Participation of second generation immigrants in Canadian Shift and Raising in Vancouver

Until recently, sociolinguistic studies conducted in multiethnic urban centers have focused predominantly on the speech of the "founder population," which in North America have typically been speakers of English of Anglo-Celtic descent (Trudgill 1986; Labov 2001; D'Arcy and Tagliamonte 2010). The limited scope of such studies has been critiqued because they only give a partial picture of the dynamics of the entire speech community (Sankoff and Horvath 1987; Kerswill 1994) which in many large urban centers consists of representatives of other races and nationalities as well, both first generation immigrants and their descendants.

The presentation reports some of the results from my PhD research which explores whether the use of several variables and the constraints on them by second generation immigrant speakers in Vancouver are similar to those characteristic of speakers from the "founder population." SFU male and female undergraduate students (18-21 y.o.) who self-identified as Anglo-Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and South Asian Canadians (second generation immigrants) were recruited in the fall 2016 – spring 2016 to participate in sociolinguistic interviews and to read a word list. The acoustic analysis of 145 tokens from the word list (based on Boberg 2008) read by 23 participants yielded 3,335 data points. The values were normalized in the NORM webtool (Thomas and Kendall 2007) selecting "Labov ANAE, using Telsur G value." Mean values for F1 and F2 for each speaker, for different ethnic groups, and for all participants were used to calculate descriptive statistics in SPSS.

The presentation will focus on the phonological features that have been shown to be undergoing change in Canadian English: Canadian Raising (Hung, Davidson, & Chambers 1993; Boberg 2008; Pappas & Jeffrey 2013) and Canadian Shift (Clarke, Elms, & Youssef 1995; Sadlier-Brown and Tamminga 2008). The preliminary results suggest that all three groups participate in the ongoing change in Vancouver English, albeit with some peculiarities. The lowering of /e/ in Vancouver is found to be more advanced than reported before (Pappas and Jeffrey 2013), with all three ethnic groups showing similar F1 values; the retraction of /æ/ is less prominent in speakers with Chinese descent than in Anglo or South Asian speakers; the raising of /ayT/ is well underway, with Anglo speakers showing the lowest values of raising compared to Chinese and South Asian. The results also suggest that both diphthongs are more fronted than reported before (Pappas and Jeffrey 2013), and contrary to Boberg 2008, there is no weakening of raising of /awT/. A statistical model that accounts for the effect of gender, ethnic heritage, and ethnic orientation (Noels 2014; Nagy et al. 2014; Hoffman and Walker 2010) on vowel production will be used to discuss the correlation of these factors and the linguistic choices made by the speakers. In view of the reported results, definition of the speech community (Labov 1972) and its applicability to modern multiethnic urban centers will be discussed.

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