

Cross-community variation in onset /l/ among California Latinx speakers

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Overview

Among white speakers of English, onset /l/ has darkened over time (Van Hofwegen 2011, Macdonald and Stuart-Smith 2014).

Some speakers of Chicanx English exhibit lighter /l/ (Van Hofwegen 2009), though variation across geographic regions is likely.

We compare the darkness of onset /l/ in two largely Latinx communities in California: Bakersfield and Salinas.

Speakers from Salinas, where Latinxs constitute an overwhelming majority, have maintained light /l/.

Variation in //

Work on Coda //


- Class and ethnicity (e.g., Ash 1992, Dodsworth 2005, Durian 2008)
- Methodological challenges (e.g., Hall-Lew and Fix 2012)
- Development of new acoustic (Stuart-Smith et al. 2015) and articulatory (e.g., Turton 2014, 2015) methods


Work on Onset //


- Darkening over time (Van Hofwegen 2011, Macdonald and Stuart-Smith 2014)
- Ethnic differences (Van Hofwegen 2009, Stuart-Smith et al. 2011)
- Light // as Spanish transfer/contact phenomenon
 - Spanish-English bilinguals produce lighter // than monolingual English speakers (Barlow et al. 2013, Barlow 2014)
 - Family-oriented peer group produces most light // (Slomanson and Newman 2014)

Variation in Onset //


Lighter Variants


 “I would say **late** yeah”
(SAL, Latinx, female, 49)


 “people would just show up and
leave and I’m like”
(BAK, Latinx, male, 26)

 “they have **leadership** and”
(BAK, Latinx, male, 69)

Darker Variants

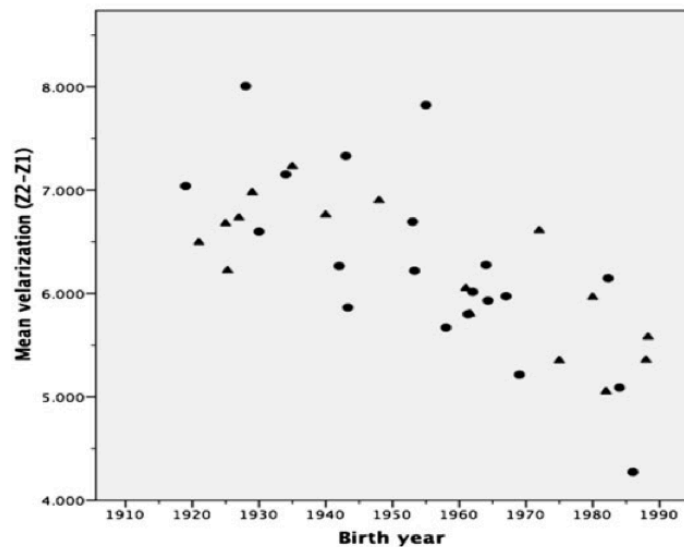
 “and that’s where I **learned** to speak
Spanish”
(SAL, Latinx, female, 64)

 “some of the teachers would cross a
line and I”
(BAK, Latinx, male, 44)

 “because it **looks** so nice”
(SAL, Latinx, female, 26)

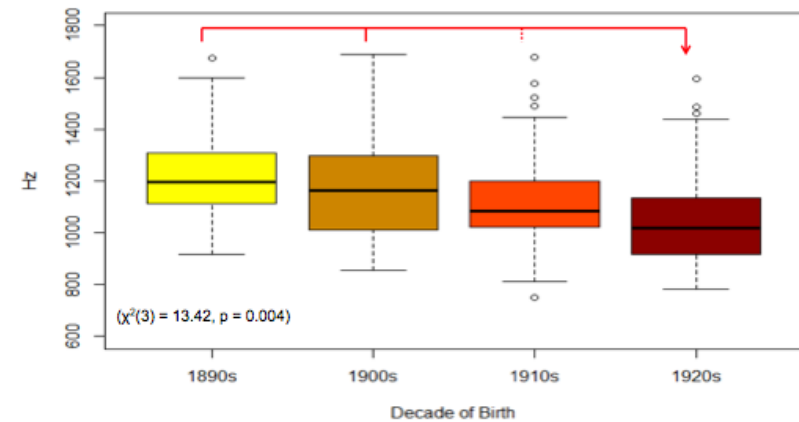
General Trend Toward Darkening of Onset //

