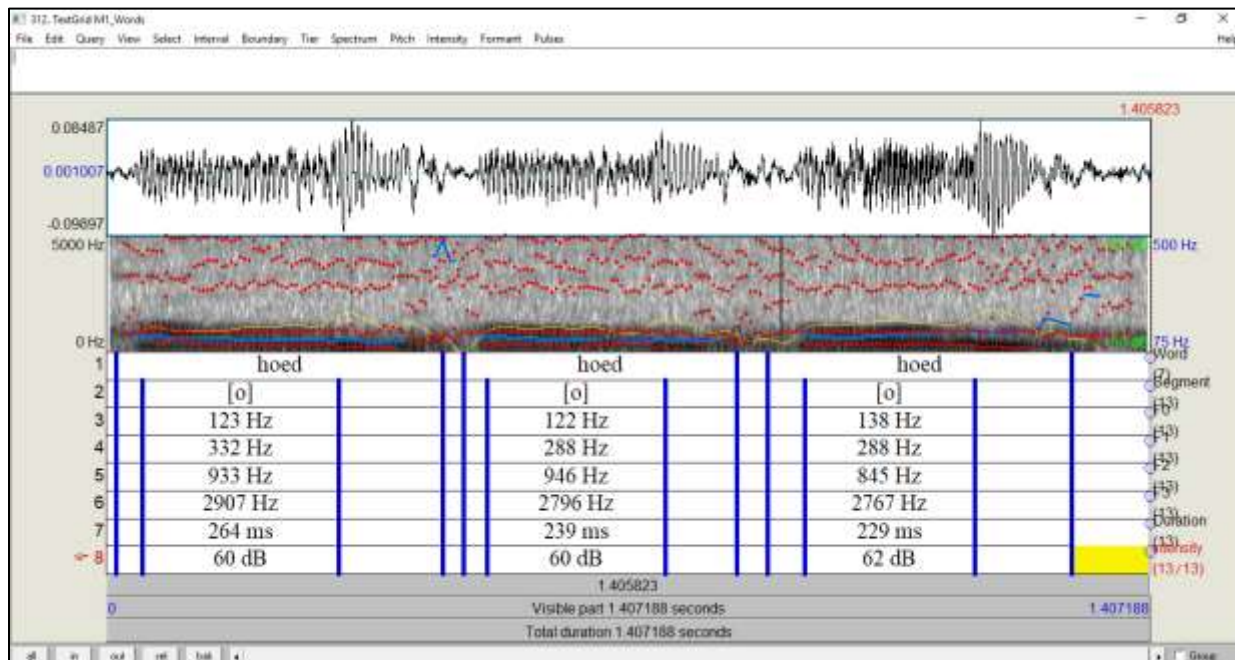


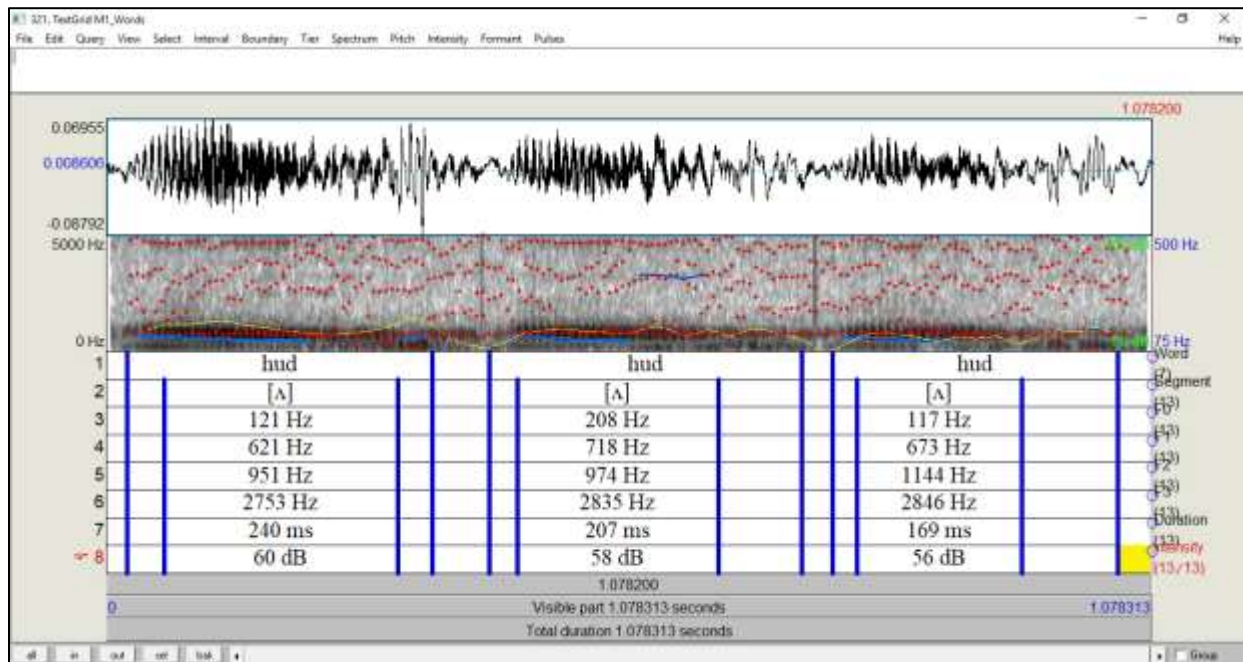
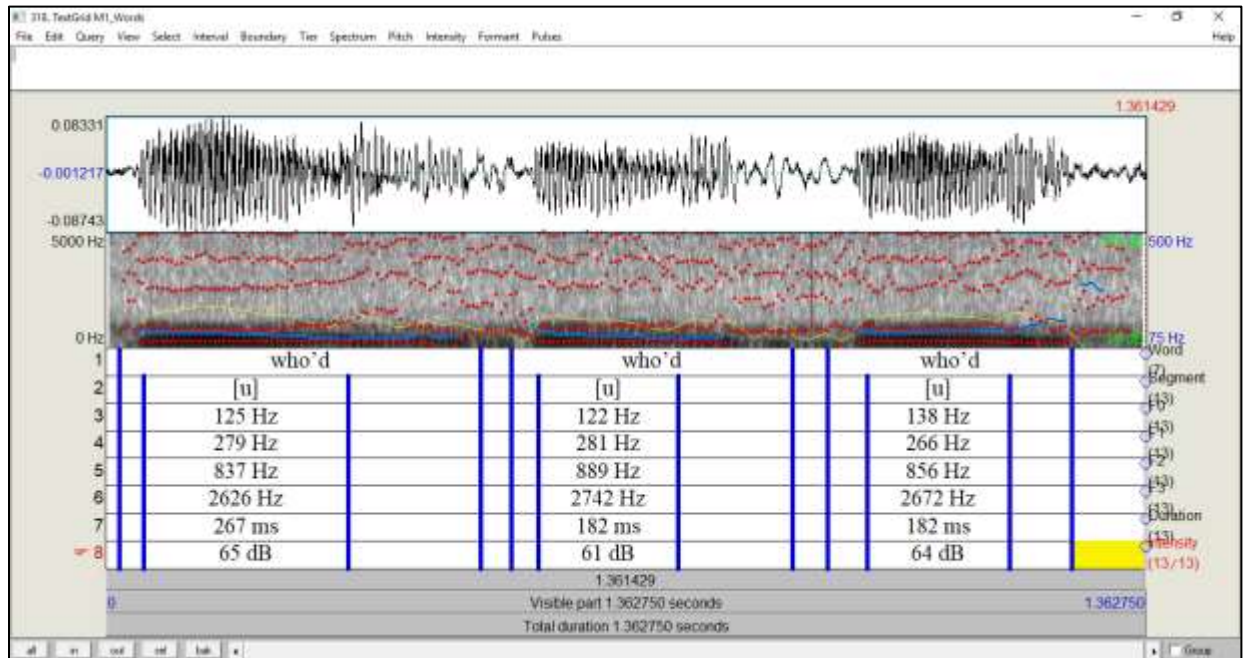




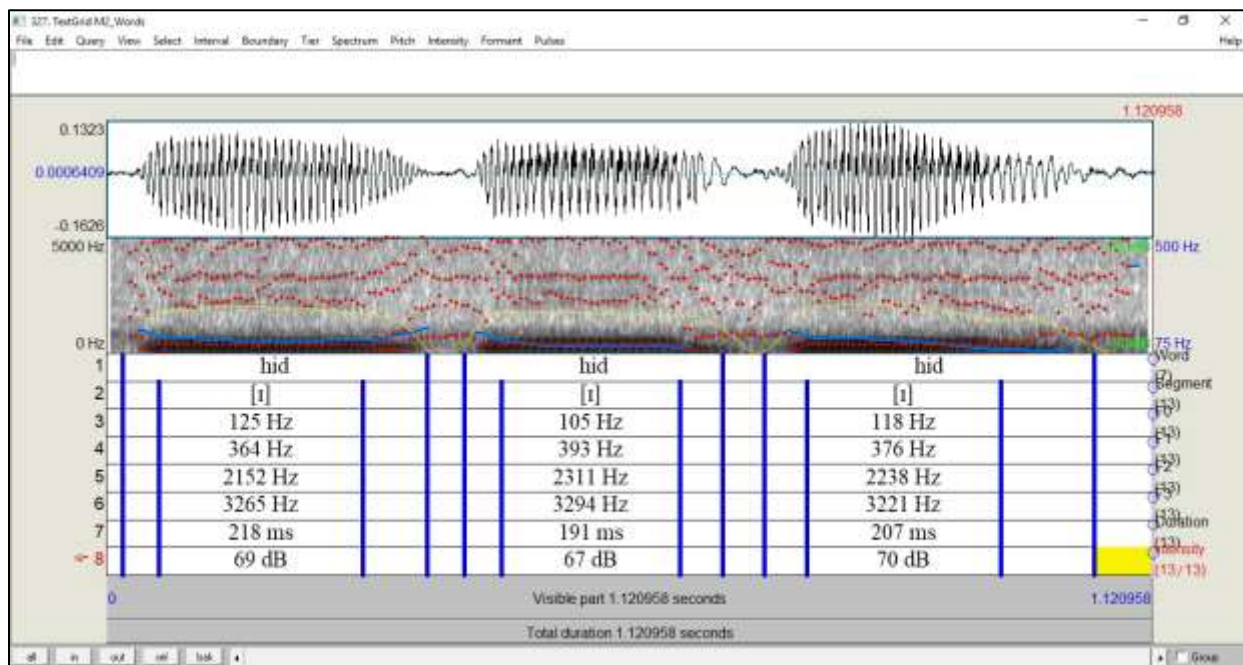
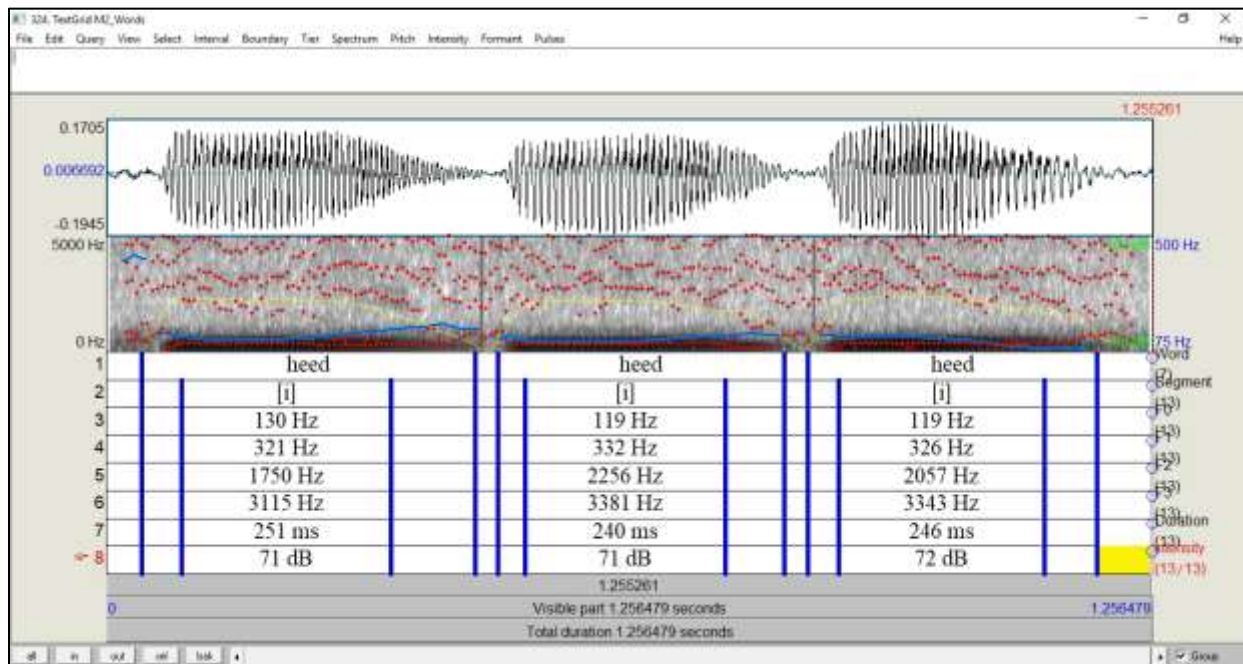


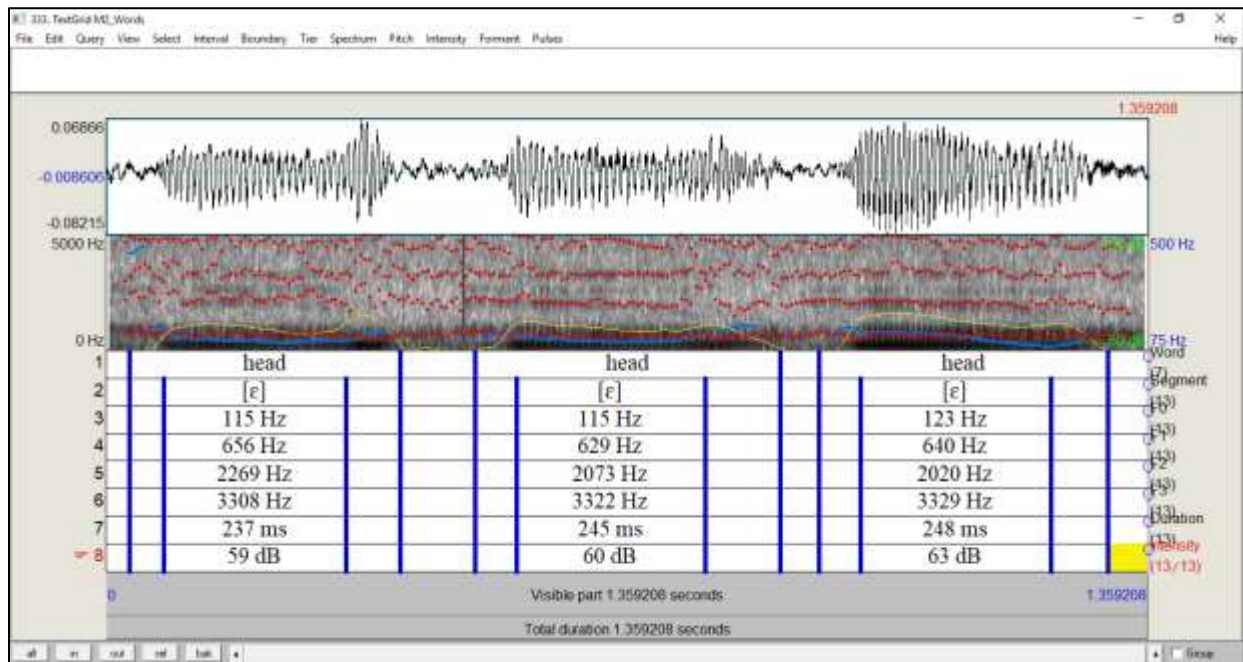
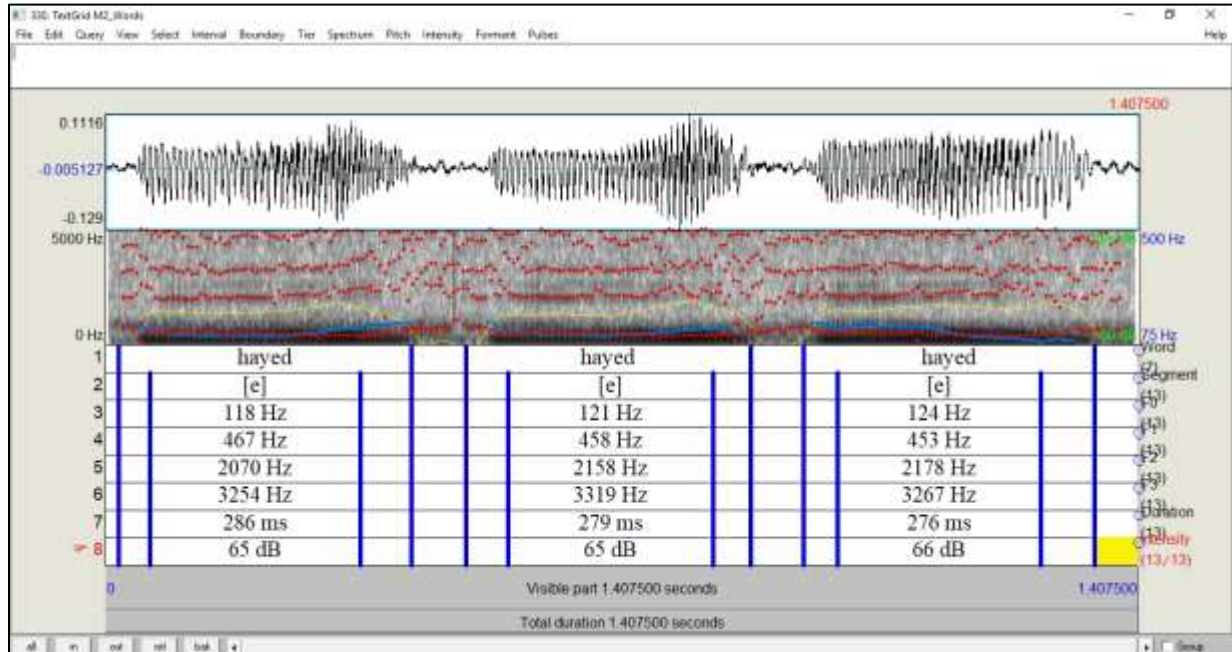






