How do people speak in Nof Ca'lina?

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INTRODUCTION

The present work studies the speech of a standard Southern-Midland speaker of American English. The informant is a resident and native of Charlotte, North Carolina, belonging to the area of the Apalachians and the Blue Ridge Mountains, which goes from the Pennsylvania line to northern Georgia . There is no dominant population center in this area and the speech features can occur either in the South or the South Midland.

METHOD

This study was based on a questionnaire, part of a project at the Center for American English of the Illinois Institute of Technology.

The material contains 239 questions and a text to be read. All the material was recorded, the informant being questioned, asked to read the text and finally, asked to speak freely. Two 3-hour interviews were required to complete the recording.

The researcher accounted mostly for vowel sounds used is significant environments, like when they occur before r, l stops and nasals, the production of the th sounds, clusters, and major consonants.

To help the distribution and organization of the sounds, a test used by Labov[1] was checked as a model. The words were displaced in groups according to specific environments and needs. A description of each group and its peculiarities follows the examples which are shown with phonetic transcription.This transcription is meant to be as closer to the actual sound as possible.For this purpose and reason,as for better comprehension of this paper, a description of the used symbols follows this introduction.

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[1]William Labov, *Study of Nonstandard English.*

LIST OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS AND DIACRITICS

/ / used to indicate a phonemic reference.
[ ] used to indicate a phonetic reference.
[ː] the colon is placed after vowels to indicate long vowels.
[.] a dot after a vowel indicates half-long sound.
[̃] indicates nasalization.
[ʰ] indicates aspirated sound.
[˭] indicates lack of aspiration.
[̥] this sign placed under a consonant indicates voiceless sound.
[ʔ] shows glottalized stops.
[̩] the sign (,) indicates syllabication, as in [ˈmæ̃ʊʔn̩] mountain.
[ʷ] indicates labiolization.
[̚] indicates that the sound is unreleased.
[̝] it is placed under a vowel to indicate that the vowel is lower.
[̂] indicates the palatal /k/.
[ɬ] indicates the velar /l/.

Primary stress is indicated by a vertical line placed before the stressed syllable. Secondary stress is indicated by a vertical line (inferior) placed before the syllable as in [ˈblækˌbɔəˌd] blackboard.

Although not a very large territory, the state reveals language characteristics which differ radically between the coastal line and the inland speakers.

It is well known that North Carolina is a region where the r-less speech is universal. However, the central coast still hears a marked retroflection of postvocalic /r/.

A striking difference between the speech of the coastal population and that of the inland people is the treatment of the diphtong /aI/ which is [ɑ̃ɪ] on the coast and [aɪ] before voiceless consonants and [a.] before voiced consonants in the inland.

Other features typical of the coastal line are:

- a fronting of the vowels /u/, /ʌ/ and /U/.
- the pronunciation of /o/ which comes out as /əU/

The features listed below are common to speakers all over the state:

- final stops are unreleased.
- final [-ŋ] in participles comes out as [-n].
- initial [sr] appears instead of [s̬r] for some speakers.
- you all or y'all are plural forms for you.
- [ɪ] stands for [ɛ] as in pin, pen, although not with marked frequency on the Outer Banks Islands.
- words like sit, set and sat generally sound as if they were only one word containing the sound [ɛ].
- [æ] is usually prolonged to produce [æᵉ] or [æɪ] and sometimes [æᴵjə]
- the diphtong [aI] comes out as [ɔI]. Although strange, the variant is heard all over the territory being more frequent along the coastal line. Among the Irish settlers of the Blue Ridge Mountains the variant changes to [ʌI] or [ɜI].
- The curious substitution of [aI] for [aU] can also be heard

all over and careful studies done previously by a number of researchers have proved it to be a deviation produced naturally by many speakers.

- Already suggested by Kurath and McDavid[1] [æʊ], [ɛʊ] and [ʌʊ] appears instead of [aU] with great frequency.
- A clear constriction of the mid central [ɜ] is heard determining the "r quality" given to the sound.
- [ə] is more frequently heard than [ʌ] in unaccented position in the end of a word.

Given the above description, the researcher now hopes that the following interview accomplish the expected results. Let us now enter the world of an American English speaker of North Carolina.

THE VOWELS

The vowels are studied in this paper according to the following distribution:

i I	ɨ	U ʉ
e ɛ	ɝ ɜ ɚ ə	ɔ o
æ ɑ		ɑ ɒ

The mid front tense [e] appears in Mary, [ˈmɛːrɪ] marry [ˈmɛːrɪ] and married [ˈmɛːrɪd̚] as opposed to the mid front lax [ɛ] in merry; [ˈmɛːrɪ]

Bat and bet are [ˈbæ̝t] and [bɛt], the first one showing a sound between the mid front [ɛ] and the low front [æ]. This sound characterizes some words in which the sound [æ] could be expected, specially before /r/.

