

A PHONOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SPEECH OF
PADUCAH, MC CRACKEN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

A Senior Honors Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the English Department
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Arts
in English
with Specialization in Linguistics

by
Sandra Dyson Rodriguez
August 1975

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This study could hardly have been carried out if there were not on the map, a place called Paducah, Kentucky. While, of course, I cannot express my gratitude to a geographical entity, those who live there, especially those who participated, giving of their time and support of several kinds, deserve a word of special thanks.

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Finally, I extend sincere thanks to my husband, Rodrigo Rodriguez, for his patience and encouragement, and to my sons, Landon and Clayton, for accepting the negligence of their mother for two months.

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ABSTRACT

This study has as its primary purpose that of describing the American English dialect spoken in Paducah and McCracken County, Kentucky. Emphasis is made on the phonology. The basic materials used to carry out this study were taped interviews with twelve adult speakers of that dialect. The interviews were conducted with the aid of a booklet of worksheets of selected items from A Compilation of the Worksheets of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada and Associated Projects.

The dialect was found to be characteristically South Midland, evidenced by a general tendency to diphthongize the checked vowels, by the presence of you-all or y'all as the second person plural pronoun (with your-all's as the possessive form), by the presence of /r/ intervocalically and in word-final position, and by a tendency toward monophthongization of the diphthong /aI/.

Morphological forms and lexical items occurring in the worksheets revealed more evidence of stigmatized usage than did the phonological features, although the more educated speakers preferred one form over another occasionally as sounding more correct.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
SECTION	
1 SETTLEMENT HISTORY	1
2 METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED	5
3 THE INFORMANTS	10
4 THE PHONEMES	14
5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIALECT	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1 Map of Kentucky	3

1 SETTLEMENT HISTORY

Kentucky is . . .
In the very heart of America.
It is bounded on the east, north,
 and west by rivers
And on the south by mountains.
Only one boundary is not a natural
 one,
It is the portion of the southern
 boundary
That runs westward from the mountains
Across the delta lowlands to the
 Mississippi.

. . .
Kentucky is neither southern, northern,
 eastern, or western,
It is the core of America.¹

The poetic description is geographically accurate, elegantly worded, and contains specific information regarding the boundaries of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, a state which is characterized by the usual tranquility of mid-America. Its principle claims to fame are the world-famous annual Kentucky Derby and a native son, Abraham Lincoln. More recently, Kentucky has given to the United States a vice president, Alben W. Barkley. In American literature, the names of Robert Penn Warren and Irvin S. Cobb are hardly unknown. Both Barkley and Cobb were from the western portion of the state, the city of Paducah. Presently home to about 50,000 citizens, Paducah is the seat of McCracken County.

A part of the Jackson Purchase, Paducah was added to the territory of Kentucky in 1818.² It grew into a

town of commercial importance because of its location. The Ohio and the Tennessee Rivers flow together at the foot of Kentucky Avenue, a principle street of the present-day business district.³ A map of Kentucky, indicating the location of Paducah and McCracken County, appears at the end of this section.

Popular tradition holds that Paducah was named for a legendary Chickasaw Indian, Chief Paduke. He was allegedly buried on the banks of the Tennessee River, for he had desired to stay forever in that beautiful place. A conversation with Professor C. E. Roberts, historian at Paducah Community College, revealed that there is no historical basis for the account, but he was quick to point out that, because of its romantic nature, local people will not readily accept any other account as fact.

McCracken County was named for Captain Virgil McCracken, a native of Woodford County, (Kentucky), who was a hero in the War of 1812.⁴

Those who settled in the territory were largely from the states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas.⁵ Some of the early settlers came from Europe, either directly or by way of the older American settlements mentioned above. The following excerpt accurately sums up the general trend of settlement:

By the northern route Scotch Irishmen and upcountry Virginians made their way westward, while the southern route was used chiefly by homeseekers from the piedmont and Valley regions of Virginia . . . the upcountry Virginia element came to dominate Kentucky, but there was a strong and active Pennsylvania contingent.⁶