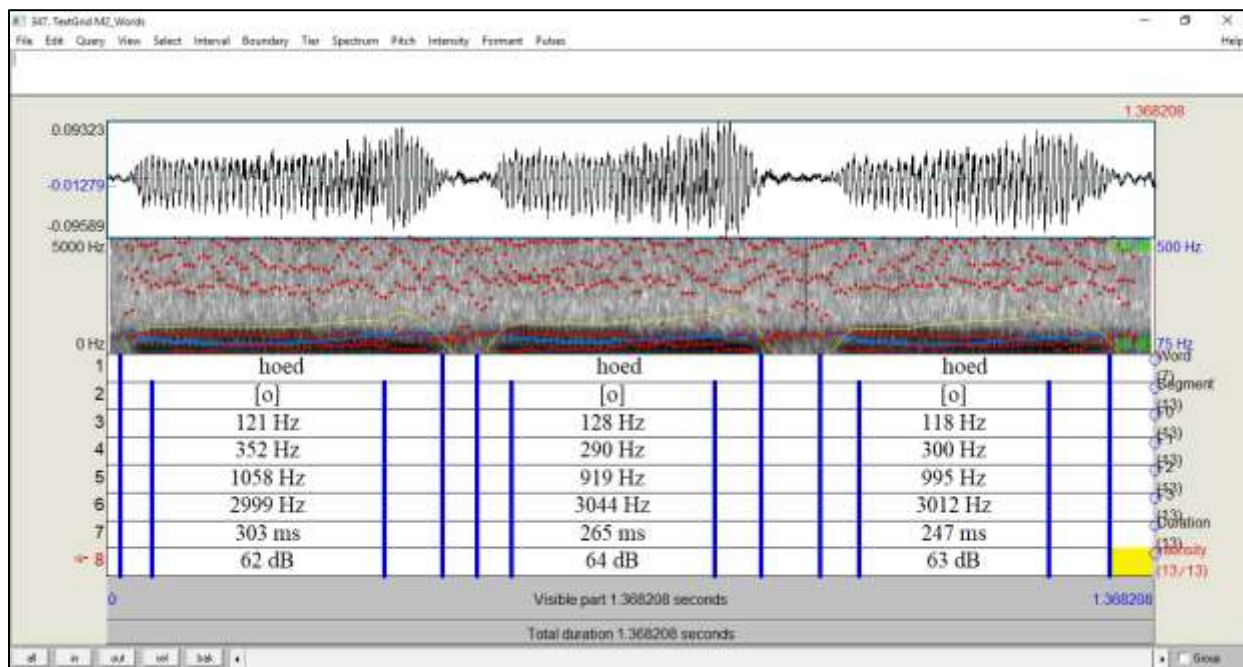
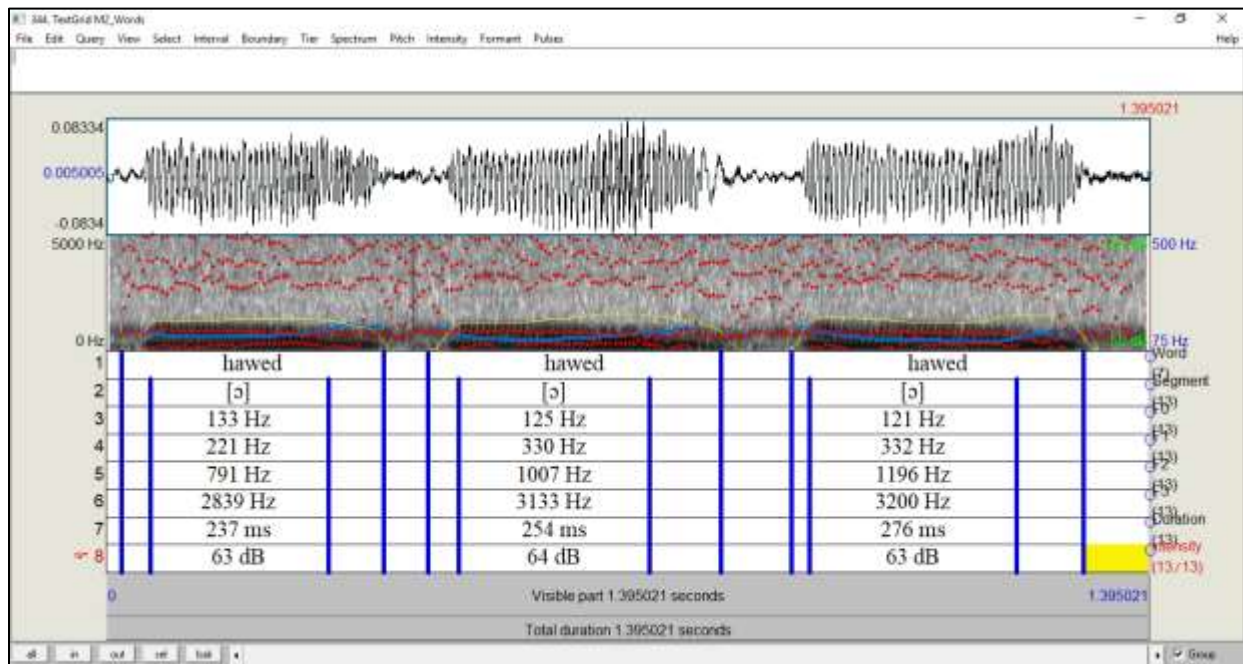
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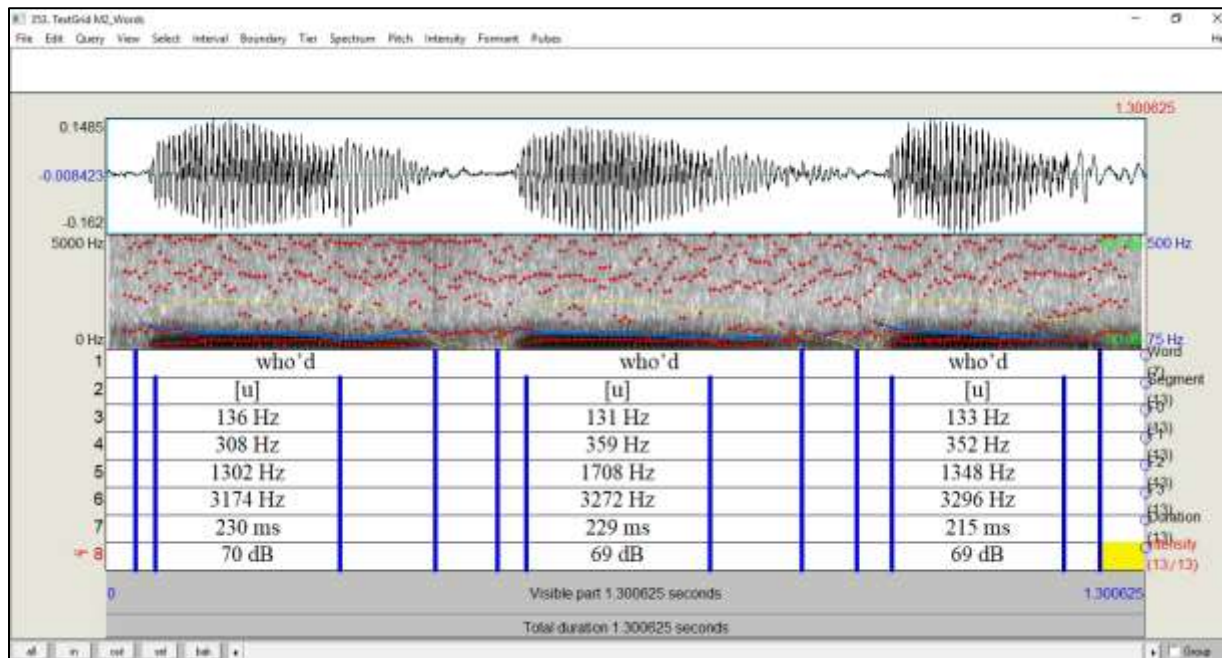
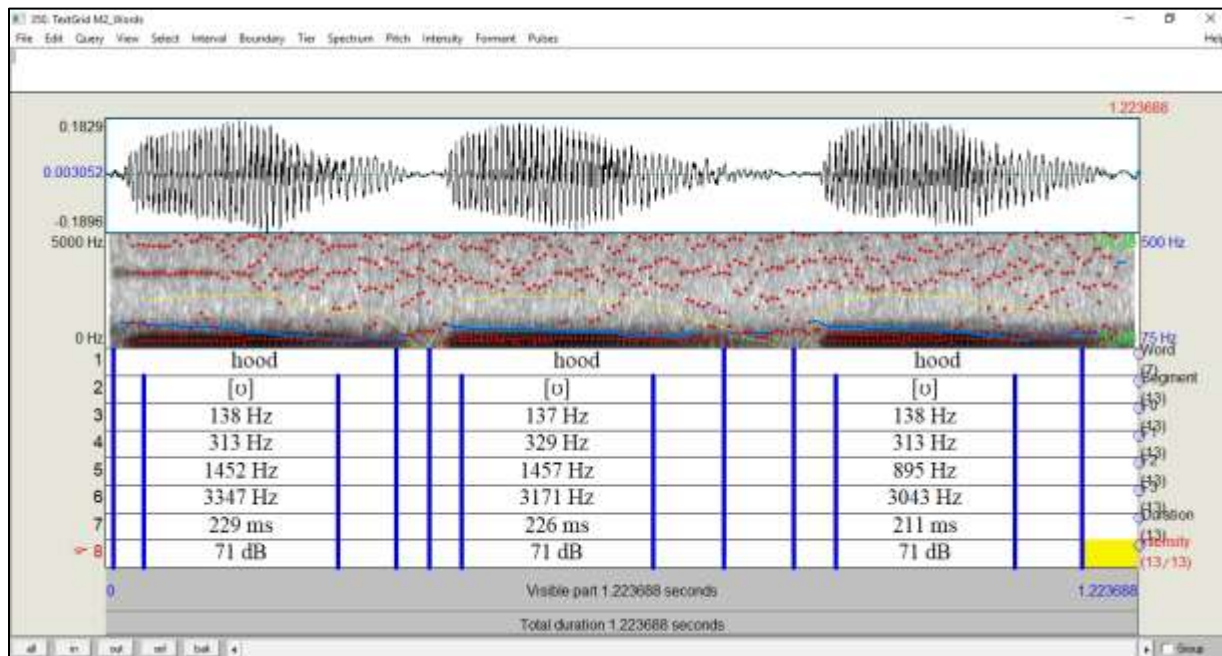


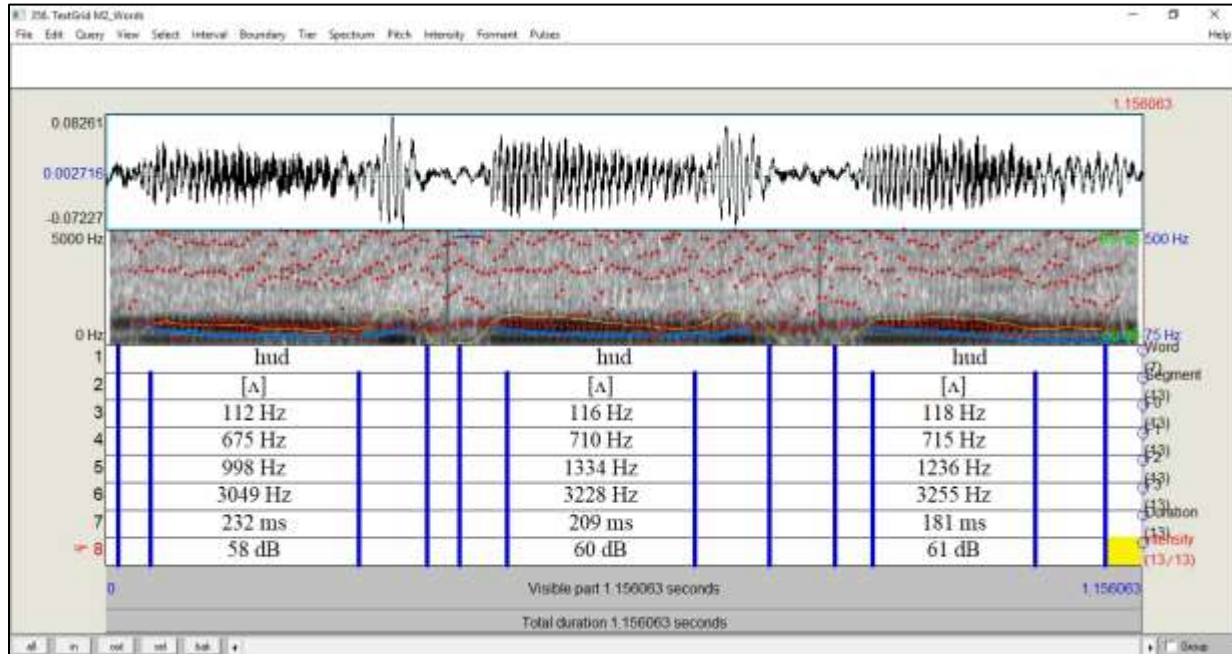




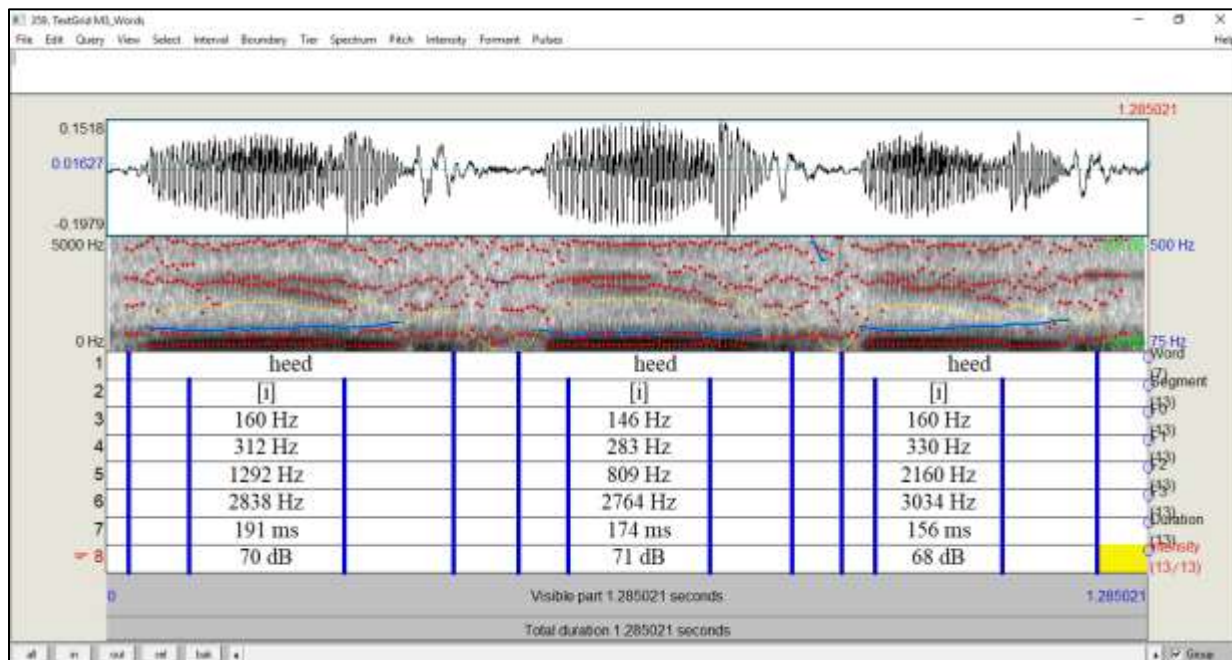


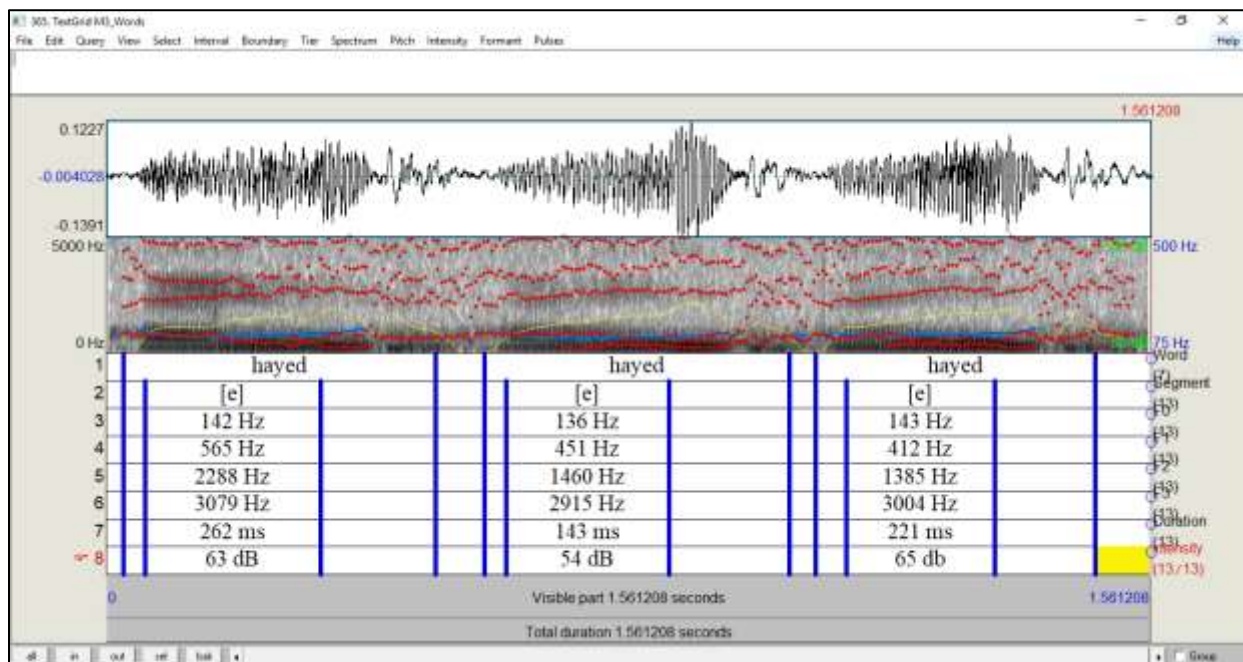
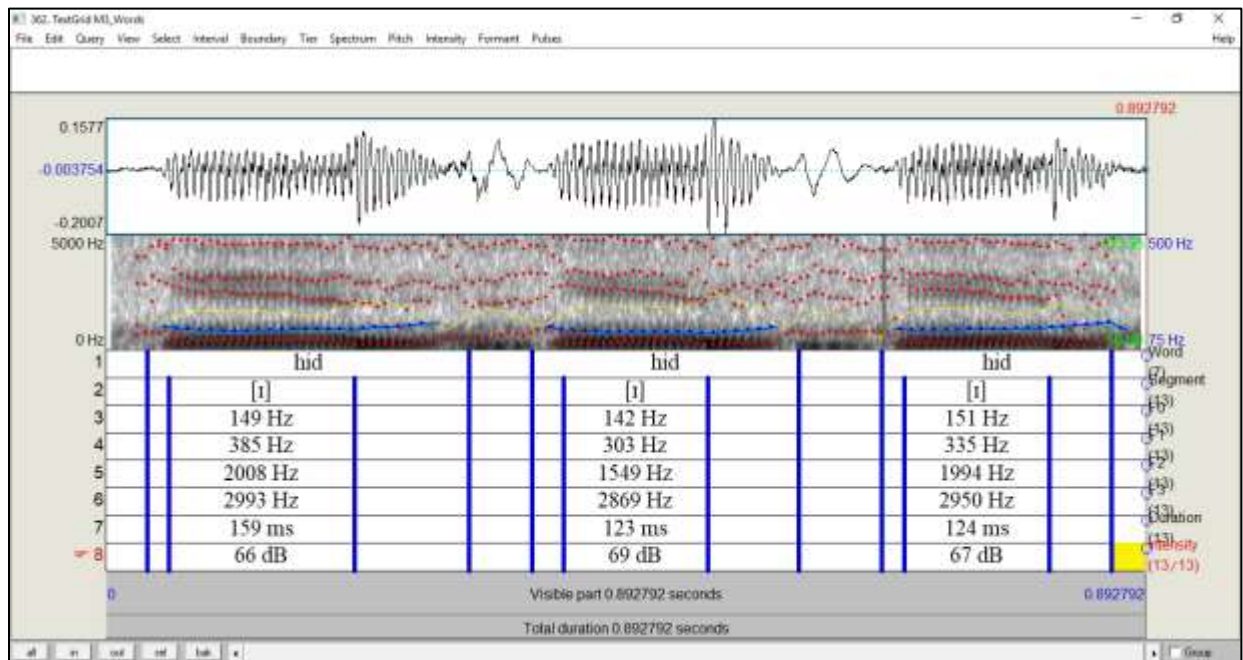


