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Exemplifying the Language Change of Jennifer Lopez: Is She Still "Jenny from the Block"?

Lea Bauernfeind

This paper investigates American singer and actress Jennifer Lopez's use of the sociolinguistic variables (ing), PRICE, and TRAP through a longitudinal study of readily available interviews over the course of 16 years. The study is an example of the same speaker of English showing lifespan change in one variable (TRAP), and age-grading in two others ((ing) and PRICE). The findings show that different variables can pattern differently, and that social context plays an important role in these linguistic developments.

1 Introduction

This paper presents a panel study of language change patterns in one individual speaker, U.S. American singer and actress Jennifer Lopez. The investigation is inspired by the lyrics of her 2002 song *Jenny from the Block* (A–Z lyrics 2020), in which she suggests that she is aware of her childhood in the Bronx and that she has not changed in any particular manner: "Don't be fooled by the rocks that I got / I'm still, I'm still Jenny from the block / used to have a little, now I have a lot / no matter where I go, I know where I came from (South-Side Bronx!)". Although she evidently has risen on the socioeconomic ladder (from owning "a little" to "a lot"), Lopez suggests she herself has not changed; however, I will argue that she *has* linguistically to some degree over the course of 16 years. This paper aims to explore the extent of change in her use of three sociolinguistic variables, inflectional morpheme (ing), and lexical sets PRICE and TRAP (Wells 1982) in two interviews, the first dating from 1999 and the second from 2015. The variable (ing) was chosen because of its long-term stability (Houston 1985) and PRICE due to its salience in African American and LatinX Englishes in NYC (Newman 2014). TRAP is of interest to this study because of Lopez's permanent move to California: TRAP is a well-studied part of the California vowel shift (CVS) (Eckert 2004).

The paper is structured as follows. I first introduce the linguistic variables, followed by a brief review of pertinent studies of lifespan change (Section 1). I then give background on the speaker (Section 2) and present the methodology (Section 3). The analysis (Section 4) shows changes in Lopez's use of these sociolinguistic variables. Finally, the implications of these results are discussed (Sections 5 and 6).

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 (ing)

One of the variables scrutinized most by sociolinguists is (ing), probably due to its evidenced long-term stability: (ing) has not shown indications of a sound change in progress and is consistent in terms of "its stable embedding within the social matrix" (Houston 1985:16). It can be realized as either the standard velar variant [iŋ] or the vernacular alveolar form [in] in polymorphemic words such as *think[iŋ]*/*think[in]*. It is also frequent in naturally occurring conversation amongst speakers of English, which means that even small samples of data contain several instances of the variable.

Subject to linguistic constraints, (ing) is conditioned by grammatical category and phonological context. The velar variant is more frequent in nouns and gerunds (e.g., *timing*, *we enjoy eating*), while the vernacular form tends to be realized in progressives and participles (e.g., *we are eating*, *we have been eating*; Schleef et al. 2011:10, drawing on Labov 2001). With respect to phonological constraints, the velar variant is favored in cases in which (ing) is followed by another velar, and the alveolar variant is more frequent in cases in which (ing) is followed by an alveolar (e.g., *think[iŋ] clearly*, *think[in] negatively*; Houston 1985). If (ing) is preceded by a velar consonant, it will most likely be realized as [in] and vice versa (Houston 1985).

It has also been shown that (ing) is socially stratified, for example by age, class, and gender. Apparent time studies have demonstrated that, compared to adult speakers, adolescent speakers prefer the vernacular variant over the standard (Houston 1985, Labov 2001). This suggests that (ing) is age-graded, which will be further explained in Section 2.4. Social stratification of (ing) is apparent in the alveolar variant being produced more frequently by speakers with a lower socioeconomic status and the velar variant by speakers with a higher socioeconomic status (Schleef et al. 2011). Similarly, the use of the standard velar variant has

been positively correlated with national (as opposed to regional) college aspirations in a group of adolescents in Pennsylvania (Wagner 2012). Cameron (2005) notes that female speakers generally tend to realize more standard variants than male speakers.

The vernacular alveolar variant [in] is regionally stigmatized in the United States (Campbell-Kibler 2011) as well as in other varieties, e.g., in North-Eastern English in the United Kingdom (Mechler and Buchstaller 2019).