North Carolina
(Van Hofwegen 2011: 388)



← darker

Glasgow
(Macdonald & Stuart-Smith 2014)



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Ethnic Differences in Onset /l/

Van Hofwegen (2011)

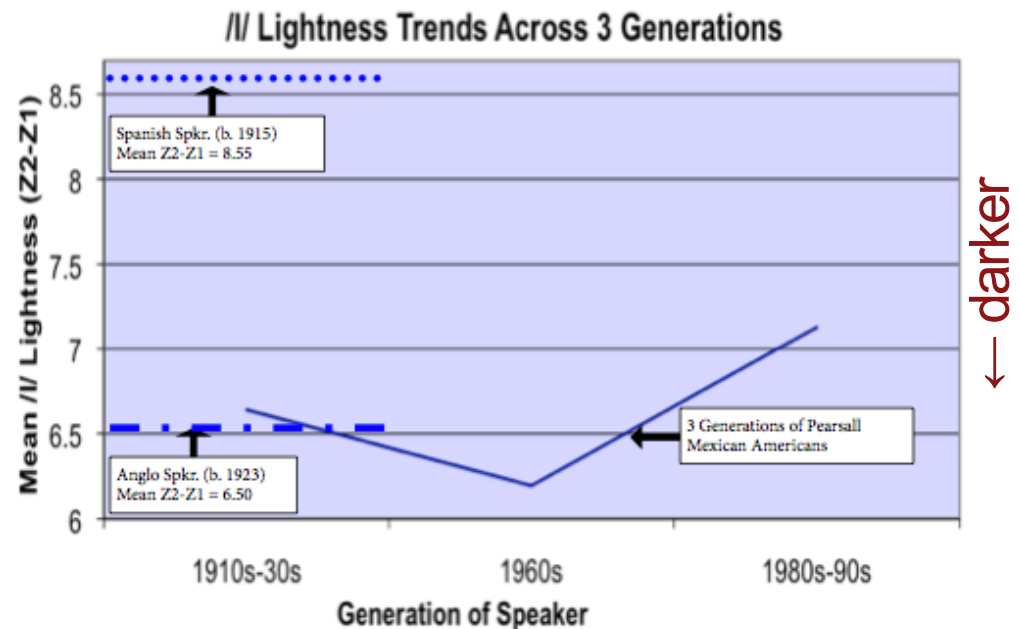
- lighter /l/ among African Americans in North Carolina

Stuart-Smith, Timmins, and Alam (2011)