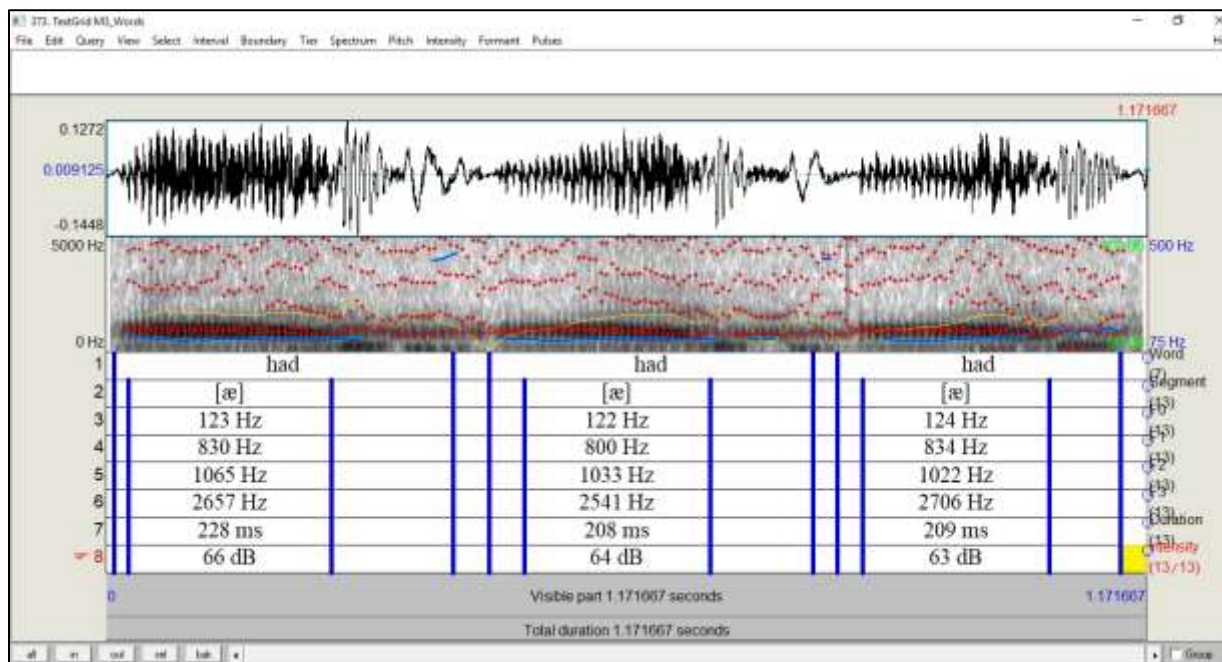
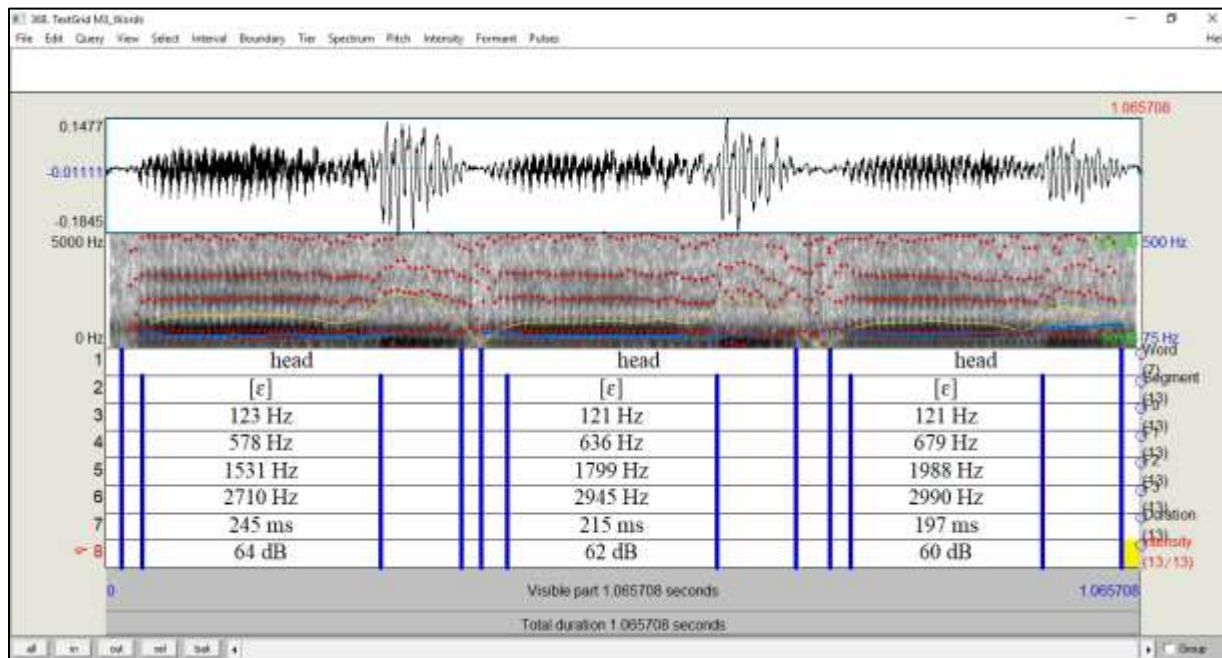


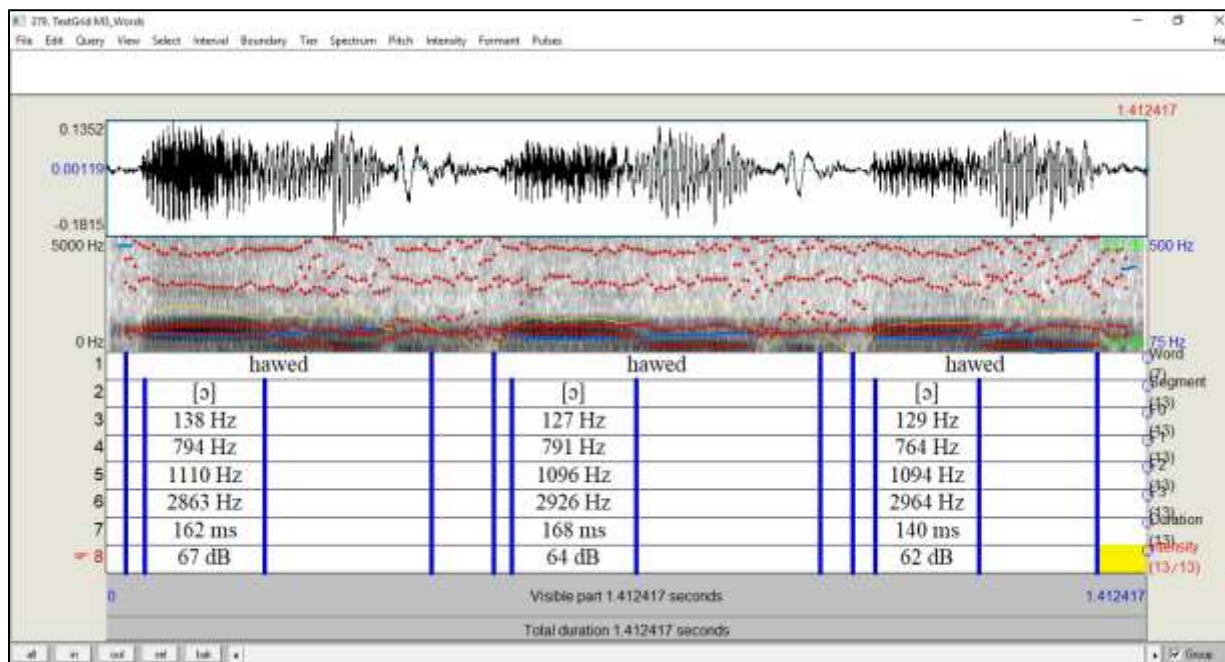
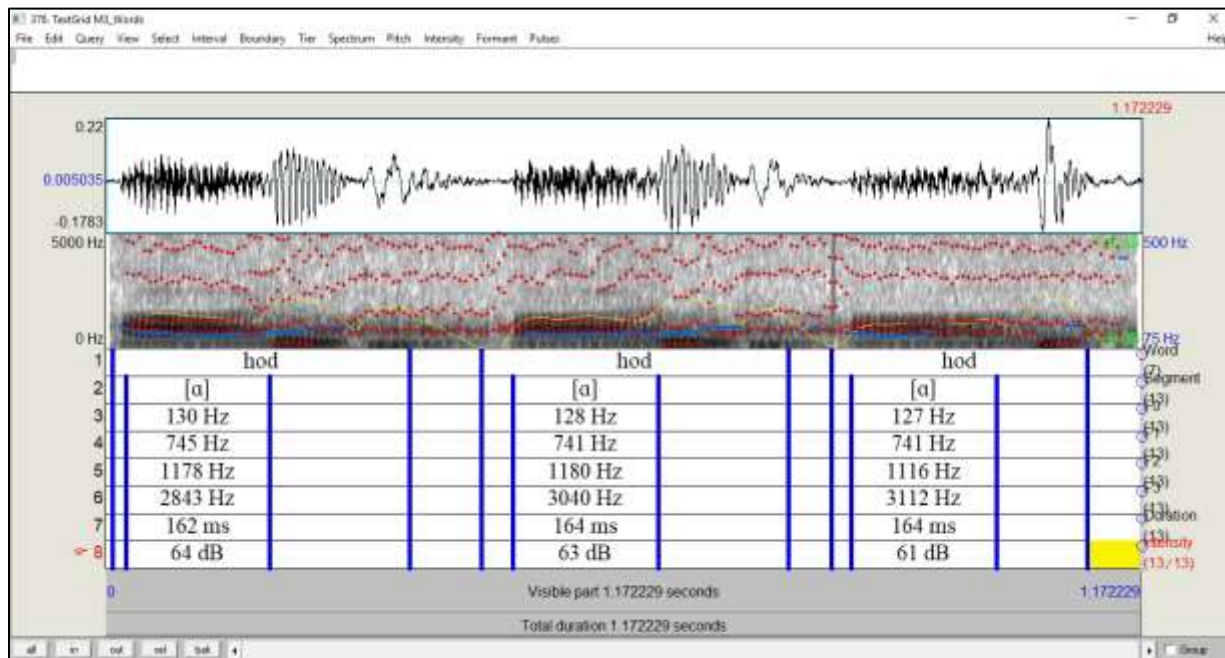


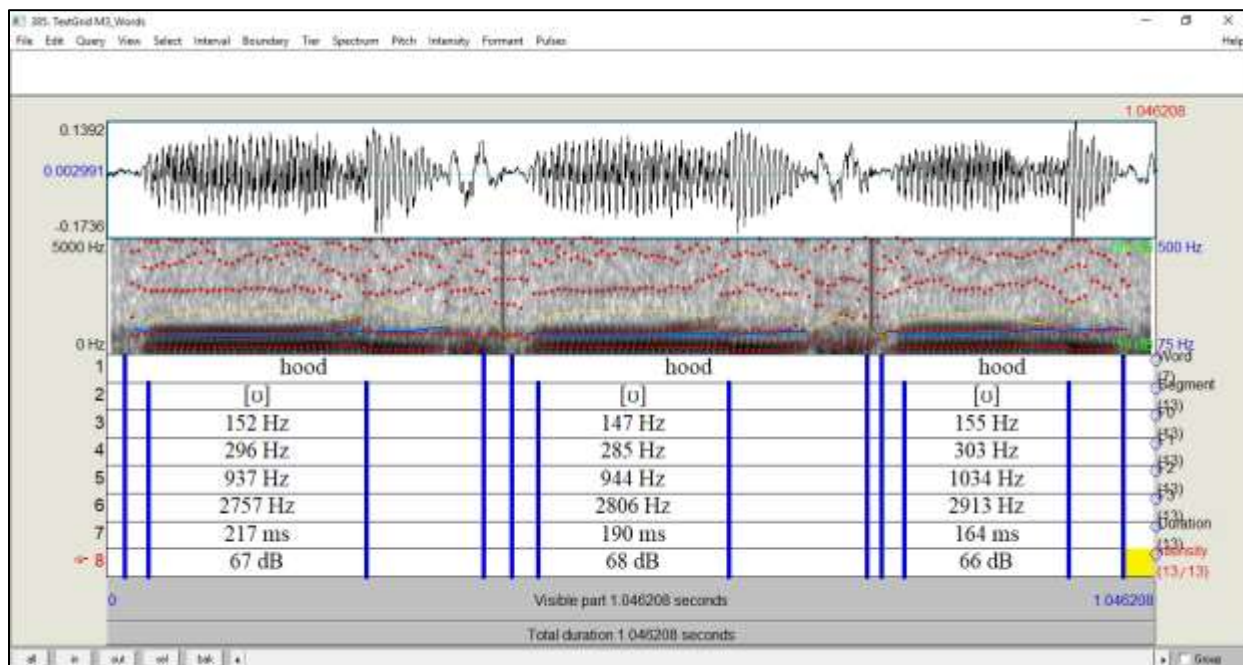
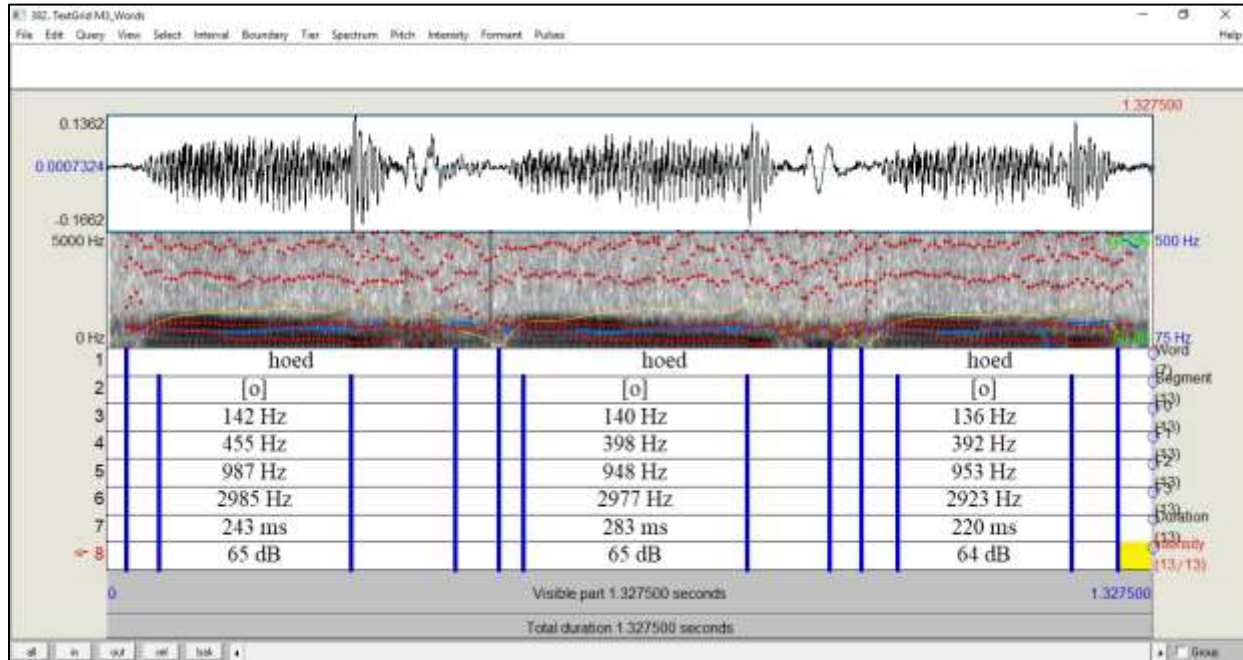
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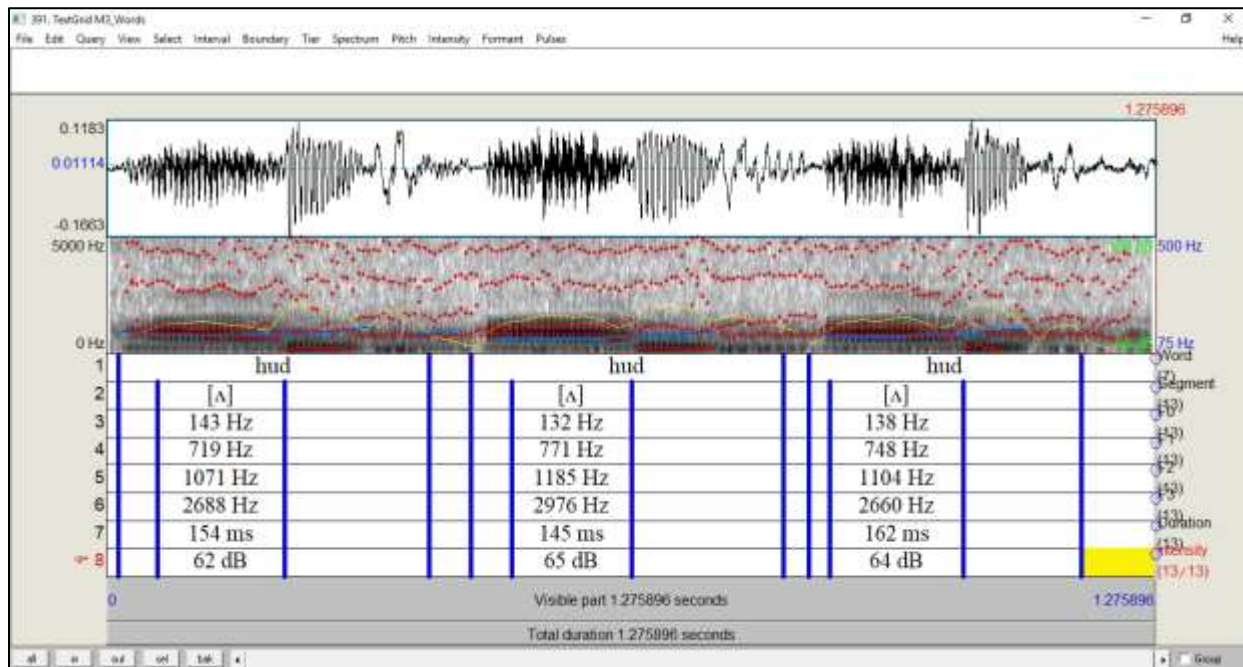
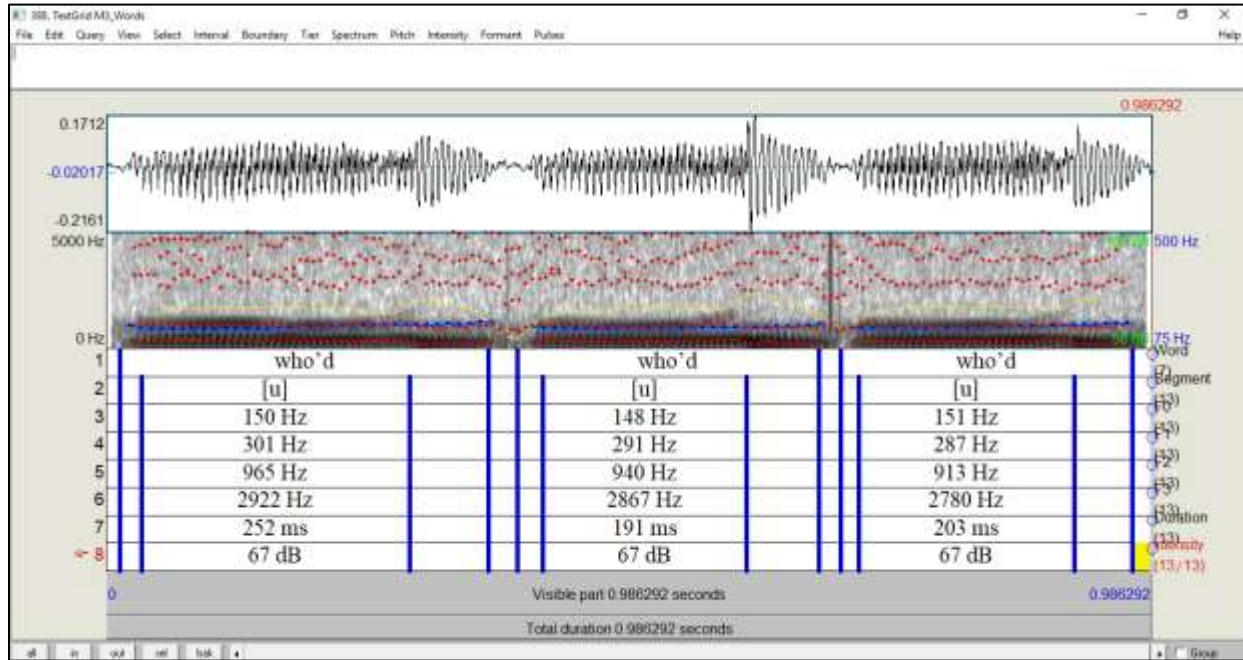