2.2 PRICE

Numerous studies have shown that there is a great variation in the realization of PRICE. In the United States, close attention has been paid to the monophthongal realization of PRICE in the context of African American (Vernacular) English (AAVE) (Thomas 2013) and in the South (Labov et al. 1997, 2006), as well as in the context of the comparison of both (Thomas 2007).

This paper focusses on the monophthongal realization of PRICE as in *s[ai]n* versus *s[a:]n* for *sign*. In New York City English, the LatinX and the AAVE monophthongal realization of PRICE is similar (Newman 2014), possibly due to close dialect contact. (The United States Census Bureau (2018) states that in July 2018 about 25% of all New Yorker citizens are of African American origin, while another 30% are LatinX.)

Like (ing), PRICE is constrained by phonological context: if PRICE is preceded by a voiceless consonant, it tends to be realized as a diphthong, while it tends to be realized as a monophthong after voiced consonants and in word-final contexts (Thomas 2013). In AAVE and Southern White speech, PRICE tends to be realized as a diphthong if it precedes a voiceless consonant (Scanlon and Beckford Wassink 2010). Words like *price* are thus usually realized as *pr[a:]s*, while *time* is realized as *t[aɪ]me* by speakers of AAVE. However, the degree of PRICE-monophthongization correlates with the social setting and the topic discussed in conversation (Scanlon and Beckford Wassink 2010). Likewise, /aɪ/ realization correlates with the familiarity of the speaker and the listener and their respective ethnicities (Scanlon and Beckford Wassink 2010). For instance, Hay et al. (1999) found that Oprah Winfrey chose monophthongal [ɑ:] significantly more frequently when interviewing fellow African Americans compared to White interviewees. Thomas (2013) showed that female speakers of AAVE in Chicago produce significantly higher numbers of diphthongal [aɪ] than male AAVE speakers, which is in line with Milroy and Milroy (1997).

2.3 TRAP

The CVS is described as a chain shift: a counterclockwise shift in the North American English vowel system in California with some front vowels backing and all back vowels fronting (Eckert 2008). Studies examining speakers from all over California have shown evidence of regional variation in San Francisco (Hall-Lew et al. 2015), Los Angeles (Fought 1999), California's Central Valley (Podesva et al. 2015), and Santa Barbara (Janoff 2018), for example.

The realization of TRAP in the context of the CVS depends on its phonological context, since TRAP before nasals diphthongizes and shifts towards /iy/ at the front (e.g., *stand)*, whereas it remains monophthongal before all other consonants and moves lower and further back towards /o/ (e.g., *hat*) (Eckert 2004). TRAP before nasals is "most raised following a velar onset or preceding an apical (nasal) coda", while "TRAP is realized furthest back following a liquid" (Hall-Lew et al. 2015:3).

Moreover, the realization of all vowels affected by the CVS correlates with a number of different socioeconomic factors. The realization of TRAP is related to binary gender, with female speakers heading the ongoing change (D'Onofrio et al. 2016, Janoff 2018). Even though no significant correlations between speakers' ages and variation in TRAP were found by Hall-Lew et al. (2015) which would indicate change in progress, the realization of the other vowels affected by the CVS correlates with the speakers' year of birth (e.g., BET) (Hall-Lew et al. 2015). The fact that no significant correlation between speakers' ages and the realization of TRAP could be established might be due to the position of the TRAP vowel, since it "is already very front [preceding nasals], and […] already very low [preceding other consonants]" (Hall-Lew et al. 2015:5). Further, participating in or overriding the ongoing changes in progress in the Californian vowel system has been shown to indicate social group membership (Eckert 2008).

2.4 Language Change across the Lifespan

We would expect relative stability in an individual's linguistic behavior after puberty based on the notion of the critical period (Labov 1994). However, individuals have been shown to change their speech production later in life. Following Labov (1994) and Sankoff and Blondeau (2007) we can distinguish five possible language change patterns in the speech community and the individual (see Table 1).

