

## Distribution and deletion of /ʁ/ in fluent speech

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**Abstract:** This study provides a detailed overview of the distribution of French /ʁ/ in different word positions, and investigates factors conditioning its potential deletion in fluent speech. Three manually transcribed speech corpora totaling ~200 hours of spoken French were used: the ESTER corpus of formal journalistic speech, the ETAPE corpus of informal journalistic speech, and the NCCFr corpus of casual speech. Forced alignment of /ʁ/ and schwa variants was used to produce phonetic transcriptions from the orthographic. The distribution of /ʁ/ was measured in 20 segmental contexts, of which the seven most frequent account for over 90% of all occurrences (word-types 93%; word-tokens 91%). Word-internal positions are shown to influence /ʁ/ deletion: /ʁ/ in word-final position or in word-final consonant clusters is more susceptible to deletion than /ʁ/ in other positions (i.e. word-initial and -internal). Post-lexical contexts also affect /ʁ/ deletion, triggering deletion more frequently in post-lexical consonantal contexts than in vocalic. As to speech style, the less formal the speech style, the more /ʁ/ is deleted.

**Key words:** French, /ʁ/-deletion, variation, large corpora, fluent speech, post-lexical context, speech style.