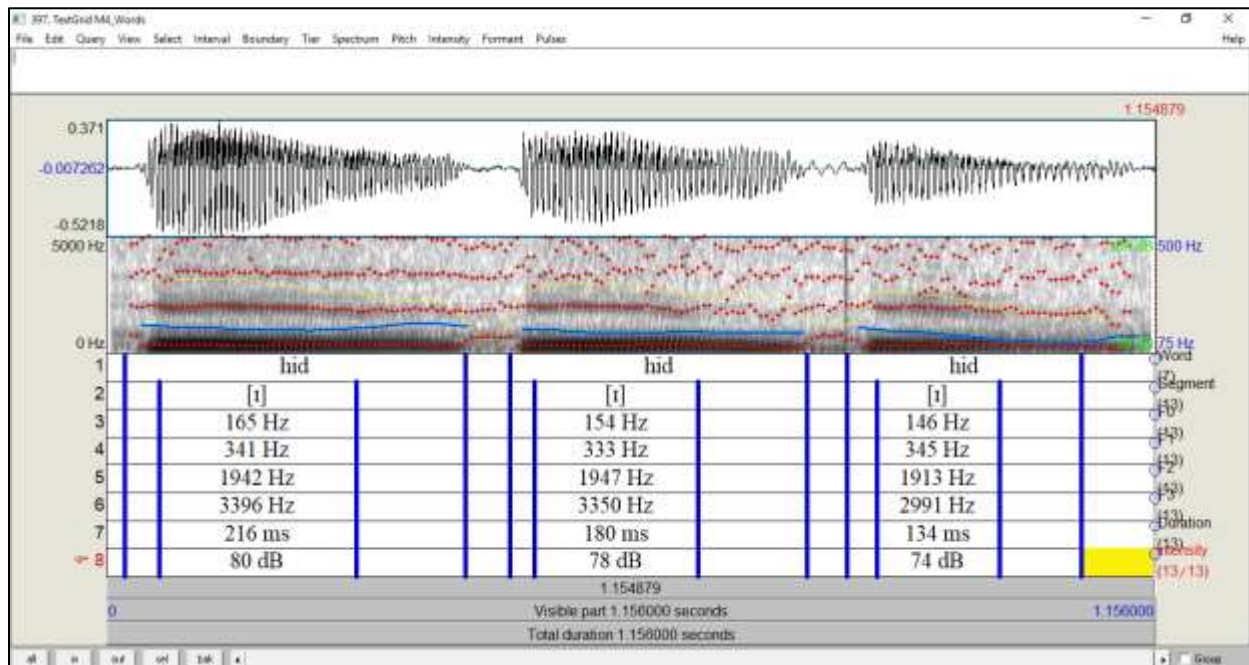
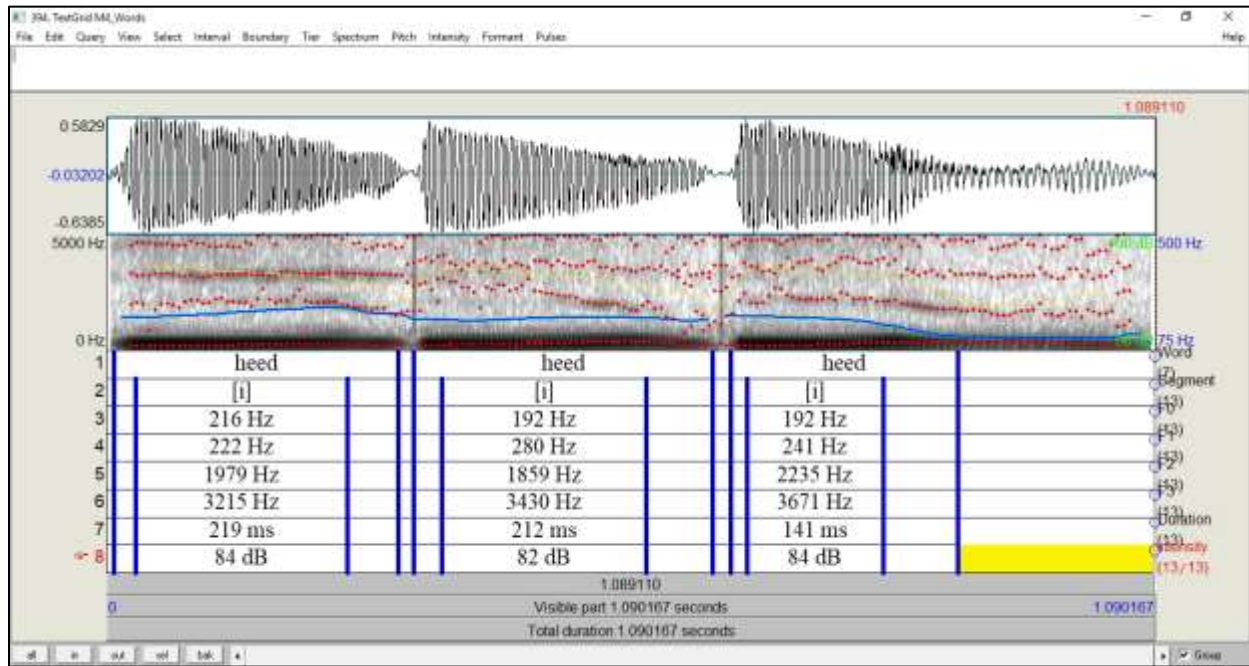


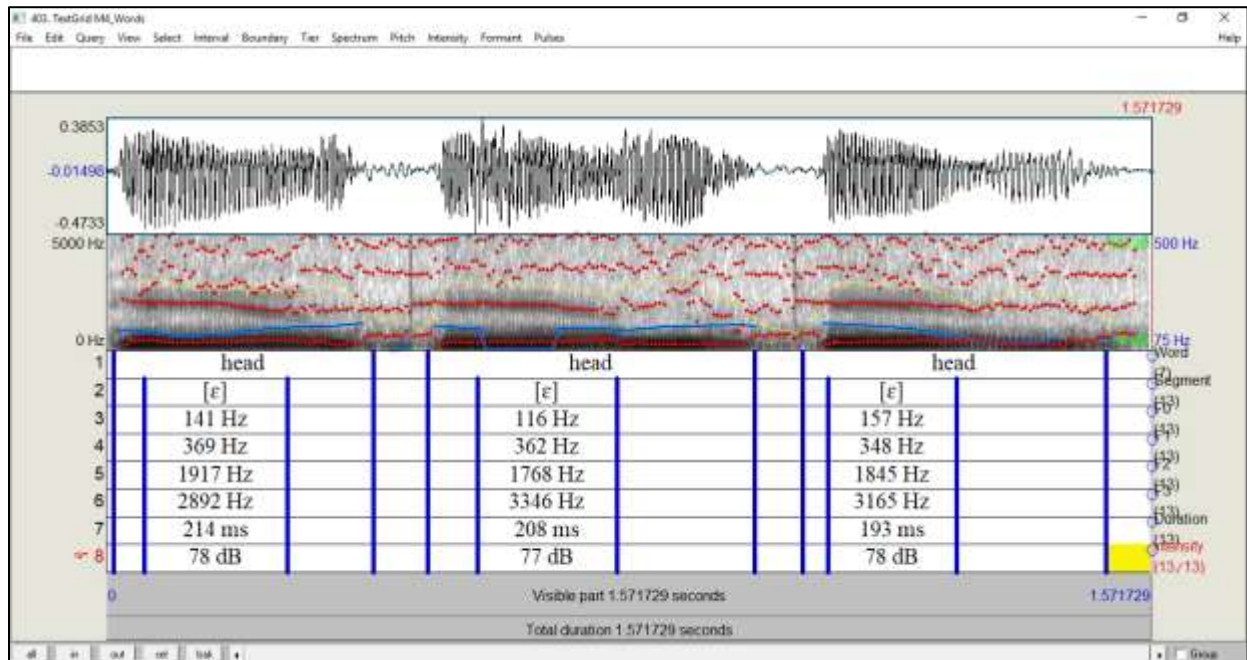
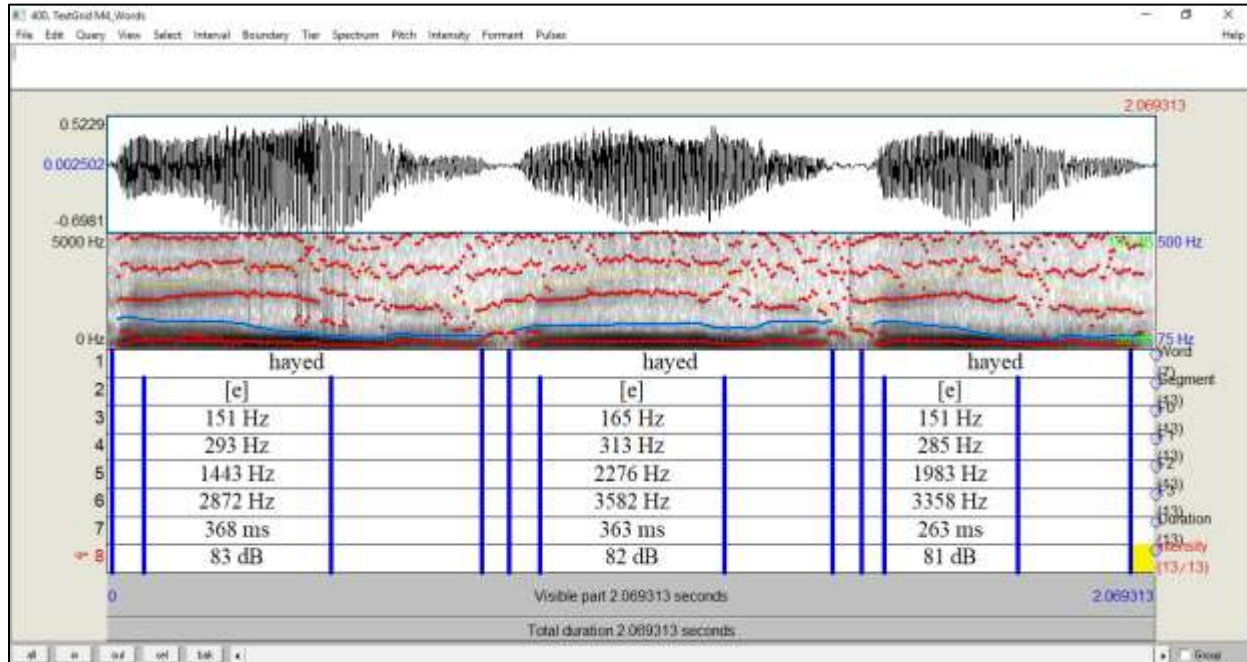


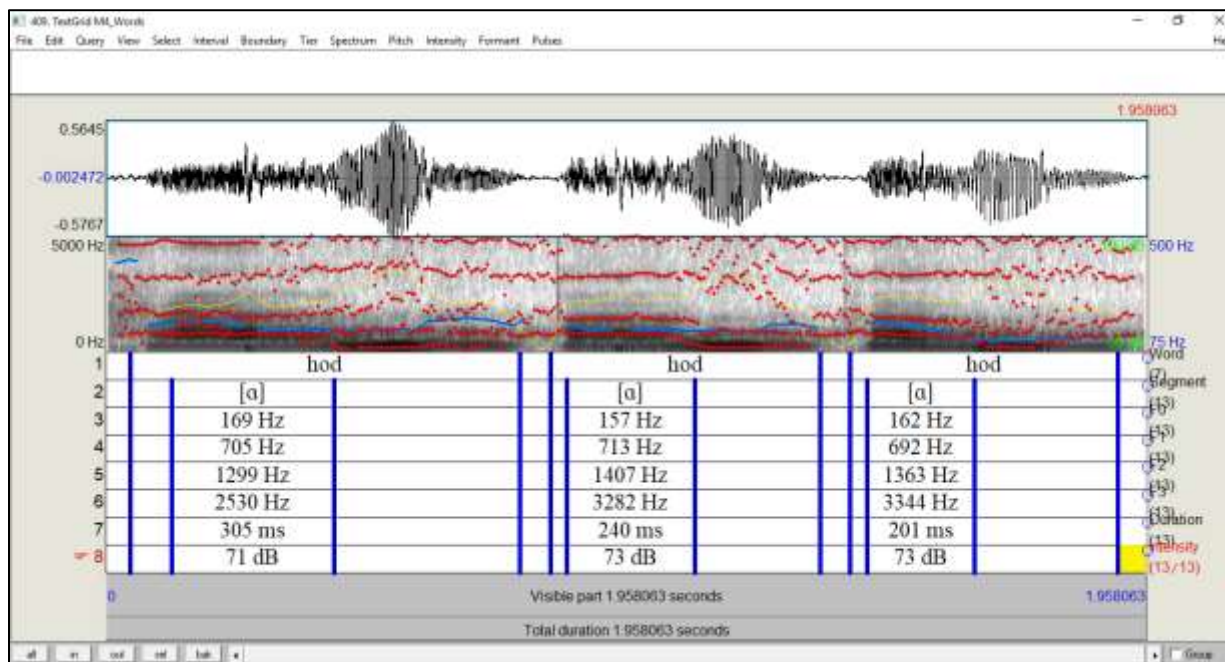
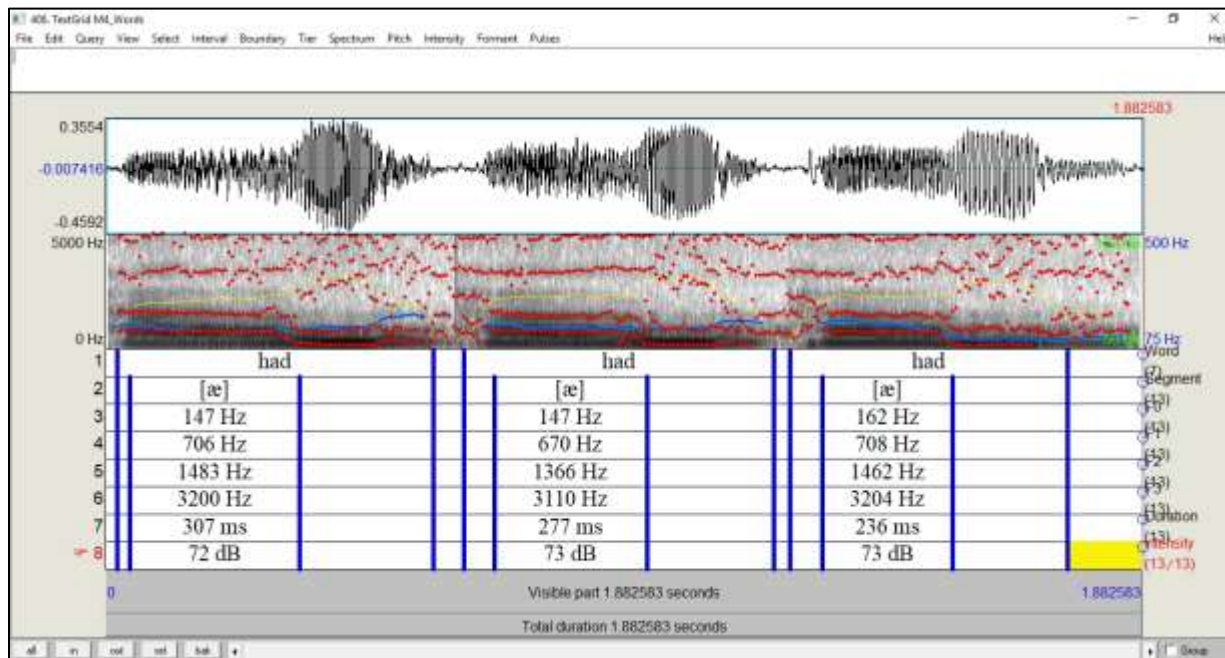


