

# **PHONOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF GLOSSOLALIA: A RESPONSE TO MOTLEY**

**Dawn Heverly**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Samarin (1972, p. 2) defines glossolalia, or speaking-in-tongues, as a "meaningless but phonologically structured human utterance believed by the speaker to be a real language but bearing no systematic resemblance to any natural language, living or dead." Motley, in his 1981 article, "A Linguistic analysis of glossolalia: evidence of unique psycholinguistic processing," claims that his examples of glossolalia are, in a number of ways, language-like yet unlike the first language (L1) of the speaker. This paper examines the question: to what extent are Motley's findings atypical of glossolalia? (An initial assumption, obviously, is that they are.) Motley's findings in the areas of phonetic inventory, non-native phonemes, and consonant clusters are compared to findings based on data from twenty-six other glossolalia texts. Additionally, this paper touches on two topics not specifically treated in Motley - core syllables and markedness relationships.

## **METHODS AND DATA**

The first step in this study was the collection of glossolalia samples. Researchers have spent years gaining the trust of glossolalists in order to record and transcribe their utterances (e.g., Goodman). Due to time constraints, collection from primary sources was not possible. All but one of the glossolalia samples were found in the literature. The remaining sample is a transcription made by the author of an utterance from a radio program.

Four methodological issues surfaced immediately. The samples in the present study come, of necessity, from a limited number of sources. Although numerous books and articles have been written by linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists, among others, very few contain sample texts. The works which do contain samples often cite the same ones (e.g., Samarin and Jaquith). Many of the texts are short - only a line or two. Many of the samples are either not transcribed by linguists or not transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), leaving room for interpretation. Finally, only one author - Goodman - includes samples from speakers whose L1 is something other than English. From her work are samples from Dutch, Spanish, and Maya L1 speakers. All that having been said, however, the value of this study is in the number and relative variety (sources and L1s) of the sample texts.

The sample texts are given in the Appendix. Both a rough version of the sample as it appears in the original text and an IPA transcription made by this author are given.

The first two samples are from Motley (1981, p. 27). Both are from the same subject - a male English-speaker with no known exposure to other languages via trips, courses or other avenues. He was able to produce, upon request, two separate varieties, labeled by Motley "Variety I" and "Variety II" (p. 19). Motley phonetically transcribed and analyzed four three-minute samples of Variety I and two three-minute samples of Variety II. Sample A of the current study consists of fragments from a few lines provided by Motley of Variety I and Sample B is from Variety II.

Samples C through F are found in Goodman (1972). Goodman designed her fieldwork based on the conception of "the glossolalia utterance as an artifact of a hyperaroused mental state or, in Chomskyan terms, as the surface structure of a nonlinguistic deep structure, that of the altered state of consciousness" (1972, p. 8). She sought out groups whose L1s represented a linguistic variety. All her phonetic transcriptions are in IPA. Sample C is that of a Dutch evangelist on the Caribbean Island of St. Vincent. Sample F is from a member of his congregation. Sample D is from a Spanish - speaker in Mexico City and Sample E, from a Maya-speaker in Utzpak, Yucatan. The Maya-speaker is bilingual in Maya and Spanish, but more fluent in Maya (Goodman, 1972, p. 119).

Patsy Sims' Can Somebody Shout Amen! (1988) is the source of Samples G through I. Her subjects are all American English speakers. Sims uses what appears to be an informal phonetic transcription. Her transcription was interpreted based on normal orthographic conventions. Samples G and H were judged to be from two separate individuals (G from a female congregation-member and H from her minister). As their "messages mingled," however, there is a possibility that both are from the minister (Sims, 1988, p. 39). Sample I is from a minister at another site.

Samples J through L each come from a separate source. Sample J is a speaker of American English quoted in Kildahl (1972). Sample K appears in Certeau (1996). And Sample L is from Wolfram (1966), cited in Malony & Lovekin (1985). Sample J does not appear to be a phonetic transcription, while Samples K and L are phonetic transcriptions, albeit not in IPA.

