

# Deaf by face mask? Impact of community masks on the perception of voiceless fricatives in English

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the daily lives of millions of people around the world, including their face-to-face interactions. Most countries have introduced an obligatory wear of a face mask in public spaces, in order to limit an airborne transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Such face coverings obscure visible articulatory movements of the lips, chin and tongue, and also serve as filters to the acoustic properties of the produced sounds (especially fricatives). The talk will present the results of a perception study that investigated the impact of a face mask on the perception of voiceless fricatives in English. We were particularly interested in estimating the magnitude of the perceptual effects arising from acoustic filtering vs. visual degradation in masked speech. The results will be discussed with a special focus on the methodological challenges of online experimentation in the times of the pandemic and beyond.