How do people speak in Nof Ca'lina?

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INTRODUCTION

The present work studies the speech of a standard Southern-Midland speaker of American English. The informant is a resident and native of Charlotte, North Carolina, belonging to the area of the Apalachians and the Blue Ridge Mountains, which goes from the Pennsylvania line to northern Georgia. There is no dominant population center in this area and the speech features can occur either in the South or the South Midland.

METHOD

This study was based on a questionnaire, part of a project at the Center for American English of the Illinois Institute of Technology.

The material contains 239 questions and a text to be read. All the material was recorded, the informant being questioned, asked to read the text and finally, asked to speak freely. Two 3-hour interviews were required to complete the recording.

The researcher accounted mostly for vowel sounds used in significant environments, like when they occur before r, l stops and nasals, the production of the th sounds, clusters, and major consonants.

To help the distribution and organization of the sounds, a test used by Labov was checked as a model. The words were displaced in groups according to specific environments and needs. A description of each group and its peculiarities follows the examples which are shown with phonetic transcription. This transcription is meant to be as closer to the actual sound as possible. For this purpose and reason, as for better comprehension of this paper, a description of the used symbols follows this introduction.

1William Labov, Study of Nonstandard English.
LIST OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS AND DIACRITICS

/ / used to indicate a phonemic reference.
[ ] used to indicate a phonetic reference.
[; ] the colon is placed after vowels to indicate long vowels.
[ · ] a dot after a vowel indicates half-long sound.
[ ~ ] indicates nasalization.
[ ^ ] indicates aspirated sound.
[ = ] indicates lack of aspiration.
[ . ] this sign placed under a consonant indicates voiceless sound.
[ , ] the sign (,) indicates syllabication, as in [mʌŋvəŋ] mountain.
[ ω ] indicates labiolization.
[ 7 ] indicates that the sound is unreleased.
[ ' ] it is placed under a vowel to indicate that the vowel is lower.
[ ^ ] indicates the palatal /k/.
[ ɔ ] indicates the velar /l/.

Primary stress is indicated by a vertical line placed before the stressed syllable. Secondary stress is indicated by a vertical line (inferior) placed before the syllable as in [bλæk'boʊd] blackboard.
Although not a very large territory, the state reveals language characteristics which differ radically between the coastal line and the inland speakers.

It is well known that North Carolina is a region where the r-less speech is universal. However, the central coast still hears a marked retroflection of postvocalic /r/.

A striking difference between the speech of the coastal population and that of the inland people is the treatment of the diphtong /ai/ which is [ãI] on the coast and [aI] before voiceless consonants and [a] before voiced consonants in the inland.

Other features typical of the coastal line are:

- a fronting of the vowels /u/, /û/ and /U/.
- the pronunciation of /o/ which comes out as /ê/.

The features listed below are common to speakers all over the state:

- final stops are unreleased.
- final [n] in participles comes out as [n].
- you all or y'all are plural forms for you.
- [I] stands for [i] as in pin, pen, although not with marked frequency on the Outer Banks Islands.
- words like sit, set and sat generally sound as if they were only one word containing the sound [ê].
- [æ] is usually prolonged to produce [æə] or [æi] and sometimes [æiə]
- the diphtong [ai] comes out as [I]. Although strange, the variant is heard all over the territory being more frequent along the coastal line. Among the Irish settlers of the Blue Ridge Mountains the variant changes to [Ai] or [i].
- The curious substitution of [ai] for [aU] can also be heard
all over and careful studies done previously by a number of researchers have proved it to be a deviation produced naturally by many speakers.

- Already suggested by Kurath and McDavid\(^1\) \(\left[\text{æ} \text{U}\right], \left[\text{ɛ} \text{U}\right]\) and \(\left[\text{ʌ} \text{U}\right]\) appears instead of \(\left[\text{əU}\right]\) with great frequency.
- A clear constriction of the mid central \(\left[\text{ɔ}\right]\) is heard determining the "r quality" given to the sound.
- \(\left[\text{ə}\right]\) is more frequently heard than \(\left[\text{ə^n}\right]\) in unaccented position in the end of a word.

