

The development of nasal systems for /æ/ and /aw/ in Charleston, South Carolina.

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This paper reports on the development of nasal systems for short-a and /aw/ in Charleston, S.C. It is based on the acoustic analysis of the speech of 50 Charlestonians, representing the socio-economic spectrum of the city. F1/F2 measurements are subjected to a series of multiple linear regression analyses, with social class, gender, age, and style, as independent variables.

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, the traditional dialect of Charleston, S.C., showed no allophonic distinction between short-a before nasals, as in *Dan*, and before oral consonants, as in *dad*; the vowel nucleus was in low front position (McDavid 1955; Kurath & McDavid 1961). This is confirmed by the acoustic analysis of a speaker from Beaufort, S.C., interviewed in 1965. Speakers currently in their 40s and younger show a clear nasal system, with considerable phonetic separation between the two allophones: short-a before nasals is high and front, whereas the non-nasal allophone remains firmly in low front position for most speakers. The change is traced in apparent time for speakers aged 90 to 8, including different generations within a family. The fronting and raising of /æN/ (*Dan*, *pan*, etc.) is led by a group located centrally on the socio-economic scale; the lack of a clear style-shifting pattern suggests little social evaluation of the change. At the same time, the allophone of short-a before oral consonants, as in *dad* and *that*, is retracting in phonetic space; the backing is led by women.

Similarly, the traditional dialect showed little allophonic differentiation between /aw/ before nasals, as in *down* and *sound*, and before other voiced consonants or word finally (there was Canadian Raising before voiceless consonants). The nasal allophone is now generally higher and fronter than /aw/ elsewhere. However, the shift of the nasal allophone does not seem to be continuing in the same direction. Apparent time data suggest that there may have been a reversal of the change. Whereas for speakers aged 40-90 there is a clear fronting and raising pattern for /awN/ in apparent time, younger speakers show a retrograde movement in F1: the vowel appears to be lowering to its earlier position.

The nasal system that Charleston has developed for the two vowels appears to be the default phonological system for American English: the allophones of /æ/ and /aw/ before nasal consonants are higher and fronter than the ones before oral consonants.