Monophthongization of /aɪ/ as a Local Identity Marker

Paul E. Reed

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Outline

Introduction

Background Literature
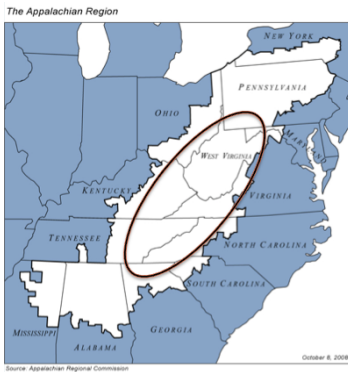
Methodology

Findings

Conclusions

Introduction

- ► This paper argues that monophthongization in Appalachian English (AE) is hard to fully capture and model using traditional sociolinguistic grouping, such as education, age or gender/sex.
- ► It can be better explained by including rootedness, i.e., local attachment to the region as one of the social factors.
- ► Results suggest that AE speakers with stronger rootedness have:
  - ► more monophthongal realizations (shorter Euclidean distance measures (EuDs))
  - ► particularly when attention to speech is at its presumed height

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Perceptions

Some quotes to keep in mind...

- ► 'Let us come now to the highlands – a land of promise, a land of romance, and a land about which, perhaps, more things are known that are not true than of any part of the country' (Campbell, 1921: xxi)
- ► 'Two defining stereotypes are lodged in the American mind: the Appalachian mountaineer, noble and stalwart, rugged and independent, master or mistress of the highlands environment, and the profligate hillbilly, amusing but often also threatening, defined by a deviance and aberration, a victim of cultural and economic deprivation attributable to mountain geography' (Williams, 2002: 17)

Appalachia

The Appalachian Region

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission

October 8, 2008

Why monophthongization?

▶ Monophthongization is 'the most notable unchanging element in Southern states' pronunciation' (Feagin, 2000: 342)
  ▶ In the metalinguistic portion of my study, many participants specifically mentioned this pronunciation as a feature that others have also noticed and caricatured
▶ Greene (2010) found that monophthongization in Eastern KY seemed to function as marker of local identity

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Background on Monophthongization of /aɪ/

- ▶ Monophthongization of /aɪ/ is associated quite broadly with the South
  - ▶ Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (1998) write 'Southern Americans are perhaps more well known for their pronunciation of /ay/ as [a]...than for any other dialect feature' (69)
  - ▶ Thomas (2001) finds /aɪ/ weakening (in varying degrees) from Texas to North Carolina
- ▶ Noticed by both insiders and outsiders
  - ▶ Plichta & Preston remark that it is 'one of the principal caricatures of US speech' (2005: 107)
  - ▶ Listeners can reliably place a speaker on a North-South continuum based on the articulation of /aɪ/
  - ▶ Many lay dictionaries (e.g., Venable, 2013) use examples, such as *arn* for 'iron'

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Background on Monophthongization of /aɪ/

- ▶ It is subject to both geographic and social differentiation
  - ▶ Thomas (2003) outlines two broad systems
    1. Pre-voiced and open syllables, PRIZE/PRY
    2. All contexts, PRIZE/PRICE/PRY
  - ▶ Linguistic atlas data show a prevalence of System 1 across the South (Pederson et al., 1986-93 and Labov et al., 2006)
  - ▶ However, System 2 is more restricted, and stigmatized (Bernstein, 2006)
- ▶ Monophthongization in Appalachian English is System 2

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Background on Monophthongization of /aɪ/

- ▶ Appalachian English /aɪ/ has been described as completely monophthongal (Kephart, 1922; Berrey, 1940; Hall, 1942; Wise, 1957; Jones, 1973; Miller, 1973; Wolfram & Christian, 1976; Reese, 1977; Pederson, 1983; Williams, 1992; Irons, 2007; Greene, 2010)
- ▶ Some studies (Labov et al., 2006; Jacewicz et al., 2011a,b) argue that /aɪ/ monophthongization is receding cross-generationally in Appalachia
- ▶ Irons (2007) found it was advancing across rural and Appalachian KY, particularly in pre-voiceless contexts
- ▶ Greene (2010) suggests pre-voiceless monophthongization may be a local identity marker

Standard Language Ideologies

► Wolfram et al. (1999) state 'attitudes about language can trigger a whole set of stereotypes and prejudices based on underlying social and ethnic differences' (27)

► These beliefs and attitudes stem from 'standard language ideology'

  ► the idea that there are correct and/or educated ways of speaking, and deviations from these 'standard' varieties are subject to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination (Lippi-Green 1997; 2012)

► the standard is usually defined by what it is not i.e., the avoidance of any overtly stigmatized features associated with marginalized groups or regions, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006: 12-13)

Research Questions

1. How is monophthongization of /aɪ/ phonetically realized in Hancock County? What are its social and linguistic distributions?

