

Inferring from X-ray tracings of Japanese vowels (Kokken 1990), and comparing these to tracings for North American English /r/ productions (e.g. Delattre & Freeman 1968), I explore the possibility that the occasional realization of Kansai Japanese /r/ as [ɹ] may be the result of a confluence of gradient articulatory parameters: partial apico-alveolar stricture, lack of lateral aperture, and modification of the shape of the pharynx via epiglottopharyngeal constriction and/or pharyngeal narrowing (Edmondson & Esling 2006). I propose that the latter of these parameters, *pharyngeal modification* (Magnuson 2007), is also a means by which to relate Kansai Japanese /r/ with other types of rhotics in the world's languages as per the family resemblances model proposed by Lindau (1985). Although Lindau's model focuses on acoustic parameters (i.e. presence of noise, presence of formants, spectral energy, etc.) and those suggested here are articulatory in nature, both sets of parameters support the notion that rhotic speech sounds lack any single, invariant phonetic property that defines them as a class. Instead, it can be argued that rhotics are defined by the co-occurrence of phonetic parameters (be they acoustic or articulatory) involved in their production. The contribution of non-oral (i.e. laryngeal/pharyngeal) parameters to the production of these complex sounds, moreover, is a facet of rhoticity which should not be overlooked even for languages (such as Japanese) whose rhotics are not typically associated with the laryngeal-pharyngeal vocal tract.

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