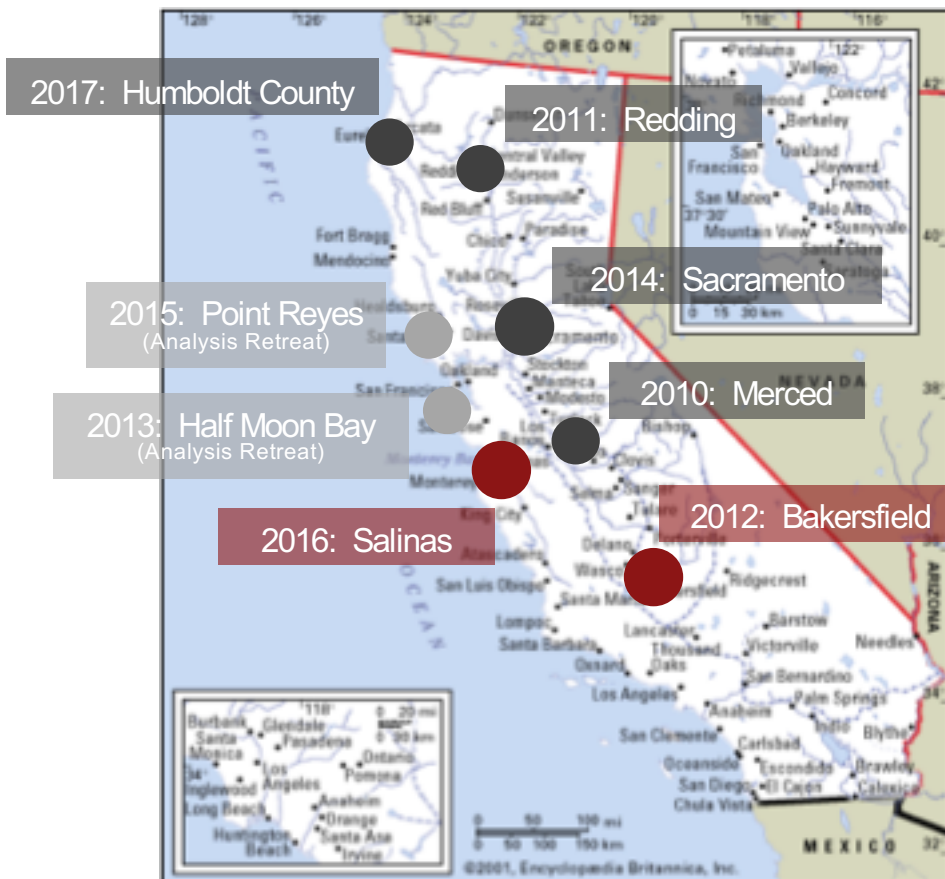
- Punjabi-speaking Asians exhibit lighter /l/ than non-Asians

Van Hofwegen (2009)

- curvilinear pattern among Chicano English speakers, showing darkening, then lightening



Voices of California



Sociolinguistic interviews by Stanford University student and faculty fieldworkers

Data Collection

- Snowball sampling, mixed demographics
- Interviews, word lists, map tasks with each speaker
- Between 130+ interviews per site, over 700 in corpus

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Bakersfield



Population: 347,483
(2010 U.S. Census)

Dramatic increase in Latinx population over the last 40 years

Latinx population nearly doubled between 2000 and 2010

Somewhat segregated along White/Latinx lines (CCRH, 2015)

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Salinas



Population: 150,441
(2010 U.S. Census)

Population has been majority Latinx for over 20 years

Steady, significant growth

Highly segregated along White/Latinx lines (City of Salinas, 2015)

Sample

| 49 Latinx Speakers (all native speakers of English, 71% bilingual in Spanish) | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| 22 from Bakersfield | | 29 from Salinas | |
| 13 female | 9 male | 14 female | 15 male |
| 1954-1994 | 1948-1991 | 1953-1998 | 1951-1996 |

Analysis

Processing

- Interviews transcribed and force-aligned with FAVE-align (Rosenfelder et al. 2011)

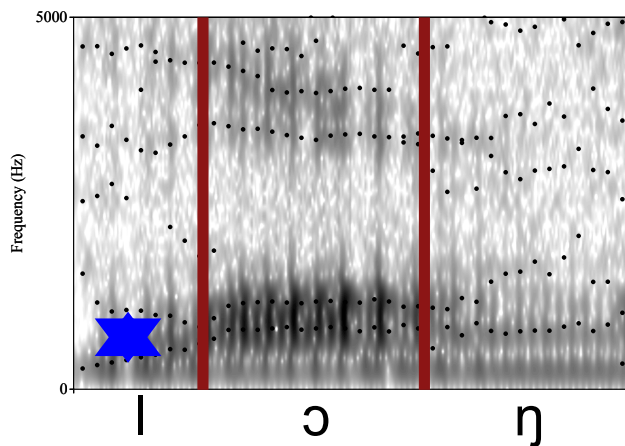
Token Selection

- For each speaker, 30 tokens of word-initial //, no more than 2 tokens/lemma
- Exclusions: *like*, simultaneous talk, unclear speech, preceding word-final //

