

LINGUISTIC ATTRIBUTES OF RETROFLEX ʀ IN PIGNASCO

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The nature of retroflex ʀ and its interaction with non-retroflex resonants is examined in Pignasco (a Gallo-Italian dialect spoken in western Liguria). It is shown that retroflex ʀ manifests a number of phonological characteristics that differentiate it from its non-retroflex congener (e.g. its 'resistance to contiguous palatal sounds; its restriction to weak syllable position; its correlation with the velar [ŋ] in certain morphological paradigms - cf. [bo:ʀa]-[boŋ] 'good', fem. sing. and masc. sing., respectively). It is argued that the retroflex ʀ in Pignasco cannot be considered as merely a variant of non-retroflex r (as a superficial analysis would lead one to maintain); rather, it must be defined in terms of the complexities of its phonetic properties along with universal notions of occurrence. (An adequate analysis of a dialect requires the dialectologist to take these factors into consideration.) Recent research on the behavior of retroflex consonants in other languages (cf. Bhat 1974; Stevens and Blumstein 1977) together with studies on the acquisition of ʀ in children (cf. Wode 1977) support the argument.

References

- Bhat, D.N.S. (1974): "Retroflexion and retraction", JPh 2, 233-237.
 Stevens, K.N. and S.E. Blumstein (1975): "Quantal aspects of consonant production and perception: a study of retroflex stop consonants", JPh 3, 215-233.
 Wode, H. (1977): "The L2 acquisition of /r/", Phonetica 34, 200-271.