

Vowel Weakening in Southern New Mexico
Sam Johnson, Languages and Linguistics, New Mexico State University

Introduction

Fronterizo Spanish: a contact variety in the United States and Mexico.
Willis (2005) confirms the unstable state of southwestern formants in vowels
Ronnquest (2013) confirms that Heritage Spanish vowels have longer durations and that atonic vowels show a large proportion of reduction.
Espinosa (1925) confirms that syllabic consonants are not new in the Spanish of New Mexico.

Phonetic Contexts

- Monosyllabic nasals in proximity with each other, usually in common words such as *me*, *mi*, *en*, and *un*
- [i],[e],[u]
- [f],[b],[p],[l],[g]

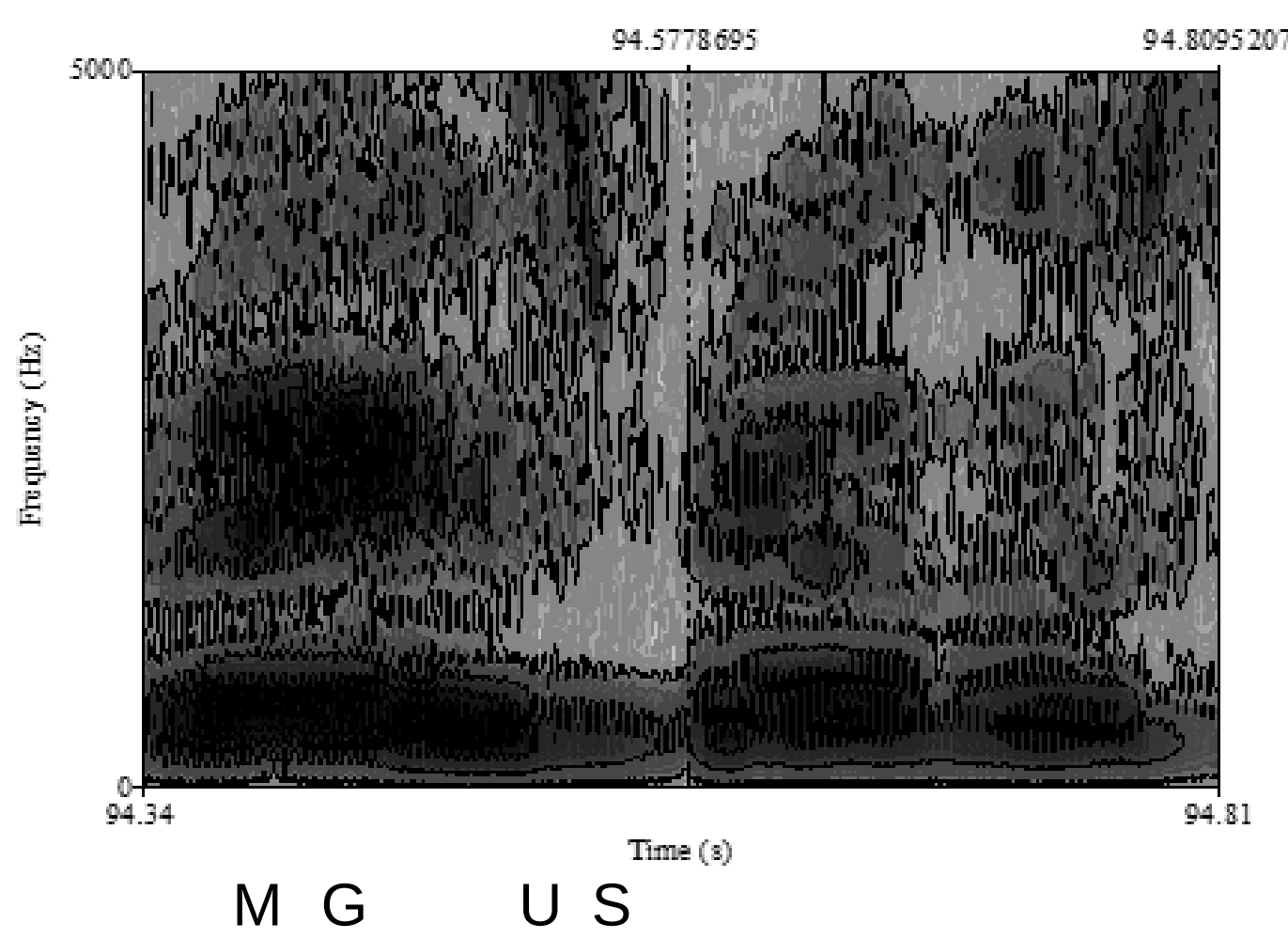
Objectives

To show consistency in the way vowels are deleted in monosyllabic words with nasal consonants in the Spanish of southern New Mexico.

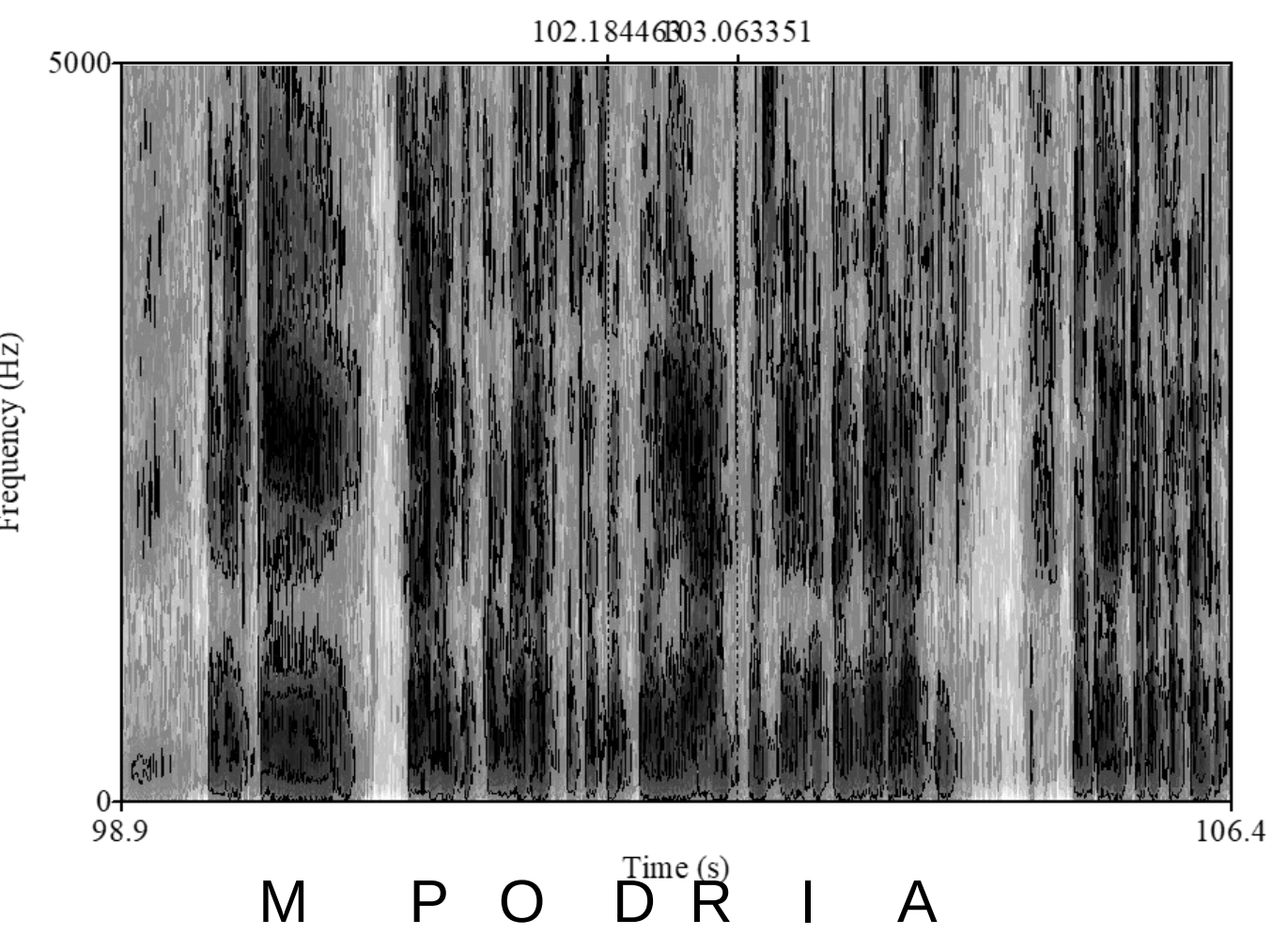
- Why do vowels weaken?
- When do vowels weaken?
- In what contexts do they weaken?

