

High back vowel fronting in the north-west of England

GOOSE-fronting has been described for many varieties of English around the world and especially for those in the U.S. (e.g. Hall-Lew 2009, Baranowski 2006, Fridland 2008, Fought 1999; see Mesthrie (2010) on the situation in South African English). It has been reported for various areas in England (e.g. Britain 2008, Harrington et al. 2008, Torgersen 1997). Docherty (2010: 67) states in an overview on recent changes in British English:

Perhaps the most striking of these [vowel changes] is the fronting of the GOOSE and GOAT vowels by younger generations of speakers. Putting to one side those varieties where GOOSE is already fused with FOOT [...], there are widespread reports of moderate to substantial fronting of GOOSE together with the production of much less marked lip-rounding/protrusion [...].

Similarly, Ferragne and Pellegrino (2010), who analysed 13 accents across Britain, suggest a general fronting of GOOSE but also comment on the relationship between GOOSE and FOOT in the various varieties.

Carlisle, a city of 101,000 in the north-west of England, provides an interesting setting for linguistic study. The proximity to the Scottish border and the lack of neighbouring urban conurbations make it a unique location in the British Isles. Yet, only very recently researchers have started to devote their attention to this area (Montgomery 2006, Llamas, Watt et al. 2008-2011, Jansen in preparation).

The current poster presents results on the age, gender and social variation of realisations of the GOOSE lexical set based on data by 42 speakers of Carlisle English. The modified Watt&Fabricius method (Fabricius et al. 2009) has been used to normalise the data. Results confirm that the high back vowel is gradually fronting. Furthermore, the data reveals that environmental constraints play an important role in the fronting process of the GOOSE vowel. Data for GOAT and FOOT has been taken into account in order to recognise any co-occurring fronting in these two vowel sets. Nonetheless, a strong fronting process cannot be observed in either of the two. And still, this result for FOOT is in line with Ferragne and Pellegrino's (2010) suggestion that there are varieties where GOOSE is fronted while FOOT remains in a back position.

References

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