

Almost everyone in New York is raising PRICEs

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1. Introduction

PRICE-PRICE Canadian raising (PPCR) is explored as a recent or in-progress phonological split in various northern US locations (e.g., Vance 1987, Fruehwald 2007). PPCR appears unreported for New York City English (NYCE), although Kaye (2012) describes an analogous long-established split with PRICE-backing in place of PRICE-raising:

	PRICE	PRIZE
Traditional Canadian Raising	[aɪ]	[aɪ]
Kaye's traditional NYCE system	[aɪ]	[aɪ]

Kaye connects this split systemically with the NYCE LOT-PALM distinction, arguing that not only do the phonetic outcomes of PRICE and PALM lengthening and backing match but so do the conditioning environments. Kaye's unified analysis suggests that both contrasts should co-occur. So, as LOT/PALM undergo merger among younger White NYCE speakers (Newman 2016), PRICE-backing should also be lost. Similarly, older Whites preserving the LOT/PALM contrast (Newman 2014) should back PRICE.

Goals

- To test Kaye's prediction of a cross-speaker correlation in PALM/PRICE-backing.
- To examine ethnic correlates of change in PRICE/PRIZE.

2. Method

Subjects: 41 native speakers of NYCE, recruited and interviewed by CUNY Queens College undergraduates 2015-17, through the Corpus of New York City English (CoNYCE) project. Participants were aged 16-68 ($M=34.4$, $SD=17.8$); 23 women; 13 Asians, 11 Hispanics, 4 Blacks and 11 Whites.

Materials & procedure: Data were gathered in a read-aloud task containing 37 tokens each of PRICE/PRIZE, 40 of LOT/PALM and 17 of THOUGHT. Vowels were measured at 35% of duration using FAVE-Extract (Rosenfelder et al. 2014) and Prosodylab-Aligner (Gorman et al. 2011), via DARLA (Reddy & Stanford 2015).

3. Results

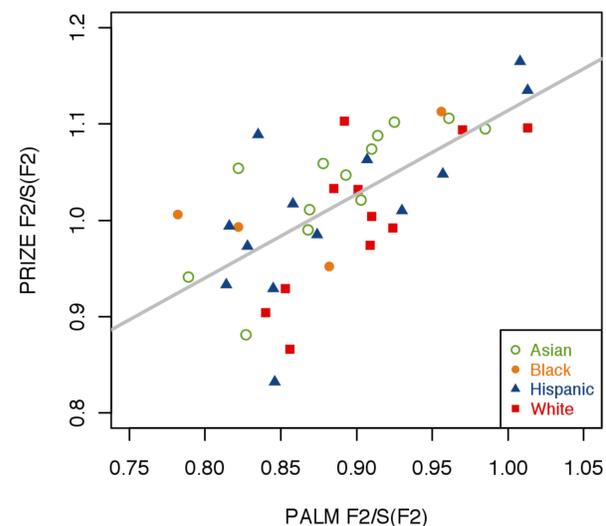


Figure 1: PRIZE & PALM F2s by speaker. Backing of PALM correlates with backing of PRICE ($r=.68$, $p<.0001$).

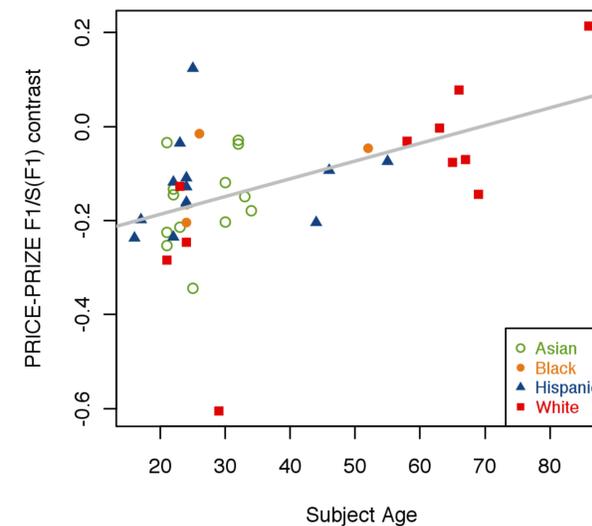


Figure 2: PRICE-PRIZE F1 contrast by speaker. Younger speakers show higher PRICE nuclei relative to PRIZE nuclei ($r=.50$, $p=.0008$).

