

Re: What's the different between /tS/ as one phoneme and as two?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-07/2564.html>

From: Mxsmanic (*mxsmanic_at_hotmail.com*)

Date: 07/21/04

Date: Wed, 21 Jul 2004 15:28:14 +0200

Brian M. Scott writes:

- > *As you've been told, it is extremely difficult to*
- > *acquire a completely native accent as an adult.*

No, I've been told that it's impossible, even though I know this isn't true. I can easily accept "extremely difficult," but not "impossible," because the latter conflicts with observation.

- > *A very good one can be managed, if one has both a good ear*
- > *and the ability to produce the sounds that one hears, but*
- > *one that is indistinguishable from a native accent is*
- > *extremely rare.*

I dunno. Some individual variations in pronunciation are larger than some foreign accents. For example, would you say that Louis Jourdan has an accent? What about Rutger Hauer?

- > *Much the same muscles are used in cycling and running, too,*
- > *but if you switch from one sport to the other, you'll find*
- > *that you need to retrain them -- and that's a comparatively*
- > *easy switch.*

You need to retrain your brain, not your muscles.

- > *The same muscles are used to play the piano*
- > *and to type, but it being an accomplished typist doesn't*
- > *make you an accomplished pianist or vice versa.*

The only difference is in the signals sent by the brain.

- > *Have you never encountered the concept of muscle memory?*

Oh yes, I've heard all those weird excuses for not being able to achieve native fluency, coming mostly from linguists who have poor aptitude for languages themselves. It's more comforting for them to believe that

sci.lang: Re: What's the different between /tS/ as one phoneme and as two?

native speech is impossible than it is for them to realize that they just don't have as much aptitude as they'd like to. But examples do exist, and so it's perfectly possible, whether these linguists accept the reality or not.

- > *It's both, but in large part it's a matter of how the vocal*
- > *apparatus is held: the muscle tensions are different, as*
- > *anyone with half an ear can tell.*

That's psychological. The tensions are produced by signals coming from the brain. The vocal apparatus holds whatever tensions it's told to hold.

- > *Very few can.*

Most singers can, from what I've heard. Even people with very thick speaking accents can often sing without an accent. Indeed, as I recall, members of the Swedish group Abba (remember them?) don't even speak English, although they manage to sing it without an accent.

- > *And judging by what you've*
- > *been saying here, you have a tin ear and are unlikely to*
- > *notice small imperfections anyway.*

- > *From the tests I've done a few times, I apparently have perfect pitch.*

--

Transpose hotmail and mxsmanic in my e-mail address to reach me directly.