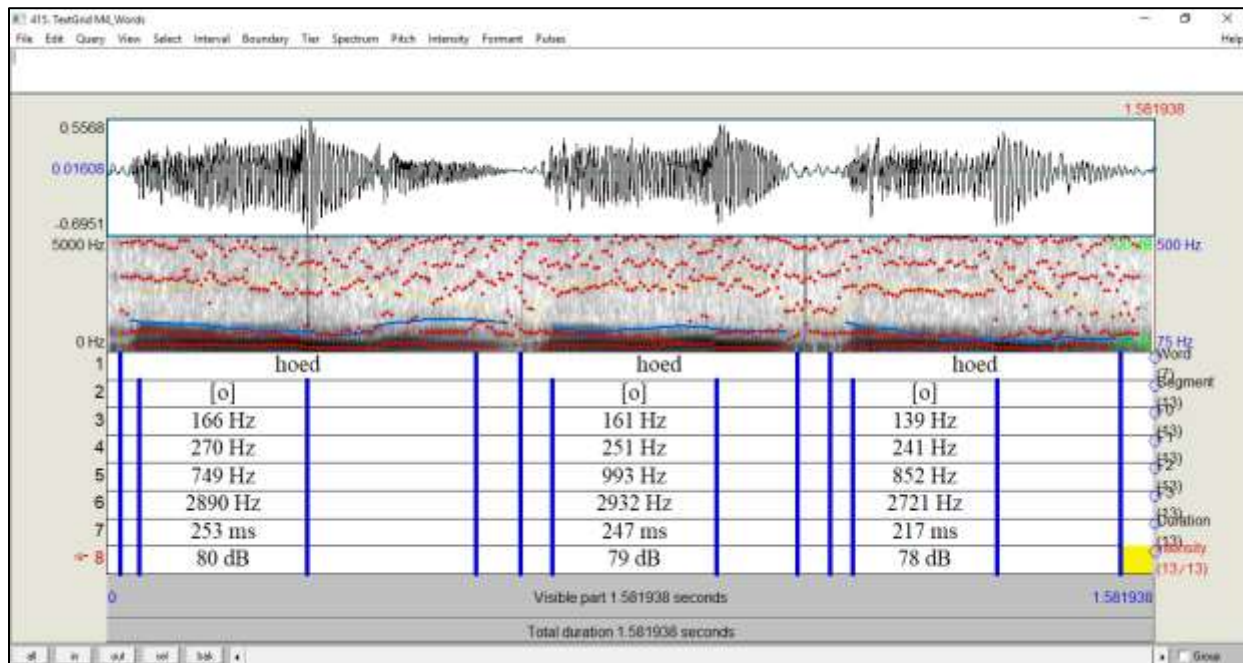
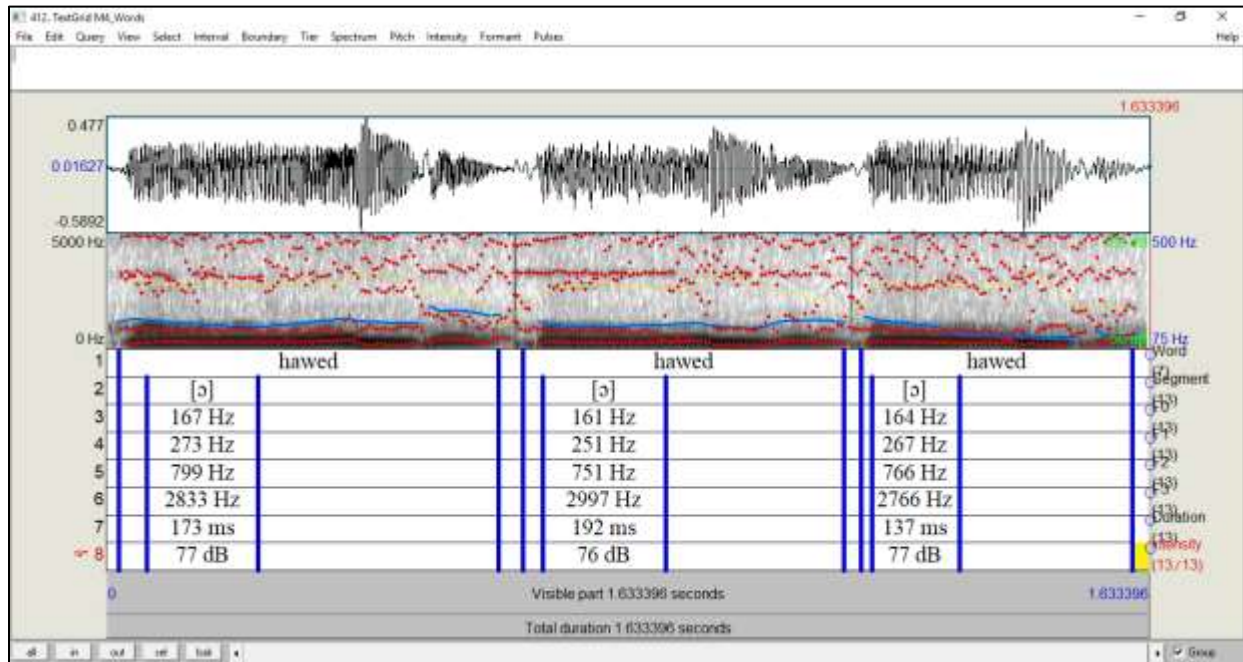


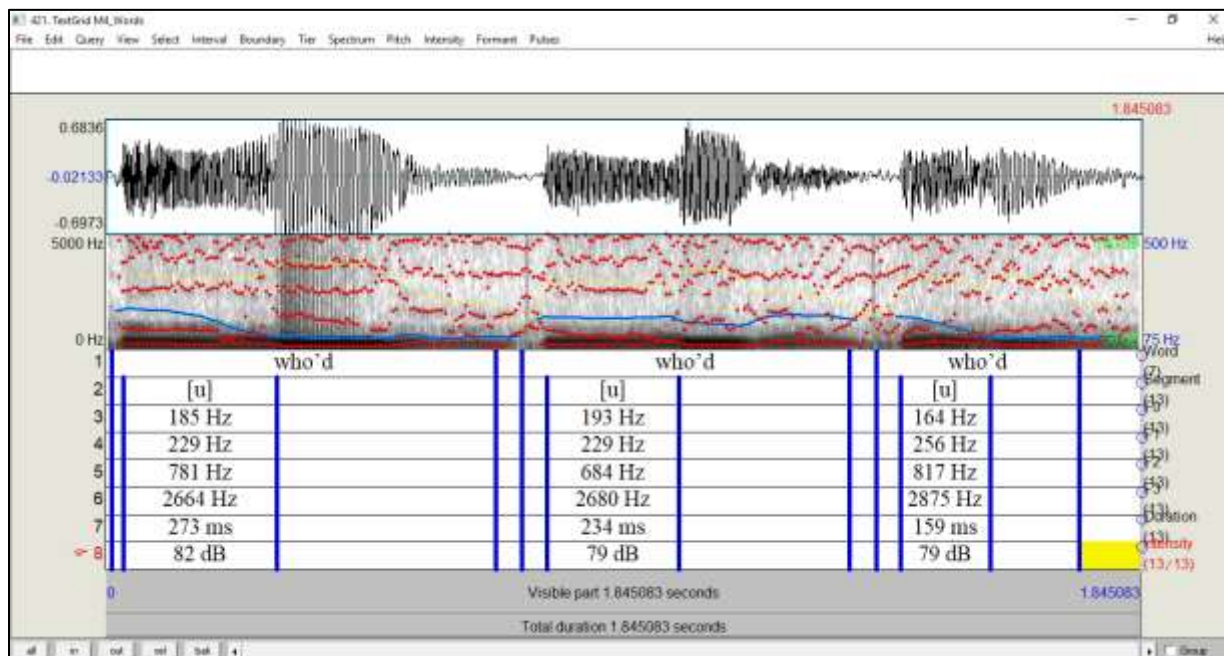
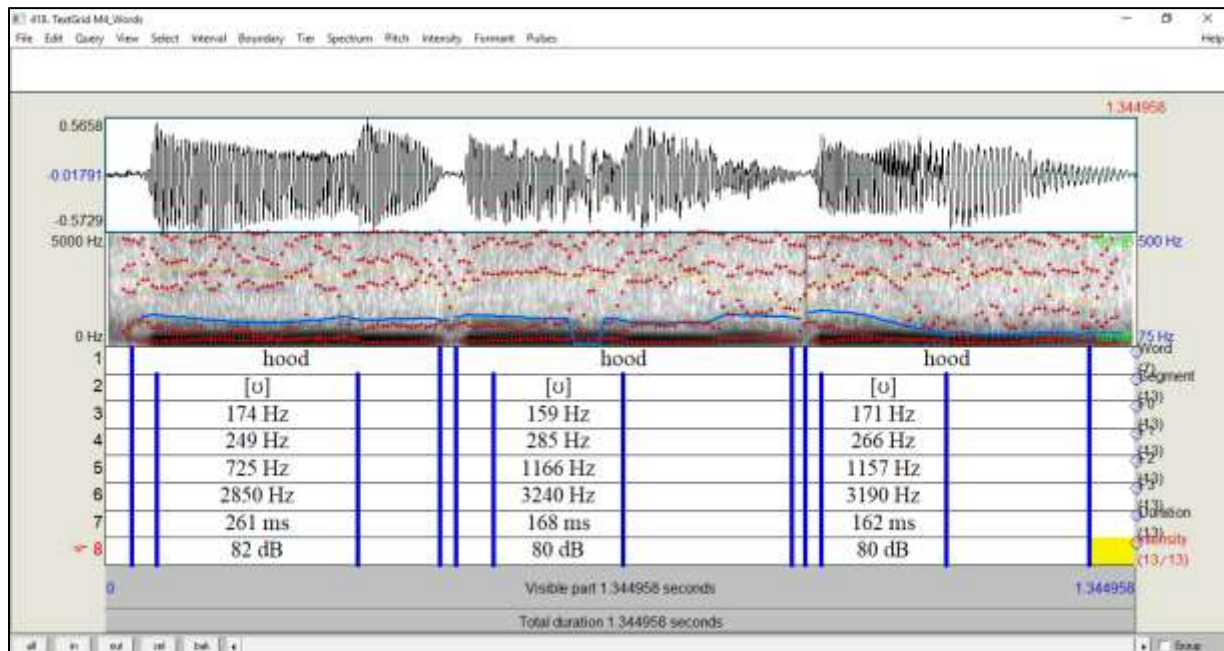
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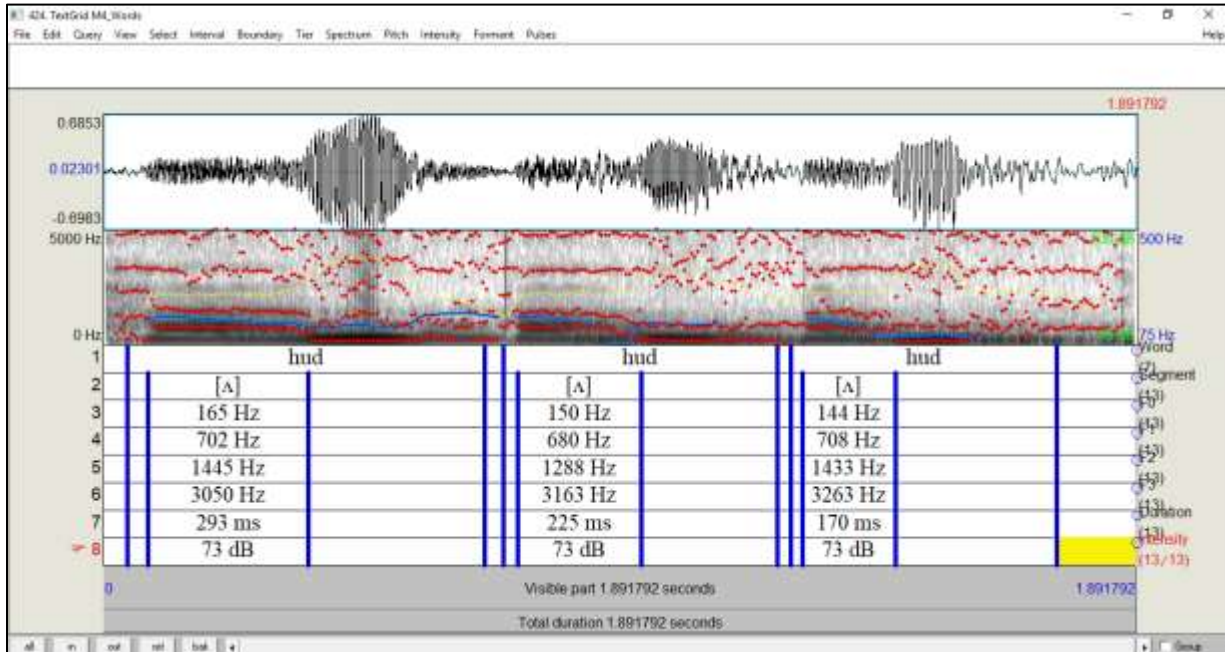




