

The realization of rising pitch as a socio-pragmatic identity marker in Appalachian English

Paul Reed (*University of South Carolina*)

Appalachian English (AE) has been shown to be different from Mainstream American English (MAE) as well as lowland Southern American English (SAE) varieties in both pronunciation and grammar (e.g., Hall 1942, Wolfram and Christian 1976, Labov et al. 2006, Greene 2010, Montgomery and Hall 2004 among others). However, the prosody of AE has remained relatively under-investigated, despite the fact that anecdotal evidence suggests the intonation of AE is distinct and that the phonetic realization of pitch is a salient regional marker (e.g., Grabe et al. 2000, Gilles and Peters 2004). Greene (2006) shows that the incidence of L+H* pitch accents (i.e., rising pitch) in AE is much higher than that of MAE or other Southern English varieties. Previous work by the author has found that female speakers of AE anchor rising pitch differently in stressed syllables than do female speakers of other Southern varieties. Both studies suggest that this pitch accent may perform a different pragmatic, or perhaps a different indexical, function for Appalachian speakers. The current study considers what indexical meaning this particular intonation pattern might have and how it can be used in constructing identity in a socially marked regional variety, thus shedding some light onto the kinds of linguistic features at speakers' disposal in negotiating local orientation.

The current study uses sociolinguistic interviews to analyze the intonational patterns of 24 (12 male, 12 female) AE speakers from northeast Tennessee. There are two steps to the study: first, ToBI-MAE transcription (Beckman et al. 2007) was used to identify rising pitches (H* and L+H*), and second, measurements of the anchoring of these rising pitches in stressed syllables from conversational speech were made. These results were compared to MAE and other Southern varieties with data from demographically comparable speakers drawn from the Nationwide Speech Corpus (Clopper and Pisoni 2007) and the SLAAP archive (Kendall 2007). In addition, the AE speakers were categorized by local orientation (positive, neutral, negative) based on responses to questions about feelings toward the local region (following the methodology of Haddican et al. 2013). Preliminary results show that overall the F₀ maximum of rising pitch aligned differently in the syllable in this variety of AE than in other SAE varieties (cf. Grabe et al. 2000 and Ladd et al. 2009 found similar differentiation for varieties of British English). Additionally, these Appalachian speakers appear to have greater F₀ excursion (the change in F₀ from the previous F₀ minimum to the F₀ maximum of the pitch accent) than speakers of MAE or other Southern varieties. Moreover, these results indicate that those speakers who have a greater local orientation appear to have the greatest excursion and most different pitch alignment from SAE speakers. This finding suggests that pitch might be a socio-pragmatically productive means for speakers of AE to demonstrate orientation toward and to reflect covert prestige associated with a region that is oft stigmatized by outsiders.

Word count: 477

References

- Beckman, Mary .E., Julia Hirshberg, & Stefanie Shattuck-Hufnagel. 2007. The original ToBI system and the evolution of the ToBI framework. In Sun-Ah Jun (ad.) *Prosodic Typology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clopper, Cynthia & David Pisoni. 2006. The Nationwide Speech Project: A new corpus of American English dialects. *Speech Communication*, 48, 633-644.
- Gilles, Peter, & Jörg Peters. 2004. (eds). *Regional Variation in Intonation*. Linguistische Arbeiten 492. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 9-31.
- Grabe, Esther and Brechtje Post, Francis Nolan, & Kimberly Farrar. 2000. Pitch accent realization in four varieties of British English. *Journal of Phonetics* 28:161-185.
- Greene, Rebecca. 2006. Pitch accent realization in Appalachian English. Stanford University unpublished manuscript.
- Greene, Rebecca. 2010. *Language, ideology, and identity in rural Eastern Kentucky*. University of Kentucky dissertation.
- Haddican, Bill, Paul Foulkes, Vincent Hughes, & Hazel Richards. 2013. Interaction of social and linguistic constraints on two vowel changes in northern England. *Language Variation and Change* 25, 371-403.
- Kendall, Tyler. 2007. Enhancing sociolinguistic data collections: The North Carolina Sociolinguistic Archive and Analysis Project. *Penn Working Papers in Linguistics* 13.2: 15-26. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Ladd, D. Robert, Astrid Schepman, Laurence White, Louise May Quarmby and Rebekah Stackhouse. 2009. Structural and dialectal differences effects on pitch peak alignment in two varieties of British English. *Journal of Phonetics* 37:145-161.
- Labov, William, Sharon Ash & Charles Boberg. 2006. *Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, phonology and sound change*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Montgomery, Michael & Joseph S. Hall. 2004. *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.
- Wolfram, Walt & Donna Christian. 1976. *Appalachian speech*. Arlington: Center for Applied Linguistics.