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Languages in contact: the case of Alsatian and French

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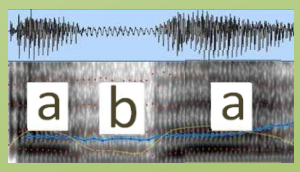
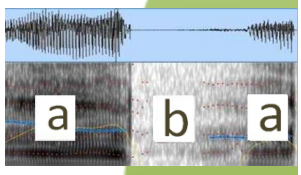
/p/ /t/ /k/ versus /b/ /d/ /g/

In French and Alsatian : two ways to distinguish plosives

Written /b/ in French and Alsatian





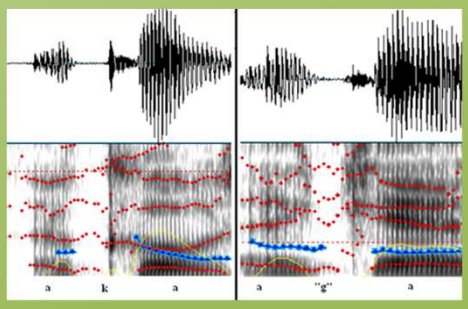
A particular situation:
- French and Alsatian in contact
- Two language families : romance and germanic

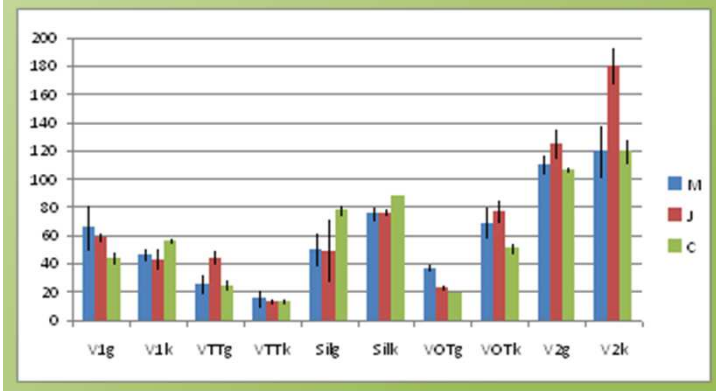
The Plosives problem:
- No voicing in Alsatian contrary to French
- What about French spoken by Alsatians ?

Datas Alsatian

Corpus:

Kass / Gass	Box/ Road
Dritt / Tritt	Blow / 3rd
Pump / Bumb	Pump / Bomb





Comparison of durations (in ms) for initial G and K in Alsatian for 3 female speakers (M, J and C)

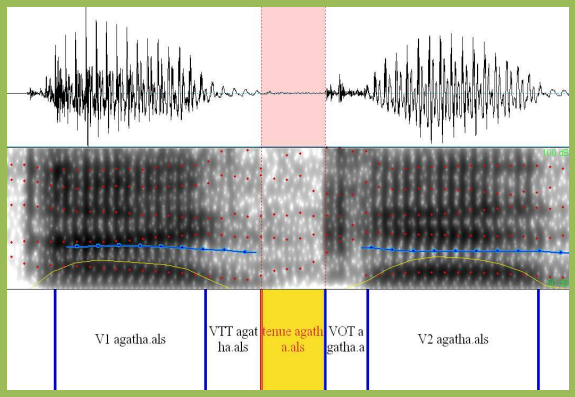
Results:
- All plosives are voiceless
- They are opposed by :

Silence **// fortis – lenis**
VOT / VTT

Datas Alsatian → French

Corpus :
-18 sentences
-6 stops
-3 positions (initial, intervocalic, final)
-Translated from Alsatian to French

Measurments:
-Vowels before and after stop
- V.TT, silence and V.O.T



p/b		%VOT/stop alsatian	%VOT/stop french	%occ/stop alsatian	%occ/stop french	%stop/loga alsatian	%stop/loga french
m	sonores	19,6	18,9	80,4	81,1	43,6	32,0
j	sonores	12,2	11,5	87,4	88,5	41,1	36,3
c	sonores	14,7	9,5	85,5	90,5	45,8	43,2
m	sourdes	24,4	18,3	78,3	81,7	48,5	56,6
j	sourdes	36,8	17,9	69,2	82,1	50,9	45,3
c	sourdes	16,9	15,4	80,5	84,6	52,1	49,1

t/d		%VOT/stop alsatian	%VOT/stop french	%occ/stop alsatian	%occ/stop french	%stop/loga alsatian	%stop/loga french
m	sonores	23,5	29,7	61,1	70,3	50,7	35,3
j	sonores	25,6	18,8	44,2	81,2	36,0	37,0
c	sonores	28,9	14,8	56,7	85,2	47,6	35,7
m	sourdes	21,4	28,6	68,5	71,4	43,7	49,3
j	sourdes	23,6	17,9	47,3	82,1	49,9	45,6
c	sourdes	22,9	18,4	64,5	81,6	39,3	44,9

k/g		%VOT/stop alsatian	%VOT/stop french	%occ/stop alsatian	%occ/stop french	%stop/loga alsatian	%stop/loga french
m	sonores	32,7	29,7	44,6	70,3	38,8	39,6
j	sonores	19,8	17,1	42,8	82,9	38,5	36,7
c	sonores	16,2	15,3	64,0	84,7	44,8	37,4
m	sourdes	43,3	35,2	47,2	75,4	49,1	46,7
j	sourdes	46,3	27,3	45,6	95,5	43,2	40,6
c	sourdes	33,2	29,1	57,9	84,4	46,6	44,5

Quantitative approach:
- Devoicing depending on age : from none for young speakers, to all stops for older speakers.
- Lenition affect more female speakers

Results:
- Voiced stops lenition
- Voiced as voiceless
- Longer VOT in alsatian
- Longer stops in alsatian

- **Features and cues are not as rigid as we might think. Some articulatory targets are clearly sufficient to ensure mutual understanding.**
- **The question raised by these changes is that of the nature of phonological systems and their phonetic basis.**
- **It seems feasible to suggest a more flexible reading of the phonetic system, based on variability and adaptation that arise within a group of different phonemes as part of language contact.**