

English obstruents and laryngeal markedness

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type frequency of singleton obstruents in CUBE*

		fortis	lenis	f/l ratio
initial	plosive	23,730	17,694	1.34
	fricative	14,546	2,154	6.75
	all	38,276	19,848	1.93
medial	plosive	41,488	28,601	1.45
	fricative	23,552	11,218	2.10
	all	65,040	39,819	1.63
final	plosive	10,953	9,321	1.18
	fricative	6,885	16,617	0.41
	all	17,838	25,938	0.69

* a 103k-entry online pronunciation dictionary at cube.elte.hu, figures as of November 2017

type frequency of obstruent clusters: as per transcription

		fortis	lenis	f/l ratio	examples
initial	plos+plos	0	0	—	
	plos+fric	13	5	2.60	<i>tsetse, Dvorak</i>
	fric+plos	4,143	0	—	<i>spot</i>
	fric+fric	29	0	—	<i>sphere</i>
	all	4,185	5	837.00	
medial	plos+plos	2,360	376	6.28	<i>Atkins, Edgar</i>
	plos+fric	2,787	479	5.82	<i>apsis, absorb</i>
	fric+plos	6,758	284	23.80	<i>system, wisdom</i>
	fric+fric	424	38	11.16	<i>asphalt, evzone</i>
	all	12,329	1,177	10.47	
final	plos+plos	954	301	3.17	<i>act, bagged</i>
	plos+fric	4,990	1,616	3.09	<i>Ritz, adze</i>
	fric+plos	2,606	596	4.37	<i>boost, used</i>
	fric+fric	313	370	0.85	<i>luffs, loves</i>
	all	8,863	2,883	3.07	

fortis+lenis: 631 (eg *Afghan, anecdote*); lenis+fortis: 886 (eg *Aztek, subtract*)

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suffixes and clitics

- ▶ 3sg, plur, gen: *hits, hit's, hits'* [hit]+[z] → [hits]
- ▶ *is, has*: *it's* [it]+[z] → [its]
- ▶ past, part: *hissed* [his]+[d] → [hist]

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a well-known pattern

batik [bæthík] ~ *Nadine* [nədíjn]
cartoon [kɑːthúwn] ~ *sardine* [sɑːdíjn]
boutique [buwthík] ~ *modiste* [məwdíjst]
Maltese [molthíjz] ~ *Chaldee* [kaldíj]
antique [anthík] ~ *Dundee* [dəndíj]
Aztek [ázthek] ~ *Nasdaq* [názdak]
fructose [frákthəwz] ~ *anecdote* [ánəkdəwt]

vs

mistique [mist*hík]

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all obstruents are phonologically voiceless

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- ▶ a fortis obstruent may spread its Cness on adjacent sounds (Cness protrudes on the adjacent sonorant, making its voiced phase, Vness, shorter)
- ▶ a fortis obstruent resists the Vness (voicing) of its environment (pace flapping)

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lenis = absence of excessive voicelessness/consonantalness

a lenis obstruent may accommodate (some of) the Vness (spontaneous voicing) of adjacent sounds (sonorants)

*sCh

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3. fortis fricatives are **not** followed by a fortis plosive: *mistique* is not [mistíjk], but [misdíjk] (eg Twaddell 1935, Davidsen-Nielsen 1969, Kaye & Pöchtrager 2017)
 - ▷ so [p t k] are not aspirated after [s f], because only [b d g] may occur there within a morpheme

accessible types of monomorphemic fricative+plosive clusters

fortis+lenis ✓

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fortis+fortis ✗

only across a word boundary: *mis#time*, *kiss#Pam*, *brief#case*

let's assume that...

*fortis+fortis extends to **all** clusters

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lenis obstruents

are voiceless except between two nonfortis segments: [g] is voiced in *dagger*, *alga*, *anger*, *singular*, *language*, *angry*, *English*, *Magda*, *Pisgah*, *exam*; but voiceless in *god*, *dog*, *actor* [agtə], *action* [agfən], *Agfa*, *Afghan*

neutralization

apparently

word finally the fortis+lenis vs lenis+fortis contrast is neutralized:

tract [tragt] (cf *tractate* [tragtejt])

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note

in both [trakd] and [tragt] the vowel is shorter than in *rag* or *Brad* because it is followed by a fortis, like in *rant*, *scalp*, or *ramp*

the issues. . .

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4. prevocalic fortis plosives are aspirated, but not after fortis fricative
 - ▷ because fortis plosives cannot occur after a fortis fricative

so why do we transcribe fortis+lenis as fortis+fortis?

imagine we didn't. . .

sport [sbɔ:t], *Asperger's* [asbə:gəz], *kissed* [kisd], *licks* [likz], etc
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but many others would notoriously mispronounce

[zbo:t], [azbə:gəz], [kizd], [ligz]

thanks to

- ▶ you & the organizers
- ▶ NKFI #119863

I am grateful to George Soros.