Yiddish Treatment of Affricates and Segmental Analysis

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BACKGROUND/DATA COLLECTION

Central Questions

- How are affricates treated in Yiddish?
- How does Yiddish phonology motivate various cross-linguistic models of the affricate?

Yiddish Background

- Falkovitch (1966), Weinreich (1968), Kleine (2003), Jacobs (2005) all have different views
- t͡s was often considered the only affricate due to it being the only one with a graph: ץ
- 2 million speakers (Eberhard et al. 2021)
- Two primary dialects (Eastern and Western)
- Written essentially with Hebrew orthography
- Descendent of Middle High German

Data Collection

- Collected words from Swadesh list, Joys of Yiddish, and Yiddish a Linguistic Introduction
- ~120 words per speaker
- Interviewed three native speakers
  - M87, M29, F34
- All spoke a Western dialect
- Elicited words through English translation prompts

PHONOLOGY

Near Minimal Pairs

- t͡ʃ has near minimal pairs with d, t, and t͡s
  - /t͡ʃɪmədan - dɪn/ ‘suitcase – thin’
  - /t͡ʃat͡ʃki – tatɜ/ ‘toy – father’
  - /mɛnt͡ʃ - ɛnt͡s/ ‘person – we’
- t͡s has near minimal pairs with d, t, t͡ʃ
  - /blɪnt͡s - hɪnt/ ‘blintz – dog’
  - /dɪn - t͡sɪŋ/ ‘thin – tongue’

Representation of Affricates

Complex Ordered Segment
- Left (- continuant), Right (+continuant) Sagey (1986)

Complex Un-ordered Segment
- Unordered (+ and - continuant) Lombardi (1999)

Simple Segment
- Simple segment with conflicting features Clements (1990)

True Cluster

Hushing Assimilation

- Process in Yiddish as well as other Germanic languages
- s -> ʃ / ___ t͡ʃ
- Motivates all three possible affricate representations

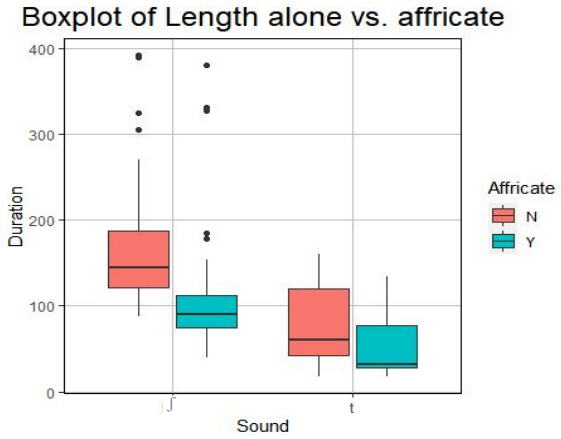
ACOUSTICS

Methods

- Annotated interviews in Praat
- Measured durations of relevant sounds (t, d, ʃ, ʒ t͡s , t͡ʃ , d͡ʒ) and recorded into Excel
- Statistical analysis in R (t test)

Findings

- Bare sounds were statistically significantly longer than their affricate counterparts



Conclusion

- t͡s , t͡ʃ , d͡ʒ are all affricates, not sequences
- t͡s and t͡ʃ are phonemes
- d͡ʒ is an allophone of d
- t͡s and t͡ʃ are acoustically unique and in overlapping distribution with their bare counterparts

References and Acknowledgements
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