Abstract

This article compares the articulation of dental stops by two subjects, one Swedish and one British English. The articulations are studied on X-ray motion films and the spectral consequences are studied on spectrograms. Speakers of Swedish are very conscious of a difference in pronunciation of dental stops and hear it as a typical part of an English accent in Swedish. The traditional Swedish explanation is that Swedish dental stops are claimed to be purely dental while English dental stops are said to be distinctly retracted, but this is contradicted by quantal theory. Both subjects of this study had denti-alveolar acclusions, the real difference being an apical articulation by the Swedish subject and a laminal articulation by the English subject, with consequent pharyngealization and palatalization respectively. This difference is not recognized in the literature, apical being typical for both languages while laminal is reported for at most 10% of speakers of both languages. Voiceless dental stops are typically aspirated in both languages, but the two subjects differed in the degree of aspiration, the English subject approaching affrication. This indicates a difference in the timing of the stop release and probably also differences in accompanying glottal articulation.