

The effect of dialect contact and social identity on fricative demerger

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While phonetic mergers have been well studied in the fields of historical linguistics and sociolinguistics, demergers/splits remain a relatively underexplored topic (Labov 1994, 2010; Maguire et al. 2013; Nycz 2013; Johnson & Nycz 2015). The possibility of the split of a merger is highly disputed in the literature, under the convention of *Garde's Principle*, which holds that once a merger has occurred, it will persist, and *Herzog's Principle*, which states that mergers expand at the expense of distinctions. Most scholars agree that a merger will not split due to language-internal reasons alone unless accompanied by language-external motivations (Labov 1994; Hickey 2004). Labov asserts that “as a rule, mergers and splits have no social affect associated with them” (1994: 343) and that splits may occur at an individual level, but not community-wide level. However, recent studies of Andalusian Spanish provide evidence to the contrary: the mergers of *ceceo* and *seseo* are demerging to the standard Castilian *distinción* due to dialect contact (Moya & García-Wiedemann 1995; Villena 1996, 2001; Villena & Sánchez 1996; Melguizo 2007; García 2008; Author 2015). *Ceceo* is a merger of etymological /s/ and /θ/ into a voiceless predorso-dental fricative [s^θ]; *distinción* is the realization of two separate phonemes for orthographic <s> and <z,ci,ce>, respectively realized as (apico-) alveolar [s] and interdental [θ] (Penny 2000).

Based on 80 sociolinguistic interviews conducted by the author (40 male, 40 female; ages 18-80), the current endeavor analyzes the coronal fricative variation in the city of Huelva and the nearby rural town of Lepe. The aim of the research was three-fold: (i) to provide sociophonetic evidence of the demerger of *ceceo* as all previous work has been auditory, with the exception of Lasarte-Cervantes' (2010) four-person case-study; (ii) to compare rural and urban speech communities; and (iii) to illustrate a socially-motivated demerger on a community-wide scale. The current analysis comes from a four-part sociolinguistic interview averaging 60 minutes: (i) semi-directed conversation; (ii) paragraph reading; (iii) word lists; (iv) demographic and attitudinal questions. Syllable initial orthographic <s> and <z,ci,ce> were analyzed, yielding 275 tokens per speaker. Tokens were measured acoustically using Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2016) for spectral peak frequency (Hz), first four spectral moments, normalized amplitude (dB), and relative duration (ms). The data were analyzed using a linear mixed effects regression model (R Development Core Team 2010) with both linguistic (orthography, style, preceding segment, following segment, syllabic stress, functionality) and extra-linguistic factors (gender, age, education, occupational prestige, years outside of Lepe/Huelva, local integration) as fixed factors and with speaker as a random factor.

Preliminary analyses indicate that significant predictors of demerged realizations are: years outside of Lepe/Huelva, education, age, gender, orthography, and style based on the measures of normalized amplitude and 2nd spectral moment of variance. The implications of this study are that (i) both speech communities are moving from merged *ceceo* to demerged *distinción*; (ii) the motivation for this community-wide split is inherently social, suggesting that sociolinguistic theory should incorporate more non-English examples to challenge long-standing claims regarding mergers/splits.

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