
Accent leveling on the realization of (h) in the Regional French of Alsace

Rei Sugiura*¹

¹University of Tokyo – Japon

Résumé

This study aims to investigate the phonological variation of Regional French of Alsace, focusing on the realization of (h). Alsace region has a unique sociolinguistic background, but the Regional French of Alsace is less explored in terms of variationist sociolinguistics. Literature review indicates that (h) was observed until the 16th century, and (h) is still present in the Regional French, including Alsace and Lorraine. Therefore, this research examines how (h) is appearing or disappearing in Alsace. This research utilizes data using a word-list task. It has eight French words and eight Alsatian origin words that include (h). The data was collected from 27 participants-14 in urban and 13 participants from rural areas. Extralinguistic factors include age groups (categorized by youngest: 17–30, middle-aged: 31–60, and oldest: 61+) and place of residence (urban or rural); and linguistic factors examine the origin of a word (French or Alsatian). This study has two significant findings. Firstly, this research reaffirms previous studies that the older the research participants are, the higher the rate of realization of (h): youngest 6.30%; middle-aged 13.99%; oldest 35.63%. Secondly, the data shows that the origin of words is a crucial factor among the youngest and middle-aged groups. For these groups, the origin of words affects the frequency of realization of (h) more strongly than the place of residence. Youngest and middle-aged speakers tend to pronounce (h) for Alsatian words, while they do not pronounce (h) for French words. This finding contradicts previous studies stating that leveling is more advanced in urban areas than rural areas. This new finding implies that urban speakers may consciously attempt to pronounce Alsatian words with an Alsatian-like (h) pronunciation.

References

- Boughton, Z., & Pipe, K. (2020). Phonological variation and change in the regional French of Alsace: Supralocalization, age, gender, and the urban-rural dichotomy. *Journal of French Language Studies*, 30(3), 327–353.
- Chambers, J., & Trudgill, P. (1998). *Dialectology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Gabriel, C., & Meisenburg, T. (2009). Silent onsets? An optimality-theoretic approach to French *h aspiré* words. In F. Kügler, C. Féry, & R. van de Vijver (Eds.), *Variation and gradience in phonetics and phonology* (pp. 163–184). Mouton de Gruyter.

*Intervenant

Pipe, K. (2014). *Accent levelling in the regional French of Alsace* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Exeter.

Mots-Clés: Regional French, Alsace, accent levelling, realization of (h)