

Aspiration, lenition, and contrast: Phrase-medial bilabial stops in Danish

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Germanic languages differ in the phonetic realization of the sounds written as <ptk> and <bdg>. This difference depends in part on the prosodic context (e.g. phrase-initial, pre-tonic, post-tonic, syllable-final), and may involve contrasts in terms of VOT (e.g. aspiration, pre-voicing) and closure duration (singleton vs. geminate). Pohl & Grijzenhout (2010) report that in phrase-medial pre-tonic position Swiss German has a length contrast, while Standard German and Dutch use different laryngeal contrasts (aspiration and voicing, respectively). The advantage of focusing on phrase-medial context (e.g. *het mooiste paar* ‘the prettiest couple’) is that this position is generally immune from the effect of passive voicing from the surrounding vowels.

In our talk we examine the phonetic realization of Danish plosives. Our production data show that the /p~b/ distinction in Danish relies on aspiration rather than voicing in phrase-medial pre-tonic position, albeit with an aspiration phrase of /p/ that is consistently longer than in Standard German. This talk is the first step in a larger study of the phonetics and phonology of Danish stops.

References

Pohl, Muna; Grijzenhout, Janet. 2010. Phrase-medial bilabial stops in three West Germanic languages. *Linguistische Berichte* 222. 141-167.