Coronal stop deletion in Blackfoot English

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In Southern Alberta, though there are 22,382 individuals registered as Blackfoot, only 2860 speakers employ the Blackfoot language fluently in speech. English has become the majority language among Blackfoot people. While most studies on Blackfoot people’s speech are related to the Blackfoot language, research on the variety of English spoken by the Blackfoot people remains rare, which motivates us to conduct this investigation.

Previous studies on coronal stop (or /t,d/) deletion in word-final consonant clusters have established a good understanding between /t,d/ deletion and its constraints. Briefly, /t,d/ deletion is affected by both internal factors such as phonological, grammatical constraints, and external factors such as speaking style, age, sex, region, ethnicity (Labov, 1968; Wolfram, 1969; Patrick, 1991; Bayley, 1994; Hazen, 2001). Though the findings of these studies are consistent with each other regarding to linguistic settings, different proportional results have still been displayed especially when social factors are concerned. Accordingly, the main purpose of this paper is to explore the frequency of /t,d/ deletion based on speakers’ first language, except for examining how /t,d/ deletion is influenced by linguistic constraints. The data was subjected to a multivariate analysis, with the independent variable tested being coronal stop deletion, and dependent variables in this study constituting two domains: internal or linguistic factors including preceding segment (Fricative, Liquid, Nasal, Sibilant, Stop), following segment (Consonants, Vowels, Pause) and grammatical status (Mono-morphemes, Bi-morphemes, Semi-weak tense, Past tense); and external or social factors including age, sex and L1. The data comprises 9 speakers, separated into three groups: Blackfoot L1 speakers, English L1 speakers of Blackfoot descent, and English L1 speakers of European descent. Our preliminary results of 6 Blackfoot-ethnicity speakers, split into two groups of three based on L1, reveal that /t,d/ deletion has a much higher frequency if the speaker’s L1 is Blackfoot no matter what the linguistic constraint is. Moreover, Blackfoot English also undergoes more coronal deletion comparing with the rates of its occurrence in Toronto English (Walker, 2008), especially when the preceding segment is liquid and the following segment is consonant.

This preliminary result shows us that the L1 is an important factor in the simplification of consonantal clusters. However, our next step is to make comparisons with other Anglophones to examine whether this relationship is common across Southern Alberta, or only typical for Anglophones of Blackfoot descent. Our research adds to the growing body of literature investigating First Nations English dialects (Ball & Bernhardt 2008, Peltier 2009, Genee & Stigter 2010).
REFERENCE