Given the above description, the researcher now hopes that the following interview accomplish the expected results. Let us now enter the world of an American English speaker of North Carolina.

THE VOWELS

The vowels are studied in this paper according to the following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&amp;i;</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>u</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>ɛ</td>
<td>ɔ</td>
<td>ɔ</td>
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<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>æ</td>
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<td>æ</td>
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</table>

The mid front tense \(\left[\text{ɛ}\right]\) appears in Mary, \(\left[\text{me:ɾi}\right]\) marry \(\left[\text{me:ɾi}\right]\) and married \(\left[\text{me:ɾid}\right]\) as opposed to the mid front lax \(\left[\text{ɛ}\right]\) in merry; \(\left[\text{mɛɾi}\right]\)

Bat and bet are \(\left[\text{bɛt}\right]\) and \(\left[\text{bɛt}\right]\), the first one showing a sound between the mid front \(\left[\text{ɛ}\right]\) and the low front \(\left[\text{æ}\right]\).

This sound characterizes some words in which the sound \(\left[\text{æ}\right]\) could be expected, specially before /r/.

One of the clearest sounds in this informant's speech, 

\[ \text{[æ]} \] is long in any environment, following the same pattern as the long \(/a/\). In some words it also seems to be lower. Words like parents \([\text{p}^b\text{æ}:r\text{ɪ}\text{nts}]\) and attic \([\text{æ}:\text{ɪ}\text{k}]\) are examples. However, this sound is many times confusing sounding like \([\text{æ}]\), which makes it very difficult to distinguish.

\[ \text{[æ]} \] is always nasalized specially before nasals \([\text{m}, \text{n}]\).

\[ \text{Hæmmer \([\text{h}\text{æ}:\text{m}\text{ə}]\)} \]
\[ \text{apple \([\text{æ}\text{p}]\)} \]
\[ \text{can't \([\text{κ}\text{æ}:\text{n}\text{t}]\)} \]

The mid central \([\text{j}]\) is dominant in stressed syllables in words like:

butter \([\text{b}\text{3}\text{t}\text{ə}]\)

yolk \([\text{j}\text{3}\text{θ}]\)

butt \([\text{b}\text{3}\text{t}]\)

roof \([\text{r}\text{3}\text{f}]\)

\[ \text{[j]} \] appears in third

third \([\text{j}\text{3}\text{d}]\)

stirrup \([\text{st}\text{3}\text{p}]\)

purse \([\text{p}\text{3}\text{s}]\)

furniture \([\text{f}\text{3}\text{n}\text{t}]\)

sermon \([\text{s}\text{3}\text{n}\text{ən}]\)

The schwa \([\text{ə}]\) substitutes this sound in unstressed syllables and also appears instead of \(/r/\) after vowels. See sermon and butter.

The low back rounded \([\text{ð}]\) in balm \([\text{b}\text{p}:\text{m}\text{ə}]\) and palm \([\text{p}\text{ð}:\text{m}\text{ə}]\)

becomes lower in bomb \([\text{b}\text{ð}:\text{m}\text{b}]\).

The same rounded \([\text{ð}]\) in caught \([\text{k}\text{ð}\text{t}]\)

becomes the unrounded \([\text{a}]\) in cot \([\text{k}\text{ɗ}:\text{t}]\)

The low front \([\text{æ}]\) in cab \([\text{k}\text{æ}:\text{b}]\)

becomes the low back \([\text{a}]\) in cob \([\text{k}\text{a}:\text{b}]\)

Notice that the length of the vowel is changed from \([\text{k}\text{ð}:\text{t}]\) to \([\text{k}\text{a}:\text{t}]\)

The long \([\text{a}:\text{t}]\) is, therefore, the dominant sound everywhere as well as \([\text{æ}:\text{t}]\):

hat \([\text{κ}\text{æ}:\text{t}]\)

hod \([\text{κ}\text{a}:\text{d}]\)

calf \([\text{κ}\text{æ}:\text{f}]\)

hot \([\text{κ}\text{a}:\text{t}]\)

cab \([\text{κ}\text{æ}:\text{b}]\)

