/s/-retraction in Moroccan Dutch and endogenous Dutch

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A reported characteristic feature of Moroccan Dutch is the pronunciation of /s/ as /ʃ/ in onset consonant clusters, specifically in /sl/, /sx/, /sm/ and /sn/ (e.g. [1,2,3]). It has recently been found that in endogenous Dutch in the Netherlands /s/ is also pronounced more towards /ʃ/ ([4]). This leads to the main question: Is Moroccan Dutch [s] in onset consonant clusters more retracted than endogenous Dutch [s]?

In addition, the use of Moroccan Dutch as an identity marker ([2]) gives rise to a second question. Speakers converge in their pronunciation in order to emphasize similarity ([5]). We hypothesize that speakers of Moroccan Dutch might converge more in their [s] realizations. The second question therefore is whether there is a difference in inter-speaker variability in the pronunciation of /s/ between Moroccan Dutch (MD) speakers and endogenous Dutch (ED) speakers.

These research questions are investigated by using data from the NFI-FRIDA database ([6]), which contains speech from young L1 speakers of Dutch with an MD or an ED background. Tokens included in the analyses are /s/ in onset clusters; three clusters eliciting retraction mentioned in the literature on MD (/sn/, /sx/, /sl/), and other frequent onset clusters (/st/, /str/ and /sk/). Several acoustic-phonetic measures reflecting /s/ realization and retraction are taken: Centre of Gravity, spectral standard deviation, and spectral maximum.

We will investigate [s]-retraction as function of both Speaker Group (MD, ED) and Phonemic Context (typical vs a-typical clusters for retraction). We expect MD speakers to have a more retracted [s] in the typical retraction context than ED speakers, and MD speakers to show less inter-speaker variability than ED speakers.

References

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