Materials and Methods

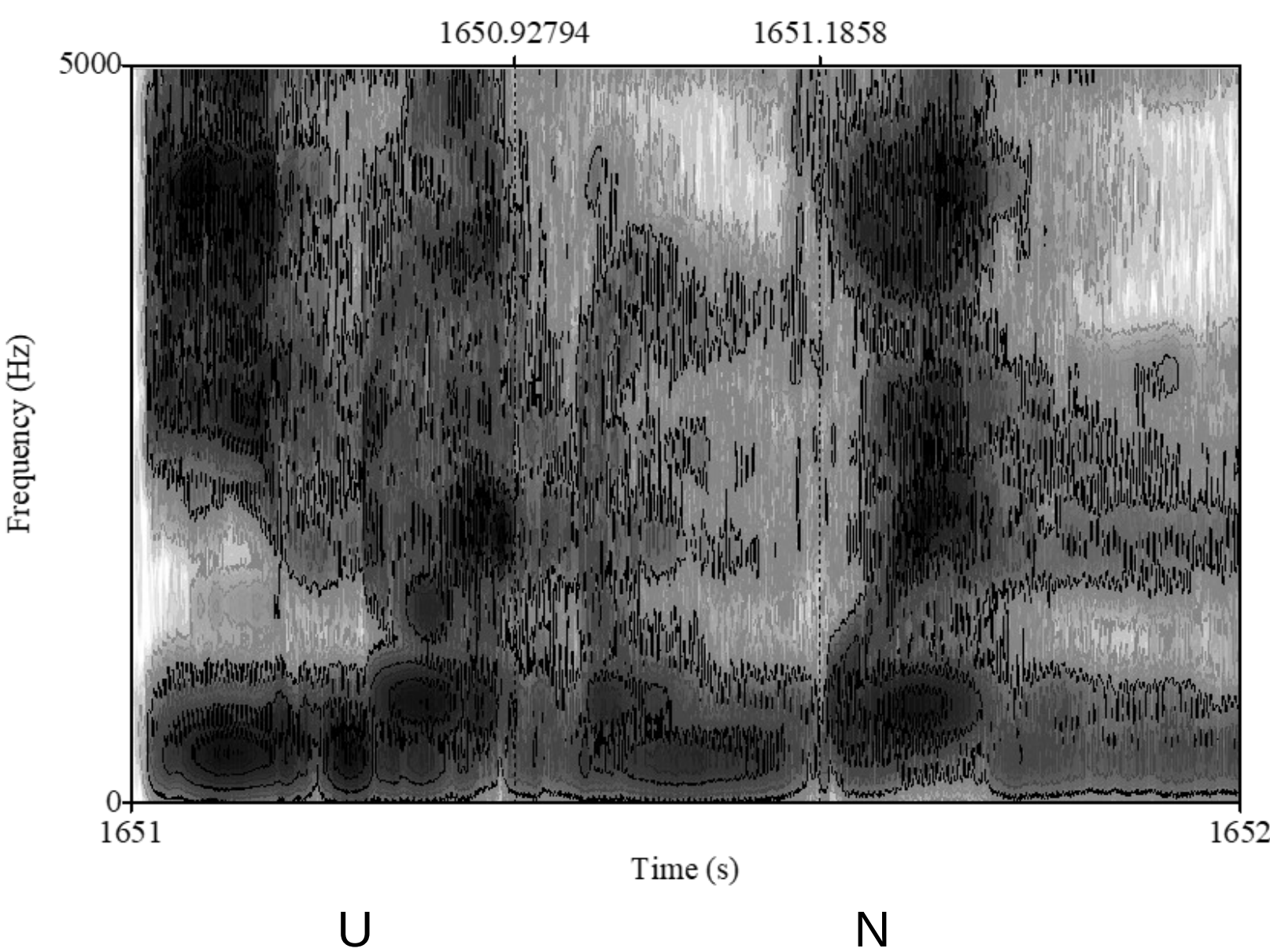
- 5 interviews
- Participants 19-20 years old, university educated ,3 female, 2 male
- Transcriptions
- Acoustic analysis in Praat