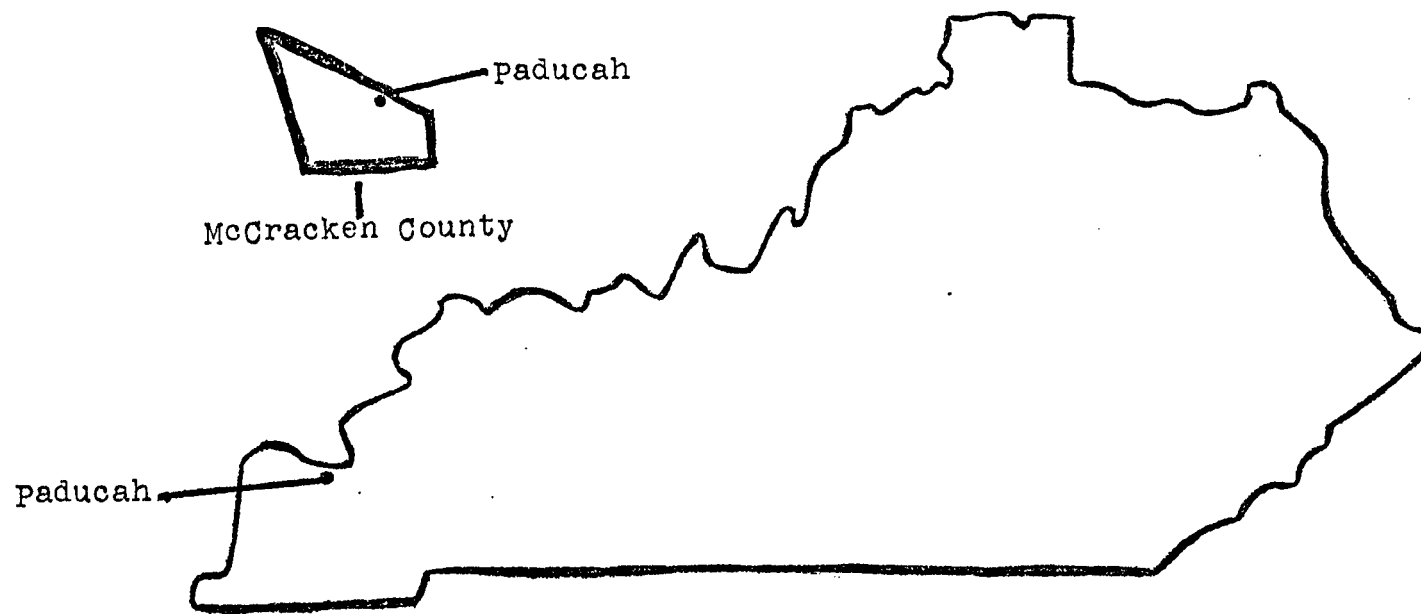


Fig. 1. Map of Kentucky.

NOTES

¹Stuart, Jesse, Kentucky Is My Land (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1953), p. 11.

²Clark, Thomas D., A History of Kentucky (Lexington, Ky.: John Bradford Press, 1960), p. 6.

³A pamphlet, "Paducah, Kentucky," was obtained from the Chamber of Commerce. It states: "Mile 0 of the Tennessee River is at the foot of Owen's Island, across from the foot of Kentucky Avenue."

⁴Perrin, W. H., J. H. Battle, and G. C. Kniffiny, Kentucky: A History of the State (Louisville: F. A. Battery Co., 1888), p. 620.

⁵Clark, A History, p. 15.

⁶Abernathy, Thomas P., Three Virginia Frontiers (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), p. 64.

2 METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED

The purpose of this study is to describe the speech of Paducah and McCracken Kentucky, with emphasis on the phonology. The segmental phonemes and their occurrence in the speech of twelve informants of differing social status and economic backgrounds will reveal the sounds of the dialect of the native speakers of English of the defined area.

The study has been designed to follow the pattern established by the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, and the items selected for the worksheets were taken from a compilation of items used in previous studies.¹ Those items selected were sufficient to produce data for a complete study; that is, vocabulary, grammar, and sound, even though it was decided prior to the selection that the study was to concentrate primarily on phonological forms.

