Production of vocalized laterals in West Central Bavarian - an acoustic and articulatory analysis

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The present study is concerned with /l/-vocalization in West Central Bavarian (WCB), a German variety which may be increasingly influenced by Standard German (SG). We investigated words that have a post-vocalic clear /l/ in SG but a diphthong in WCB. The hypothesis was that shifts were more likely from WCB diphthongs to laterals in cases of ambiguity in the mapping from production to perception ([1], [2]). Thus, there might be a greater shift from the acoustically similar WCB /hɔɪts/ and SG /hɔltz/ (Holz, 'wood') than between the acoustically more divergent WCB /bʁuiŋ/ and SG /bʁɪlə/ (Brille, 'glasses').

Acoustic and ultrasound recordings of 9 WCB speaking primary school children (mean age: 7.5) were analysed. They each produced 4 repetitions of 5 isolated words with SG V+/l/ as target segments: Holz, Stuhl (acoustically similar between the two varieties) and Brille, Geld, Spiel (acoustically divergent).

The acoustic analysis of the first two formant frequencies suggests so far that there is continuous variation between WCB and SG forms in words like Holz but not in words like Brille. We are currently investigating the corresponding articulatory variation in order to test whether the children are beginning to show an SG-type lateral production in Holz words.