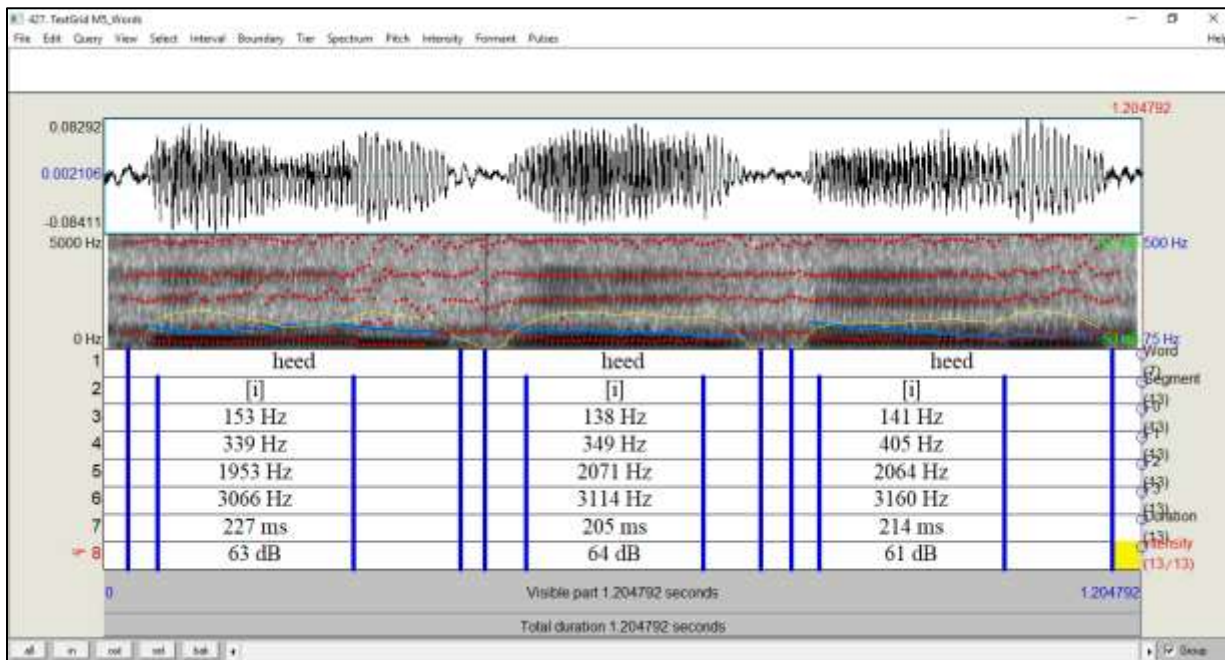


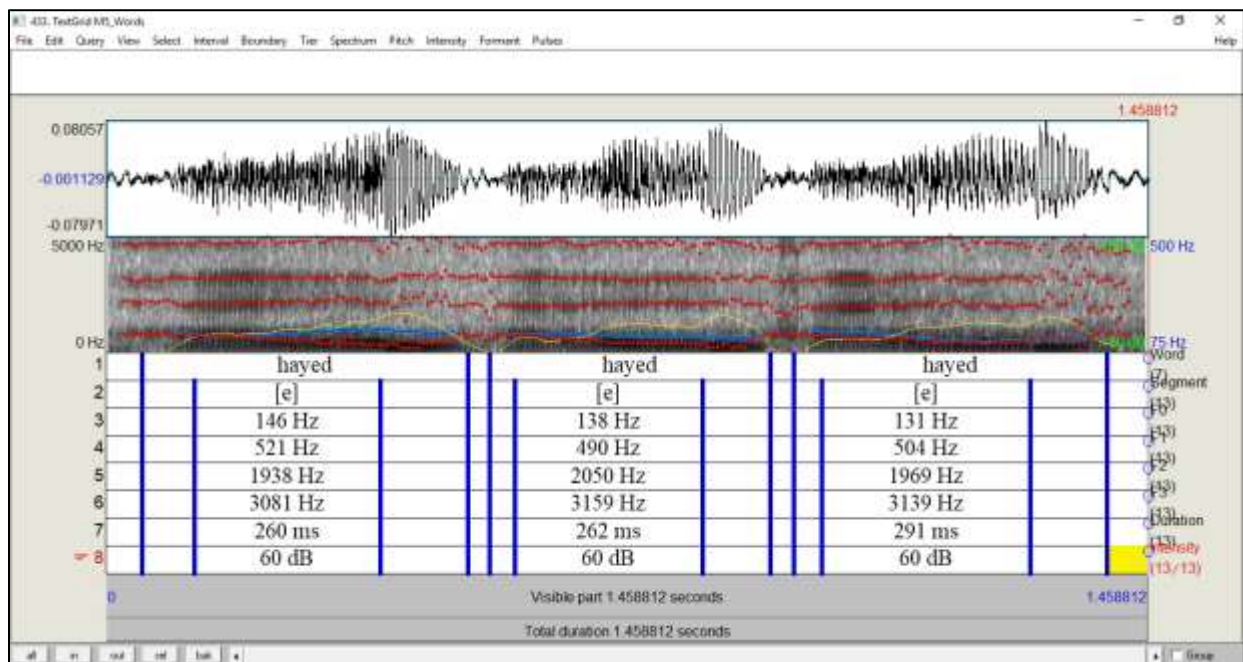
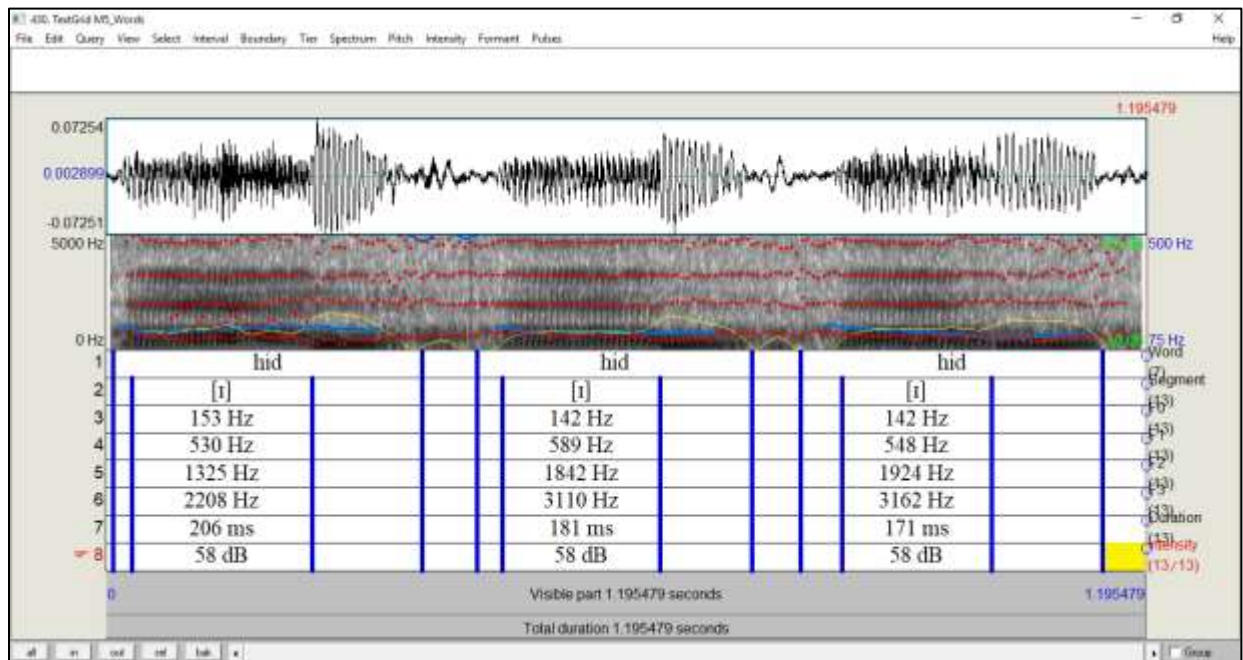


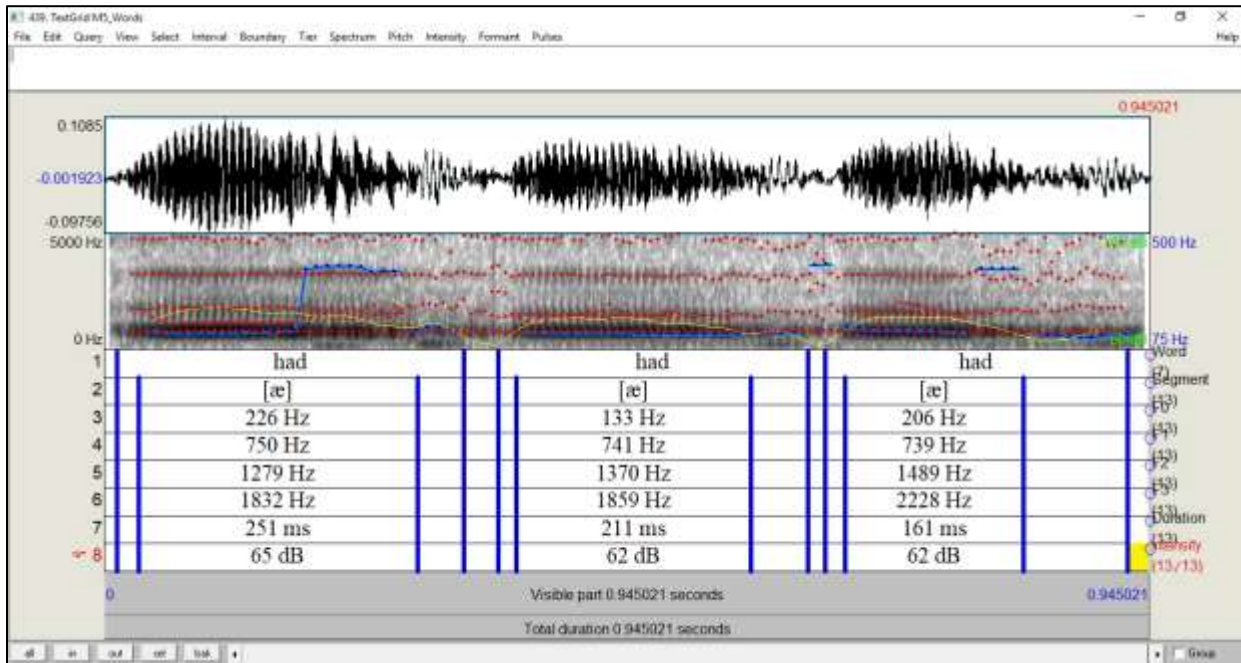
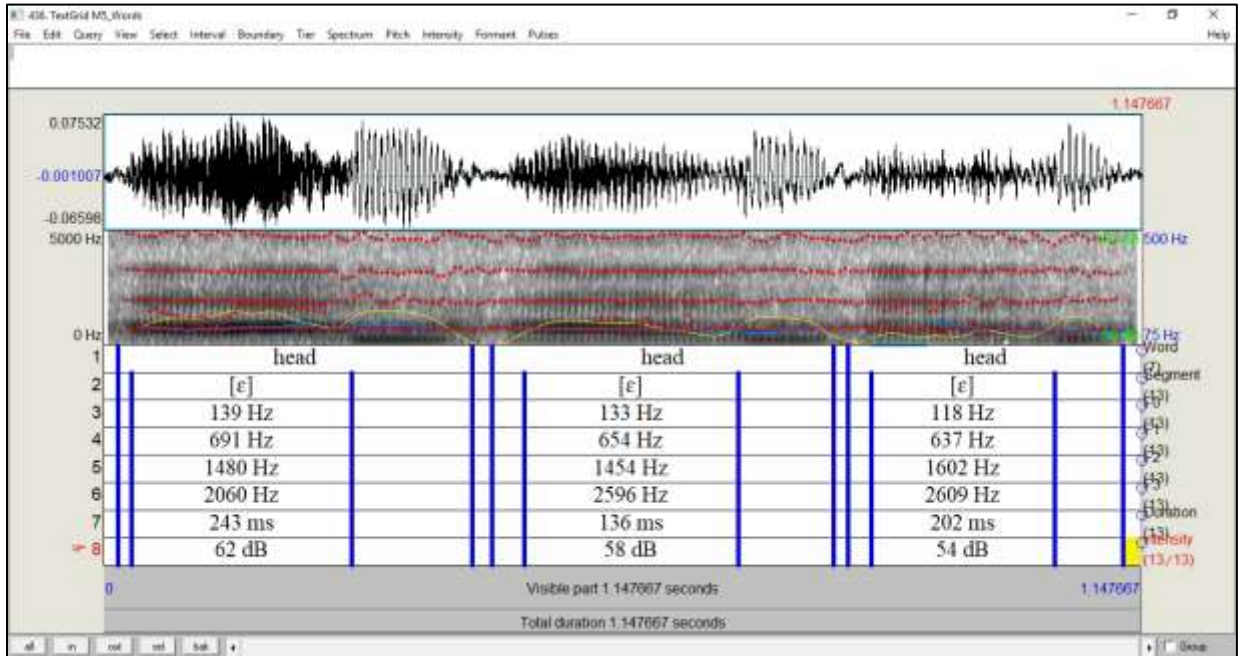




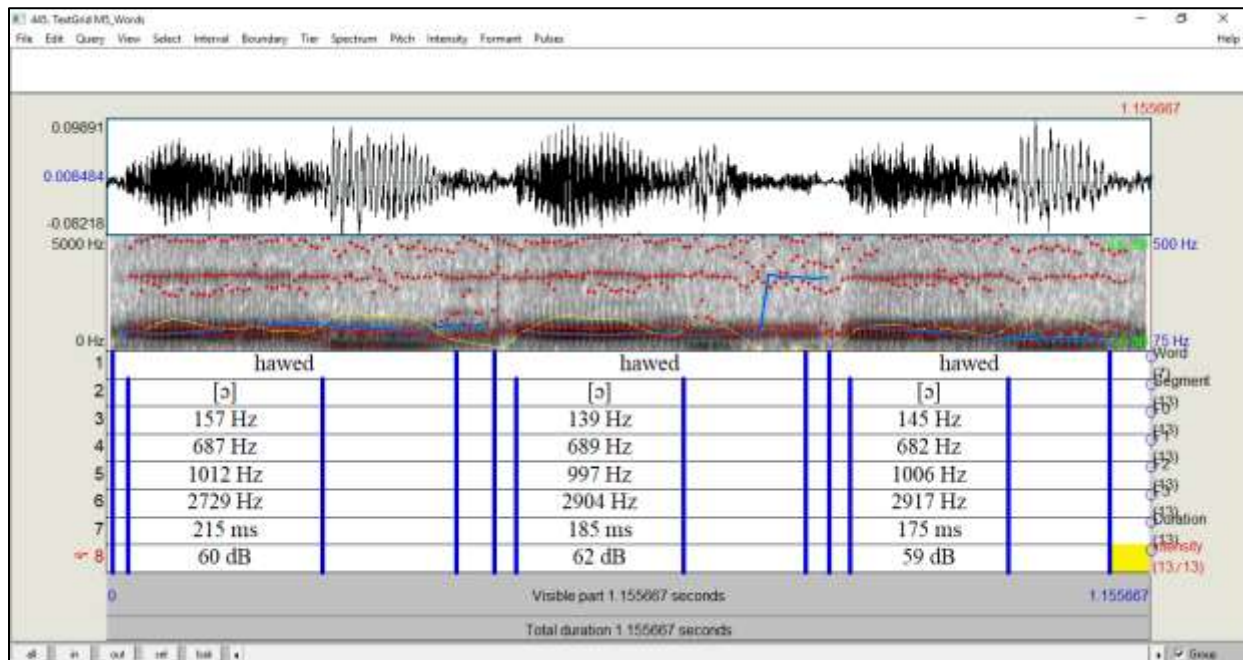
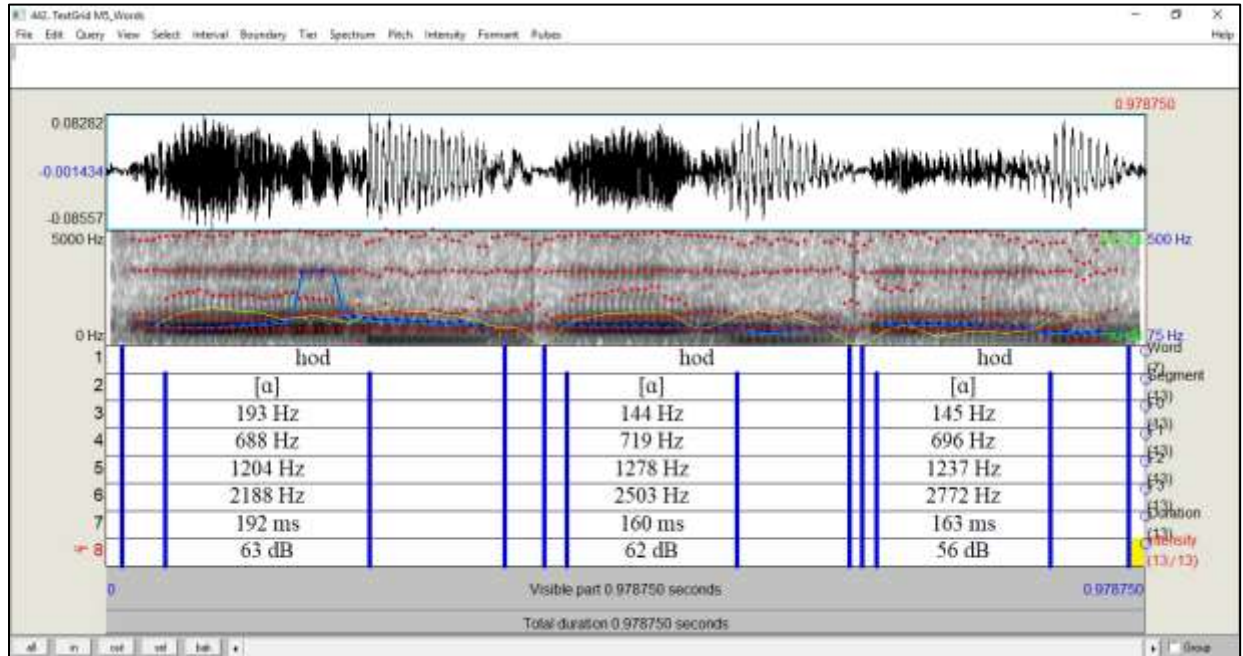
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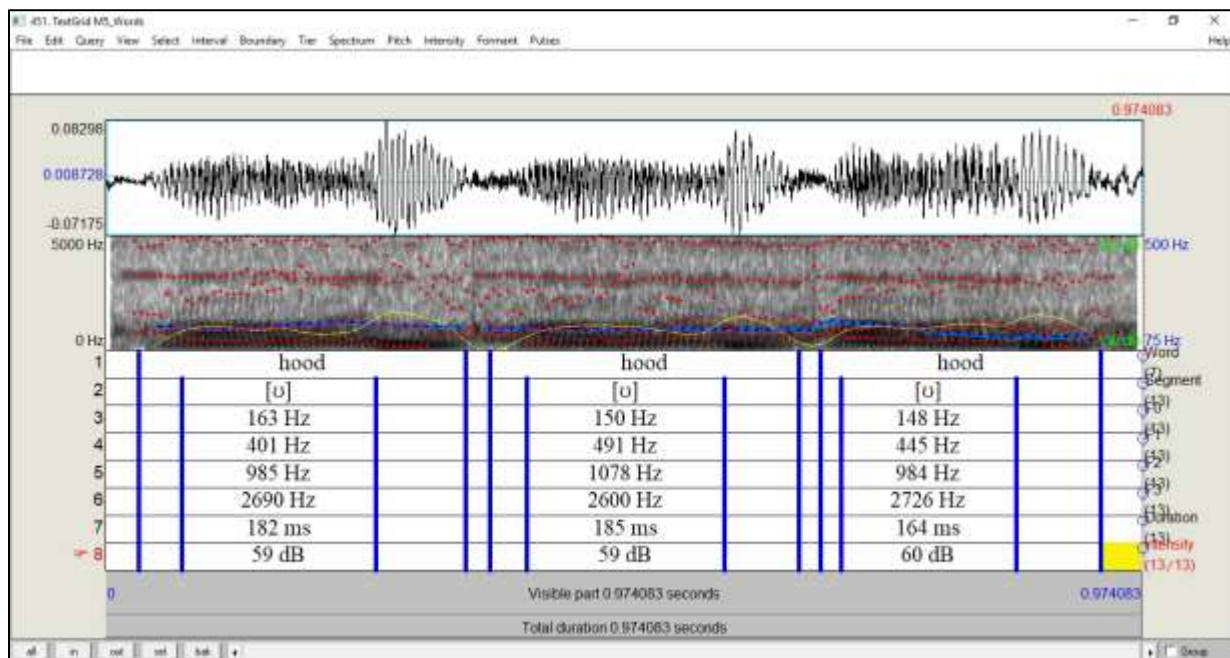
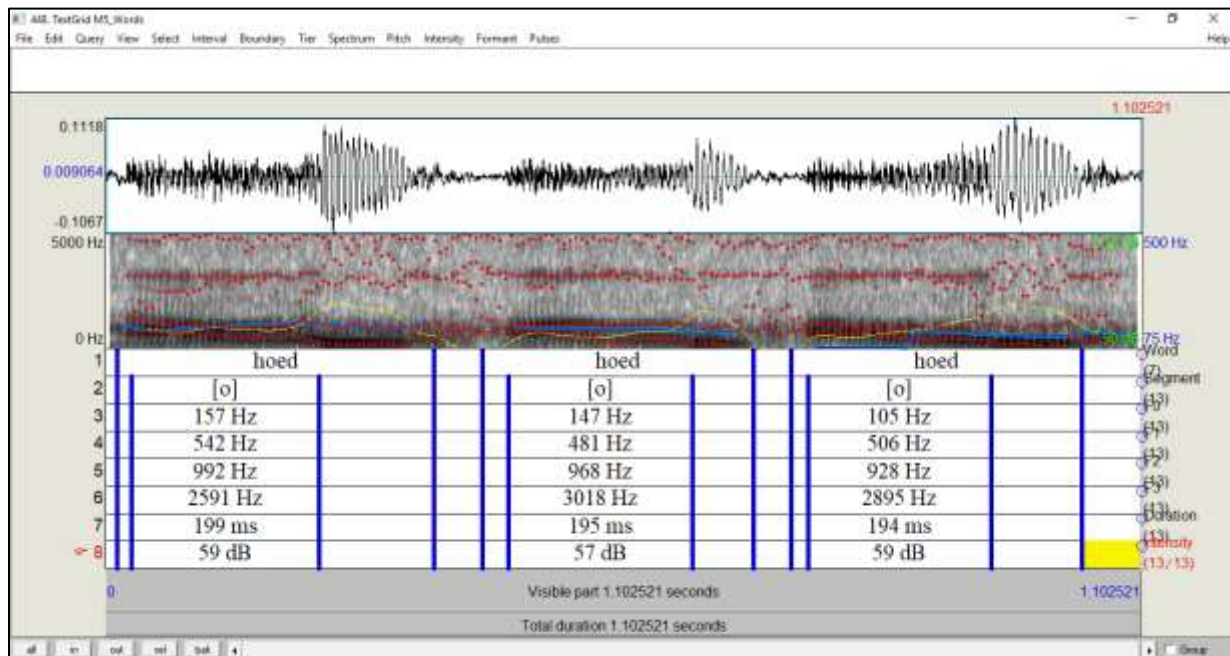