Dr. Raven I. McDavid, Jr., editor of the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States, was contacted in order to ascertain that the dialect of Paducah had not been previously studied. Obtaining his permission, if not his blessing, is an invitation to proceed with a study of this nature, as well as to use all materials pertinent to the production of such. He replied very promptly to each request and offered suggestions for the proper

effectuation of the intended work.²

The period of time spent gathering the data was three weeks. Interviews were scheduled with the informants at their convenience. Each interview was conducted in an enclosed room, with the interviewer and the person being interviewed seated at a table facing each other. The entire session, in all cases, was recorded on tape. The interviewer guided by the material contained in the worksheet booklets, led the participant in a conversation designed to elicit all specified forms. All participants were invited to look at the sheets as often as necessary. This procedure was followed in order to conserve time and to aid in the elicitation of desired forms. Informants V and VIII did not use them; they felt more comfortable without them. The aged ladies, Informants XI and XII, were not shown the booklets, but were led into a conversation which would yield many of the key forms. The remaining participants referred to the worksheets only occasionally, when they felt the need.

The ideal situation, of course, would be to elicit the desired items in their entirety without aid from written forms. However, the time factor made this impossible, and this manner of proceeding was the best solution for achieving an early termination of the research. The recordings reveal no significant difference in the quality of the data, whether or not the worksheet booklets were used. The interviews were three to four hours in length.

Phonetic transcriptions of all taped material were

made, producing the entire corpus of data from which the conclusions herein contained were drawn.

For the purpose of phonetic notation, an adaptation of the IPA has been used. It varies only slightly from the vowel chart developed for use in recording the material for the Linguistic Atlas of New England.³ The vowel symbols used in this study appear in the following chart. Those in parenthesis are rounded vowels.

i	(ɨ)	(u)
I	ɛ	(u)
e	ɛ	(o)
æ.	(3) 3 ^	(ɔ)
a	a	(e)

Vowel length (duration) is marked only when the vowel is distinctly audible as long. One dot signifies that it has been held (it is not distinctly short), [aː]; two dots indicate that the vowel was held significantly longer, [aːː].

Three degrees of stress are indicated: primary, secondary, and weak stress. Primary stress is shown by a vertical line placed as a superscript (') before the stressed syllable; secondary stress by the same character, but written as a subscript (,). Weakly stressed syllables are those which are unmarked.

All vowel phonemes and their allophones may shift their positions. The signs ^ (raised), v (lowered), < (advanced), and > (retracted) are used to indicate the shifts.

NOTES

¹Davis, Alva L., Raven I. McDavid, Jr., and Virginia G. McDavid, eds., A Compilation of the Worksheets of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada and Associated Projects (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 1-106.

²Letters received from Prof. McDavid mainly list the counties in Kentucky which had been surveyed and the names of various studies which have revealed information pertinent to this study.

³A diagram of the chart appears in Kurath, Hans, Handbook of Linguistic Geography of New England (Providence, R.I.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1939), p. 123.

3 THE INFORMANTS

Those who participated in the study did so willingly, even happily. Many others would have done so if they had been needed. The poem by Jesse Stuart quoted in the first section of this paper goes on to call Kentucky "A land of even tempo/A land of mild traditions."¹ The student of history will recall that the ideology of the state has long been diverse. It was a border state, did not secede from the Union, but Kentuckians enlisted in both services during the Civil War.² The most outstanding detail regarding that period, though, is the strikingly ironic historical fact that Kentucky was the birthplace of both the Presidents: Lincoln, of the Union; and Jefferson Davis, of the Confederacy. This lack of political uniformity continues today. Some people tend to be very out-going, others are shy.

With the exception of one person, who would not accept the presence of the tape recorder, all who were asked to participate in this study did so. Since the researcher is a native of Paducah, arranging interviews was uncomplicated. All the informants were either personal acquaintances or were friends of an acquaintance or of a relative.

The major consideration in choosing the informants was the degree to which they were native speakers of the

dialect. Of the twelve informants, eight were born in the city of Paducah or in McCracken County. None of these has lived for more than four years of his life outside the county. Two others were born in neighboring counties and moved to Paducah as children. The two remaining informants were born in Tennessee. Both of them, middle-aged adults, moved to Paducah as adolescents.

