

## **Stylistic variation in the use of rise-plateaux, falls and uptalk rises in Belfast English**

*Anna Bothe Jespersen*

Aarhus University

[anna.jespersen@cc.au.dk](mailto:anna.jespersen@cc.au.dk)

This study is a replication of Lowry's (2002) work on stylistic variation in Belfast English declarative intonation. Here, it was reported that while Belfast English speakers avoid falling tunes in informal speech in favour of Northern Irish English rise-plateaux, they tend to produce falling tunes in more formal speaking contexts. Lowry argues that this indicates that speakers make use of intonational falls to align themselves with the prestige of SSBE, in which statements produced with falling intonation have long been the norm (Grabe et al. 2000; Ladd 1996).

However, since Lowry's study, younger speakers of SSBE, as well as of other British varieties, have been reported to use a new statement tune: the uptalk rise (Arvaniti & Atkins 2016; Levon 2016; forthcoming). Uptalk is, like the Belfast rise-plateau, a rising tune used with declarative statements, but the uptalk rise has not previously been reported in Northern Irish English. Furthermore, uptalk is more frequently associated with American and Antipodean Englishes than with British Englishes (see Fletcher & Harrington 2001; Warren 2016). In this way, the use of uptalk does not carry immediate associations with Irish or British varieties, a fact which may be sociolinguistically useful to young Northern Irish English speakers. Lowry's paper did not account for informants' sociolinguistic and political background, and a secondary aim of this paper is therefore to investigate whether speakers' political stances have an influence on their choice of declarative intonation.

In order to replicate Lowry's study, and investigate the potential impact of speakers' political backgrounds, sociolinguistic interviews were conducted with 12 speakers between the ages of 18 and 22, using the same methodology and texts as Lowry (2002). The study reports the distributions of falls and rises in semi-spontaneous interviews, read speech and short phrases, discusses the sociolinguistic ramifications of the patterns found, and discusses phonetic evidence that uptalk rises are indeed present in the English produced by young Belfast speakers.

### **References**

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