[1]Hans Kurath and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press) maps 28 and 29.

One of the clearest sounds in this informant's speech, [æ] is long in any environment, following the same pattern as the long /a/. In some words it also seems to be lower. Words like parents [ˈpʰæ̃:rɪnts] and attic [ˈæ:ʃɪk̚] are examples. However, this sound is many times confusing sounding like [e], which makes it very difficult to distinguish.

[æ] is always nasalized specially before nasals [m, n]. Hammer [ˈhæ̃:mə] apple [æpl̩] can't [kʰæ̃:nt]

The mid central [ɜ] is dominant in stressed syllables in words like:

butter [ˈbɜʃə] yolk [ˈjɜk̚]
butt [ˈbɜt] roof [rɜf]

[ʃ] appears in third

third [ˈθɜd] stirrup [ˈstʃɜpˀ]
purse [ˈpʰʃɜs] forniture [ˈfʃnɪʧə]
sermon [ˈsʃmən]

The schwa [ə] substitutes this sound in unstressed syllables and also appears instead of /r/ after vowels. See sermon and butter.

The low back rounded [ɒ] in balm [ˈbɒ:mˌ] and palm [ˈpʰɒ:mˌ] becomes lower in bomb [ˈbɑ:mbˌ].

The same rounded [ɒ] in caught [kʰɒ:tˀ] becomes the unrounded [ɑ] in cot [kʰɑ:tˀ]

The low front [æ] in cab [kʰæ̃:bˌ] becomes the low back [ɑ] in cob [kʰɑ:bˌ]

Notice that the length of the vowel is changed from [ˈkʰɒ:tˀ] to [ˈkʰɑ:tˀ]

The long [ɑ:] is, therefore, the dominant sound everywhere as well as [æ:]:

hat [ˈhæ̃:tˀ]
hod [ˈhɑ:dˌ] calf [kʰæ̃:f]
hot [ˈhɑ:tˀ] cab [ˈkʰæ̃:bˌ]
cob [ˈhɑ:bˌ]

The low back rounded [ɒ] is sometimes confused with the mid back unrounded [ɔ] in words like dog [ˈdɔ̝gˌ] and in some diphtongs which will be described later in this paper.

DIPHTONGS

Noticeable are the changing in the regular American diphtong [aʊ] shown as slow diphtong in all positions but changed into [æʊ] in most words like:
cow [kʰæ̃:ʊ], house [hæ:ʊs], used before voiceless nasals as in pounds [pʰæ̃:ʊnʦ] and mountains [mæ̃:ʊʔn̩z] and being nasalized everywhere.

A second variation is the diphtong [ɜʊ] as in boat [bɜʊtˀ] and in coat [kʰɜʊtˀ] goat [gɜʊtˀ] and go [gɜʊ].
This diphtong remains as a strong feature coming from the British influence in the area.

A diphtong [eɪ] appears in dance [deɪ̃n̩s] and chair [ʧeɪɚ] also being nasalized before nasal consonants.

[ɜə] appears in theater [ɜəʃə]
Other diphtongs are formed by the occurrence of a schwa in postvocalic position substituting the /r/, while few triphtongs are also noticed for the same reason. (See the study of /r/.)
The diphtong [ou] is usually shorter than the dipthong [æʊ] and very rarely occurs.

THE CONSONANTS

THE STOPS: The voiced stop /d/ is voiceless in final position as in the following examples:
bread [bɹɛd̥]
spoiled [spɔəɪ̯d̥]
boiled [bɔəɪ̯d̥]
scrambled [skɹæ̃m̩bl̩d̥]
forehead [fɔəʰɛd̥]
haunted [hɔn̩id̥]

wounded [ˈwu:ndɪd̚].

However, it sounds in some other words. Notice the final /ed/ of the verb forms, where the /d/ sound is usually voiceless. The same /d/ is a flap in mid position between vowels, as in: widow [ˈwɪʃə] and ladder [ˈlæʃə].

The voiceless stop /t/ remains aspirated in front position, but it is unreleased in final position in most of the words. There is no regularity in the occurrence of these two stops. Unreleased /t/ is found in: yeast, [jist̚], chocolate [ˈʧa:k̚lit̚] and closet [ˈkʰla:zɪt̚]

Aunt is one of the words in which the /t/ is produced:

- It becomes flap in mid position between vowels, like in:

put it on [pʰʊʃɪˈɑn]
daughter [ˈda:ʃə] water [ˈwa:ʃə]
latter [ˈlæ:ʃə] saturday [ˈsæ:ʃədə]

- It remains as unaspirated /t/ in sister [ˈsɪstə] and parents [ˈpʰæ̃:rɪnʦ] and it is unreleased and followed by a glottal stop in right ear low: [ˈraɪt̚ʔɪəˌloʊ].