All informants were adults. Their ages ranged from 22 to 86. This helped gain information on the speech of three generations. Their educational backgrounds are very diverse; there are those with only an elementary school education, and one has a post-graduate degree.

Those who participated in this study are representative of their neighbors of all stations in life. It is to be noted that social status has not been a major issue in the classification. Age and education are the most clearly marked areas of diversity. Social status is judged in the United States largely by education and amount of income. It is for this reason that Linguistic Atlas studies rate informants by age and amount of education. It should be pointed out, though, that the better-educated speakers are as likely to use stigmatized forms in unguarded speech as are those with less education. Pronunciation is to a great extent homogeneous, vocabulary items and grammatical forms providing more valid social markers than phonetic forms.

The following table summarizes the personal data

known about the informants:

Informant Number	Age	Sex	Education	Occupation
I	32	F	1 year college	Housewife
II	24	F	College degree B. Mus. Ed.	Teacher, housewife
III	26	M	College degree 6 sem. hrs. grad.	Teacher, businessman
IV	48	F	B.S., M.S. Elem. Ed.	Teacher, librarian
V	54	M	3 yrs. college, Pharmacy school	Pharmacist
VI	36	F	High school	Housewife
VII	22	M	3 years college	Student
VIII	44	F	High school, beauty college	Housewife
IX	29	F	High school	Housewife
X	52	F	8th grade	Factory worker, housewife
XI	85	F	6th grade	Housewife (widow)
XII	86	F	6th grade	Housewife (widow)

NOTES

¹Stuart, My Land, p. 17.

²Clark, A History, p. 330.

4 THE PHONEMES

A phoneme has been defined in many ways. Some definitions are quite clear and straightforward while others are vague and complicated. All, however, say basically that "a phoneme is a class of phonetically similar sounds, contrasting and mutually exclusive with all similar classes in the language."¹ Some of the fourteen vowel phonemes of the Paducah dialect have allophonic variations which are obviously predictable, while others fail to yield a clear pattern of variation. The term "free variation" has been applied to those of the latter group, although with some reservation, due to recent studies concerning the predictability of the linguistic variable and the constraints that promote highly accurate predictions of occurrence.²

The vowel phonemes of the dialect of Paducah and McCracken County, established according to the above definition, and verified by the process of minimal pair contrast, (e.g., bat/bet).

The vowels of stressed syllables have been explained as falling into two classes: (1) Free vowels, usually upgliding diphthongs, which occur either before consonants or word - finally; (2) checked vowels, usually monophthongal and ingliding, restricted to a pre-consonantal position. The following list describes the free vowels

first, and the checked vowels follow.³

Free vowels:⁴

/i/ as in three, yeast, bean

/u/ as in two, shoes, spoon

/e/ as in eight, cake, way

/o/ as in oats, post, ago

/ɔ/ as in fog, frost, law

/aɪ/ as in five, library, twice

/aʊ/ as in cloud, owl, drown

/ɔɪ/ as in boy, joint, poison

Checked vowels:

/ɪ/ as in six, kitchen, closet

/ʊ/ as in wood, push, pull

/ɛ/ as in egg, seven, February

/æ/ as in back, ashes, January

/ʌ/ as in shut, hundred, bucket

/ɜ/ as in weather, girl, heard (occurs only before
/r/)

/ɑ/ as in father, car, garden

The /i/ phoneme of three, yeast, bean is usually an unrounded upgliding diphthong [Iⁱ], which begins at a lax lowered high-front position, and moves to a higher, tense position. It occurs as a monophthong in words like evening. The major allophones are: [i^v] as in she; [i[˙]] as in piece; [i^I] as in seesaw; [i^ɛ] as in meal; and, [i^ɔ] as in wheel.

The /u/ phoneme of two, shoes, spoon is an

upgliding diphthong [U_u], as in hoops. It begins at a lower-high back rounded position, moving upward and back to a tense position. Major allophones include: [u] as in new (after /j/); [u[•]] as in spoon; [I_u] as in shoes; [ʌ] as in do it; and [u^ə] as in hoot (owl).


