

Development of the so-called "Middle Bavarian e-confusion" in the city dialects of Salzburg and Vienna.

Introduction

The linear historical development of the Middle High German vowels /e/ and /ɛ/ was disturbed by mainly five factors in the Middle Bavarian dialects. This disturbance came to be known as the Middle Bavarian "e-confusion". By and large, this confusion of the vowels /e/ and /ɛ/ is transparent. However, in the city dialects, further factors add to this confusion. In the Viennese dialect, two such factors have to be considered: Firstly, the diphthongs /aɛ/ and /ɑɔ/ were monophthongized to /æ:/ and /ɔ:/, respectively. This sound change which started around 1900 and was completed around 1940 triggered further changes of the vowel system. In particular, it further complicated the status of the vowels /e/ and /ɛ/, because an additional vowel, namely /æ:/ was added at the palatal constriction location. Secondly, the interaction with Standard Austrian German, which has a well-defined distribution of the vowels /e/ and /ɛ/, put an additional challenge on the realization of this vowel pair. The phonological situation is slightly different in the city dialect of Salzburg. Though the Viennese monophthongization affected and still affects large parts of Austria, it never affected the phonological system, i.e., the phonemic status of the original diphthongs is unquestioned and monophthongization occurs as a phonological process. However, the interaction with Standard Austrian German has effects on the realization of the vowels /e/ and /ɛ/. Therefore, with respect of the development of the "e-confusion", we hypothesize different developments in the city dialects of Salzburg and Vienna.

Method

Interviews are conducted with 10 speakers of the Viennese dialect and with 10 speakers of the city dialect of Salzburg, in each case five female and five male speakers. Especially in Vienna, younger speakers of the lower social classes started to develop a dialect based Standard variety, therefore, speakers are recruited from the older generation (+50 years). For the current investigation, a picture naming task is analyzed. The front vowels /i, e, ɛ/ are segmented manually, F1, F2, and F3 are extracted, duration measurements are performed as well.

Results

For the time being, only the results of Vienna can be reported. The vowel /i/ is produced on the pre-palatal constriction location, probably as a consequence of the Viennese monophthongization. As concerns the vowels /e/ and /ɛ/, two groups of speakers can be distinguished: One group has neutralized the vowel pair to the vowel /e/, the other group realizes both /e/ and /ɛ/, however, in a very unsystematic way. For this group, no prediction can be made with respect of the quality to be used in a specific item, i.e., both [e] and [ɛ] can be used by one and the same speaker in one and the same item.