

## Dialect differences come about through processes of linguistic change

There are five different types of change in the phonological system of dialects that we are going to consider:

- (1) Addition of a rule (Oct. 5)
  - (2) Change in a rule (Oct. 5)
  - (3) Adding a sound to the inventory through splits (Fri. Oct. 7)
  - (4) Eliminating a sound from the inventory through mergers (Fri. Oct. 7)
  - (5) Changes in the phonetic realization of the sound inventory (Wed. Oct. 12)
- Review session for the quiz on Friday October 14

### Addition of a rule

We have seen that the rule of *r*-vocalization (*r*-dropping) was ‘borrowed’ from the prestige speech of London in the late 1700’s and added to the phonological systems of the dialects of Boston, New York, Richmond, etc, and the surrounding areas.

Rule added to the phonological system of the ENE dialect:

#### **R-vocalization (= “vowelization”)**

/r/ turns into the schwa vowel [ə] before a consonant and before a pause  
and

Schwa deletes after a low vowel.

But ‘borrowing’ is not the only means by which a rule may be added to a dialect.

Rules may develop for ‘*internal*’ reasons. (See WSE Ch. 3, pp. ). For example, there is a rule in the speech of many people from Eastern New England which causes the /æ/ vowel to raise and become a diphthong [eə] before a nasal consonant, as in *Manny*, *planet*, *can*, *lamb*, *ham*, *sand*. (Compare this to the [æ] vowel in *Maggie*, *gadget*, *cab*, *lab*, *sad*.) This rule of /æ/-raising is not present in the speech of the historic Inland North, indicating that it is probably an innovation, something that was ‘invented’, in the speech of Eastern New England. It is thought to be the result of natural phonetic processes having to do with the effect of nasal consonants on vowels.

Rule added to the phonological system of the ENE dialect:

#### **AE- raising**

/æ/ raises to [eə] before a nasal consonant

/æ/-raising is a less obvious feature of the dialect of ENE, one that people may not be conscious of. Are there people from Eastern New England who have /æ/ raising but who do not drop their *r*’s? Are there people who drop their *r*’s but who do not do /æ/-raising?

### Change in a rule

**Example One:** We have already seen that the dialect of the lowland South contains a rule which turns the diphthong /ay/ into a simple [a] before voiced consonants (*time, tile, hire, tide, tribe, rise, live; Tyler, Ira, tidal, rising*) and word-finally (*tie, cry, ally, high, Jedi*), but not before voiceless consonants (*tight, ripe, like, rice, ice, life*). I have discovered I was incorrect in assuming that the [a] vowel which /ay/ turns into is long. This means that we can assume that what happens here is simply that the /y/ deletes in this context.

Rule in the Inland South:

#### **AY monophthongization (dependent on context)**

The diphthong /ay/ loses its /y/ before voiced consonants and word-finally.

I have also mentioned that in the Upland South (the Appalachians) and the parts of Texas settled by people from the Upland South, the rule turning /ay/ into /a/ is completely general. It applies in all contexts—before voiced consonants, word-finally, and before voiceless consonants. (The result is that no /ay/ diphthong appears in this dialect at all.)

*Change* in the rule in the Upland South:

#### **AY monophthongization (not dependent on context)**

The diphthong /ay/ loses its /y/ everywhere.

It seems that at an earlier stage, the dialect of the Upland South also contained the context-dependent version of the AY monophthongization rule. But a change in the rule took place in the Upland South: the rule generalized to all occurrences of /ay/, regardless of what followed the vowel.

**Example Two:** Another example of a change in a rule that contributes to creating a dialect different comes from the pronunciation of the diphthong /ay/ in Northern dialects. All Northern dialects have a rule which raise the vowel of the /ay/ diphthong, resulting in a pronunciation something like [ʌy]. This happens only before voiceless consonants, not when the diphthong precedes a voiced consonant or is word-final:

|                       |             |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| In Northern dialects: | <b>[ay]</b> | <b>[ʌy]</b> |
|                       | tide        | tight       |
|                       | tribe       | type        |
|                       | rise        | rice        |
|                       | live        | life        |
|                       | time        |             |
|                       | tie         |             |
|                       | high        |             |

Rule in the Northern U.S.:

**AY raising**

In the diphthong /ay/, the /a/ raises to [ʌ] (yielding [ʌy]) before voiceless consonants.

It is very interesting to observe that in Canadian dialects, not only do you find the same raising of the diphthong /ay/ to [ʌy] before voiceless consonants, but you also find raising of the diphthong /aw/ to [ʌw] in that same context. This is a well-known feature of the Canadian dialect, one of the major features which differentiates that dialect from that of the historic Inland North.

|                       |             |             |             |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| In Canadian dialects: | <b>[ay]</b> | <b>[ʌy]</b> | <b>[aw]</b> | <b>[ʌw]</b> |
|                       | tide        | tight       | proud       | out         |
|                       | tribe       | type        | browse      | house       |
|                       | rise        | rice        | loud        | about       |
|                       | time        |             | town        |             |
|                       | high        |             | how         |             |
|                       | tie         |             | now         |             |

What has happened in the Canadian dialects is that the diphthong raising rule has changed to affect *both* of the diphthongs that begin with /a/. The rule in the Canadian dialect has *generalized*, applying to any and all diphthongs beginning with /a/.

Change in the rule in the Canadian dialect:

**A-diphthong raising**

In any diphthong beginning with /a/ (namely, /ay/ or /aw/), the /a/ will raise to [ʌ] (yielding [ʌy] and [ʌw], respectively) before voiceless consonants.

It is interesting that in both cases of change in a rule that we have examined—the change of /ay/ to [a] in the Upland South and the raising of /a/-diphthongs in Canada—the change has led to the rule applying in more general fashion, to a larger class of cases.

Changes in rules come about through the language acquisition process. The child learning the dialect actually comes up with a different rule from that which is at play in the parents' dialect. It is a well-known fact that children over-generalize in learning a language. For example, when children are learning verb forms in English, they often come up with forms that they never would have heard from adults, but which correspond to a general rule that they have learned. So they may say *runned*, *buyed*, *bringed*, putting on a regular past tense ending *-ed*, instead of producing the irregular forms *ran*, *bought*, *brought*. So it is not surprising that children might “learn” a phonological rule like the ones above in what is at the time “too general” a fashion, and in that way produce a change in the dialect.