Phonologization: the case of /s/ aspiration/metathesis in Andalusian Spanish

Paul O’Neill

(University of Sheffield)

A number of recent articles have concentrated on the aspiration of /s/ preceding heterosyllabic voiceless occlusive consonants in Andalusian Spanish and have noted the presence of a statistically significant increase in VOT on these consonants and suggested that it may be indicative of a change in progress whereby there is occurring a metathesis of the portion of aspiration. Various studies (O’Neill 2009, Parrell 2012, Torreira 2007a, 2007b) have explained this change in progress in purely articulatory terms as a result of gestural overlap and coarticulation of the glottal gesture of [h] and the closure gesture of the occlusive within a model of articulatory phonology (Browman & Goldstein, 1992; Goldstein, Byrd, & Saltzman, 2006) but have denied that the aspirated occlusives are intended by speakers. More specifically given the negative correlations between the duration of pre- and post-aspiration, they have been considered realisations of the same underlying sequence /s/ and Parrell (2012), has claimed that the metathesis is related to the notions of anti-phase and in-phase gestures and claimed that preaspiration was a case of the former since the occlusive closure is late in relation to the onset of the opening of the glottis whereas cases of post-aspiration are in-phase gestures in which there is a synchronisation between the onset of glottal opening and the release of the occlusive gesture. In this paper, upon a definition of phonologization proposed by Hymann and taking into account recent work into this concept by Garret and Johnson (2013), I present evidence from the cities of Seville and Cádiz which suggests that the aspirated pronunciations are intended and phonologised by male speakers within words but not across words. I discuss my results in the context of the debate regarding sound change acting of words (neogrammarian) or phonemes.