Table 1: Possible language change patterns (Labov 1994:83 and Sankoff and Blondeau 2007:563)

Scenario	Community	Individual	Interpretation
(1)	stable	stable	stability
(2a)	stable	change	age-grading
(2b)	change	change	lifespan change
(3)	change	stable	generational change
(4)	change	change	communal change

If both the community and the individual do not produce any language patterns that indicate change, Scenario (1) (stability in the community and in the individual) and Scenario (4) (change affecting the community and the individual equally) are probable explanations (see Table 1). In contrast, if change in the individual is evident and the community remains stable over time, Scenario (2a) is occurring (see Table 1). Buchstaller (2006) suggests that different extents of standard/vernacular realizations are expected for certain age spans: the vernacular is established during childhood and then predominantly used, precipitates in adolescence above the average level of the previous generation, and is reduced in favor of the standard once the individual enters professional life. Then, in retirement, the vernacular often increases again.

As age-graded variables are usually stigmatized forms (Chambers 2003), a decrease in vernacular/stigmatized variants is anticipated in middle age since the individual sets foot into professional life. This is due to the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975), which applies to individuals in professional life. The linguistic marketplace enforces the production of standard variants in speech as they are of higher prestige (Chambers 2003, Buchstaller 2006, 2015, Wagner 2012). Because of the linguistic marketplace pressures that apply, age-grading is expected to occur in every generation and has been evident in several panel studies (Wagner 2012, Rickford and Price 2013, Buchstaller et al. 2017). The findings of the analysis of Jennifer Lopez's speech production suggest that her language choices (especially in regard to (ing) and PRICE) might be age-graded, which will be detailed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.

Scenario (2b) of Table 1 details lifespan change which occurs when both the community and the individual change. However, this scenario differs from Scenario (4) in so far that the individual is not affected by the change equally to the community but participates to some degree in the ongoing change in the speech community (Sankoff and Blondeau 2007). This phenomenon might apply to Jennifer Lopez's language choices for TRAP, which will be outlined in Section 5.3.

Generational change in Scenario (3) depicts a changing community and stability in the individual, implying that each generation of speakers is stable after critical age. The following generations would then increase their use of a certain linguistic variable resulting in an S-curve.

3 Speaker Background

This section outlines some information on Lopez's personal background which serves as an aid in the interpretation of the findings on her language change patterns.

Jennifer Lopez was born on July 24, 1969 as the second of three daughters to Puerto Rican immigrant parents. She grew up in the ethnically diverse Castle Hill neighborhood of the Bronx in New York City. As a child, she took acting and singing classes. The working-class family's emphasis on speaking English well resulted in Lopez's first language not being Spanish but English (Lopez 2014).

Lopez started her career as a background dancer, then she became an actress. In 1999 she released her debut album *On the Six* which was ranked number one on the Billboard Top 100 charts the same year. To this day she has released eight studio albums and received numerous awards not only for her music but also for her acting. Earning 43 million U.S. dollars in 2019, Lopez was ranked in place 76 of Forbes List Celebrity 100 (Forbes 2020).

The two interviews which will be examined in this paper span a period of 16 years from 1999 to 2015 (aged 30 to 46). During this time, Lopez married and got divorced twice as well as becoming a mother to twins in 2008. She also worked as a judge on the popular TV show *American Idol* and obtained a two-year Las Vegas residency. Additionally, Lopez also published a book *True Love*, which was used in this paper in order to summarize her biography. Throughout her career, Lopez has been highly geographically mobile, with the exception at the time of her Las Vegas residency. However, she has mostly resided in Los Angeles (with her family) since the early 1990s.

4 Methodology

For the analyses, two 10-minute interviews with Jennifer Lopez were retrieved from YouTube and then transcribed in ELAN (2019). Both interviews are with female, African American television talk show hosts. The first interview, from 1999, is with Oprah Winfrey and depicts Jennifer Lopez's first time on The Oprah Winfrey Show. At that point, her career had just started to kick off. She was famous already for her movie roles but had yet to acquire her superstar status. This is different to the second interview from 2015, with Wendy Williams, by which time Jennifer Lopez had become more successful, establishing a reputation for herself in Hollywood. The interview with Wendy Williams marks Lopez's second appearance on the show.

