

Vowel Variation Over T[ai]m: Comparing the First Person Possessive and the PRICE Vowel in Tyneside English

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This study is a phonetic analysis of the vowel trajectories of the different variants of the lexical set PRICE (all words that are canonically realized with the diphthong [ai]). The data used is the LaVaLi corpus of Tyneside English, which consists of an old and a young panel with two sociolinguistic interviews per individual recorded at different time points. This corpus allows to track sound change across age groups and time.

Tyneside English is known for its salient production of the first person Possessive (1POS) *my* as [mi], [mai], [ma], [me], or [mə]. Recent studies have shown that the categorical use is driven by social factors such as age, gender, or occupation [1, 2].

Moelders [1] has shown that [ma] is an incoming form which is realized more often by the young speakers than [mi], which is the dominant realization of the older speakers and a very salient feature of Tyneside English [3]. Two options were proposed to explain the origin of 1POS [mi]: (i) [mi] could be transferred from first person Object *me* (1OBJ) [1] or (ii) [mi] in 1POS is a residue of the Great Vowel Shift (GVS) [4]. A recent study by Ahrens [5] shows that the vowels trajectories of 1POS and 1OBJ [mi] differ acoustically from each other making (i) unlikely.

If [mi] is indeed a residue of the GVS (i) the assumption is that similar variation is likely to be found within the lexical set of PRICE. This investigation is conducted on two levels. First categorical production of PRICE variants was compared to categorical production of 1POS, showing a significant difference between 1POS and PRICE. In the next step vowel trajectories are analyzed by looking at the formant trajectories of F1 and F2. Measurements were taken in 5% steps over the trajectory between 15% and 85%. The analysis of all tokens realized as [a] and [ai] by all young speakers (N=6), using Generalized Additive Mixed Models, shows a significant difference between PRICE and 1POS tokens within the categorical productions as well. The ongoing analysis includes the older speakers who have a much higher proportional use of 1POS [mi] allowing a comparison of all instances of 1POS [mi] to all [i] realizations of the lexical set PRICE. This comparison allows to get insight into whether [mi] could be a residue of the Great Vowel Shift. The use of the lifespan corpus additionally adds an extra layer as this particular corpus allows us to see how the variations behave over the lifespan of individuals. It is possible that the PRICE vowel is undergoing further change, which may be the reason for the variation found in the data which makes the different time points very important factors in this analysis.

References:

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