Analysis

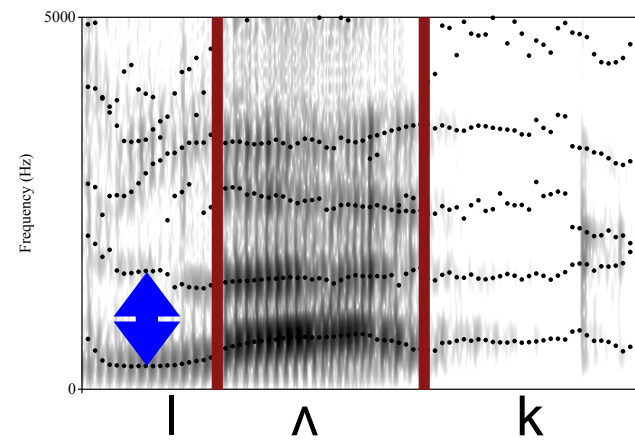
Acoustic Analysis (Sproat and Fujimura 1993, Van Hofwegen 2011)

Dark /l/ in *long* (low Z2-Z1)



Latina, 34 years old

Light /l/ in *luck* (high Z2-Z1)



Latino, 60 years old

Statistics

Mixed-effects linear regression model on lightness of // measure (Z2-Z1) (N=2,060).

Fixed Effects

Social

- community
- birth year
- sex
- education
- occupation
- \pm bilingual

Linguistic

- stress
- log duration
- phonetic environment (Z2 30 ms into following vowel)