The /e/ phoneme of eight, cake, way is most frequently pronounced as an upgliding diphthong [eI] which is unrounded and begins at a tense mid-front position and moves toward the high-front area. In words like April, eighty, /e/ occurs both as a monophthong and as a diphthong. Eighty may have an upgliding [e^I]. Also a free variant is [e^ə] as in bread.

The /o/ phoneme of oats, post, ago usually occurs as the upgliding diphthong [o^U], which begins at a rounded mid-back position and moves upward. A shorter upglide occurs frequently in word final position [o^U]. It may occur as a monophthong under secondary stress (hotél), or when tomorrow has /o/ value in word final. Frequently appearing variants are: [o^ə] as in sore; [o^U] as in shoulder; and, [o^{•U}] as in coat.

The /ɔ/ phoneme of fog, frost, law occurs as a rounded lower mid-back monophthong, as well as a diphthong as, for example, in dog [ɔ^{əv}], or saw [ɔ^v]. Other allophones which are frequent are [ɔ[•]] of torn up, and [ɔ:] as taught.

The [aI] phoneme as in five, library, twice is almost always monophthongized, becoming the low-front vowel [a]. All informants had [aI] occasionally,

particularly in guarded speech. PEAS notes that dialects having [a] show an occurrence of a "fast" diphthong⁵ before voiceless consonants (as in twice, night). This holds true only to some extent here; diphthongal phones are sporadic. Note below examples taken from the tapes. No clear pattern emerges, for the two columns represent equally typical utterances.

[aI]		[a]
twice		I'd say
night		stay awhile
right-handed		right now
bite		tired
wire		wiry
that's right		that's right
life		life
time		time

Other allophones of [aI] are: [a^{•ə}] as in nine; [a^{•I}] as in dying; and, [a^{•ɛ}] as in five.

The /aU/ phoneme of cloud, owl, and drown begins at a low-front position and raises rapidly, moving toward a high-back rounded position. In the Paducah dialect, [æ^ə]

predominates when followed by a voiced consonant, as in down and towel [ɔæ^ə, tæ^əl]. The situation seems to reverse itself in house and houses [hæ^əs] but [hæ^ʊzɪz]. Those informants who are college graduates showed a preference for [aU]; however, at all social levels, [æ^ə] seems to be a strong competitor.

The /ɔɪ/ phoneme of boy, joint, poison varies in the quality of the initial element. In initial position, as in oil, there is a strong tendency to monophthongize this upgliding diphthong, ranging from [ɔɪ > ɔ^ə > ɔ > o^ə]. In all cases, preceding a voiceless consonant, the value is [ɔɪ]. Before the liquid [l], most utterances are [ɔ^ə]. This phoneme did not appear before /r/ in the items of the worksheets for this study.

The /ɪ/ phoneme of six, kitchen, closet most frequently occurs as an unrounded lower high front monophthong. In cases of diphthongization, which are not rare in the speech of any of the informants, there is a lowering, resulting in [ɪ^ə]. It may occur in monosyllabic words, as in whip, or in disyllabic words, as chimney. In isolated cases, uneducated speakers may retract [ɪ] as far back as [ʊ], as in whip, [hwʊp].

A centralized monophthong, [ɜ] occurs very rarely, but never before /r/. Compare: heater [h^ɪit3r]; heated [h^ɪitɪd].

The /ʊ/ phoneme of wood, push, pull occurs as a rounded lower high-back monophthong, particularly in disyllabic words as butcher or bushel. The diphthongal forms are most frequently [ʊ^ə], as in pull, and, occasionally, [ʊ^ɪ], as in push. The former is typical of all speakers; the latter is sporadic. This phoneme occurs initially and medially, but not before /r/.

The /ɛ/ phoneme of egg, seven, February may be an unrounded mid-front lax monophthong or an upgliding

diphthong [ɛI]. Before /g/, it is almost invariably [ɛ^] or [ɛ>]. In some cases, as before /l/, [ɛ^ə] may occur, as in shell. Its occurrence before /r/ is limited, but it may be a weaker, second element of a glide, as in clear [kli^ɛr], or rarely as a lengthened monophthong [ɛ·r], as in harrow. [ɛr] occurs in Mary, merry, which are homophonic in this dialect. The rounded allophone has been represented in this study by the symbol [ɜ], as in burr. /ɛ/ does not occur finally, nor does it occur with regularity before a nasal. For example, it is usually [ɪ] before a nasal.

