

Best Practices for Representing Appalachian Speech

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What is speech?

- The vocalized form of human language
- The sounds of speech are a series of changes in air pressure created by the vibrations of the larynx and filtered by oral articulations.
- Language functions to communicate, but not just the linguistic information
 - ‘Information about the characteristics of the speaker himself’ Laver 1968:43

Indexicality

- “The array of structured variation available to an individual, coupled with other factors such as ideology ... can be seen as a rich resource from which the individual can choose elements in order to project their identity and achieve particular communicative goals.”

(Foulkes, Scobbie & Watt 2010)

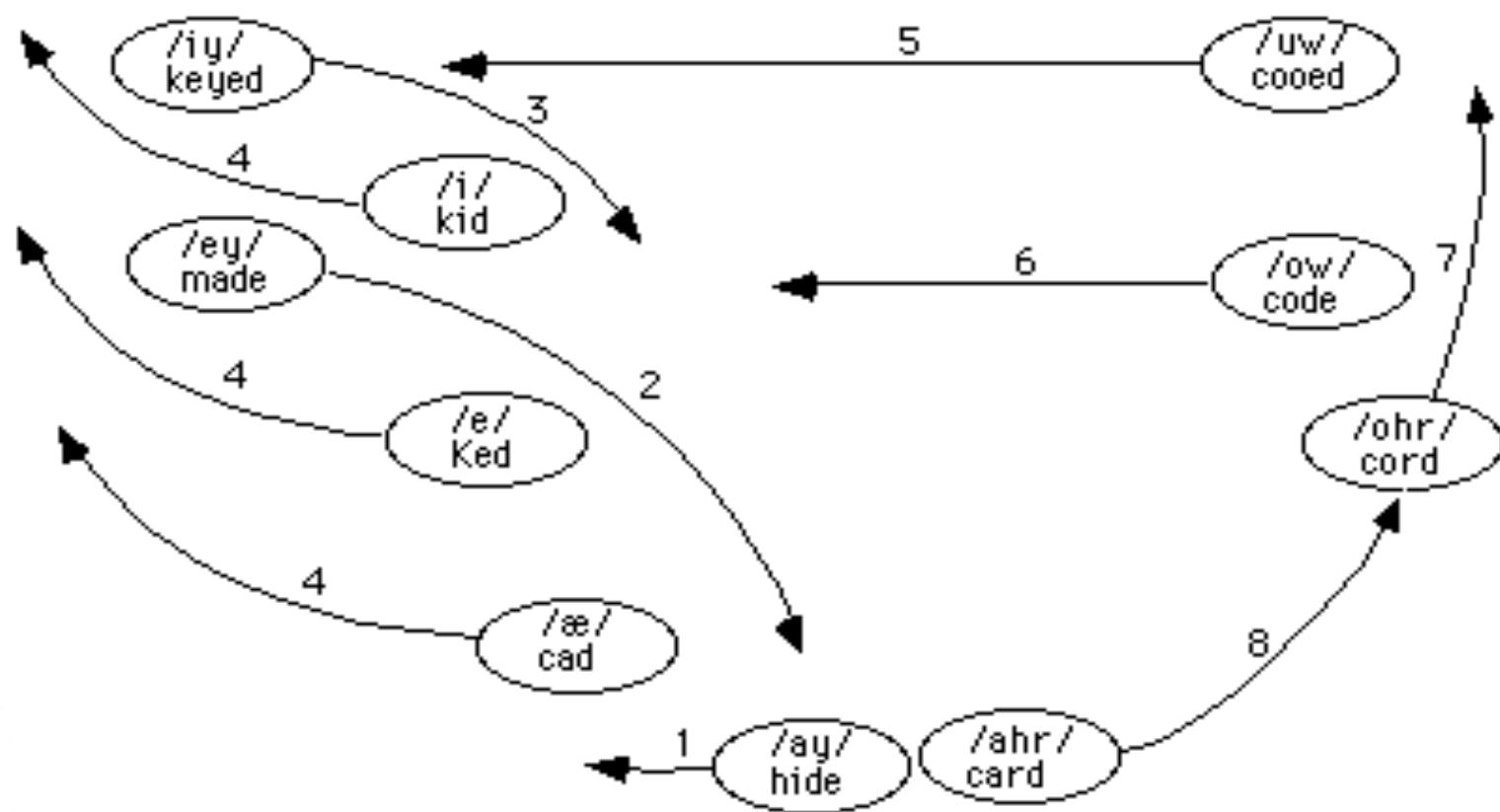
More Indexicality

- ‘Changes operate because communities are heterogenous, and because speaker-listeners *evaluate* competing linguistic forms. They recognize that variants have **indexical meanings** and thus that their use may be more or less attractive, appropriate or valuable in particular social circumstances’.
- (Foulkes, Scobbie and Watt 2010)

What makes Appalachian Speech different?