The first interview is centered around Lopez's debut album release, tabloid stories about her and male celebrities, her Latino-American identity, and her faith and work ethics. Afterwards, the interviewee is asked to perform a song for the audience. This performance was excluded from the analysis because the music was assumed to obscure the realizations of the three variables. The interview also includes a pre-shot image clip at the end, in which Lopez describes how meditation aids her to stay grounded and "herself". Lopez is dressed in a simple black sweater, leather capris, and black high heels, while wearing her hair down and minimal make-up. The second interview starts with a conversation about the latest fashion then continues with a story from Lopez's book. Williams carries on with Lopez's private life, i.e., her children, her divorce from Marc Anthony, her pets, and her male companions. The interview includes a short trailer clip for Lopez's new movie *Boy Next Door*, which is discussed afterwards. The trailer clip was not included in the analysis. The interview finishes with an anecdote about extravagant gifts Lopez has received. Furthermore, Lopez's mother is present in the audience and is directly addressed by Wendy Williams twice. This time, Lopez is wearing a golden embroidered long-sleeve top and a long black skirt with black high heels. Her make-up consists of smoky eyes and she is wearing jewelry. Her hair is styled in big waves and a half-up do. Lopez's appearance differs significantly in the two interviews, which might indicate the change of her reputation in Hollywood and her persona over the course of time and could, thus, contribute to different linguistic choices.

The two interviews cater to a similar audience, as The Oprah Winfrey Show and Wendy Williams are both shows with a small and mostly female middle-aged live audience and a greater TV audience once the show airs (with 315–365 live audience members on The Oprah Winfrey Show (Oprah 2020) and similar numbers estimated for Wendy Williams). Therefore, the settings of the interviews are very much alike, enabling a relatively good comparability between them.

Both interviews yielded approximately 25 to 30 tokens of each variable (overall, about 150). Unclear tokens (e.g., overlapping speech utterances, music, or noise from the audience) were excluded from the analyses. The remaining tokens were coded auditorily as binary variants by the author. To statistically assess the difference between the 1999 and 2015 interviews, a chi square was calculated for each variable with Social Science Statistics (Stangroom 2020). In addition, the binary variants of the variables were categorized on a standard versus vernacular axis, so that a chi square for the overall change in linguistic patterns could be calculated with the same tool. In the analysis of the (ing) variable, *-thing* compounds (e.g., *everything*, *nothing*) were excluded as they are difficult to classify according to word categories (Labov 2001; for a different approach on classifying *-thing* compounds, see Schleef et al. 2011). For the examination of TRAP, all emphatic tokens were excluded (e.g., *happy*). Moreover, as explained in Section 2.3, I did not consider tokens in which TRAP precedes a nasal, since it was assumed they would shift towards diphthongal /iy/ instead of shifting towards /o/ (BAN & BAT) (Eckert 2004, Hall-Lew et al. 2015).

5 Results/Findings

This chapter depicts the results of the three variables explored in this paper. Both interviews were transcribed and coded for tokens of (ing) as well TRAP and PRICE vowel realizations. For (ing), the data yielded a total number of 50 different tokens ($N_{\text{total 1999}} = 29$, $N_{\text{total 2015}} = 21$), for PRICE 55 tokens ($N_{\text{total 1999}} = 31$, $N_{\text{total 2015}} = 24$), and for TRAP 50 tokens ($N_{\text{total 1999}} = 27$, $N_{\text{total 2015}} = 23$). These are comparatively low token numbers; therefore, Yates continuity correction was used in the calculation of the chi square in order to ensure the reliability of the outcome (Stangroom 2020). Nevertheless, the results of the quantitative analysis must be treated cautiously. Qualitative examples and analyses can help to interpret the patterns observed.

5.1 (ing) findings

Table 2 illustrates the results of Jennifer Lopez's use of (ing).

Table 2: Lopez's velar and alveolar realization of the (ing) variable

	1999 *N*	1999 %	2015 *N*	2015 %
velar [ŋ]	22	76	20	91
alveolar [n]	7	24	1	9
Total	29	100	21	100

χ^2 (1) = 1.05 p = .31 p > .05 (n.s.)