2. How does the production of /aɪ/ monophthongization vary across tasks?

3. To what extent does /aɪ/ vary according to rootedness/local attachment?

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Geographic Location

Location of Hancock County, TN

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Participants

Participants

- ▶ 25 participants all from Hancock County, TN
  - ▶ Participants were stratified by gender (12 male, 13 female), education (13 College, 12 NonCollege) and age (27-94)
  - ▶ Additionally, speakers were given a rootedness score, based on their responses to interview questions (Haddican et al., 2013) and responses to a rootedness metric (RM)

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Data Collection

Interviews

- ▶ Data were drawn from sociolinguistic/oral history interviews
  - ▶ Questions focused on life in Hancock County
- ▶ Each interview took place in a quiet room in a participant's home or workplace
- ▶ Interviews were recorded on a Tascam DR-40 digital recorder using either an AT BP896 or Shure MX183 omnidirectional condenser lavalier mic
- ▶ Interviews were transcribed and force-aligned using FAVE (Rosenfelder et al., 2014)

Rootedness

- ▶ I asked several questions during the interview related to local attachment, 'rootedness'
    - ▶ Do you like (Hometown, Home County)? Why/why not?
    - ▶ Where do you consider to be 'home'? Why?
    - ▶ Do you think that is part of who you are? Part of your identity?
- ▶ I also administered a rootedness metric (RM), which asked 11 questions from 7 categories.

1. Willingness to Relocate
2. Travel Habits
3. Where a Participant Says They're From
4. Family History

5. Areal Identification
6. Participation in Local Events
7. Identification to Hancock County

Monophthongization Methodology

- ▶ I extracted almost 3,000 total stressed tokens of /aɪ/ from the various sections of the interview
- ▶ Measurements of F_1 and F_2 at 25% and 75% of the duration provided the Euclidean Distance (EuD), following the formula:
$$\sqrt{(F_{1onset} - F_{1glide})^2 + (F_{2onset} - F_{2glide})^2}$$

	Pre-voiced	Pre-voiceless	**Total**
Conversation	25	25	**50**
Reading Passage	23	11	**34**
Word List	20	19	**39**
Total	**68**	**55**	**123**

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Statistical Analysis

I generated a mixed effect linear regression model using R (R Core Team, 2015) and *lme4* (Bates et al., 2015).

Dependent Variable	*Independent Factors*	*Random Effects*
Euclidean Distance	Log-Duration	Individual speaker
	Following Voicing	Word
	Gender	
	Education	
	Age	
	Interview Task	
	Rootedness	

Significant Effects

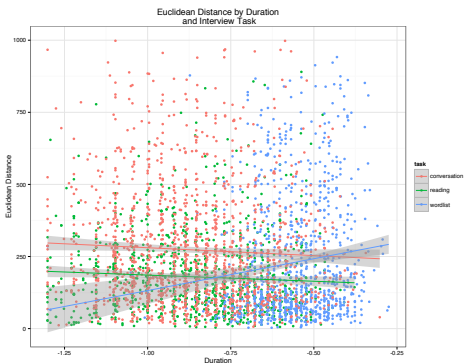| Effect	p-value	Result for EuD
Voice: Voiceless	0.001379	Longer EuD
Task: Word List	2.2e-16	Shorter EuD
Gender: Male × Task: Word List	0.0001931	Shorter EuD
Task:Word List × Log Duration	0.000779	Longer EuD
Task: Reading × Voice: Voiceless	0.006548	Shorter EuD
Rootedness × Voice: Voiceless	0.02371	Shorter EuD
Rootedness × Task: Word List	4.292e-05	Shorter EuD

Significant Main Effects
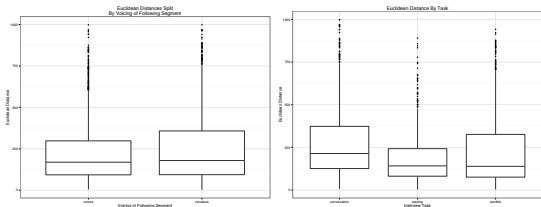
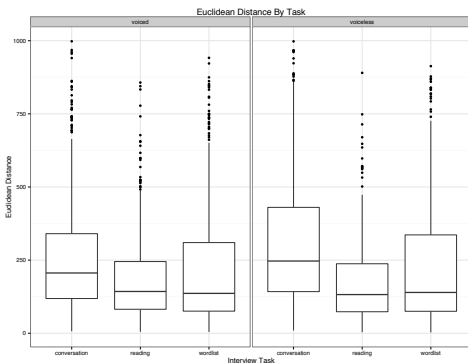(a) Main effect of Following Voicing. (b) Main effect of Interview Task.
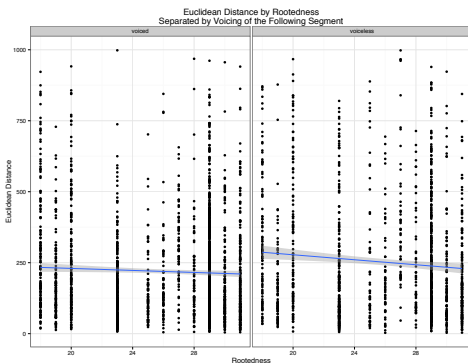
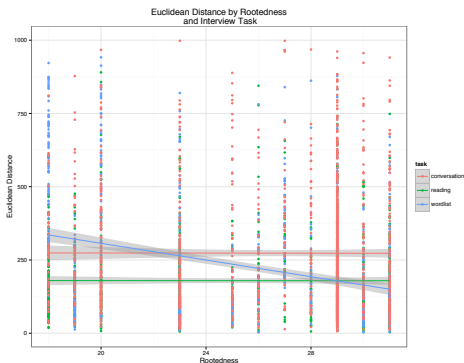# Task by Gender Interaction
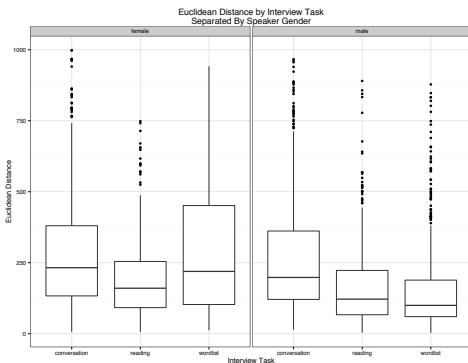
Duration by Task Interaction