The /æ/ phoneme of back, ashes, January is an unrounded higher low-front vowel, which has as major allophones a raised [æ^I] as in bag, and [æ^ə] or [æ·] before a nasal, as in dance. Younger speakers appear to prefer the former; older informants used the latter most often. Before intervocalic /r/, as in marry or parents, it is almost always a monophthong. Sporadic occurrences of lengthening were noted, [æ·r]. (See the phoneme /aU/ for further peculiarities of this phoneme.)

The /ʌ/ phoneme of shut, hundred, bucket occurs usually as an unrounded mid-central monophthong. Before /ʃ, ʒ/ it is almost always a monophthong, although it is at times advanced, as in mush, [mʌʃ̹~mʌ<ʃ̹]. Before a nasal, as in lunch or bunch, it is frequently advanced, and ranges from [ʌ<] to [ʌ^ə].

The /ɜ/ phoneme alternates with /ʌ/, but is

restricted in occurrence to a position before /r/, as in Thursday. It is somewhat more constricted than the /ʌ/ of stressed syllables or the /ə/ of weakly stressed syllables.

The /a/ phoneme of father, car, garden occurs most frequently as a low-central monophthong. It may have a short upglide, as [a[^]]. In monosyllabic words that end in voiceless consonants, it is almost invariably [a]. In disyllabic words, as in college, it is frequently lengthened to [a[•]] as it is in hearth. The diphthong [a^ə] as in yard [jɑ^ərd], or [a^{•ə}] as in palm may occur. The rounded, retracted allophone [ɐ] occurs occasionally in the speech of all informants. It generally follows a bilabial consonant, most often /w/, as in wash [weʃ]. There is a definite r-coloring of the vowel in this sequence in almost all such utterances.

Six vowel phonemes may occur in weakly stressed syllables. They are /i, I, e, u, o, ə/. All except /ə/ may also occur in stressed syllables.

The /ə/ phoneme may occur initially, (ago), medially, (Saturday), or finally (sofa). It is a mid-central monophthong, and may alternate in the dialect with other phonemes, as: [o~ə] in tomorrow; [i~ə] in Missouri.

The twenty-four consonant phonemes of the Paducah dialect proved to be the same as those in other studies consulted.⁶ Consonant phonemes were tested before the sequence /Il/, as established by Pedersen.⁷ This process

established eighteen, and five more were established by minimal pair contrast, for example, /θ, ð/ in thigh and thy; /n, ŋ/ in sin and sing; /z, ʒ/ in zoo and you; and one more with nonminimal /ʝ, ʑ/ in pledge and pleasure. All forms given below did not appear in the material for this study, but Pedersen's list was read by two of the informants to insure the veracity of using his method.

The consonant phonemes, then are:

- /p/ as in pill, top, open
- /b/ as in bill, tab, able
- /t/ as in till, eaten, bit
- /d/ as in dill, bad, daddy
- /k/ as in kill, kick
- /g/ as in gill, peg, foggy
- /n/ as in nil, sin, net
- /ŋ/ as in sing, going
- /m/ as in mill, smile, some
- /f/ as in fill, laugh, after
- /v/ as in village, over, have
- /θ/ as in thigh, without, hearth
- /ð/ as in thy, father
- /s/ as in sill, dress, dresser
- /z/ as in zoo, his, business
- /ʃ/ as in shill, mush, bushel
- /ʒ/ as in pleasure, azure
- /ç/ as in chill, church
- /ʝ/ as in Jill, edge, pledge

/h/ as in hill, behind
 /j/ as in you, few
 /w/ as in will, twelve
 /l/ as in Lil, tiller
 /r/ as in real, rear

A complete description of the consonants used herein appears in the Handbook of Linguistic Geography of New England.⁸ There are, however, a few specific cases which warrant individual discussion.