- ‘Appalachian is a place as well as places, people as well as peoples’. Montgomery 2013:15
- Reflecting diversity: geography, social differentiation, identity and personality
- The Southern Shift
 - A series of vowel changes happening across broad areas of the South (Labov, Yaeger, and Steiner 1972)
 - Focused primarily in rural areas; Not uniform

The Southern Shift



Advanced Southern Shift examples

- A monophthongized /ay/

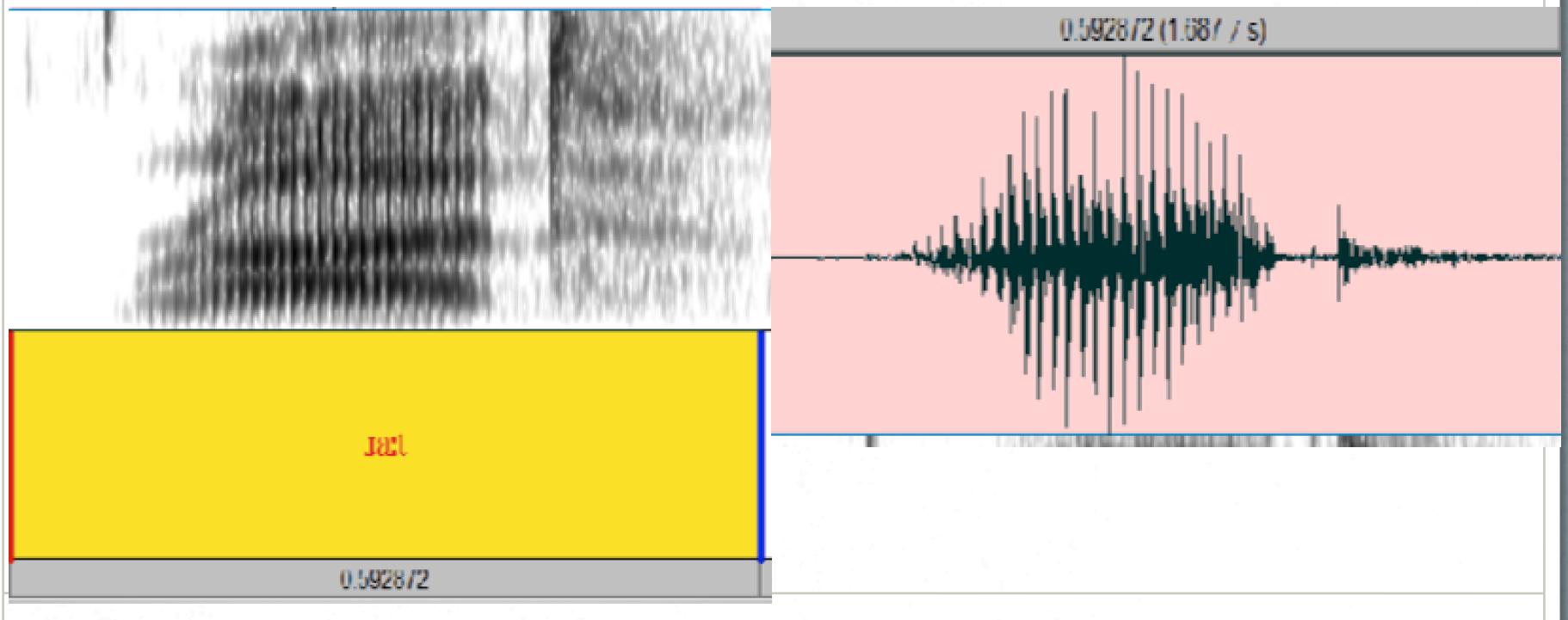


- Fronted back vowels



How can it be represented?