In 1999, Lopez realizes 76% of all extracted tokens as the standard velar variant. Her linguistic choices change towards an almost exclusive standard velar realization of 91% in 2015. The comparison of Lopez's velar and alveolar realizations of (ing) in the interviews from 1999 and 2015 shows no statistically significant change (χ^2 = 1.05 (n.s.)), but it is still noticeable. Also, it is important that the observed change is in the expected direction, namely a decrease of the alveolar realization [n] and an increase of the velar [ŋ] as depicted in Table 2. This change might imply age-grading (see Section 2.4). Lopez moves away from the vernacular variant [n] in middle age as it is likely that she is subject to increased linguistic marketplace pressures, possibly due to her status as a role model for her children and her image in Hollywood.

In terms of phonological constraints, the number of available tokens (which do not occur before or after a vowel) is very small (in 1999 N = 3 for preceding consonants, N = 2 for following consonants; in 2015 N = 1 for preceding consonants, N = 0 for following consonants). Nonetheless, in two out of three cases from 1999 (illustrated in Examples (1) and (2)) the vernacular alveolar is realized following a velar form. This corresponds to Houston's (1985) findings that if (ing) is preceded by a velar consonant, it will most probably be realized as an alveolar and vice versa (see Section 2.1).

(1) It's such a big deal that's why every interview "what are you thinki[n] of Latin explosion"
(2) while I was maki[n] the album you know

The only alveolar token from 2015 does not coincide with the findings depicting the phonological constraints of (ing) (see above), since the alveolar variant [n] in Example (3) is realized following an alveolar /d/.

(3) they were like houndi[n] us

Regarding the realization of (ing) in terms of word classification and grammatical constraints, Lopez follows the patterns delineated in Section 2.1. All tokens contained in the first interview from 1999 that are realized as alveolar are either progressives or participles, as shown in an animated discussion about LatinX representation in the media in the late 1990's (known as *Latin explosion*) (see Example (4)).

(4) so that's (an increase of LatinX representation in the media) what they're seei[n] now

This finding remains consistent in the interview with Wendy Williams from 2015 when Lopez describes how she and her family were followed aggressively by paparazzi (see Example (5)).

(5) they were like houndi[n] us and was like my agai- like a one day off I was doi[ŋ] press out in Paris for music

Interestingly, Lopez only realizes *hounding* as an alveolar but produces the standard realization of *doing*. This might be related to lexical frequency. For instance, Forrest (2017:147) suggests that in the Raleigh Corpus (North Carolina) very frequent (ing) tokens tend to be realized as [n] and less frequent lexemes are often realized as [ŋ], but "words at the lowest end of the frequency spectrum actually show a reversal of the pattern", i.e., they are also likely to be realized as [n]. This offers a possible explanation for Lopez's alveolar realization of *hounding*, considering that she — contrary to this one instance of alveolar realization in the 2015 interview — realizes the majority of her (ing) tokens as velar. Also, in the context of *hounding*, Lopez is referring to a situation where she was surrounded and concerned for the safety of her family — a situation similar, to some extent, to the danger of death question which Labov (1972) noted to elicit particularly vernacular realizations.

As above, if the number of tokens yielded from the available data was greater or if more interviews were examined, clearer patterns could have been reported. Hence, whereas it is difficult to argue for a clear pattern of (ing) in realizations uttered by Jennifer Lopez in terms of phonological constraints, the overall choices in (ing), while not reaching statistical significance, clearly fit the expected pattern of age-grading.

5.2 PRICE findings

In this section, I will report the findings for Jennifer Lopez's realizations of PRICE in 1999 and 2015 (Table 3).

Table 3: Lopez's diphthongal and monophthongal realization of the PRICE vowel

	1999 *N*	1999 %	2015 *N*	2015 %
[aɪ]	22	71	23	96
[ɑ:]	9	29	1	4
Total	31	100	24	100

χ^2 (1) = 4.08 p = .04 p < .05 (s.)

Like her production of (ing), Lopez's linguistic choices in the PRICE vowel delineate a clear trend towards the standard (χ^2 = 4.08, p = .04). For PRICE, however, the change in patterns is statistically significant. The standard diphthongal realization [aɪ] increases from 71% to 96% over a time period of 16 years, while the vernacular monophthongal realization [ɑ:] decreases from 29% (N = 9) to only 4% (N = 1). It is evident that Jennifer Lopez has almost categorically moved away from the vernacular with only one instance of monophthongal PRICE in 2015. Example (6) illustrates this single case in which Lopez realizes [ɑ:] when talking about her mother's career-enhancing measures.

