

My final linguistic analysis is of a phonetic variable. I chose to isolate the [sk] sound due to a variation I had heard produced in a particular idiolect. Within this person's speech, he inserts an additional [k] when the [sk] appears after the front, lax, mid vowel [ɛ]. For example, [ɛskeɪp] becomes [ɛkskeɪp]. This insertion first sounded like a case of metathesis, however, upon closer analysis of the recorded speech, he does not switch the [s] and the [k] sounds; they remain unchanged. It is altered only by the insertion of the [k] beforehand. Also, the variation is produced under a very specific environment: only when [sk] appears after the vowel [ɛ], which itself appears at the beginning of words.

My initial hypothesis included all lax vowels. Consequently, when I was developing utterances for my speaker I had included such words as "ascension" and "ascetics", believing that since [ɑ] is also a lax vowel, the variation would be produced. However, once I replayed the recording, words such as "ascension" and "ascetics" did not produce the variation because there is no [k] in the word. I also developed utterances which included the [ks] sound. I had wondered if there would be a variation with this set of sounds as well, perhaps a similar insertion of an [s]. My speaker's idiolect did not include any variation of the [ks] sound and he blended the two sounds traditionally.

I believe that this variation is produced because of the location of the tongue when moving from a lax vowel immediately to an alveolar consonant. Since the tongue is pulled back and at the same time the jaw is quickly drawn together from the vowel, a short, nearly aspirated, [k] is produced between the two sounds.