Random Effects

- speaker
- word

Summary of Model

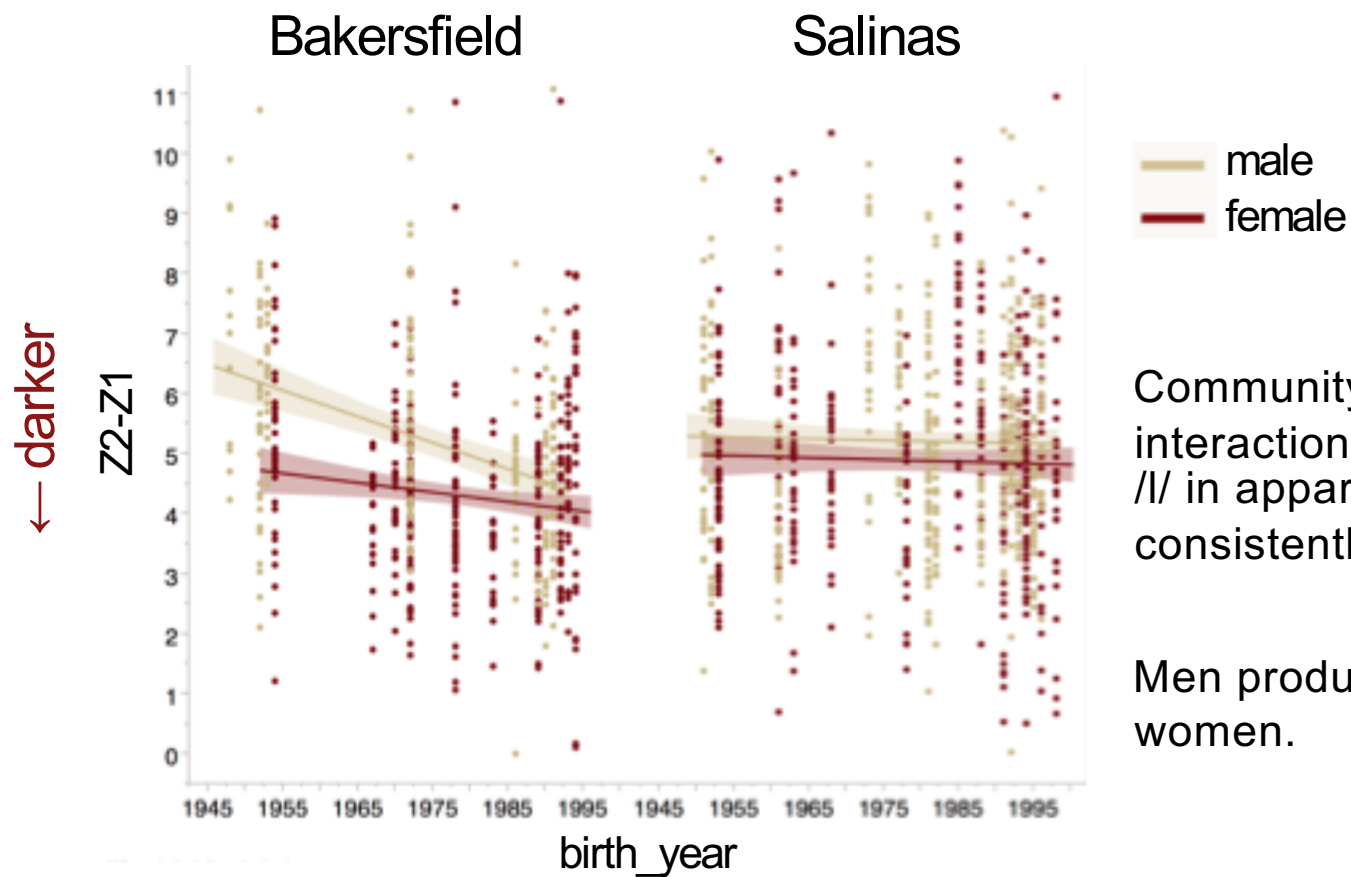
| Term | Estimate | Std Error | DFDen | t Ratio | Prob> t |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|---------|
| Intercept | 40.249 | 12.624 | 47.2 | 3.19 | 0.0025* |
| phonetic_context(30ms_into_V) | 0.347 | 0.0249 | 1372.8 | 13.90 | <.0001* |
| duration(log) | 0.214 | 0.0938 | 1363.7 | 2.28 | 0.0229* |
| community[BAK] | -0.189 | 0.0944 | 46.6 | -2.00 | 0.0515 |
| sex[Female] | -0.257 | 0.0934 | 45.8 | -2.75 | 0.0086* |
| birth_year | -0.018 | 0.0064 | 47.1 | -2.85 | 0.0064* |
| community[BAK]*birth_year | -0.013 | 0.0064 | 46.9 | -2.09 | 0.0418* |

Linguistic Factors

- phonetic context: the higher the F2 of the following vowel, the lighter the //
- duration: // becomes lighter with longer duration