The remaining samples (with the exception of the last) are from Samarin (1972). The IPA transcriptions of his texts are based on notes provided on pages 58 and 252. He found Samples M and N in Jaquith (1967) and altered the orthography to be consistent with his own. The former is from a song, and the latter, from a speech. Among Samarin's texts are ten (Samples R-AA) provided by respondents to a questionnaire. The respondents were asked to write down, as best they could, words they recalled from their tongues or from the tongues of other people (Samarin, 1972, p. 252). While these ten texts may not carry the same legitimacy of the others, they were included in order to increase the size of the data base. The IPA transcription of these recollections was based on normal orthographic conventions.

TABLE 1. Consonant Inventory																											
		p	b	t	d	k	g	ʔ	tʃ	dʒ	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ	x	h	m	n	ɲ	l	j	w	ɹ
A		x	x	x	x	x						x			x						x	x		x	x		
B		x	x	x	x	x						x			x		x				x	x		x	x		
C					x	x		x													x		x				
D			x			x									x						x					x	x
E			x					x							x							x			x	x	
F				x	x	x		x													x	x	x		x		
G			x		x																x				x	x	
H			x	x	x	x									x						x	x			x		
I		x	x	x		x									x		x				x	x	x		x	x	x
J						x									x						x	x	x			x	x
K						x									x		x				x	x	x			x	x
L		x	x	x	x	x					x	x			x	x					x	x	x		x	x	x
M						x															x		x		x	x	x
N		x			x	x															x		x		x	x	x
O			x	x	x	x					x				x						x	x	x		x	x	x
P		x	x	x	x	x									x						x	x	x		x	x	x
Q		x		x								x			x		x				x	x	x		x	x	x
R			x		x	x									x							x	x		x	x	
S			x		x	x					x	x			x	x	x					x	x		x		
T			x		x	x	x								x		x	x				x	x		x	x	
U		x				x			x						x						x	x	x		x		
V			x	x	x	x	x					x				x					x	x	x		x		
W			x			x	x				x				x							x			x	x	
X				x		x									x							x	x			x	x
Y			x	x	x	x	x			x					x		x					x	x		x	x	x
Z				x		x															x	x	x		x		
AA				x													x				x	x	x		x		x
AB				x	x	x			x						x					x		x	x				x

TABLE 2. Vowel Inventory																
	i	ɪ	e	ɛ	ə	ʊ	u	o	ɔ	ʌ	ɑ	ɒ	ɔ̃	ɔ̄	ɔ̅	ɔ̆
A	x		x								x			x		
B	x		x								x			x		
C	x										x	x		x		
D	x				x	x	x	x			x	x				
E	x					x					x			x		
F	x			x							x	x		x		
G	x										x					x
H	x				x					x	x	x		x		x
I	x			x							x			x		
J	x										x			x		x
K	x		x								x			x		
L	x			x						x	x	x		x		
M	x		x								x			x	x	
N	x	x		x						x	x	x		x	x	
O	x									x	x			x		
P	x									x	x			x	x	
Q	x	x		x						x	x	x		x		
R	x										x	x		x	x	x
S	x					x					x	x		x		
T	x		x								x	x	x	x		
U	x		x	x							x	x	x	x	x	
V	x		x								x			x		
W	x		x	x							x	x	x	x	x	
X	x		x	x							x			x		
Y	x			x							x	x		x		
Z	x										x			x		
AA	x										x			x		x
AB	x					x					x				x	

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The phonetic inventory.

Tables 1 and 2 list the consonants and vowels identified in each of the samples. Motley found that his subject's two varieties of glossolalia "contain as many phone types (~30) as most languages do phonemes (25-40)" (1981, 20). (Looking at the samples Motley provides, however, it must be noted that approximately 15 phonemes appear to be present in Sample A and 16 phonemes, in Sample B. It can only be assumed that the remaining phonemes would be identified if his entire transcription were provided.)

The findings in the current study differ. The mean number of phonemes in the samples is 14. The range of phonemes is 8-20. The sample at the high end of this range approaches the low end of the range Motley gives for most languages. However, his samples contain almost twice the average number of phonemes as the samples in the current study.

