

Affricating and hypercorrecting: a sociophonetic study on Spanish r in Chile

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The present work focuses on the affrication of the cluster /tr/ in Spanish spoken in Chile. The allophones are [tr] [t̪] [t̪̄] [t̪̄̄] [t̪̄̄̄] [s] [t̪s] and their realization depends on sociocultural and geographical factors (Araneda Beltrán et al., 2019; Sadowsky, 2015). Moreover, depending on the presence (or not) and the duration of frication, the allophones are associated to different degrees of prestige (e.g. [tr]) or stigmatization (e.g. [t̪̄̄̄] [t̪̄̄̄̄]) (Figueroa et al., 2013). Our study aims to investigate how the different variants are associated with social factors (i.e. age and socioeconomic profile).

We recorded 15 speakers (10 females, 5 males) living in different districts of Santiago de Chile. A questionnaire was given to the participants to calculate their socio-economic index (SEI) based on education level and economic resources. The higher the index, the higher the education, economic resources and material goods. We used a picture naming task to elicit words containing /tr/ in different prosodic positions and different phonetic contexts. The data was segmented on Praat. We quantified the frequency of realization and the duration of the rhotic on R.

On 495 analyzed tokens of /tr/ clusters, 45% were produced as [tr], 25 % as a short approximant [t̪], 11% as a long approximant [t̪̄], 9% as a voiceless tap [t̪̄̄] and 9% as an affricate [t̪̄̄̄]. The affricate realization [t̪̄̄̄] was produced by 10 of 15 speakers but 80% of the tokens were produced by 5 speakers. It is more frequent in older speakers (68%) and speakers with low SEI (61%). Though, a young male speaker with higher SEI produced 18,2% of the affricate.

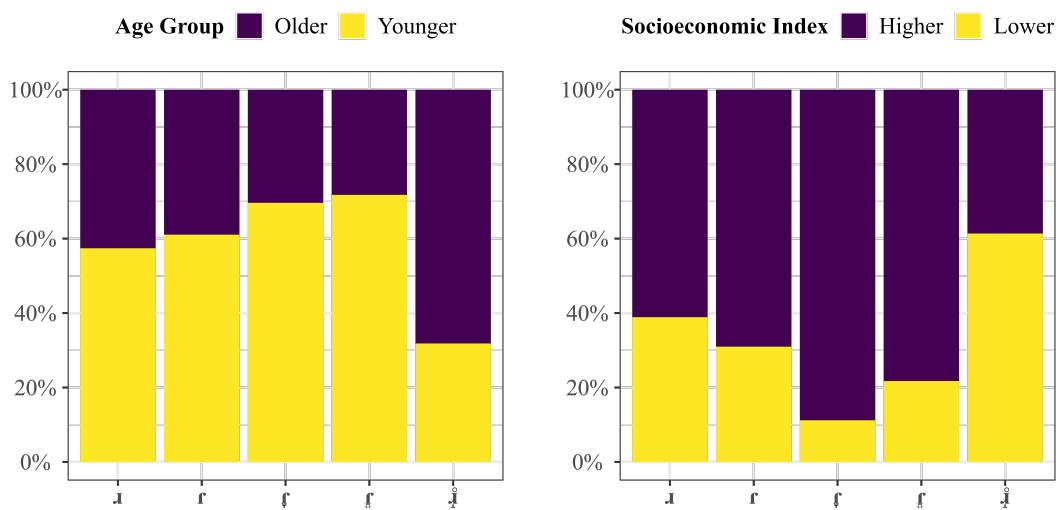


Figure 1: Barplots of the proportion of rhotic realization (n=495) depending on age (left) and socio-economic index (right).

Concerning the duration of the rhotics [r] and [ī], older speakers with low SEI tend to increase the duration of [r] compared to younger speakers with higher SEI. The same young male speaker showed increased duration of [r]. For [ī], it was longer in young speakers with high

SEI compared to older speakers with lower SEI.

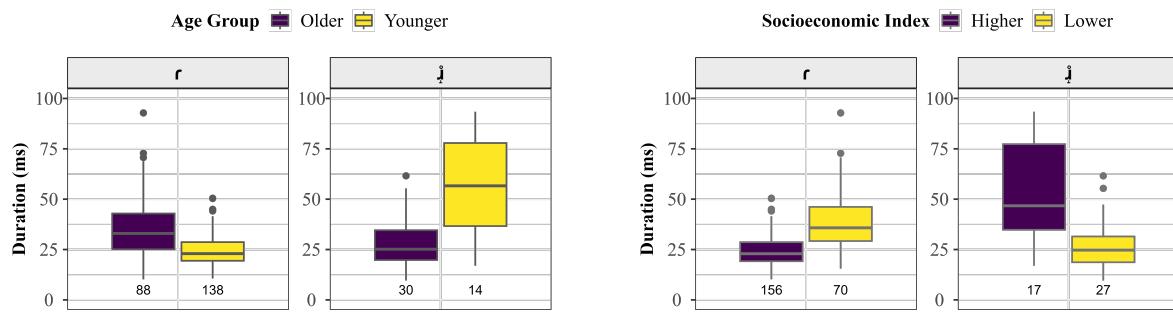


Figure 2: Duration of [r] and [i] (n=270) depending on the age (left) and the socioeconomic index (right).

Surprisingly, 4 old speakers with low SEI did produce affricates outside the recording sessions very frequently but rarely during the experiment. They switched from a low prestige affricate (i.e. [tʃ]) to a more prestigious realization of the cluster (i.e. [tr]) with an increased duration of the tap. This suggests that these speakers hypercorrect their production. While affrication may be explained in terms of how it occurs physiologically or phonologically, both phonetic and phonological theories fail to explain why it happens.

References

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