The low back rounded \([\text{ð}]\) is sometimes confused with the mid back unrounded \([\text{ɔ}]\) in words like dog \([\text{d}\text{ɔ}g]\) and in some diptong which will be described later in this paper.
DIPHTHONGS

Noticeable are the changing in the regular American dipthong \([\alpha u]\) shown as slow dipthong in all positions but changed into \([\varepsilon u]\) in most words like: cow \([\text{kw}\varepsilon:u]\), house \([h\varepsilon:us]\), used before voiceless nasals as in pounds \([p\varepsilon:u\eta d]\) and mountains \([m\varepsilon:u\eta z]\) and being nasalized everywhere.

A second variation is the dipthong \([\varepsilon u]\) as in boat \([b\varepsilon t]\) and in coat \([k\varepsilon t]\) goat \([g\varepsilon t]\) and go \([g\varepsilon]\). This dipthong remains as a strong feature coming from the British influence in the area.

A dipthong \([ei]\) appears in dance \([d\varepsilon\varepsilon]\) and chair \([\varepsilon i\varepsilon]\) also being nasalized before nasal consonants.

\([\varepsilon \varepsilon]\) appears in theater \([\varepsilon \varepsilon \varepsilon\varepsilon]\).

Other dipthongs are formed by the occurrence of a schwa in postvocalic position substituting the /r/, while few triphthongs are also noticed for the same reason. (See the study of /r/.) The dipthong \([ou]\) is usually shorter than the dipthong \([\alpha u]\) and very rarely occurs.

THE CONSONANTS

THE STOPs: The voiced stop /d/ is voiceless in final position as in the following examples:

- bread \([b\varepsilon d]\)
- spoiled \([sp\varepsilon d]\)
- boiled \([\text{bo}\varepsilon d]\)
- scrambled \([s\varepsilon m\varepsilon d]\)
- forehead \([f\varepsilon h\varepsilon d]\)
- haunted \([h\varepsilon n\varepsilon d]\)
wounded \(\overset{\cdot}{w}u:n\ 2d\).  
However, it sounds in some other words. Notice the final /ed/ of the verb forms, where the /d/ sound is usually voiceless. The same /d/ is a flap in mid position between vowels, as in: widow \(\overset{\cdot}{w}i\ 3d\) and ladder \(\overset{\cdot}{l}3\ 3d\).  
The voiceless stop /t/ remains aspirated in front position, but it is unreleased in final position in most of the words. There is no regularity in the occurrence of these two stops. Unreleased /t/ is found in: yeast, \(\overset{\cdot}{j}3\ 3t\), chocolate \(\overset{\cdot}{c}3\ 3l\), and closet \(\overset{\cdot}{k}\ 3\ 3l\).  
Aunt is one of the words in which the /t/ is produced:  
- It becomes flap in mid position between vowels, like in: 
  - put it on \(\overset{\cdot}{p}h\ 3c\ 3d\), 
  - daughter \(\overset{\cdot}{d}3\ 3d\), 
  - water \(\overset{\cdot}{w}3\ 3d\), 
  - latter \(\overset{\cdot}{l}\ 3\ 3d\), 
  - Saturday \(\overset{\cdot}{s}3\ 3d\)  
- It remains as unaspirated /t/ in sister \(\overset{\cdot}{s}3\ 3t\) and parents \(\overset{\cdot}{p}3\ 3t\ 3l\), and it is unreleased and followed by a glottal stop in right ear low: \(\overset{\cdot}{r}3\ 3t\ 3i\ 3l\).  
The voiceless bilabial stop /p/ is mainly unreleased in final position. In isolated words it is sometimes pronounced but not in a text or in free conversation.  
syrup \(\overset{\cdot}{s}3\ 3p\), stirrup \(\overset{\cdot}{s}\ 3t\ 3p\).  