### Non-native phonemes.

Motley finds that "the overall impression provided by the place-and-manner charts of both glossolalia varieties is that their features are obviously nonEnglish" (1981, P. 22). He continues by stating that his analysis "clearly contradicts Jaquith's finding that glossolalia contains no non-native phones" (Jaquith, 1967, in Motley, 1981, p. 22). The data in the current study contain non-native phonemes but they are relatively rare.

**English.** Only one non-native phoneme was found among the English L1 samples. The remaining phonemes all appear in tables of consonants, vowels, and diphthongs of American English (Edwards, 1997, pp. 34, 35). The non-native phoneme is the [x] in Sample AB. A possible explanation for the presence of this [x] comes from the Aramaic phrase "lama sabachthani." This phrase appears in English-language versions of the Bible (e.g., Scofield, 1967, p. 1073). This writer, while ignorant of the correct pronunciation of this phrase, has heard it pronounced as [lama sabaxθani]. The subject may easily hear this phrase, with this pronunciation, at least annually. If indeed she does, the appearance in her glossolalia of a phoneme she hears at a religious service should not be surprising due to the fact that she views her speaking-in-tongues as "God's language" (Firth).

**Dutch.** All the phonemes present in Sample C, that of a Dutch L1 speaker, are present in Dutch. This determination was made by referring to Harmsen's Sound and spelling of Dutch (1995).

**Maya.** Mayan is a language family. Goodman describes the subject of Sample E as a bilingual Maya/Spanish speaker, more fluent in Maya, residing in Utzpak, Yucatan (Goodman, 1972, p.119). (Maya and Mayan are being used interchangeably, as used in the individual sources). A phonetic description of Tzotzil Mayan, spoken in Zinacantan, also in Yucatan, is available on-line (Haviland, 1980). (Maya or Mayan is not listed in Maddieson, 1984.) Goodman uses a schwa once in her transcription of this sample. Tzotzil Mayan does not use a schwa. This omission should not be considered grave, however. In English, a schwa may be used for any reduced vowel in an unstressed syllable (Edwards, 1997, 254). Perhaps Goodman heard a reduced vowel on the one occasion when she used this symbol in this sample. Other than the schwa, all the phonemes in Sample E are found in Tzotzil Mayan, either originally or through Spanish loan words. ([w] is found only in Spanish loan words.)

**Spanish.** The transcription of Sample D, the Spanish L1 sample, contains an [h]. This consonant is not voiced in Spanish. The other consonants in the sample do appear in Spanish.

Goodman uses seven vowels in her transcription. According to Maddieson, Spanish does not use at least three of these vowels - the [ø], the [u], and the schwa (discussed above). It is probably safe to assume that Goodman's [ɛ] is the vowel Maddieson describes as a Spanish vowel slightly higher than [e] and slightly lower than [e] (1984, p. 267).

Thus, non-native phonemes appear in only three (11.5%) of the non-Motley samples. If the schwa in Maya is disregarded, this figure drops to two (7.7%). The specific non-native phonemes are [x], probably heard in a religious service; [h], only used orthographically in Spanish; and three vowels - [ø], [u], and [ə].

#### Consonant clusters.

Motley found both his varieties "rich" in consonant clusters (1981, p. 22). This observation is significant because earlier studies noted a lack of consonant clusters in glossolalia. The excerpted portion of Motley's first variety (Sample A) contains the cluster [fw], a cluster not allowed in English (Kenstowicz, 1996, p. 256). In the second variety (Sample B) appear [pr], [tr], and [kr], all allowable in English.

One interpretation decision was made in identifying consonant clusters in the non-Motley samples. The "sph" of "sphona" in Sample S, is being read as [sf].

Of the non-Motley samples, seven (27%) contain clusters. Samples G and H contain [br]. Sample G is the text of a congregation-member and Sample H, that of her minister. Goodman writes that "the stereotyped utterance mirrors that of the person who guided the glossolalist into the behavior. There is little variation of sound patterns within the group arising around a particular guide" (1972, p. 123). Hence the appearance of a cluster in these two separate samples is mitigated by the fact that the congregation member of Sample G was probably introduced into speaking-in-tongues by the speaker of Sample H.