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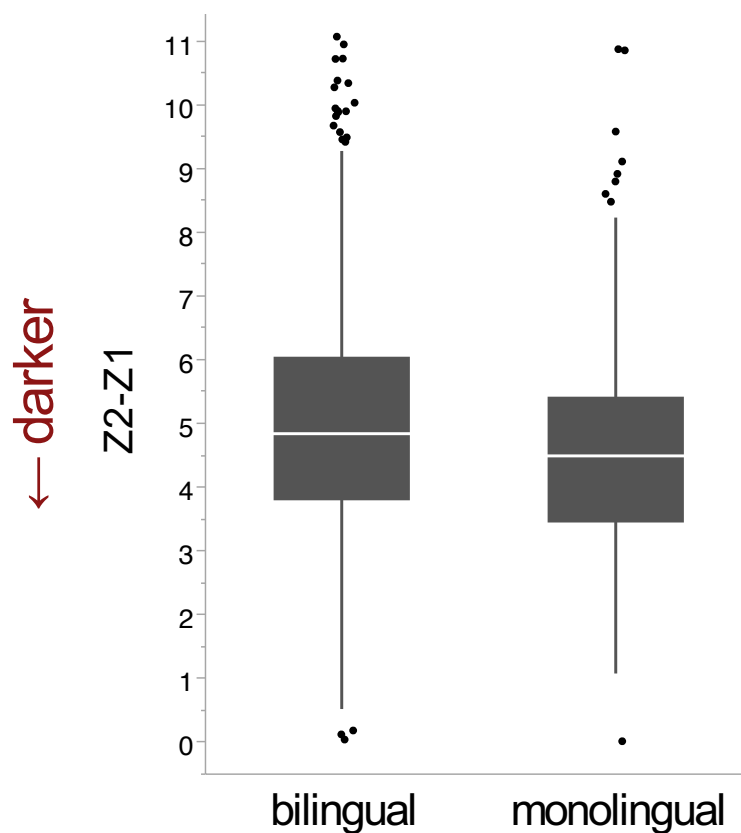
Social Factors



Community * birth year
interaction indicates darkening of
// in apparent time in Bakersfield,
consistently light // in Salinas.

Men produce lighter // than
women.

Bilingualism



Bilinguals trend toward lighter /l/ than monolinguals ($p < 0.08$).

No other social factors (education, occupation) approached significance.

Cross-Community Differences

Light // as a resource for constructing Latinx identity

- Could be interpreted as transfer phenomenon
- Data suggests influence of distinct community patterns





Bakersfield

- Sizeable Latinx minority
- Accommodation to majority pattern of dark // (Fought 1999)

Salinas




- Highly visible Latinx majority
- Positive evaluation of light //

Bakersfield: Community Dynamics Promote Dark //

- Despite growth, Latinx residents see Bakersfield as a small town with a small-town mentality.  “That’s one thing that always baffles me is the size and the population of the town but...it’s like that continues to grow, but the mentality does not”
- Physical expansion has been driven by outside investment, and large-scale, top-down development.  “You can tell there’s lik- all kinds of like uh new track homes, new housing developments, new uh business establishments [...] but then all of a sudden they just started to invest in downtown, businesses...”
- These factors contribute to sentiment that older, white residents and big business hold balance of power in Bakersfield.  “Bakersfield’s ran by old white people. Old white dudes. That’s what they are – good ol’ boys.”  “No matter how big Bakersfield is, there’s the good ol’ boys that still run it.”

Adoption of dark // as symbolic capital associated with power held by white community members.

Salinas: Community Dynamics Promote Light //

- Salinas has centered around its agricultural industry – and its sizeable community of predominantly Latinx farmworkers.  “The feel of Salinas is ... we’re ag town. You know, most of uh Salinas is uh built around agriculture and a lot of the laborers.”
- The prominence of the Latinx community has driven low-level, local change; some businesses are starting to cater to its needs.  “I think more and more businesses are realizing that uh Latinos have you know, purchasing power – and if they want to grow their business, and uh grow their market – you know they have to target to that Spanish-speaking audience.”
- Spanish has become a shibboleth of community membership.  “It’s mostly Spanish around here. If you don’t speak Spanish around here, you’re gonna be lost. ((laughter))”

Retention of light // as resource for constructing Latinx identity, which is valued across the community.

Conclusion

- Latinx speakers in Salinas and Bakersfield demonstrate different patterns in onset /l/
- Light /l/ not a straightforward marker of Latinx identity
 - Features of Chicano English index much more than simply ethnicity (Flores-Bayer 2017, this conference)
 - Ethnicity-based linguistic variation tied up in social histories of specific groups in specific communities (Laferrière 1979, Sharma 2016, Sharese King this conference)
- Need to study variation across Latinx communities (Fought 2003, Flores-Bayer 2017), as light /l/'s potential to index Latinx identity varies across communities, even in the same state.

Thank You!

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Questions?

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