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"Realization of voiceless stops and vowels in
conversational French and Spanish".

Abstract:

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The present study compares the realization of intervocalic voiceless stops and vowels surrounded by voiceless stops in conversational Spanish and French. Our data (2154 stops and 1224 vowels from 98 speakers) reveal significant cross-linguistic differences in how these segments are realized in conversational speech. Spanish voiceless stops tend to have shorter stop closures, display incomplete closures more often, and exhibit more voicing than French voiceless stops. As for vowels, more cases of complete devoicing and greater degrees of partial devoicing were found in French than in Spanish. Moreover, all French vowel types exhibit significantly lower F1 values than their Spanish counterparts. These findings indicate that the extent of reduction that a segment type can undergo in conversational speech can vary significantly across languages. Language differences in specific phonetic targets, coarticulatory strategies and "base-of-articulation" are discussed as possible causes of our observations.