The liquid /l/ is velar in final position:  
towel \(\overset{\cdot}{t}3\ 3d\), wool \(\overset{\cdot}{w}3\ 3\), wail \(\overset{\cdot}{w}3\ 3\).  
- It is not pronounced before the voiceless fricative /f/, the voiced bilabial nasal /m/ and the voiceless stop /k/.  
palm \(\overset{\cdot}{p}\ 3\ 3m\), yolk \(\overset{\cdot}{j}3\ 3\), balm \(\overset{\cdot}{b}\ 3\ 3m\), calf \(\overset{\cdot}{k}3\ 3\).  
Notice that the bilabial nasal /m/ becomes voiceless in the above examples in final position.  

The /r/ sound is one of the strongest characteristics of the informant, being the cause for many changes in the vowel
quality of certain words. Professor Lucia Morgan had studied the dialect spoken in North Carolina and had pointed out some of the major features of the pronunciation of students at Chapel Hill and in the Outer Banks. According to this study, most of the informants had a clear loss of the postsyllabic /r/ which is substituted for /ə/. The informant for this particular study showed the following samples:

- **Saturday** [səˈrɑːdə] → furniture [ˈfɜːnɪtʃə]
- **Morning** [ˈmɔrənɪŋ] → scorched [ˈskɔrətʃd]
- **Afternoon** [ˈæpəˈnʌn] → horse [hɔːs]
- **Porch** [ˈpɔr̩t] → lawn mower [ˈlɑːn ˈmɔrə]
- **Florida** [ˈflɔrədiə] → garden [ˈɡɑːdɑn]

The same occurs after the so called "vowel r words" in unstressed position. Either the plain schwa [ə] or the [ə] is produced as a variation of the /r/ sound which does not occur in postsyllabic position.

Examples are:

- **Father** [ˈfɑːðə] → flowers [ˈflɔrəz]
- **Daughter** [ˈdɑːθə] → butter [ˈbʌtə]
- **Sister** [ˈsɪstə] → war [wɔr]
- **Shoulders** [ˈʃouldəz] → ladder [ˈlædə]
- **Theater** [ˈθɛər] → beard [bɛəd]

The /r/ sound has a great influence upon the preceding vowels. The mid back rounded [ɔ] is lower and not completely rounded in:

- **Four** [ˈfɔː] → morning [ˈmɔrɪŋ]
- **Forty** [ˈfɔrτi] → porch [pɔr̩t]
- **Oranges** [ˈɔrəndiz]

It also changes the sound of the mid central [ə] in stressed position where the /r/ is sometimes clear and sometimes very short.

Observe the words:
syrup [ˈsɜːp] furniture [ˈfɜːniər]
stirrup [ˈstɜːrup] sermon [ˈsɜːmən]
purse [ˈpɜːs] girl [ɡɜːl]
nurses [ˈnɜːsiz] bird [bɜːd]

Words like cemetery, american, dairy carry a mid front unrounded in stressed syllables: [ˈsɛmərəri] [ˈæmərɪkən] [ˈdeəri].

The /r/ sound appears as labialized in front position in words like:
room [ruːm] road [rɔd] roof [ruːf]

This aspect only occurs in the speech of educated people. As the informant had been a student at Chapel Hill and at the time of this interview was taking courses at Ball State University, it is obvious that this sound occurs mainly for this reason although the expected labiolized /g/ does not appear in her speech.

Lawn mower and horse have a clear unrounded /ɔ/ before /r/.

THE /TH/ SOUND:

The /t/ voiceless is not pronounced in words like: moths [mɔθs]. It is unreleased in math [mæθ] and path [pæθ] and changed into /t/ in final position in mouth [mɔθ] but remains /θ/ in teeth: [tθ]

It is also changed into /s/ in the plural forms of:
lengths [ˈlɛnθz] sixths [ˈsɪks] and twelfths [ˈtwɛlfθz] constituting the most irregular sound in Miss Reeves' speech. For this reason, this sound has several variations in the ordinal numbers, like:
fifth \( \text{[fifth]} \)   eighth \( \text{[eight]} \)  
fourth \( \text{[fourth]} \)  tenth \( \text{[tenth]} \)  

