

Diffusion of Viennese Monophthongization in Austria's traditional dialects

Philip C. Vergeiner (University of Salzburg), Lars Bülow (University of Vienna), Jan Luttenberger (Austrian Academy of Science), David Britain (University of Bern)

In this paper, we investigate the geographical and structural diffusion of Viennese Monophthongization (Moosmüller & Vollmann 2001; Moosmüller & Scheutz 2013). By means of a new numerical measure to assess and compare formant movement in 18 lexical items, we provide evidence that Viennese Monophthongization is an ongoing, regular sound change transforming [aɛ] and [aɔ] gradually into [æ:] and [ɔ:] in the dialects of (Eastern) Austria.

The data are based on direct dialect recordings of 76 speakers in two age-groups in 19 rural locations of eastern and central Austria. Results indicate that [æ:] and [ɔ:] are diffusing in a wave-like fashion from Vienna (where Viennese Monophthongization originated, cf. Gartner 1900). Even though Viennese Monophthongization is reported to have been established in other bigger cities for more than 30 years (Moosmüller and Vollmann 2001, Moosmüller and Scheutz 2013), the data show no evidence for diffusion from these cities (cf. for different models of spatial diffusion Britain 2012). There are also other factors affecting the degree of formant movement: The phonetic-phonological environment (stress and the following consonant) explains most of the variance in the data, whereas no frequency effects (Phillips 2006) could be found. Furthermore, we identified social identity, cultural space (Horvath and Horvath 2001), and gender-related network structures as language external factors.

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