In words like seven and eleven, the intervocalic /v/ tends to become bilabialized, yielding [sɛbən, (i)lɛbən]. In some cases, the nasal is also bilabialized and the final sound becomes bilabial /m/ [sɛbm, ilɛbm]. All speakers were careful to pronounce /v/ in elicited items. In unguarded speech, all except informants II, III, and IV (all college graduates) gave the /b/ form.

The /ʃ/ phoneme rarely occurs in final position. Before a voiced consonant, as in with milk, both /θ/ and /ʃ/ occur. The latter appears to be a social marker as well as a matter of age. Younger, more educated speakers prefer the former.

No clearly discernible pattern emerges in the alternation of /s, ʃ/, as in shrimp. Informant XII did not know what shrimp are but indicated that she enjoys [ˈastɛrz]. The form, grocery, varies from [ˈgroʊsɛrɪ] in guarded speech to [ˈgroʊʃrɪ] unguardedly. This was specifically noted in the untaped utterances of informants I, II,

and IV, who manage homes, and are prone to speak of this institution rather often.

For sumac, the range is [^ʲsu,mæk~'sju,mæk~'su,mæk~'su,meik]. PEAS lists [^ʲsu,mæk] as possibly "importing the preferred English form."⁹ It appears that the pronunciation is widely varied because some informants are familiar with the word and some are relying on their knowledge of the phonic value of the graphemes. A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English lists [^ʲsu'mæk] as "a spelling pronunciation used only by the literate," and [^ʲsɪu,mek] as "perhaps from use in tanning."¹⁰ The preferred form appears to be [^ʲsu,mæk], which Kenyon and Knott list as "historically natural."¹¹

The sequence "wh" appears in thirteen words in the worksheets for this study. With the exception of words like wharf, (where no known dialect produces /h/ and which is only a familiar "reading word" in Paducah, the usual term being dock); and whore, whole, words which historically began with /h/, the spelling being unetymological, most informants preserve the /h/ before /w/ in stressed syllables. The /hw/ words occurring follow, with the preferred form in transcription.

while [hwaˈl]
 whip [hwɪp]
 whetstone [hwɛˈtstoʊn]
 whistle [hwɪsəl]
 anywhere [ɪnɪhwɛər]
 whipping [hwɪpɪŋ]

what [hwɛ^ət]

whether [hwɪ^fðɜr]

where's [hwɛ^ərZ]

The following exceptions were noted:

whoa [wo:^ʊ] is always [w-]

Informant I added /h/ to wallop, [hwɛlɒp].

Informant III replaced /hw/ with /w/ in what,
whip, whipping.

Informants V and IX replaced /hw/ with /w/ in
whether.

Informant IX replaced /hw/ with /w/ in whipping,
but the value of the vowel was changed, yielding [wv[·]pɪ^vn].

The evidence, then supports the conclusion that
while in British English and some American dialects /w/
prevails,¹² the /hw/ is stable in this dialect.

The speech of Paducah is r-ful. The evidence
supports an /r/ intervocalically and in word-final posi-
tion almost without exception. It is not the trilled /r̄/
of three, nor the tense retroflex of initial position, but
a lax retroflex, and not merely an r-coloring of the vowel.

Evidence of intrusive /r/ is extremely slim,
occurring only twice during the interviews. Informant X
has swallow it as ['swɛ,ɪ^rɪt], and Informant XII produced
pillow slip as ['pɪlɜr,sɪɪ^əp]. These forms appear to be
entirely random and isolated, as neither of the informants
used both forms, nor was either used by any other speaker.

Comparable is the case of the occasional loss of

/r/ before a bilabial, as in [fɔ̃^ər'ɛvə,movɜr], which occurred in a few isolated items. Although further study could possibly reveal a clear pattern in both the intrusive /r/ and its loss in final position, the present study maintains that, since both occur only very rarely, they are of minor importance to the description of the dialect.

The conversion of the phoneme /z/ to /d/ before /nt/ occurs frequently in unguarded speech of all informants. For example, isn't, wasn't, and doesn't are pronounced as [ɪdnt, wɛdnt, dʌdnt]. This is explained by assimilation of /z/ to alveolar /nt/.

