

Perceptual equivalence between co-varying cues in the register contrast of Southern Yi

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Phonation is the primary phonetic cue for the Southern Yi tense vs. lax register contrast. This study investigates the relationship between phonation and its co-varying vowel quality and f₀ cues for the vowels /e/ and /u/. In a phonetic imitation experiment, we tested whether speakers would produce distinct vowel quality and f₀ when imitating stimuli where both co-varying cues have been neutralized, and only phonation cues were present. We found that differences in phonation cues led to corresponding production of co-varying vowel quality cues for /e/ but not for /u/ in the imitation speech. This result indicates that vowel quality cues are phonologically encoded in the register contrast for /e/ but not for /u/. Moreover, the absence of phonation effects on f₀ in the imitation speech suggests that f₀ is not part of the phonological representation for either /e/ or /u/. Overall, our results demonstrate that the link between production and perception is abstract and integrative.