

This paper investigates the status of aspiration of voiceless stops as a sociophonetic index in the Regional Italian spoken by a group of adolescents from central Calabria (Lamezia Terme). These adolescents can be considered diglottic speakers, since in addition to the regional variety of Italian they can also speak the local Romance variety, which features aspiration of geminated, post-rhotic, post-nasal and post-lateral stops (Falcone 1976, Sorianello 1996, Nodari 2016). The present study assumes that the surfacing of aspiration in regional Italian speech is a consequence of language contact and of the speakers' mixed linguistic competence. Therefore, this study aims at analysing the role of different sociophonetic factors triggering the patterns of stop aspiration in the speech of young Calabrians. In particular, we want to investigate the relationship between sociolinguistic and anatomic factors in triggering aspiration, with the aim of distinguishing the two factors.

In order to do so, we decided to collect speech data from forty-four students from two different schools in Lamezia Terme, one humanities high school and one vocational school, sorted by gender and age (14 vs. 18 years old). Speakers were asked to perform two different tasks: a sentence-reading task was used in order to collect balanced data, and a spontaneous conversation task was used to confirm data coming from the sentence reading task. Voice Onset Time (VOT; Lisker&Abramson 1964, Cho&Ladefoged 1999) and closure duration were the two acoustic variables measured in this study. We expect, indeed, to find greater VOT values for voiceless stops when aspirated. These two measurements were correlated to two groups of factors. One group includes internal factors, i.e.: place of articulation (/p/, /t/, /k/), context (intervocalic singletons and geminates, post-rhotic, post-nasal, and post-lateral position), stress (pre-tonic or post-tonic stops), and speech rate. The other group consists of extra-linguistic factors, i.e. gender, age, school attended, attitude towards schooling (positive, negative, in-between), and attitude towards dialect (positive, negative, in-between).

Results showed that variations in VOT has both phonetic and extra-linguistic explanations. The general findings showed that aspiration is generally favoured in velar and post-rhotic stops. More specifically, the findings showed that aspiration is generally favoured in velar and post-rhotic stops. At the same time, individual speakers show fine-grained differences in the realization of aspiration as a function of their social characteristics and attitudes towards the dialect. In particular, a significant effect of the attitude towards schooling, with males with a negative attitude showing significantly longer VOT, was found; by contrast, females with a positive attitude produce the least aspirated variants. Finally, despite their school orientation, speakers with positive attitude towards dialect show more aspiration.

Nevertheless, the interaction between place of articulation and phonotactic context showed peculiar results concerning alveolar stop when geminated or preceded by a rhotic. In these

two phonotactic contexts, indeed, alveolar stops reach VOT values that are similar to the velar stops. For this reason, we decided to analyse only the alveolar stop in these two particular contexts. Concerning sentence reading task, results show that, in these two particular contexts, aspiration is governed by a number of factors that were not significant in the whole set of data. The most important findings concern the sociolinguistic variables. We find the same general findings, with a significant effect of the attitude towards schooling and the attitude towards dialect. In addition to this, a significant effect of the variables ‘gender’, ‘school’, and ‘socioeconomic status’ was found. In particular, we found that males, from the vocational school, with low socioeconomic status, show longer VOT values for the alveolar stop. Concerning spontaneous conversation task, we found, instead, different results concerning students that have an in-between attitude toward the dialect and an intermediate attitude toward schooling. In spontaneous conversation data, students with an in-between attitude toward schooling show indeed VOT values that are similar to students with negative attitude (whereas in the sentence reading task they showed values similar to students with positive attitude), and students with an in-between attitude toward the dialect show VOT values that are similar to students with positive attitude (whereas in the sentence reading task they showed values similar to students with negative attitude). We think that these results show us that, at least in Calabrian Italian, the socio-indexical value of aspiration of the voiceless stops is conveyed by the alveolar stop when geminated or preceded by a rhotic. Indeed, we think that longer VOT values showed by the velar stop are only the consequence of anatomic factors (cf. Cho and Ladefoged 1999), whereas longer VOT values showed by alveolar stop convey sociophonetic information. The aspirated alveolar stop when geminate or preceded by a rhotic is indeed invested with covert prestige, and is used to project a strong regional identity and identification with traditional Calabrian culture. Overall, this suggests that aspiration is covertly marked not only for local identity but also for group membership and social distinctiveness.

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