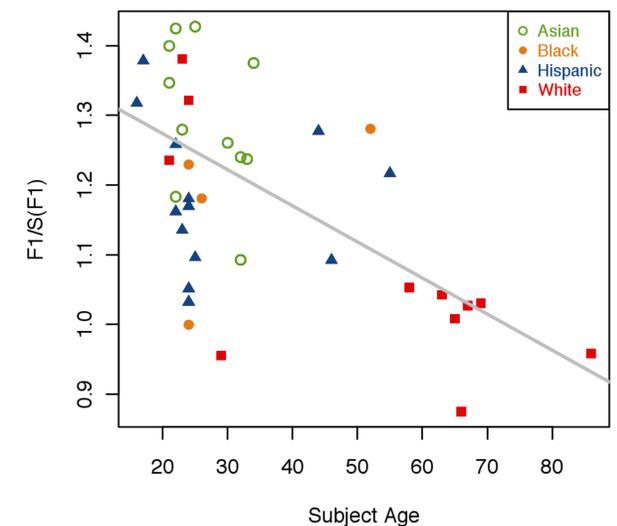


Figure 3: THOUGHT F1 by speaker. Younger speakers tend toward lower THOUGHTs ($r=-.57$, $p=.0001$). A model with speakers < 40 reveals an effect of ethnicity with Asians favoring lower THOUGHTs ($p=.02$).

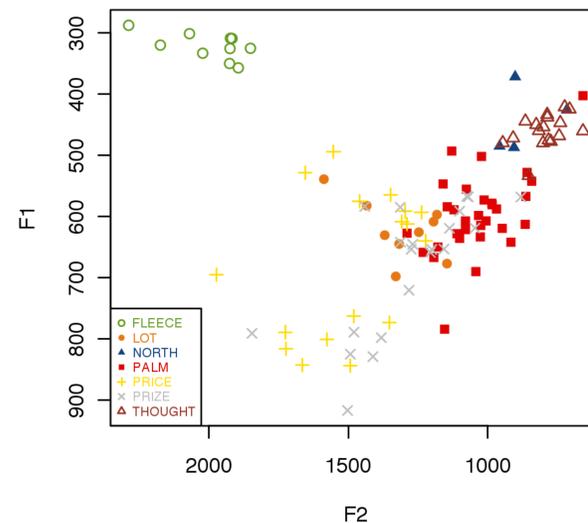


Figure 4: Sample older speaker (63, Irish-Am. male).

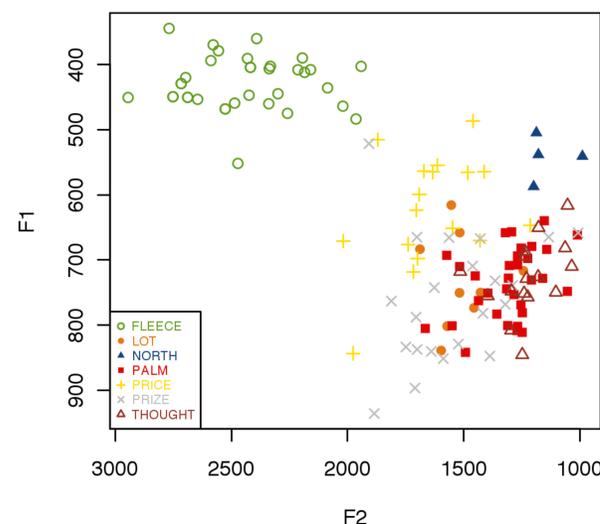


Figure 5: Sample younger speaker (21, Korean-Am. female).

Three main findings

- Support for Kaye's (2012) phonological approach.** The cross-speaker correlation in the backing of PRICE and PALM (Fig. 1) supports Kaye's phonological approach. The fact that this is not restricted to older whites is surprising from the perspective of Newman's (2014) description of the LOT-PALM merger in NYCE.
- Regionalization.** Younger speakers tend away from the traditional local NYCE pattern and toward the regional PPCR pattern—fronter PRICE and higher PRICE. Our data suggest no effect of speaker ethnicity on this change.
- Asians lead THOUGHT-lowering.** NYCE South and East-Asians are leading a change toward lowered THOUGHT, consonant with Becker's (2010) and Wong's (2012) production results for Manhattan and Johnson's (2001) and Haddican et al.'s (2016) homophony judgment results.

4. Conclusions

This is the first production study showing a split PRICE/PRIZE system in New York City English. Results from the read-aloud task suggest change in progress from a highly localized pattern marked by PRICE-backing to a more general one marked by PRICE-raising (relative to PRIZE), and the loss of the LOT/PALM distinction. These findings are reminiscent of results showing change away from the localized short-a split system to a regional nasal system, but the present results suggest no evidence for the ethnic-group distribution reported for the latter change (Becker & Wong 2010). Future work might examine these ethnicity results further, as well as age and ethnicity effects on MOUTH-fronting, which has also been related to change in PRICE/PRIZE (Kaye 2012, Labov, Ash, & Boberg 2006).