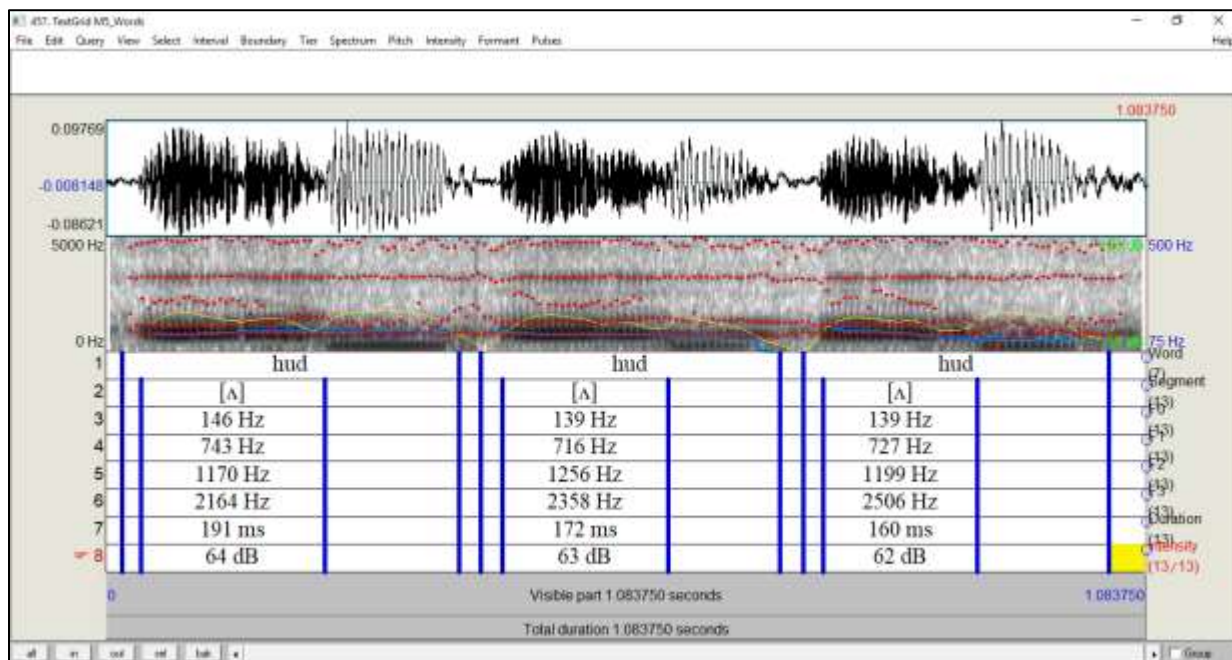
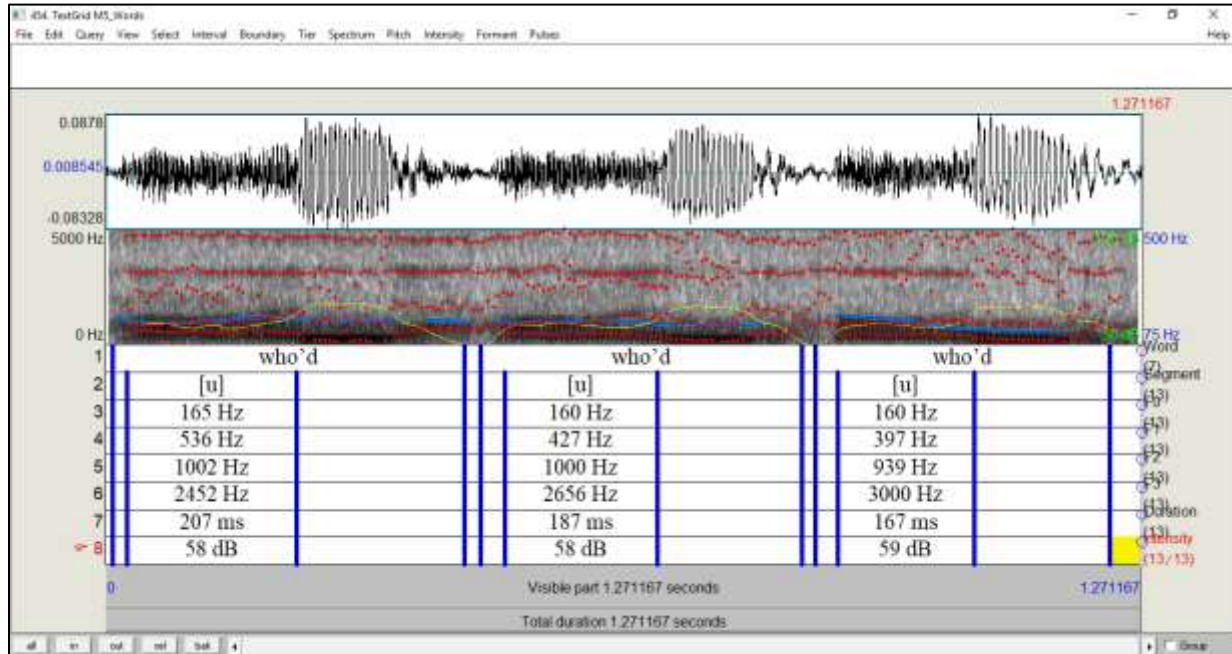




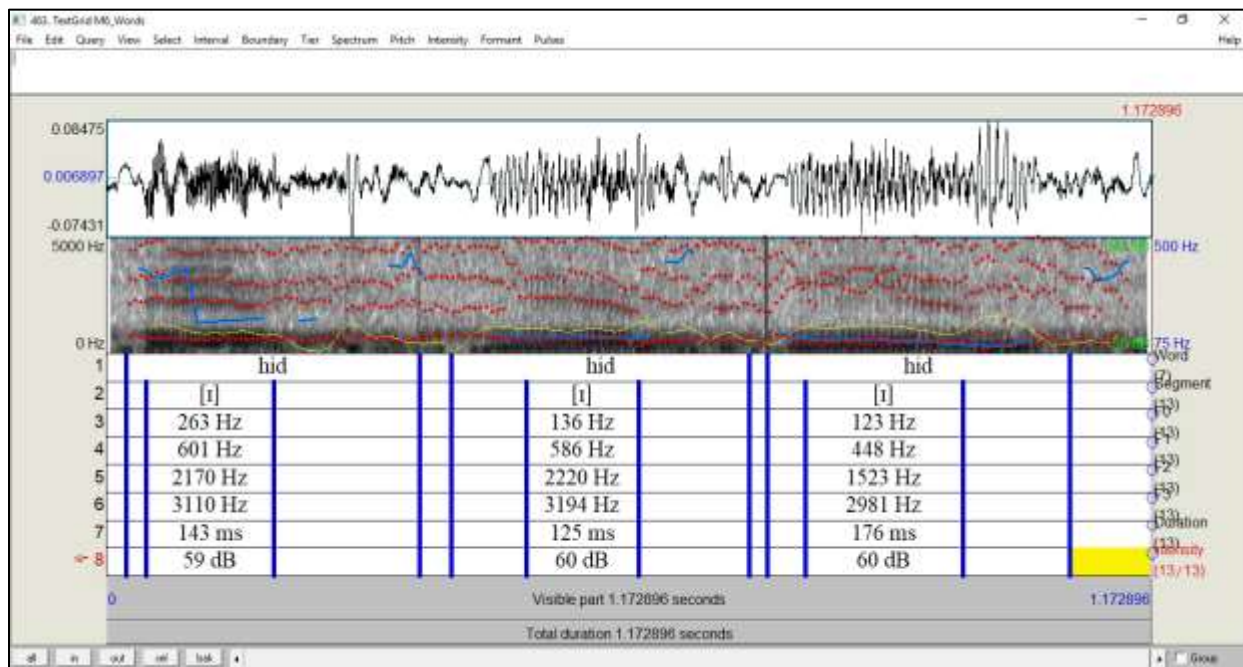
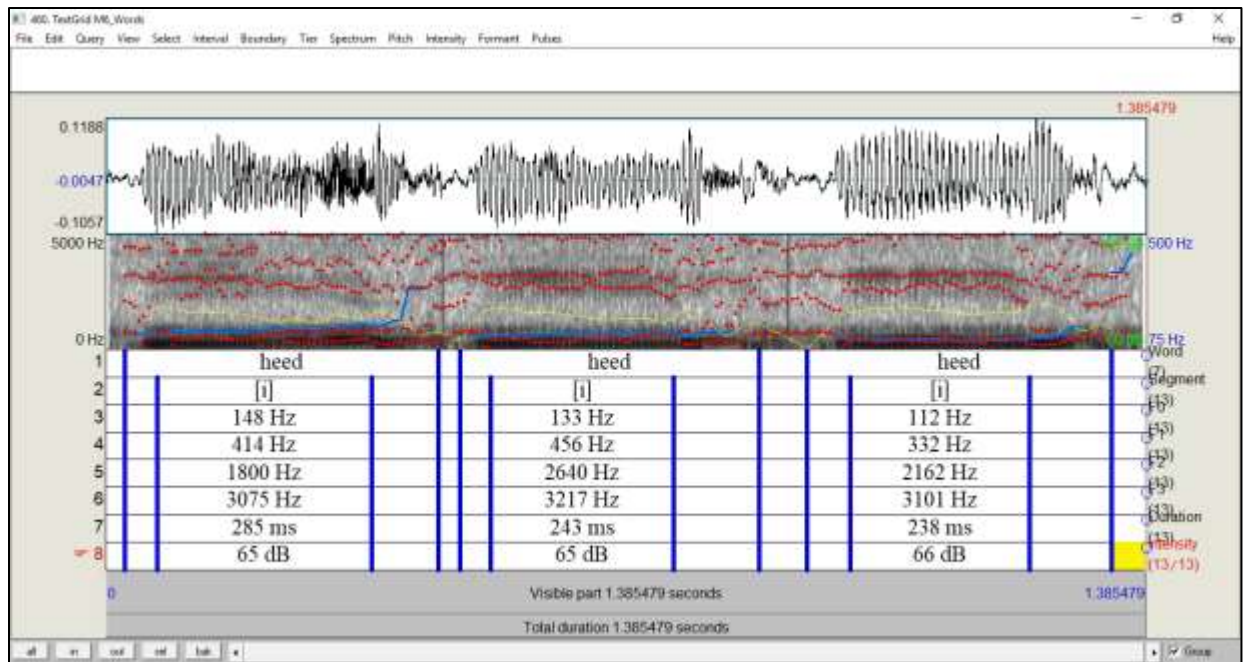


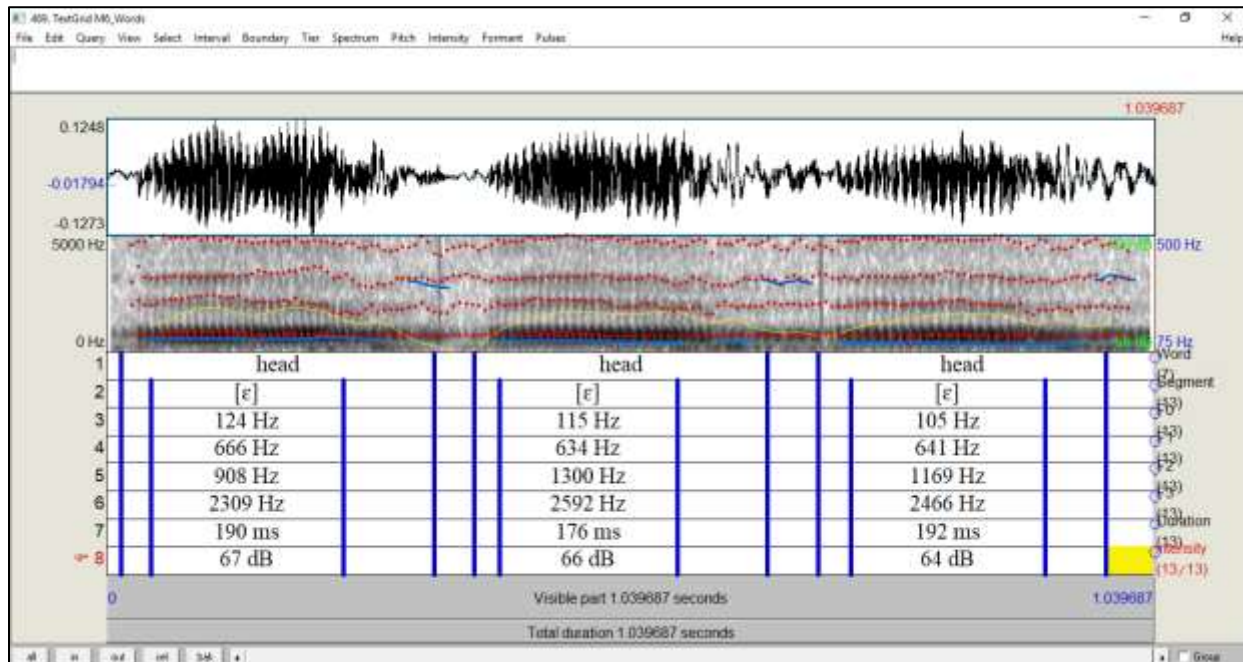
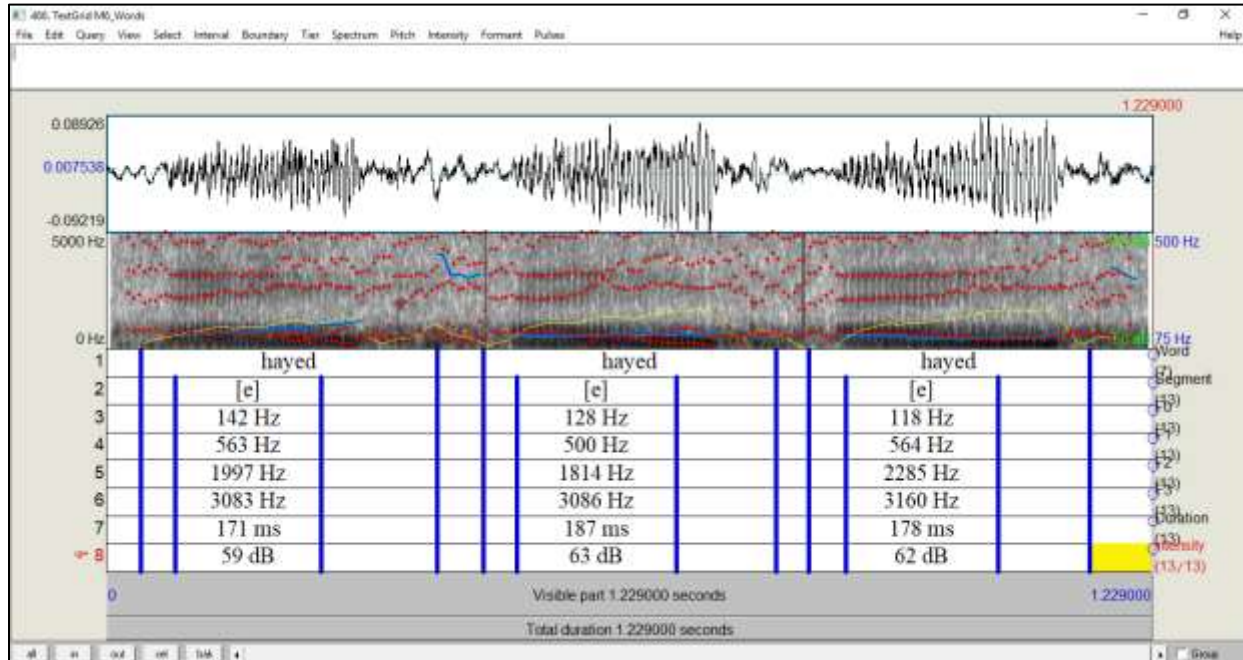


