

Characteristics of the West-Central-Bavarian vowel system

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While in the last decades Sylvia Moosmüller and colleagues have contributed much to the acoustic phonetic analysis of the Bavarian dialect region in Austria (e.g. 1991; 2007; 2010; Moosmüller & Scheutz, 2013), the German side remains largely unexplored.

The goal of the current study was to test whether some of the defining characteristics of West-Central-Bavarian (WCB) are being preserved across generations. The new approach is to make use of longitudinal analyses of children from two separate but geographically close schools in WCB that differ in the extent to which children with a WCB accent are exposed to migrant children with a non-German L1 language background. The data from the children were compared in an apparent-time analysis with those from WCB adults.

The focus of the analysis was on vowel characteristics of WCB that have been so far based primarily on auditory impressionistic analyses (e.g. Capell, 1979; Mansell, 1973; Zehetner, 1985).

Recordings were made from 18 young and 8 older (mean age 6.5 and 60.5 years) WCB speakers. The recordings were obtained via a picture-naming-task consisting of 58 different pictures (target words). Target sounds were vowels and diphthongs that are characteristic of WCB.

The comparative analysis between children and adults was concerned with derounding of front vowels, whether there are two open vowels, and how many diphthongs there are in WCB.

The results so far suggest no appreciable differences between young and older speakers i.e. many aspects of WCB are being faithfully transmitted. The data thus provides a reliable basis for the current longitudinal analysis to test whether children that spend four years together in school begin to develop innovations in WCB.

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