(6) it wasn't like she was tr[ɑ:]ng to get me into show business

This finding is in line with the phonological constraints illustrated in Section 2.2, as PRICE is realized as a monophthong following voiced /ɹ/ in *trying*. Importantly, this PRICE token is situated in a complex phonological environment because /aɪ/ is followed by (ing), initiated by another short /ɪ/ which Jennifer does not pronounce. Instead, she realizes *trying* as [trɑ:ŋ], resolving the hiatus. Therefore, this specific monophthongal instance could have developed out of an effort of speech economy, perhaps as a simplification process (Britain and Fox 2009). Note however, Lopez realizes *trying* diphthongally later in the interview in a very similar syntactical context when addressing a former lover's efforts to reconnect (see Example (7)).

(7) they were you know tr[ajɪ]ng to talk to me

The difference in these instances of *trying* might be of emotional context: Lopez defends her mother from pushing her into a career in the public eye in the first interview and laughs off romantic advances in the second.

5.3 TRAP findings

Table 4 illustrates Jennifer Lopez's use of TRAP in the two interviews.

Table 4: Lopez's realization of standard and CVS TRAP vowel

	1999 *N*	1999 %	2015 *N*	2015 %
standard TRAP	22	82	13	57
CVS TRAP	5	18	10	43
Total	27	100	23	100

χ^2 (1) = 3.68 p = .11 p > .05 (n.s.)

The findings for TRAP indicate a trend whereby Lopez moves towards the lowered California vernacular form (18% in 1999 as compared to 43% in 2015); however, this is not statistically significant (χ^2 = 3.68 (n.s.)). Lopez's language pattern is in line with the current language change in progress amongst speakers in California (see Eckert 2004, Podesva et al. 2015, D'Onofrio et al. 2016, Janoff 2018), but it contrasts with the findings for (ing) and PRICE. For those two variables (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2), Lopez has moved towards the standard, while for TRAP she adapts to the speech of young Californians. Lowered TRAP is associated with the social type of Valley Girl, a "female persona that is typically white, feminine, affluent,

materialistic and superficial" (D'Onofrio 2015:243). Thus, with her realization of TRAP, it is possible that Lopez linguistically styles herself as more White and Californian.

The lowering of TRAP seems to be independent from the position of the sound within the word, since it occurs in both word-initial and word-internal positions in both interviews (no tokens with word-final positions of TRAP were yielded from the interviews).

(8) exact- and *Latin* women are the same way (word-internal, 1999)
(9) "On the Six" is my *album* (word-initial, 1999)
(10) I used to take my *classes* (word-internal, 2015)
(11) that dress was a little *heavy* (word-internal, 2015)
(12) I'd like to think that the *actors* that came to the house are more professional (word-initial, 2015)

For the five tokens of CVS TRAP Lopez produced in the 1999 interview, the variant is followed by either a stop (Example (8)), a liquid (Example (9)), or a fricative (Example (10)). In 2015, CVS TRAP occurs before fricatives (Example (11)) and stops (Example (12)). No tokens with following liquids were found in the interview with Wendy Williams. But based on the available evidence, we might expect them to be lowered, too.

In contrast to the tokens from 1999, Jennifer Lopez's linguistic choices do not follow Eckert's (2004) hypothesis regarding the vowel patterns in California (see Section 2.3) in her 2015 interview. While instances of CVS TRAP increase towards a balance of standard and vernacular, three out of ten CVS variants occur preceding nasals (see Table 4). This is contrary to Eckert (2004) asserting that TRAP diphthongizes to /iy/ before nasals. In the 2015 interview, Lopez realizes eight TRAP tokens before nasals in total (see Table 5). Three of these tokens (= 38%) are lowered even though they precede nasals. All realizations of lowered TRAP before nasals are nouns; therefore, one potential explanation of Lopez's production of lowered TRAP before nasals in nouns is that there is a dependency of the lowering of the TRAP vowel based on word class.