- Linguists can use things like spectrograms or waveforms



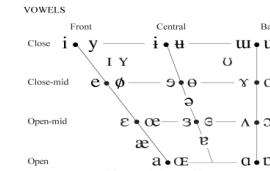
More representation

- Or you could use the International phonetic alphabet
 - [la:k.ðɪs.]
 - But, all of these can be hard to read/understand

THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)											
CONSONANTS (PULMONIC)											
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d		t̪ ð̪	c j	k g	q ɣ			ʔ
Nasal	m n̪		n		ɳ	j	ɳ̪			N	
Trill	B		r							R	
Tap or Flap	v̄		f̄		t̄						
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ɬ	x y	χ ɻ	h ɺ	h f
Lateral fricative				t̪̄ b̪̄							
Approximant		v		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɻ̪			
Lateral approximant				l		ɻ̄	ɬ̄	ɭ̄			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

CONSONANTS (NON-PULMONIC)			
Clicks	Voiced implosives		Ejectives
ʘ Bilabial	ɓ Bilabial	,	Examples:
Dental	ɗ Dental/alveolar	p, bilabial	Bilabial
! (Post)alveolar	ʄ Palatal	t, dental/alveolar	Dental/alveolar
+f Palato-velar	ɠ Velar	k, velar	Velar
Alveolar/lateral	ʗ Uvular	s, uvular	Alveolar fricative



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

ψ	Voiced labial-palatal approximant	ʃ	Simultaneous f and X
H	Voiceless epiglottal fricative		
χ	Voiced epiglottal fricative		Affricates and double articulations can be represented by two symbols joined by a tie bar if necessary.
χ	Epiglottal plosive	k̪	ts

- Primary stress
- Secondary stress
- Long $\text{e}:$
- Half-long e°
- Extra-short e°
- Minor (foot) group
- Major (intonation) group
- Syllable break $\text{j}. \text{ækt}$
- Linking (absence of a break)

TONES AND WORD ACCENTS		LEVEL CONTOUR	
	LEVEL		CONTOUR
ጀ	Extra high	ጀ	Rising
ጀ	High	ጀ	Falling
ጀ	Mid	ጀ	High rising
ጀ	Low	ጀ	Low rising
ጀ	Extra low	ጀ	High falling
↓	Downstep	↗	Global rise
↑	Upstep	↘	Global fall

Literary Attempts

- George Washington Harris
 - Hit am an orful thing, George, tu be a nat'ral born durn'd fool. Yu-se never 'sperienced hit pussitionally, hev yu? Hits made pow-fully agin our famerly, an all owin tu dad. I orter bust my head open agin a bluff ove rocks, an' jis' wud du hit, ef I warnt a cussed coward.
- Mary Murfree
 - They 'lowed don yander ter M'ria's house ez this hyar Evander Price hev kem ter be the headin'est, no 'count critter in the kentry: The 'lowed he hev been a-foolin' round Pete Blenkins's forge, a-workin' fur him ez a striker, till he thinks hisself ez good a blacksmith

Problems

- Can be hard to read
- What exactly is being represented?
 - Some things are how we all speak (wuz, tu, hev)
 - Not linguistically nuanced/consistent (not all the potential changes are made)
- Functions more as a type of belittlement
 - Indicates, since it is a counterpoint to a more mainstream narrator or other characters, a lack of modernity/education

Other Example Representations

- James Still – uses mainly lexicon
 - Aplenty, rag edge, etc.
- Silas House – uses some syntax/morphology and lexicon
 - Knowned, I done that, etc.
- Amy Greene
 - Uses syntax/morphology and some lexicon

How can we improve?

- Knowing how important speech is for indexicality, how can we improve?
 - First, understand exactly what the linguistic situation is, so that any attempt can be more informed
 - Must also think of the reader
 - Anecdote from an aspiring author friend
 - Find a balance
 - Linguistic fidelity and readability

Proposed Options

- For monophthongization of /ay/
 - Right → raht
 - Strike → strahk
- For fronted back vowels
 - School → skewl (schewl)
 - Soap → seop (seowp)
- High Front vowels
 - Chicken → cheeken
- Let the Reader Know!
 - Preface; Appendix (Young 1987, Preece 2007)
 - These two authors used slightly different techniques (quite successfully!), and they alerted the reader.
 - Know how this will be perceived

Selected References

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