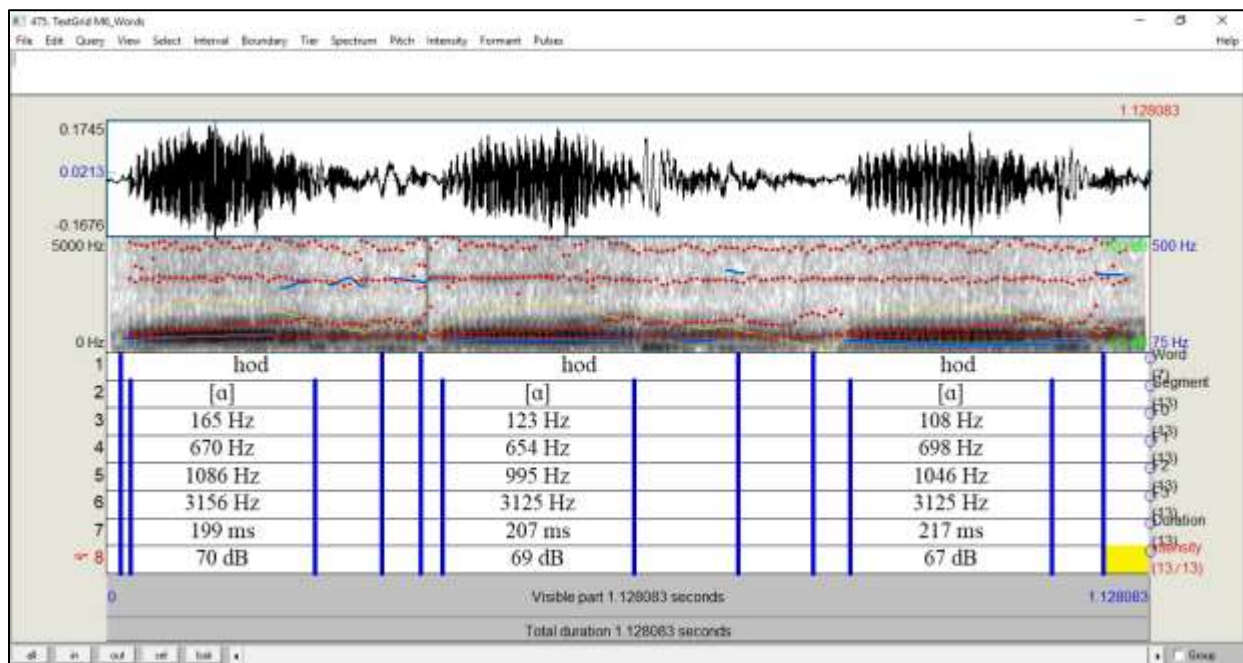
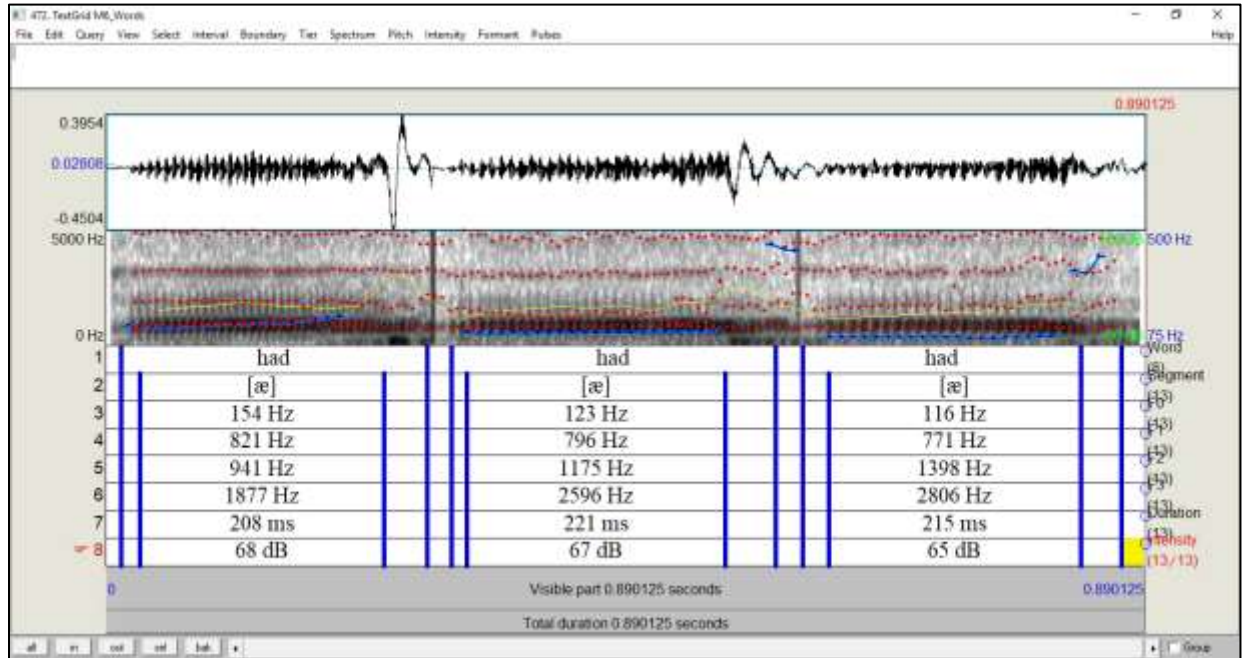


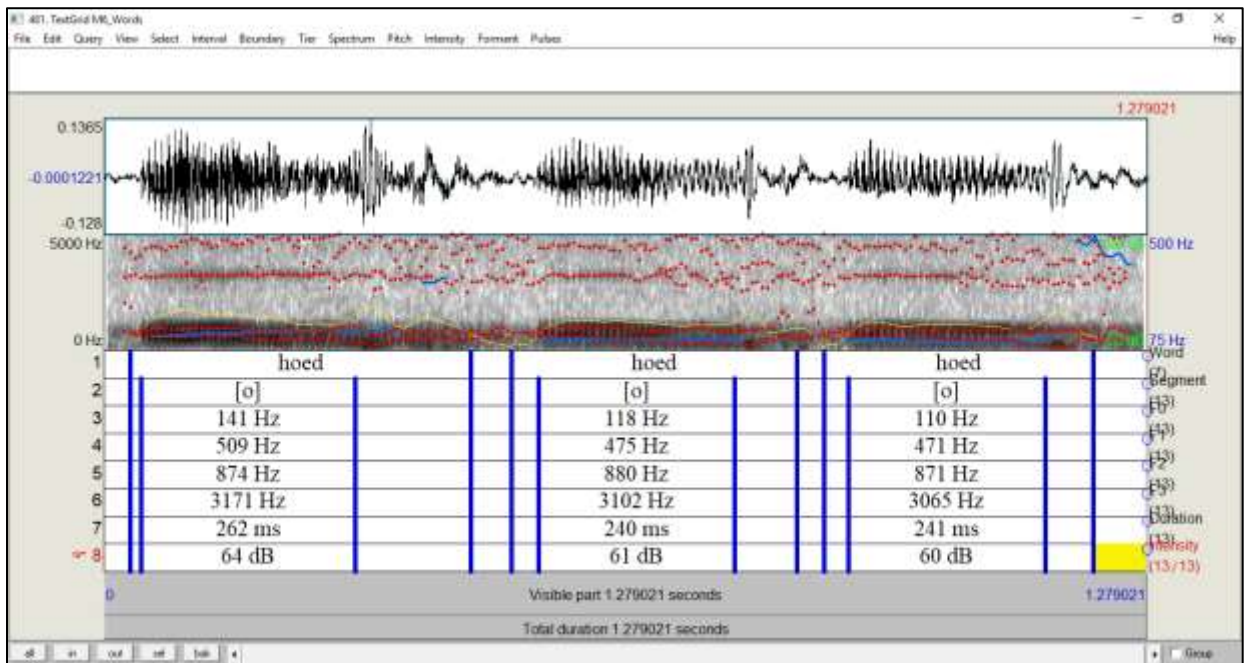
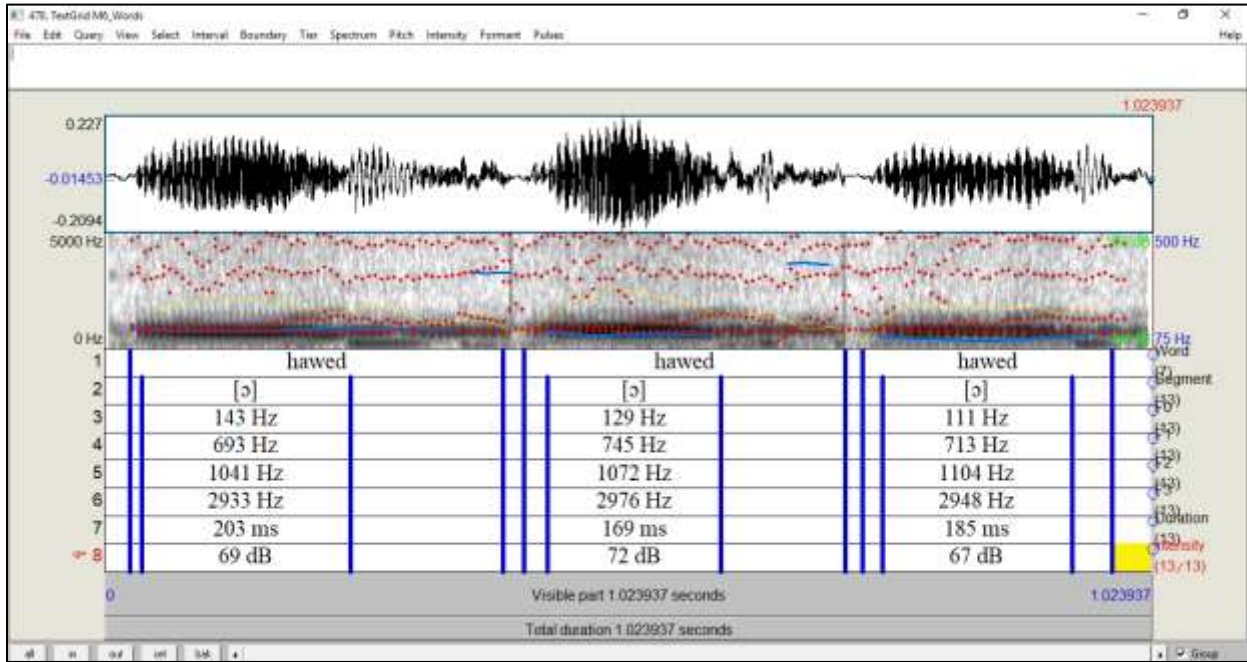


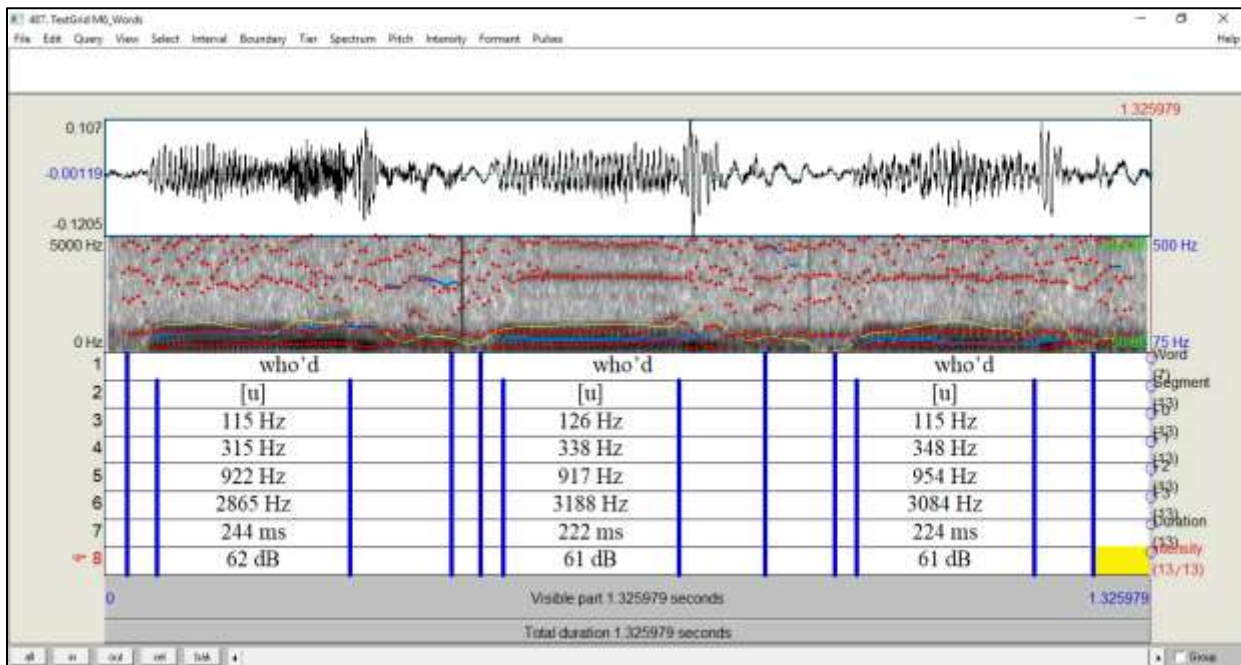
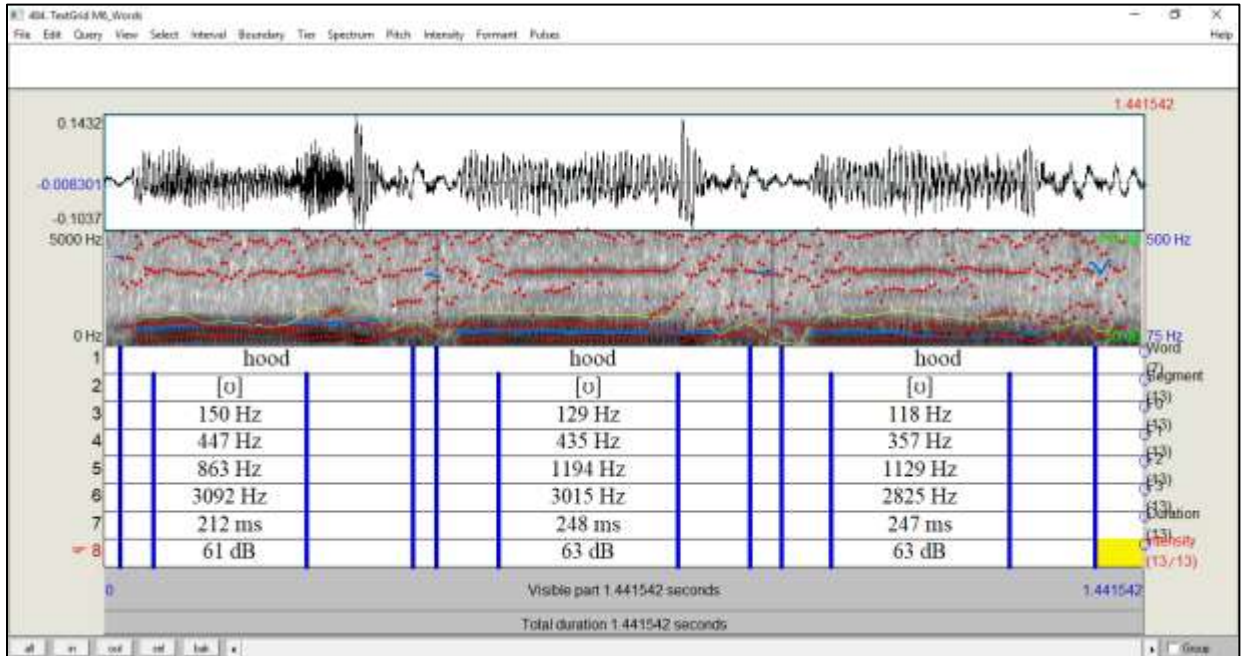
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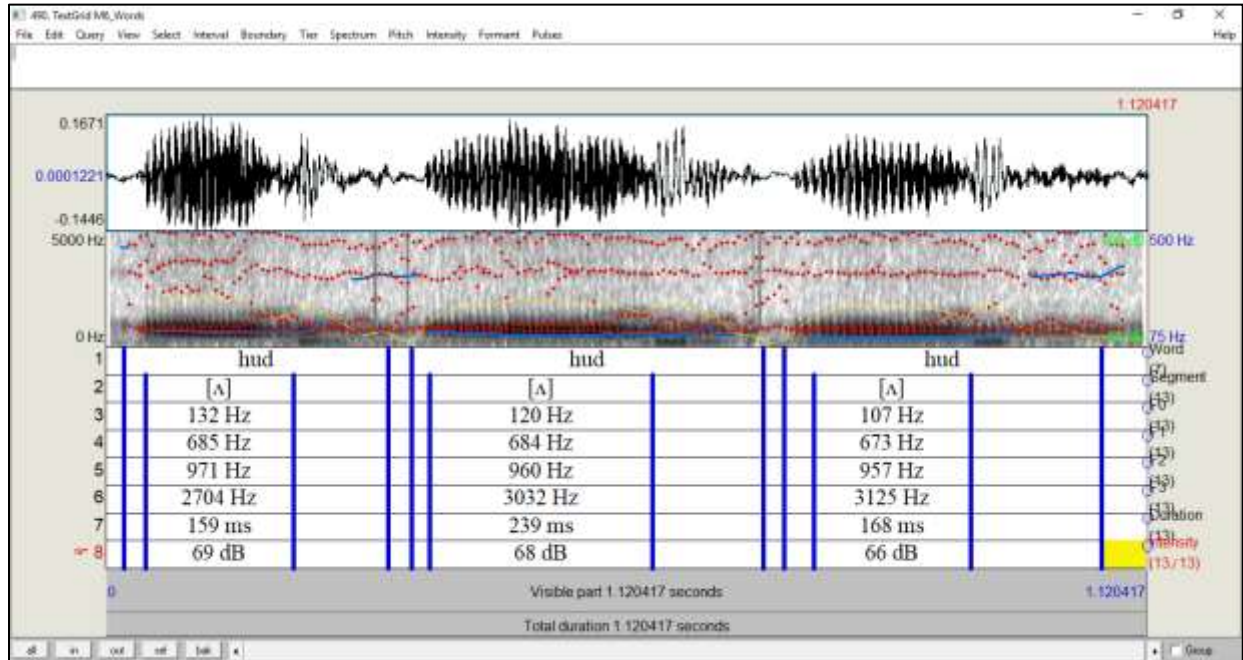












M7

