

Re: The sound /s/

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"Hans Kamp" <info@hanskamp.com> wrote in message news:<[cjln6j\\$ei3\\$1@news2.zwoll1.ov.home.nl](mailto:cjln6j$ei3$1@news2.zwoll1.ov.home.nl)>...
> *"Hans Kamp" <info@hanskamp.com> schreef in bericht*
> *news:cj492s\$oan\$1@news1.zwoll1.ov.home.nl...*
> > *I tend to think that the sound of s is slightly different in each language.*
> > *I notice that the German and American English /s/ is more hissing, more*
> > *like*
> > *a snake, than the Dutch /s/. Possibly the Dutch /s/ is between German /s/*
> > *and /S/. What are the respective places of articulation when pronouncing*
> > */s/? Can somebody give me a clue?*
> >
> *Nobody?*

I think you have been neglected because there was quite recently a discussion about /s/ in the thread "Quadrilingual". Below are some excerpts from that thread.

Miguel Carrasquer: I wonder if the Amsterdam accent has apical /r/ and /s/. It certainly has the first, and the /s/ has a palatal quality which may well be due to its being apical, I'm not sure.

Ruud Harmsen: Neither am I. Could be. If I try to make a Castillian s ("nosotros somos"), it then try to use it in Dutch words, it doesn't sound Amsterdam-like, but rather very "netjes, bekakt". Perhaps the Amsterdam s is slightly rounded? Or that a modern non-Amsterdam accent that also has the 'Gooise r'? Is the Modern Greek s the same as the Castillian Spanish one? And that of Finnish? I heard rumours that certain northern Portuguese dialects or accents has apical s (for written s) and also a 'normal' one (for written ç, which is z [T] in neighbouring Galician. I haven't yet heard anyone talk like yet. Perhaps Basque has of had this feature also?

Miguel Carrasquer: The Amsterdam /s/ tends to [S], it has a shibilant-like quality, but it's not quite [S]. Perhaps it's an apical [s], but sounded a little more back than the standard Spanish variety (more

like the standard Basque variety). I'd have to listen closely. The vast majority of Spanish America has a laminal /s/, as do the Southern dialects of European Spanish (andaluz, extremeño, canario, ...). If I remember correctly, some parts of Colombia have apical /s/, but not Mexico, AFAIK. Standard Basque has <z> (laminal /s/) and <s> (apical /s/). Some dialects (notably Bizkaian) have lost the distinction, and both <z> and <s> are pronounced apical [s], while both <tz> and <ts> are pronounced laminal [ts].

Notes:

(1) Apical = pronounced with the tip of the tongue. In the excerpts above it most probably meant "pronounced with the tip of the tongue turned a little upwards towards the alveolar ridge, far enough back for the resulting sound to resemble an English /S/ ever so slightly".

(2) Laminal = pronounced with the blade of the tongue. In the excerpts it most probably meant "pronounced with the front of the tongue (including the tip) fairly flat, as in English, French, German, and Swedish, often with the blade close to the alveolar ridge and the tip behind the lower front teeth".

(3) The typical Modern Greek and Finnish /s/ is apical. So is the typical Icelandic /s/. But the range of /s/ is rather wide in all three languages. With respect to Finnish I'm quite sure that the average /s/ is not so far back as in Castilian, and that many Finns pronounce /s/ as in English.

> *BTW, I think (but that might be an imagination) that women hiss more than men, when pronouncing /s/.*

I haven't noticed such a difference myself, but it is not implausible.

> *BTW, in many American English movies, I notice that final consonants are devoiced, so "web" sounds like "wep", "his" like "hiss", "fog" as "fock", "move" as "moof", etc.*

Final voiced consonants are indeed most often partially devoiced — and sometimes fully devoiced — in English (and not only in American English, as far as I can tell). Usually, however, confusion is averted, because voiced consonants are distinguished by more than voicing alone: Vowels are somewhat lengthened before final /b/, /d/, /g/, etc., regardless of how much those consonants are devoiced. Moreover, if a final /p/, /t/, or /k/ is released, there is often a puff of air, and in many dialects there is a glottal constriction before a final /p/, /t/, or /k/. Nevertheless, it's not a good idea to devoice final consonants completely, because doing so can make comprehension difficult, in spite of the vowel lengthening and other clues.

Tor Aschan