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Perception of two English front vowels by L1 Dutch speakers with different regional accents

Paola Escudero\textsuperscript{a} and Ellen Simon\textsuperscript{b}
\textsuperscript{a}University of Amsterdam, Institute of Phonetic Sciences, Spuistraat 210, 1012 VT Amsterdam, Netherlands
\textsuperscript{b}Ghent University, English Department, Rozier 44, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

This paper reports the results of a categorization task of the English vowels "epsilon" and "ash" by native speakers of Dutch. Dutch has only one member of the contrast ("epsilon"), the acoustic realization of which is subject to considerable regional variation (Adank et al., 2007). Previous research has shown that there is asymmetrical lexical competition between English words containing "epsilon" and "ash" for native speakers of Dutch (Weber & Cutler, 2004; Escudero et al., in press). Weber & Cutler (2004) argue that "epsilon" is the dominant category for native speakers of Dutch, because it is phonetically closer to the L1 Dutch sound. The present study investigates whether the dominant category may vary depending on the speakers’ L1 dialect by examining how two groups of Dutch-speaking participants from different dialect regions (the Randstad region in the Netherlands and East-Flanders in Belgium) perceive the English vowels "epsilon" and "ash". Preliminary results indicate that participants from these two area’s do indeed categorize English "epsilon" and "ash" differently as the result of the acoustic properties of their L1 vowel "epsilon" (F1, F2 and duration).