Task by Voicing Interaction

Euclidean Distance By Task

Rootedness by Voicing Interaction

Euclidean Distance by Rootedness
Separated by Voicing of the Following Segment

Rootedness by Task Interaction

Euclidean Distance by Rootedness and Interview Task

Rootedness and Language

In discussions of language and place, my participants
demonstrated:

- ▶ Impact of SLI
- ▶ Pride in Local Speech

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Qualitative Results

Impact of SLI

- ▶ References to 'bad grammar', 'country accent', etc.
- ▶ References to 'sounding uneducated'
    - ▶ More rooted speakers recognized the possible stigma, but didn't want to change.
    - ▶ Less rooted speakers recognized the possible stigma, and felt compelled to change.
- ▶ Personal anecdotes of ridicule in college/graduate school
    - ▶ Difference between reaction of more/less rooted speaker

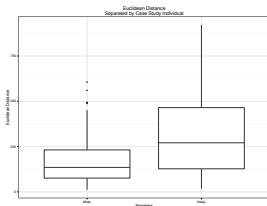| Introduction | Background Literature | Methodology | **Findings** | Conclusions | References |
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Qualitative Results

Pride in Local Speech

- ▶ Less rooted speakers made reference to antiquity, 'Shakespearean' English
- ▶ More rooted speakers referred to the the speech as reflecting the area
    - ▶ 'We get our slow drawl from our mountain-ness'
    - ▶ 'you know you're from around here when you start talking like us'
- ▶ Impact of outsiders
    - ▶ More rooted speakers wanted outsiders to adhere to local norms, resented being ridiculed for speech
    - ▶ Less rooted speakers thought outsiders may be a positive influence, felt their speech was different (in a good way)

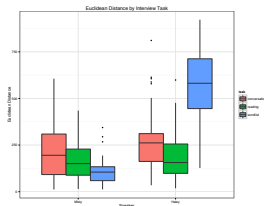| Introduction | Background Literature | Methodology | **Findings** | Conclusions | References |
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Case Studies

Case Study Speakers

1. Haley - 27 year old female, Master's Degree, Works in Education, Lowest Rootedness (18)
2. Misty - 37 year old female, Master's Degree, Works in Education, Highest Rootedness (31)
3. Hugh - 84 year old male, High School, Retired Business Owner, Fairly High Rootedness (29)
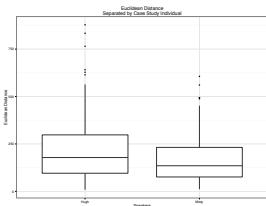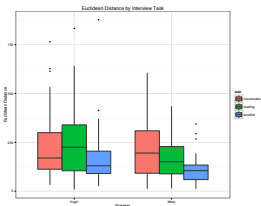
Misty and Haley

(a) Average EuD Distances.

(b) EuD by Task.

Hugh and Misty

(a) Average EuD Distances.

(b) EuD by Task.

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Monophthongization

- Overall, the community was fairly monophthongal, but not completely monophthongal
- Following Voicing did have an effect
- Primary difference between more and less rooted speakers was in the Word List Task

Rootedness

- More rooted speakers used more local features, in spite of possible stigma
- Speakers are aware of the social meaning of features, and can use and respond to those features that index localness

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Implications

- ▶ Challenges homogeneity of speech communities
  - ▶ All speakers are individuals
- ▶ Challenges the idea of a monolithic Appalachia or of monolithic Appalachian English
  - ▶ Even within a very small community, much variation exists
- ▶ Support for using metrics to quantify connection to place
- ▶ Paradigm for investigating rural communities

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