Four of the seven non-Motley samples containing consonant clusters are recollection samples. Sample S contains [sf]; Sample V, [dv] and [ghz]; Sample W, [pl] and [pr]; and Sample Y, [gw], [kw], [gr], and [sj].

The remaining consonant cluster sample, Q, contains [vw].

Consonant clusters not allowed in English appear in only two (8%) of the non-Motley samples - [dv] and [ghz] in Sample V and [vw] in Sample Q. (Although Kenstowicz does not list [sf] as an allowable English onset cluster (1996, p. 256), it does appear in words such as sphinx [sfinks] and sphere [sfir].)

#### Core syllable inventories.

Of all the logically possible combinations that can be formed of the syllable types CV, V, CVC, and VC, the combinations found across languages are limited to four (Clements & Keyser, 1983, in Clements, 1988, p. 67). Additionally, Clements generalizes that "a closed syllable type implies the corresponding open syllable type, and a vowel-initial syllable type implies the corresponding consonant-initial type" (1988, p. 67).

TABLE 3. Core Syllables					
	CV	V	CVC	VC	TYPE
A	x	x	x	x	IV
B	x	x	x		V
C	x		x		III
D	x	x	x	x	IV
E	x	x	x		V
F	x	x	x		V
G	x	x			II
H	x	x	x		V
I	x	x	x		V
J	x	x			II
K	x	x			II
L	x	x	x	x	IV
M	x	x			II
N	x	x	x	x	IV
O	x	x	x	x	IV
P	x	x	x	x	IV
Q	x		x		III
R	x	x	x	x	IV
S	x	x	x		V
T	x	x	x		V
U	x	x	x	x	V
V	x	x			II
W	x	x	x	x	IV
X	x	x			II
Y	x	x	x	x	IV
Z	x	x			II
AA	x	x	x		II
AB	x				I

The syllable types identified in the glossolalia texts are given on Table 3. A listing of the inventories and the number and percentage of samples using each is given below. An additional inventory has been invented to capture the CV, V, CVC combination present in 28.6% of the samples. It is given as V on the table.

I. CV	1	3.6%
II. CV, V	8	28.6%
III. CV, CVC	2	7.1%
IV. CV, V, CVC, VC	9	32.1%
V. CV, V, CVC	8	28.6%

Although the CV, V, CVC inventory does not appear on Clements' list, it is consistent with his generalizations above.

#### Markedness relationships.

In languages, the occurrence of a specific segment type may imply the occurrence of another segment type. When this happens, the first segment type is considered marked relative to the second segment type. It has been found that fricatives are marked relative to stops; voiced stops are marked relative to voiceless stops; and voiced fricatives are marked relative to voiceless fricatives (Eckman & Iverson, 1993, p. 241).

**TABLE 4. Markedness Relationships**

	Fricative	Stop	Voiced Stop	Voiceless Stop	Voiced Fricative	Voiceless Fricative
A	x	x	x	x		
B	x	x	x	x	x	x
C	x	x	x	x		
D	x	x	x	x		
E	x	x	x	x		
F	x	x	x	x		
G	x	x	x	-		
H	x	x	x	x		
I	x	x	x	x		
J	x	x				
K	x	x				
L	x	x	x	x	x	x
M	x	x				
N	x	x	x	x		
O	x	x	x	x		
P	x	x	x	x		
Q	x	x			x	x
R	x	x	x	x		
S	x	x	x	x	x	x
T	x	x	x	x	x	x
U	x	x				
V	x	x	x	x	x	x
W	x	x	x	x		
X	x	x				
Y	x	x	x	x	x	x
Z	x	x				
AA	x	x				
AB	x	x	x	x		

The glossolalia texts were examined to determine the extent to which these markedness relationships held. The results appear on Table 4. When a sample contained a marked segment (i.e., fricative, voiced stop, voiced fricative) a search was made for the corresponding unmarked segment (i.e., stop, voiceless stop, voiceless fricative). If the marked segment was not present, its corresponding unmarked segment was not looked for as its presence or absence was not relevant. (The affricate [dʒ] in Sample Y was treated as a voiced stop plus voiced fricative.)

