

Analyzing the results of the survey on r-dropping

What evidence is there that r-dropping does not enjoy the prestige that it once had?

Answers to questions regarding appropriateness of r-dropping in the speech of TV anchors. What differences if any between assessment for national, WMass and Boston TV anchors?

- Look at results for national TV anchor: More than 75% think r-ful is appropriate, remainder think “either” is appropriate, only a one respondent thinks r-drop is appropriate. Compare to likely results in the 1930’s—complete reversal is likely.
- Look next at results for local television, to see if any different. First, Springfield TV anchor. All of the people who thought “either” was ok for national TV also think “either” is ok for Springfield. But now ten of the people who only thought Rful was ok for national think “either” is ok for Springfield. This shows that for some people, the criteria change depending on the circumstances. Presumably, for this small number of people, the fact that the station’s in Mass. means that using the MA dialect is ok. Still, though, 2/3 of the respondents think Rfull pronunciation is appropriate for the Springfield station.
- What about Boston, the home of r-dropping? You’d expect there might be more people thinking that the local accent would be ok for the local TV station. This is true. 40 people responded with “either”. That’s 30 more than thought “either” was ok for national TV. And 8 actually specified that R-dropping would be appropriate for the Boston TV anchor. But there is no unanimity--the other 60 people still think that Rfull pronunciation is appropriate for the Boston TV anchor.
- So there are difference of opinion about the appropriateness of r-dropping for Boston TV, much more so than for national TV. But the majority view is that r-dropping is best left off the TV news. This is a view held by r-droppers and non-r-droppers alike, as you can see by checking the database.

What about appropriateness of R-dropping for UMass professor, WMA grade school teacher and EMass grade school teacher?

Homework assignment: Write a page analyzing the results whether R-dropping is considered appropriate for a UMass Professor, WMA grade school teacher and EMA grade school teacher.

Next let’s look at what people said most directly about their opinion of the r-dropping feature:

Let’s sort the answer to the Rdrop preference question, and then see what the responses about the basis for the preference shows.

Preferences:

- 58 out of 108 report no preference for either pronunciation, 10 report a preference for R-full pronunciation. And the remainder (40 people) express a preference for R-full pronunciation. There are negative attitudes towards r-dropping expressed in this latter group.
- The opinion is expressed that r-droppings “sounds ignorant” , that it isn’t “proper”, that it sounds “uneducated”.
- Are any of the the people expressing these opinions r-droppers themselves? (This was Raisa’s question on Monday.)

Does the fact of being an r-dropper correlate with other social properties? The closest thing we have to information about class is information about education.

- What is the correlation between education and r-dropping?— we have data on college education of parents.
- The upshot is that given the data on r-dropping and education of parents, there is no factual basis for the stereotype held by some people that r-droppers are less educated.