

Resum:

Many languages have a two-way laryngeal (voicing) contrast in obstruents, where, for example, 'b' is distinctive from 'p'. This kind of contrast is traditionally described as a voiced-voiceless pair. In reality, however, not all voiced-voiceless pairs actually involve a voicing contrast. A typical example is found in languages such as English, where the contrast between sounds such as 'b' and 'p' does not refer to the presence or absence of voicing. Instead, the distinguishing property is aspiration, where 'p' can be aspirated (in strong syllables) whereas 'b' cannot, and importantly, both are phonetically voiceless. In languages such as Spanish, French and Japanese, on the other hand, there really is a contrast between voiceless and fully voiced obstruents. Languages of the former type are called aspiration languages while those in the latter voicing languages. After discussing this issue, my lecture will focus on the degree of improvement that L2 learners of English can achieve in their production of aspiration (+ VOT: voice onset time) as a result of receiving training in phonetics and English pronunciation. The data that will be shown suggest that overt teaching of general phonetics, and of English aspiration production, are to a certain extent effective in helping L2 English learners to develop a more accurate L2 pronunciation.