The markedness relationships hold in all but one of the samples. Sample G contains a voiced stop but no voiceless stop. The full text of Sample G, however, resembles "abracadabra" and variations thereof. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that this sample does not conform. The remaining 96% of samples demonstrate the markedness relationships.

## CONCLUSION

This analysis of data from twenty-eight samples of glossolalia demonstrates that Motley's phoneme inventory, non-native phoneme, and consonant cluster findings are atypical of glossolalia.

Motley found approximately thirty phonemes in his samples. The mean number of phonemes in the samples in this study is 14. The range is 8-20. Motley's samples contain almost twice the average number of phonemes as the samples in this study.

Non-native phonemes appear in only three (11.5%) of the non-Motley samples (two or 7.7% if the schwa in Maya is disregarded). The non-native phonemes present are [x], probably heard in a religious service; [h], only used orthographically in Spanish; and three vowels - [ø], [u], and [ə].

Seven (27%) of the non-Motley samples contain consonant clusters. Two (8%) contain consonant clusters not allowed in English.

Additionally, it has been shown that 28.6% of the samples, while conforming to Clements' generalizations about syllable structure, do not conform to one of the four core syllable inventories. Finally, the markedness relationships described in Eckman and Iverson held in 96% of the samples.

Motley may be justified in claiming that the glossolalia examples he has found are, in a number of ways, language-like yet unlike the L1 of the speaker. Given the atypicality of his samples, however, it would not be sound to extend this claim to glossolalia in general. The phoneme inventory and consonant cluster findings of this study are significant. The paucity of non-native phonemes is striking. This paucity will no doubt prove disappointing for readers hoping to find support for the idea of an other-than-human source for glossolalia, a topic admittedly well beyond the scope of this paper.

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## APPENDIX, SAMPLE TEXTS

A. Motley (1981, p. 27) [tinto lapaltara vevisisio komosobrintinisiyantadero pemaramando]	tinto lapaltara vevisisio komosobrintinisiyantadero pemaramando
B. Motley (1981, p. 27) [pɛfɲive kɾapɾetaveʃ inamo labrosele apɾotave dɛʃetɾave]	pɛfɲive kɾapɾetaveʃ inamo labrosele apɾotave dɛʃetɾave
C. Goodman (1972, p. 108) [hunda handalanda ʔikala lololo lu]	hunda handalanda ʔikala lololo lu
D Goodman (1972, p. 115) [ʔuwa sʝəh ʔəh sihəh ʔuhsiah ʔubuliaʔu ʔubuliaʔu ʔai kiheh]	ʔuwa syoh ʔəh sihəh ʔuhsiah  ʔai kiheh
E. Goodman (1972, p. 122) [boʔi sai boi siri siria ʔiori saʔi wai baʔ simai soi siriʔai soʔiʔiʔi baiʔiʔiʔi siʔiʔiʔə siʔiʔiʔə]	boʔi sai boi siri siria ʔiori saʔi wai baʔ simai soi siriʔai soʔiʔiʔi. baiʔiʔiʔi
F. Goodman (1972, p. 106) [huntala hun maʔan dɛ hanandada kontola]	huntala hun maʔtan dɛ hanandada kontola
G. Sims (1988, pp. 38-39) [ahabɾababa balabahaɾ dadi a]	Ahabrababah-balabahai! dadi-ah!
H. Sims (1988, pp. 39-43) (1) [ɛ kamdeka kakakubɾa akori] (1) [hata ɾababa kuɾabasa duɾabai]	Eh-comdeka-kakakubra akori Hatah-rababa-kurabasah-durabai!
I. Sims (1988, pp. 182-184) (1) [hate samo a poɾa ti ato] (2) [ʃa na hoja] (3) [kumbekoja lohoja]	Hate-samo-ah-pora-ti-ahto sha-na-hoya Kumbekoyah-lohoyah
J. Kildahl (1972, p. 1) [iana kana saɿi jahai o saɾamai]	Iana, kanna, saree, yahai, oh saramai
K. De Certeau (1996, p. 29) [swina o kwina kana maja ʃana ina kwena]	swina o kwina kana maja Sana ina kwena