The voiceless bilabial stop /p/ is mainly unreleased in final position. In isolated words it is sometimes pronounced but not in a text or in free conversation.

syrup [ˈsɝəp̚] stirrup [sˈtɝəp̚]

The liquid /l/ is velar in final position:

towel [ˈtʰaəɫ] wool [ˈwɜɫ] wail [ˈweəɫ]
oil [ˈɔəɫ] whale [ˈweəɫ]

- It is not pronounced before the voiceless fricative /f/, the voiced bilabial nasal /m/ and the voiceless stop /k/.

palm [ˈpʰɒ:m̥] yolk [ˈjɜk̚]
balm [ˈbɒ:m̥] calf [kʰˈæ̃:f̚]

Notice that the bilabial nasal /m/ becomes voiceless in the above examples in final position.

The /r/ sound is one of the strongest characteristics of the informant, being the cause for many changes in the vowel

quality of certain words. Professor Lucia Morgan had studied the dialect spoken in North Carolina and had pointed out some of the major features of the pronunciation of students at Chapel Hill and in the Outer Banks. According to this study, most of the informants had a clear loss of the postsyllabic /r/ which is substituted for /ə/. The informant for this particular study showed the following samples:

saturday [ˈsæːʃədə]
morning [ˈmõənɪŋ]
afternoon [ˈæːftəˌnuːn̩]
porch [ˈpʰoəʧ]
florida [ˈflɒədə]
furniture [ˈfɝnɪʧə]
scorched [ˈskoəʧtˈ]
horse [hɔəs]
lawn mower [ˈlɑʊmɔə]
garden [ˈgɑːədn̩]

The same occurs after the so called "vowel r words" in unstressed position. Either the plain schwa [ə] or the [ɚ] is produced as a variation of the /r/ sound which does not occur in postsyllabic position.

Examples are:

father [ˈfɑːdə]
daughter [ˈdɒːʃə]
sister [ˈsɪstə]
shoulders [ˈʃoʊdɚs]
theater [ˈθɜəʃə]
chair [ʧeɪɚ]
flowers [ˈflɑɚs]
butter [ˈbɜːʃə]
war [ˈwɔɚ]
ladder [ˈlæːʃə]
beard [ˈbiɚd̩]

The /r/ sound has a great influence upon the preceding vowels. The mid back rounded [o] is lower and not completely rounded in:

four [ˈfo̞ə]
forty [ˈfo̞ɪ]
oranges [ˈo̞rẽnʤɪs]
morning [ˈmo̞ənɪŋ]
porch [ˈpʰo̞əʧ]

It also changes the sound of the mid central [ɜ] in stressed position where the /r/ is sometimes clear and sometimes very short.

Observe the words:

syrup [ˈsɝəpˀ]
stirrup [sˈtɝəpˀ]
purse [pʰɝs]
nurses [ˈnɝsɪz]
furniture [ˈfɝnɪʧə]
sermon [ˈsɝmən]
girl [ˈgɝːɫ]
bird [ˈbɜːd̥]

Words like cemetery, american, dairy carry a mid front unrounded in stressed syllables: [ˈsɜməˌtʰɛːrɪ] [əˈmɛːrkən] [ˈdɛːrɪ].

The /r/ sound appears as labialized in front position in words like:

room [ɹ̥ˈuːm] road [ɹ̥ˈɜʊd̥] roof [ɹ̥ˈuːf]

This aspect only occurs in the speech of educated people. As the informant had been a student at Chapel Hill and at the time of this interview was taking courses at Ball State University, it is obvious that this sound occurs mainly for this reason although the expected labiolized /g/ does not appear in her speech.

Lawn mower and horse have a clear unrounded /ɔ/ before /r/.

THE /TH/ SOUND:

The /t/ voiceless is not pronounced in words like: moths [ˈmɒs]. It is unreleased in math [ˈmæ̃ːθˀ] and path [pʰæ̃ːθˀ] and changed into /t/ in final position in mouth [mæ̃ʊt] but remains /th/ in teeth: [ˈtiːθ]

It is also changed into /s/ in the plural forms of:
lengths [ˈlɛrŋs] sixths [ˈsɪks] and twelfths [ˈtwɛlvs] constituting the most irregular sound in Miss Reeves' speech. For this reason, this sound has several variations in the ordinal numbers, like:

fifth [ˈfɪf] eighth [ˈeɪθ]

fourth [ˈfoɚθ] tenth [ˈtɛnθ]

The voiced /th/ changes into /d/ in mid position between vowels like in <u>father</u> [ˈfɑːdə] <u>without</u> [ˈwɪdaʊtˈ] and in final position as in <u>with</u> [ˈwɪːd].