A spelling pronunciation was noted in the pronunciation of often in the speech of informants III, VI, and X. They, unlike the others, pronounce the word with intrusive phoneme /t/. The Oxford English Dictionary states that "the pronunciation (ɔ̃^əftɛn), which is not recognized in the dictionaries, is now frequent in the south of England, and is often used in singing."¹³

NOTES

¹Lee A. Pedersen, "The Pronunciation of English in Metropolitan Chicago," in A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects, ed. by Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 536. The definition is credited originally to Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager.

²For a detailed discussion of "The Linguistic Variable," see Wolfram, Walt and Ralph Fasold, The Study of Social Dialects in American English (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 99-123.

³Williamson, Juanita V., A Phonological and Morphological Study of the Negro of Memphis, Tennessee (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press for the American Dialect Society, 1968), p. 8.

⁴The variants of the following phonemes have been verified with the descriptions occurring in Kurath, Hans and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961). This work will subsequently be referred to herein as PEAS.

⁵PEAS, p. 109.

⁶Pedersen, "Chicago," p. 537, defines twenty-four while Williamson, MEMPHIS, p. 19, defines twenty-five. In the dialect described here, the phoneme / /, which is characteristic of r-less dialects does not occur for obvious reasons.

⁷Pedersen, "Chicago," p. 536.

⁸Kurath, Handbook, p. 133.

⁹PEAS, p. 177.

¹⁰Kenyon, John, and Thomas A. Knott, A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam, 1944), p. 414.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²PEAS, p. 178.

¹³Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VII. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 88.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIALECT

This section of the study will describe some of the more salient features, other than phonology, of the dialect and, ultimately, to show that these characteristics place it in the South Midland dialect area.

The description of the vowel phonemes in the previous section, when compared to the presentation in PEAS, confirms that this area belongs to the South Midland region.¹

A study of the morphological features of the Paducah dialect reveals only a few cases of variation from other American dialects of Standard English. Three of these differences are significant; furthermore, they place the dialect firmly in the general category of Southern speech.

The form you-all for the second person plural pronoun is used and adamantly defended by all informants, and is frequently reduced to y'all, [jɔ̃ˈl]. The genitive form is your-all's, [jɔ̃ˈlz]. Interrogative who-all is also common; the genitive may be who-all's or whose.

Themselves [θɪmsɛ̃ˈvz], alternates with theirselves [θɪɛ̃ˈrsɛ̃ˈvz]. Ten informants gave themselves, commenting that while they know that it is "right," they "probably" say theirselves unguardedly.

Two modals may occur together freely in this

dialect. I might could've helped him was not only acceptable, but considered the "best" way to express the concept. Might have been able to was also given, but the informants agreed that it is only another way to say the former form. Contemplating duty, informants agree that they might should carry out one project or another. No apparent catastrophe will visit those who might can go if circumstances are agreeable.

PEAS states that the South Midland has "hardly a single feature that does not occur either in the North Midland or the South."² This statement is consistent with that made by McDavid and McDavid in their discussion of areas of secondary settlement.³

The various dialect maps which have been drawn during the course of the years of investigation for the Linguistic Atlas and projects related to its development have shown the area of the lower Ohio River Valley as belonging to both the South Midland and to other dialect areas. However, all those seen during the investigation for the preparation of this study place, if they contain a region called South Midland, McCracken County either within or on the edge of that area.

One map which shows how a primary dialect gave way to a secondary one, because of the patterns of settlement as the population moved westward, appears in Dialects-U.S.A.⁴ In it, Paducah falls into the South Midland area, but close by is the Southern region. The pattern of

migration into Western Kentucky explained in Part 1 of this study agrees with the diagram in that book.

The evidence, then, is almost unanimous that, although there are elements of other types of speech in the area herein described, the settlement of that area by speakers of several dialects gave way to the development of a majority of forms which are characteristic features of the South Midland speech area.

NOTES

¹PEAS, p. 19.

²Ibid.

³McDavid, Raven I., Jr., and Virginia G. McDavid, "Grammatical Differences in the North Central States," in A Various Language: Perspectives on American Dialects, ed. by Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 349.

⁴Malmstrom, Jean, and Annabel Ashley, Dialects-U.S.A. (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963), p. 43.

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