

Abstract

This thesis will investigate the phonetic cues by which speakers produce and identify stressed syllables in the Ichiskiín Sahaptin language, still spoken in three distinct dialect regions: the Yakima valley in Washington, and both Warm Springs and Umatilla in Oregon, all of whom collectively have no more than 40 first language speakers. There have been no detailed phonetic studies of Warm Springs Ičiškiin, but dictionaries and teaching materials from the dialects suggest that Warm Springs shows a distinctly different placing of syllable stress than those of the Yakima and Umatilla dialect. Accurate phonetic analysis of prosody (including stress) can only be done by recording speakers, who utter words and sentences following specific elicitation protocols; these recordings can then be analyzed to figure out what parts of the acoustic signal tell speakers that a syllable is stressed. Doing this for two different dialects allows us to compare them, to see if the same phonetic properties have just shifted to different syllables in the different dialects, or whether perhaps stress is signaled by different phonetic properties in the different dialects. I will also do a comparison to their sister language Nez Perce to add to the knowledge and understanding about the historical familial relationship these languages share, and in turn perhaps find an explanation to why Yakima and Warm Springs languages pattern stress differently.