The voiced /\text{th}/ changes into /d/ in mid position between vowels like in father \( \text{[father]} \) without \( \text{[without]} \) and in final position as in with \( \text{[with]} \).
FINAL NOTES

Few answers did not correspond to the expected word. However these words do not show any dialectal difference. Anyway they are listed here, with the correspondent equivalent:

**condominiums** substituted for **houses**.

**cow leather** and **real leather** were said instead of **genuine**.

**funeral service** substituted for **mourning**.

Three words differed in pronunciation:

**vase** was pronounced [ˈvaːz] which is considered unnatural or snobbish by some scholars, and people.

**sari** was [ˈsərəri]. No basis was found for this pronunciation. It seems to this researcher that the word was not known by the informant.

**aunt** was [ɑːnt] in isolation but it changed to [ˈæːnt] in context. It is clear that the informant, like the residents of her area, and also the residents of Ocracoke, keeps many of the British features that incorporate the dialect of the region.

No difference was noticed between:

morning/mourning [ˈmɔːn ˈmɔːnɪŋ]

ladeer/latter [ˈlædər]

pin/pen [ˈpɛn]

horse/hoarse [ˈhɔːs]

Syllabication: this feature does not appear very frequently in her speech, although some of the words carry it with final nasals [m, n] and the liquid /l/ specially when a stop occurs immediately after:
To complete this work, the final list of words is given here in transcription, in order to show the occurrences of sounds when said in comparison to minimal pairs.

dog, log, fog ['dɔɡ] ['lɔɡ] ['fɒɡ]
Mary, marry, merry ['meəri] ['meəri] ['meəri]
syrup, stirrup ['sərəp] ['stərəp]
mourning, morning ['mɔrniŋ] ['mɔrniŋ]
broom, room ['bruːm] ['raʊm]
horse, hoarse ['hɔːs] ['hɔːs]
a can, I can ['kæn] ['aɪkæn]
card, cord, barred ['kaːrd] ['kɔːd] ['bɑːrd]
boy, buoy ['bɔɪ] ['bɔɪ]
furry, hurry, worry [''fɜːrɪ] [''hɜːrɪ] ['''wɜːrɪ]
poor, pour, pore ['pɔːr] ['pɔːr] ['pɔːr]
scorch, porch ['skɔːr] ['pɔːr]
mirror, dearer ['mɪrər] ['ˈdiər]
caller, collar ['kælər] ['ˈkɔlər]
beer, dear ['bɪə] ['dɪə]
scare, bare ['skɛə] ['bɛə]
sorry, starry, story ['sɔːri] ['stʌri] ['stɔrɪ]
wore, was ['wɔː] ['wɔː]
any, many, penny ['eɪnɪ] ['mɛnɪ] [''pɛnɪ]
farmer, former, foreman ['fɑːmərn] ['fɔːmər] [''fɔːmərn]
whipping, whooping ['wɪpɪŋ] ['wʊpt̴]
CONCLUSION

After an analysis of this informant's speech, some of the main features encountered were the following:

1. the occurrence of the long low back unrounded [ə] before liquids [l,r] and voiced or voiceless stops [d, t, p, b].
2. the diphthong [3u] used instead of [øu] in the examples on page
3. the nasalization of [æ] (see page 107) everywhere except before the flap [ʃ] and in the words afternoon and apple (front position)
4. the syllabication of the voiced bilabial nasal /m/ in room and broom; the voiceless nasal /n/ after the voiced stop /d/ and the glottal [ʔ]; the liquid /l/ after /p/ and /b/ (see page
5. the lack of /r/ in postsyllabic position, either in isolation or in context.

The list of words on page 114 shows the relationships between sounds and it is useful to observe the following occurrences:

1. the difference between: boy and buoy; car/cor/barred; sqry; story/starry; wore/war; the noun can and the verb can;
2. the similarity between scare/bare; beer/dear; poor/pour/pore; horse/hoarse; morning/mourning, etc.