Table 5: Lopez's realization of TRAP tokens before nasals in 2015

tokens before nasals (in order of occurrence during interview)	**realization**
thank you	standard
cameras	CVS
ran	standard
dance (verb)	standard
animals	CVS
hands	CVS
dammit	standard
enamored	standard

It is also possible that Lopez's linguistic choices are based on her construction of a Latina identity, "for Chican[X] speakers tend not to show the nasal pattern" (Eckert 2008:34), i.e., they do not diphthongize TRAP towards /iy/ before nasals. Note that although Jennifer Lopez's ancestry is Puerto Rican and *ChicanX* refers to Americans of Mexican descent, there are probably similarities in the creation of a LatinX identity. Realizing lowered TRAP before nasals might therefore be Jennifer Lopez's means of creating such shared identity with other LatinX Californians.

It can also be hypothesized that Lopez might not have picked up on the CVS vowel constraint (diphthongization towards /iy/ before nasals), since she was already beyond critical age (Labov 1994, see Section 2.4) when she moved to California in her late twenties.

5.4 Overall findings on a standard/vernacular axis

Finally, I will compare the realization of the three variables, using the individual findings from (ing), PRICE, and TRAP. Table 6 illustrates the results of a comparison which categorized all tokens as either standard versus vernacular realizations (highlighted in green).

Table 6: Lopez's standard and vernacular realization of the examined variables

	1999 *N*	1999 %	2015 *N*	2015 %
realization of standard variants	66	76	56	82
velar [ŋ]	22	76	20	91
diphthongal PRICE	22	71	23	96
standard TRAP	22	82	13	57
realization of vernacular variants	21	24	12	18
alveolar [n]	7	24	1	9
monophthongal PRICE	9	29	1	4
CVS TRAP	5	18	10	43
Total	87	100	69	100
$\chi^2 = 0.98$	$p = .32$	$p > .05$ (n.s.)		

Altogether, Table 6 shows that Jennifer Lopez has moved away from vernacular realizations in favor of the standard between the two interviews, although the change is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.98$ (n.s.)). She mostly realizes the standard in both the first and the second interview (76% in 1999, 82% in 2015), with a subtle decrease of the vernacular in 2015 (18% as compared to 24% in 1999), especially in the PRICE variable, as discussed in Section 5.2.

Jennifer Lopez's linguistic choices regarding the realizations of (ing) and PRICE indicate age-grading, as the standard increases in middle age at the cost of the vernacular. However, she favors CVS TRAP, categorized as vernacular in Table 6, over non-CVS TRAP, perhaps as an indication that her home is now California, not NYC (Labov (2010), which suggests no lowering of TRAP for NYC). As above, this might be related to her creating a young, female, and perhaps more White persona for the public; but since the nasal split of TRAP is not associated with ChicanX speakers of English, Lopez might instead display a Latina identity with her linguistic choices. While (ing) and PRICE seem to be age-graded, TRAP is likely to indicate social group membership (Eckert 2008): here, possibly with White Californians or rather with LatinX Californians.

Note that 156 tokens in total are a very limited base to draw sufficient findings from. As mentioned before, we might expect to see significant findings as the amount of data is increased.

6 Discussion

The findings above will be discussed with regard to the different language change patterns outlined in Chapter 2.4.

In terms of the (ing) variable, Jennifer Lopez shows some arguable indications of age-grading. Although the change is not statistically significant, a decrease of the vernacular variant [n] from 24% in 1999 to 9% in the 2015 interview is notable. Age-grading is a likely explanation for this increase of the standard for several reasons. First, and as mentioned before, between 1999 and 2015 Lopez became a mother as well as strengthening her position in Hollywood. Rickford and Price (2013:161) suggest that motherhood (along with other factors) increasingly leads to the production of standard variants, possibly due to "family responsibilities and high ambitions for [the parents] and their children". Further, Lopez developed from a young up-and-coming starlet to a proper Hollywood icon. Therefore, she was presumably subject to much stronger linguistic marketplace pressures as a role model (see Section 2.4) in 2015 than in the 1999 interview.

