PROGRESS REPORT

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NONPREVOCALIC INTRUSIVE R IN URBAN HAMPSHIRE

Portsmouth and Southampton, being the largest urban centres in Hampshire away from Bournemouth, are in that part of England - roughly speaking the West - where historical /r/ is generally preserved preconsonantally and finally, at least in rural accents. Indeed, it had been reported[1] to me that in Southampton and elsewhere there were no words ending in a non-r-coloured vowel (ə), since not only words with historical final /r/, such as <u>better</u>, <u>hammer</u>, <u>colour</u>, but also historically r-less words like <u>banana</u>, <u>sofa</u> have a final r-coloured vowel (ɚ). This pronunciation was stated to be used in all positions, including preconsonantally and prepausally, and is therefore distinct from ordinary intrusive /r/[2], which is used in most parts of England when words such as those cited occur before a vowel, but not when they occur before a consonant or pause. The aim of the fieldwork reported here was to investigate the extent of this phenomenon, which might be labelled NONPREVOCALIC INTRUSIVE R.

An attempt was made to elicit one or more of the words potentially subject to nonprevocalic intrusive /r/ from a sample of the local population in Portsmouth and Southampton. The fieldworker approached individual people at random in the main shopping streets of the two cities. From their point of view he appeared to be doing interviews for a market research firm. They were asked to state their preferences among various flavours of ice cream listed on cards. In this way the items <u>vanilla</u>, <u>banana</u>, and <u>ginger</u> were elicited (the first two lacking, the last having, historical final /r/), in the crucial prepausal or preconsonantal position.

Of the 26 people approached in Portsmouth, 19 were induced to utter <u>ginger</u> and <u>vanilla</u> and/or <u>banana</u> in the phonetic context required. Ten of these were male (5 men, 5 boys of school age), and nine female (8 women, 1 girl of school age). Of the 16 people approached in Southampton, 11 gave satisfactory interviews: 6 were male (5 men, 1 boy), and 5 female (all women).

It was possible to divide respondents into three categories:

A. (<u>non-rhotic</u>) Those who had nonprevocalic r-colouring neither for <u>-er</u> nor for <u>-a</u>;

B. (<u>rhotic</u>) Those who had nonprevocalic r-colouring for <u>-er</u> but not for <u>-a</u>;

C. (<u>hyperrhotic</u>) Those who had nonprevocalic r-colouring for both <u>-er</u> and <u>-a</u>.

Analysis showed that most respondents came in category A, followed by category B, and the smallest number in category C - as shown in the following Table.

TABLE. Nonprevocalic r-colouring in the items -er (ginger) and -a (vanilla and/or banana) in two Hampshire urban localities

Category	Portsmouth			Southampton			combined		
	m.	f.	all	m.	f.	all	m.	f.	all
A.	6	7	13	2	6	8	8	13	21
B.	3	2	5	2	0	2	5	2	7
C.	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	2
total	10	9	19	5	6	11	15	15	30

In all, thirty successful interviews were carried out. Of the respondents, 70 per cent (21) used a pronunciation which - as far as final r-colouring is concerned - might as well have been RP or popular London speech. The remaining 30 per cent (9) showed evidence of rhoticity in their pronunciation, with r-colouring at least in non-prevocalic ginger; of these 7 per cent (2) had non-prevocalic r-colouring in banana, too. There seemed to be no significant difference between the two localities in this respect, although the sample is too small to allow statistically sound conclusions to be drawn.

Dr. Fudge, a native of Southampton, says[3] that final (ə) does not occur at all in 'pure' Southampton speech, and is felt to be 'cissy'. Nevertheless, he says, "it does occur in the speech of those who want to better themselves (especially women)".

The results obtained are evidently in accordance with this description of the situation. The occurrence in each locality investigated of one, if only one, instance of non-prevocalic (ə) in vanilla and/or banana, shows that the pronunciation does indeed exist locally[4]; the fact that it was not more common suggests that it is generally felt to be inappropriate in "public" language - the register used when speaking to an outsider such as an ostensible market research interviewer - when informants might reasonably be expected to be on their linguistic best behaviour.

A strikingly greater proportion of men than of women used (ə) non-prevocalically (7 out of 15 men, as against 2 out of 15 women). A larger sample would enable one to verify or otherwise a hypothesis that the use of (ə) here is sex-linked, in accordance with the reasonable supposition that women are more sensitive than men to social pressure in matters like pronunciation.

J.C.W.

Footnotes

[1] by Dr. Erik Fudge of the Edinburgh University Department of Phonetics and Linguistics, in private correspondence.

[2] see, for example, A.C. Gimson, Introduction to the Pronunciation of English, p. 204.

[3] loc. cit.

[4] assuming that the relevant respondents were in fact locals (which is not known for certain).