

## Markus Jochim & Katrin Wolfswinkler

### Minimal pairs that differ in two or more sounds

What is the difference between English *led* and *let*? Or between German *reisen* and *reißen*? Looking at phonological transcription (or at orthography, for that matter), it must surely be the voicing of the stop or fricative consonants, respectively. But phonetic investigation tells us that this is not clear at all. Many investigations, amongst them Kohler (1979) and our own pilot study (unpublished), have shown that duration of the segments in question and their neighbors can play a vital role in both production and perception of “phonological voicing”. This talk aims to give an idea of how description of sounds can sometimes be misleading. The German minimal pair *reisen* vs. *reißen* is usually transcribed as /ʁaɪzn/ vs. /ʁaɪsn/, thereby disregarding substantial differences in the duration of both the diphthong and the alveolar fricative that can be measured between the two words.

#### References:

Kohler, K. J. (1979). Dimensions in the Perception of Fortis and Lenis Plosives. *Phonetica*, 36(4-5), 332–343. <http://doi.org/10.1159/000259970>