

Phonological Pertinacity: Change & Processing

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Speech is exceedingly variable, and it is difficult, if not impossible, for any individual to repeat the same word twice in an identical fashion. Languages change in time, but not necessarily in a vacuum; rather phonological grammars change in time through use and communication. Languages in contact also lead to loan adaptation. Furthermore, regular phonological processes elicit contextual variation, making it more difficult for the listener. We are examining the extent to which the phonological system of the native speaker plays an active role in language change, processing and lexical access. Phonological representations include contrasts in terms of features (e.g. [HIGH] vs [LOW]) or quantity (e.g., geminate/long vs. singleton/short consonants). Along with segmental features and quantity, metrical feet govern the assignment of stress. We will discuss ways in which phonological structure governs processing for native and non-native speakers. Historical and experimental evidence will come from (alphabetically) Bengali, English, German and Mandarin.