

Phonetics Colloquium – Saarland University

Wed, 6 Feb 2019, 14:15-15:45

Building C7.2, Room 5.09

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Vowel reduction in Bulgarian Judeo-Spanish,  
and bilingual and monolingual Bulgarian spontaneous speech

This pilot study investigates vowel reduction in three linguistic varieties: the Judeo-Spanish and Bulgarian of bilingual speakers from Bulgaria, as well as monolingual Bulgarian speech. Three acoustic variables are examined: F1, F2 frequency and duration. Stressed and unstressed vowels are compared to establish the extent of unstressed vowel reduction, while unstressed phrase-final vs non-final vowels are further compared to assess vowel sensitivity to prosodic position. High and non-high vowels are then compared to estimate the loss of contrast in unstressed position. All three varieties exhibit substantial reduction in unstressed non-front non-high vowels, the change being almost exclusively in F1 frequency. As regards final vs non-final vowels, there the role of duration vastly outweighs any spectral differences. Although substantial, both vowel reduction and contrast loss are less pronounced in Judeo-Spanish than in Bulgarian. The two Bulgarian varieties are not neatly separated, but differ across individual vowels. The results for spontaneous speech reported here diverge from earlier findings on Judeo-Spanish and Bulgarian careful speech, in terms of both the strength of vowel reduction and the weight of individual acoustic variables.