- L. Wolfram (1966, p. 31, in Malony & Lovekin, 1985, p. 32)
- (1) [hɔɹdo do marta lebntentantala] hordo do marta, lebntentantala,  
 (2) [tʌzɹusutu lapa ʌn kea zivolo] tuzrusutu, lapa, unkea zivolo  
 (3) [nufaro tuloe] nufaro tuloe
- M. Jaquith (1967, in Samarin, 1972, p. 252)
- [kelakelahorajanajelalajelajanaijo] Kelakelahorayanayelalayelayaanaiyo
- N. Jaquith (1967, in Samarin, 1972, p. 252)
- (1) [palainjanokojijalalainakajuwara] palainyanokoyiyalalainakayuwara  
 (2) [halajoninhirakajainjiyakatodoinna] halayoninhirakayainiyiyakatodoinna  
 (3) [ɛɹa] era
- O. Samarin (1972, p. 253)
- (1) [tahandoria] tahandoria  
 (2) [fiandolokolamababasi] fiandolokolamababasi  
 (3) [lamokajamasi] lamokayamasi
- P. Samarin (1972, p. 253)
- (1) [kandahondo] kandahondo  
 (2) [mahapakahandohai] mahapakahandohai  
 (3) [lahambakati jahamasi] lahambakati, yahamasi  
 (4) [masiando katandori] masiando, katandori.
- Q. Samarin (1972, p. 253)
- (1) [tivataʃataw vwarisitivirisi] tivataʃataw vwarisitivirisi.  
 (2) [savaraʃataporati] savarashataporati  
 (3) [ʃajati tuvalisitalishi] rayati tuvalisitalishi  
 (4) [witatarihin ʃatativishenti] witatarihin shatativishenti.  
 (5) [moritativatashi] moritativatashi
- R. Samarin (1972, p. 253)
- [ama konda amus kiamo diamo mo ma damos. Ama conda amus. Keamo deamo no ma diamos.  
 ako mala amos siamakamos boraonba] Aako mala amos ceamakaamos boraonba.
- S. Samarin (1972, p. 253)
- [ki ladia sfona sa nania ʃu ka lana moba ki ladia sphona sa nania shuh ka lana moba  
 desin vi ladia so boda ʃan za] deseen vi ladia so boda shan za
- T. Samarin (1972, p. 254)
- [la ɹe gu ʃi a munde ɹa kumbisando laɹia] La Re Gu She a Munde Ra, Kumbisando,  
 Lagia,.
- U. Samarin (1972, p. 254)
- [kanum atʃeniko holikanape ofonamatʃi lenia Canum acheniko holiconapay ofonamachi lenia  
 amakenu politʃinia senie] amakaynu polichinia seniay

V. Samarin (1972, p. 254)

[ki a na ma na la gi a va ta le a dva da bo va di va vo ghza]	ke a na ma na, la ghee - a va ta. le a dva da. Bo va dee va vo ghza
--	--

W. Samarin (1972, p. 254)

[ple kun del i kwes pel suel prolok dos fundos en de den dus]	play coon del e cues pel suel proloque doss fundos en day den doos
--	---

X. Samarin (1972, p. 254)

[yo ke ti asa mo kitake ana se so ja ka nasa torea me mosa arie te ena]	yo kay ti-assa-mo keetake-ana say so ya ka- nasa-towrea may mosa-arie-te-enna
--	--

Y. Samarin (1972, p. 254)

[uliamba magafami anddžesta miliamba gvakimi Uliamba magashami andjesta miliamba.  
Grakimi anddžalu šjikambi gwadialu amdžesta o kwanti] andjalu. Šjikambi gwadialu amjesta. o kwanti

Z. Samarin (1972, p. 254)

[hiliato ka hola lama nati liato ala manata]	hileato ka hola lama nati leato ala manata
--	--

AA. Samarin (1972, p. 254)

[inana malata haša mo lotohorja alanaja]	eenanah malata hashā mow lotohoya alanaya
--	---

AB. Firth

[sitaxaminamatfisatar dakodijarnamasikardantokarnar  
sətidaxarnar