In my humble opinion : The prosodic portrayal of the non-standard 1sg

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Ongoing research into the re-emergence [1] of the non-standard 1sg in English ("i", herein NS1sg) shows [2] that the inclusion of the novel form in computer mediated communications variant spellings is indeed encoding sociophonetic variation [3]; that it is deployed for its attenuative effects in a language with only one 1sg and no speech levels. The attenuation afforded by the variant is displayed in both a graphemic and—as suggested here—an acoustic reduction; a strong graphemic "I" becomes a weak graphemic "i", and a diphthong /ɑɪ/ shifts to a monophthong /ə/ , /ɑː/ , or /ʌ/. This pairing of phoneme-grapheme [4] attenuation can prove useful on social media, in particular when conversing on potentially sensitive issues. The very sound of /ɑɪ/ is salient and self-assertive, the sound of /ə/ is not. The perception of this phonetic variation relies on endophasia [5][6], but where do these vocal depictions come from, and are they faithful to the grapheme?

This paper aims to demonstrate how vocal characterizations are being inscribed and enregistered in the NS1sg using personae, which are essentialized personifications of the imagined typical user [7]. Enregisterment has been characterized [8] as a social process whereby diverse behavioural signs (whether linguistic, non-linguistic, or both) are functionally re-analysed as cultural models of action, as behaviours capable of indexing stereotypic characteristics of incumbents of particular interactional roles, and of relations among them. As already established [9], some implementations of the NS1sg are visually iconic to the point of being purely indexical], used to signal by a young online demographic. This instant recognition bypasses the slower cognition that mobilizes reading on a deeper level and engages with subvocalization. I posit that some usages of the novel form—in particular those deployed for pragmatic, attenuative effect—do however rely on endophasia, and that the decision to be informed by a particular external voice relies heavily on the characterisation afforded by its tone and intonation [10], over all other idiosyncrasies. This inner voice will have been chosen as appropriate to the NS1sg grapheme from an 'archive' of aural representations, either of the reader's own voice, of a voice encountered during social interaction, or a voice heard via various forms of media—in any case externalized. These aural depictions of the standard and non-standard 1sg personae may come to us via news and information, fiction series, movies, video games, YouTube, Instagram, and advertising, etc.

The corpus was created from 47 main primary sources further divided into multiple tokens; all highly viewed English language material. 131 audio file segments containing standard or non-standard forms of the 1sg were isolated, and the tokens annotated as 'perceived as' 1sg or NS1sg. The high exposure is important for their memetic potential, but also for their impact potential, since the authority of the personae is enhanced by the implication of high numbers of views if not significant material resources. [11]

Segments were isolated first by auditory analysis and spectogram pattern, then their separation was fine-tuned using formant analysis. The F1 and F2 formants of the perceived standard and non-standard forms were measured at their optimal length [12] 1sg nuclei and offglides were measured (Fig.1), and NS1sg monophthongs (Fig.2) were treated in the same manner.

The depictions were then plotted to show saliences of the actor personae representations compared to formants of a standard plot of a 1sg (diphthong) and NS1sg (monophthong). Since target phonemes are representative of the intended utterance even in voiceless versions of diphthong offglides[13], the F2 were isolated in order to map frequencies and see whether the perceived 1sg and NS1sg from the mass media followed suit.

The results (Fig.3) show that of the 131 tokens (F2 Hz frequencies), 93 were perceived as 1sg, and 37 as NS1sg. The full corpus showed a frequency range of 1984Hz from min. 758Hz to 2742Hz max, with a mean 1827.04Hz and median of 1810Hz and SD of 1431Hz. Both data sets 1sg and NS1sg were normally distributed The results clearly show (p-value=<0.05) that the perceived

NS1sg sits in the frequency area of high F2, and that as expected the 1sg personae reside in the low F2. The frequency of the 'less self-asserting' voice correlates with the same personae from highly viewed mass media.

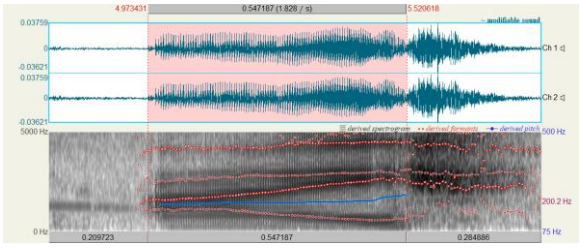

Fig.1 *Movie: Jurassic World, token n°3 (>$1,671,537,444 in box-office revenue). Long 1sg.*

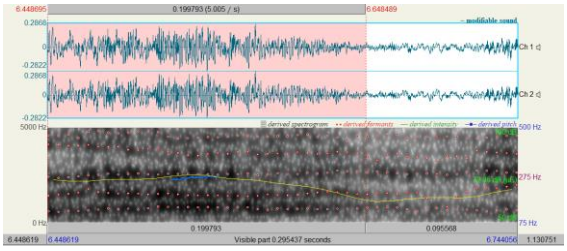

Fig.2 *Video game: COD Modern Warfare 2019, token n°4 (>26,500,000 sales) Breathy NS1sg.*

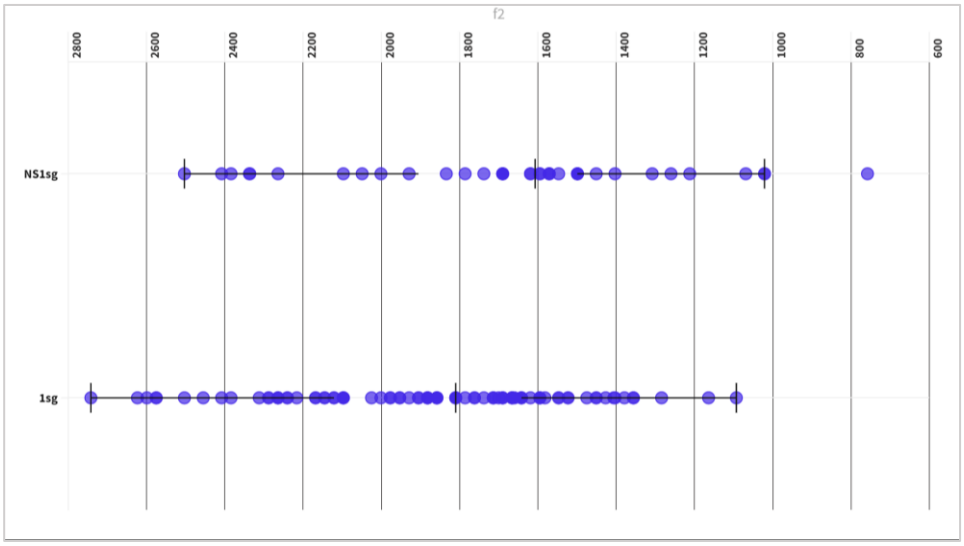

Fig. 3 *F2 formant frequencies in HZ of NS1sg and 1sg.*

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