The findings for Lopez's realization of the PRICE vowel depicted in Section 5.2 show a statistically significant change in linguistic choices in favor of the standard diphthongal variant [aɪ]. Moving away from stigmatized vernacular variants indicates age-grading (see Section 2.4) similar to Lopez's (ing) choices. However, since Lopez located permanently to California in the 1990s, she had lived there for over two decades by 2015, when the second interview was held. Assuming that Lopez had adapted to the different environment in which monophthongal PRICE is rather uncommon (Labov et al. 2006), her linguistic patterns might also imply lifespan change, which Sankoff (2005:1011) defines as a process in which "individual speakers change over their lifespans in the direction of a change in progress in the rest of the community". Although mainstream, urban Californian English does not feature a monophthongal realization of PRICE (Labov et al. 2006), Lopez's move to Los Angeles might be similar to a change in language patterns in a speech community. Her adaption towards the standard realization within the "new" speech community would therefore indicate lifespan change, or rather second dialect acquisition, a phenomenon by which speakers accomplish "assimilation to the local speech community" (Tagliamonte and Molfenter 2007:650).

Another possible explanation of Lopez's change in linguistic choices derives from her biography, especially regarding her partners. Between 1999 and 2001 Lopez was linked to Sean Combs, an African American rapper who grew up in the Bronx. Her decrease in monophthongal realization of PRICE can be interpreted in the context of the decline in close contact to African Americans and her permanent move away from close dialect contact between LatinX and African Americans in New York City. However, this hypothesis cannot be tested, as Lopez's personal contacts are unavailable to the public to a great degree (see Lopez 2014). Overall, two language change scenarios (i.e., age-grading and lifespan change) offer reasonable explanations for Lopez's changing linguistic patterns.

The findings of Lopez's realization of the TRAP vowel indicate a trend towards lowered TRAP. The CVS has been illustrated as an ongoing change in progress in Section 2.3, which might link Lopez's lowered realizations of TRAP to the concept of lifespan change. If interviews from before 1999 were chosen for the analysis of TRAP, a significant change instead of a trend might possibly have been evident, since Lopez would have been younger and more prone to change (see Section 2.4). By 1999, she had already lived in California for a few years; thus, she had already been subject to the change in progress in the speech community. The possibly significant changes between the interview from 1999 and the interview from 2015 could emphasize Lopez's participation in the CVS.

The scope of this project was limited to only two interviews. If more interviews were examined to increase the number of available data, different outcomes would be possible. Also, the tokens were coded auditorily, and although utmost care was applied, the coding could have led to an increase of desired realizations (i.e., realizations that fit the expected language change patterns). Last, this paper has provided an investigation of language change patterns in adulthood in an individual whose actions and behavior are scrutinized by the world media. It is unclear if and to which extent this shapes Lopez's language patterns.

7 Conclusion

This paper has aimed to explore the extent to which Jennifer Lopez's linguistic patterns have changed over her lifetime. I hypothesized that she would have undergone language change, at least to some degree, due to her socioeconomic shift upwards (from "a little" to "a lot"), different developments in her personal life (marriage, motherhood, and divorce), and her increased success in Hollywood. Possible language change patterns (see Section 2.4) were investigated in the context of the variables (ing), PRICE, and TRAP, which were outlined in Section 2. For (ing), the findings indicate a trend towards the increased standard realization [ŋ], which fits the patterns of age-grading. The data also delineated significant changes in the realization of the PRICE vowel, suggesting that Lopez has moved away from the vernacular monophthongal realization. As discussed in Section 5, this change in patterns could imply age-grading or lifespan change. To support either of those scenarios, more investigations have to be implemented.

The investigation of TRAP illustrates a trend towards an increase of realizations of CVS TRAP (see Section 5.3). This finding is in line with the counterclockwise shift of the vowel system in California (outlined in Section 2.3). If more interviews had been examined or if earlier interviews were analyzed, a different, and possibly significant, change in language patterns could have been observed. Thus, whereas she might be aware of her up-bringing in the Bronx, Jennifer Lopez's linguistic choices have changed in contrast to her claim that she is "still Jenny from the Block". Section 5 has shown that Lopez produces an increased number of standard realizations in 2015 as compared to 1999.

The study of Jennifer Lopez has shown that different language change patterns in regard to different variables can be observed in individual speakers, even beyond critical age. For the interpretation of the results, the social meaning of the variables is of great value.

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