FINAL NOTES

Few answers did not correspond to the expected word. However these words do not show any dialectal difference. Anyway they are listed here, with the correspondent equivalent:

condominiuns substituted for houses.

cow leather and real leather were said instead of genuine.

funeral service substituted for mourning.

Three words differed in pronunciation:

vase was pronounced [ˈvɑ:z] which is considered unatural or snobbish by some scholars,and people.

sari was [ˈsərɑ:] . No basis was found for this pronunciation. It seems to this researcher that the word was not known by the informant.

aunt was [ɑ:nt] in isolation but it changed to [ˈæ̃:nt] in context. It is clear that the informant, like the residents of her area, and also the residents of Ocracoke, keeps many of the British features that incorporate the dialect of the region.

No difference was noticed between:

morning/mourning [ˈmɔ̃ə.ɪŋ]

ladeer/latter [ˈlæ:ɾə]

pin/pen [ˈpʰɛ:n]

horse/hoarse [ˈhʰɔ:ɹs]

Syllabication: this feature does not appear very frequently in her speech, although some of the words carry it with final nasals [m,n] and the liquid /l/ specially when a stop occurs immediately after:

garden [ˈgɑːədn̩] apple [ˈæːpl̩]
mountains [ˈmæ̃vʔn̩z] table [ˈteɪbl̩]
room [ˈruːm̩]

To complete this work, the final list of words is given here in transcription, in order to show the occurrences of sounds when said in comparison to minimal pairs.

dog, log, fog [ˈdɒːg] [ˈlɒːg] [ˈfɒːg]
Mary, marry, merry [ˈmeːrɪ] [ˈmeːrɪ] [ˈmɛːrɪ]
syrup, stirrup [ˈsɝəpˀ] [sˈtɝəpˀ]
mourning, morning [ˈmõ̞ənɪŋ] [ˈmõ̞nɪŋ]
broom, room [ˈbruːm̩] [ˈʁuːm̩]
horse, hoarse [ˈhʰɔəs] [ˈhʰɔəs]
a can, I can [əˈkɛːn] [aɪˈkæːn]
card, cord, barred [ˈkʰɑɚd] [ˈkʰpɚd] [ˈbɑɚd]
boy, buoy [ˈbwɔɪ] [ˈbuɪ]
furry, hurry, worry [ˈfɜːrɪ] [ˈhʰɜːrɪ] [ˈwɜːrɪ]
poor, pour, pore [ˈpʰoə] [ˈpʰoə] [ˈpʰoə]
scorch, porch [ˈsKʰɔəɻ] [ˈpʰɔəɻ]
mirror, dearer [ˈmiːrə] [ˈdiːrə]
caller, collar [ˈkʰɑːlə] [ˈkʰɑːlə]
beer, dear [ˈbjə] [ˈdjə]
scare, bare [ˈsKɛə] [ˈbɛə]
sorry, starry, story [ˈsɑːrɪ] [sˈtɑːrɪ] [sˈtorɪ]
wore, was [ˈwoɚ] [ˈwɔɚ]
any, many, penny [ˈɛ̃ːnɪ] [ˈmɛ̃ːnɪ] [pʰˈɛ̃ːnɪ]
farmer, former, foreman [ˈfɑəmən] [ˈfɔəmə] [ˈfɔəmən]
whipping, whooping [ˈwɪpɪŋ] [ˈwupˀ]

CONCLUSION

After an analysis of this informant's speech, some of the main features encountered were the following:

1. the occurrence of the long low back unrounded [ɑ] before liquids [l,r] and voiced or voiceless stops [d, t, p, b].

2. the diphtong [ɜʊ] used instead of [oʊ] in the examples on page

3. the nasalization of [æ] (see page 107) everywhere except before the flap [ɾ] and in the words afternoon and apple (front position)

4. the syllabication of the voiced bilabial nasal /m/ in room and broom; the voiceless nasal /n/ after the voiced stop /d/ and the glottal [ʔ]; the liquid /l/ after /p/ and /b/ (see page

5. the lack of /r/ in postsyllabic position, either in isolation or in context.

The list of words on page 114 shows the relationships between sounds and it is useful to observe the following occurrences:

1. the difference between: boy and buoy; car/cor/barred;sorry/ story/starry; wore/war; the noun can and the verb can;

2. the similarity between scare/bare; beer/dear; poor/pour/ pore; horse/hoarse; morning/mourning, etc.

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