

## **You Have Sheffield Vowels: Dialect Acquisition in Second Language – A Preliminary Study**

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Previous studies have shown that mobile adults exhibit the ability to adapt and acquire features of a second dialect in their native language (e.g. Chambers, 1992; Nycz, 2011; Siegel, 2010; Stanford & Pan, 2013). Moreover, Tagliamonte and Molfenter's (2007) study illustrates three Canadian children's gradual yet successful shift from Canadian English to British English. Furthermore, Munro et al.'s (1999) study reveals that native listeners can perceive the dialectal features of mobile speakers' second dialect. However, what is less understood is whether second language (L2) speakers can acquire dialectal features of their L2 after a significant period of residing and potentially interacting with native speakers of the local dialect.

For this preliminary study, an auditory-acoustic approach was used to analyse two vowels that are widely acknowledged as highly salient regional markers of English accent in northern England, specifically Sheffield – the vowels from STRUT and BATH lexical sets (e.g. J. Beal, 2004; J. C. Beal, 2009; Stoddart, Upton, & Widdowson, 1999). The English speech (both read and spontaneous) of 21 (14 female; 7 male) young ( $M=26.2$  yrs;  $SD=2.6$ ) highly educated Chinese L2 English speakers were used for analyses. The speakers have all obtained sufficient IELTS scores to attend a British University, and have lived and studied at the University of Sheffield for at least 1 year ( $M=2.9$  yrs;  $SD=1.7$ ) at the time of the recording.

Preliminary results indicate that most of the subjects pronounced the target vowels with noticeable regional dialectal features, especially in their less formal, spontaneous interview speech. It is possible that similar to second dialect acquisition (SDA) of the same language, dialect acquisition in an L2 is also present. However, the degree of 'localness' of the L2 dialect may be subject to factors that influence SDA, such as the complicated relations between linguistic, social, and developmental factors in language use (Nycz, 2015), as well as factors that influence L2 acquisition, such as age of L2 learning, length of residence in an L2-speaking country, and motivation (Piske, MacKay, & Flege, 2001).