Deletion in the phrase [m.gus]



Deletion in the phrase [m.pod.ri.a]



Weakening in the word *un*
Duration of 50ms

Conclusions

When monosyllabic nasal words such as *me*, *mi*, *un* and *en* are in contact with words beginning in [f], [b], [p], [l], and [g] they become reduced or completely deleted. During this phenomenon, [n] always changes to [m].
This phonetic change occurs through assimilation, as all the sounds that trigger weakening are either labial/dentolabial or voiced.
Articulation is eased since the deletion or weakening of the vowel makes it easier to move from phoneme to phoneme. The labialized consonant at the front of the mouth eases the movement back to the others.

Lexicalization of [m] is possible in the phrase [m.gus.ta.ri.a] as seen from participant C’s use of the phrase

Implications

Non standard variations in Southwest vowels
There is still a lot of research to be done on Southwest Spanish Vowels

Selected References

Burkhart, A. (2012) The perspective of the ‘fronterizo.’ City Times. Retrieved from <https://www.sdcitytimes.com/news/2012/12/05/the-perspective-of-the-fronterizo/>
Davies, M., & Davies, K. H. (2017). *A frequency dictionary of Spanish: Core vocabulary for learners*. Routledge.
Espinosa, Aurelio (1925) *Syllabic Consonant in New Mexican Spanish*. Stanford University. Language, Vol. 1. No.4 pg. 109-118
Hidalgo, M. (1987). Español mexicano y español chicano: Problemas y propuestas fundamentales. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 11(2), 166-193.
Lipski, John (2008) *Varieties of Spanish in the United States*. Georgetown University Press. Washington D.C.
Mendez, Luis Alberto. (2017) *El alófono [ʃ] en el español de Ciudad Juárez*. Lingüística Mexicana, vol. IX, núm.1. 2017. La Universidad de Texas en El Paso
Piñeros, C.-E. (2005) *Syllabic Consonant formation in Traditional New Mexican Spanish*. University of Iowa
Ronnquest, Rebecca (2013) *An acoustic examination of unstressed vowel reduction in heritage Spanish*. North Carolina State University. Selected Proceedings of the 15th Spanish Linguistics Symposium. Somerville MA.
Sanz, I., & Villa, D. J. (2011). The genesis of Traditional New Mexican Spanish: The emergence of a unique dialect in the Americas. *Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics*, 4(2), 417-442.
Willis, Erik. (2005) *An Initial Examination of Southwest Spanish Vowels*. Southwest Journal of Linguistics, Vol. 24 No. 1&2
[Video File] Cultura firme. (2011) *Una Identidad Sin Fronteras / An Identity Without Borders*. Retrieved