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De Laurentese: A Diachronic Study of the Idiolect of Giada De Laurentiis

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An increasing amount of sociolinguistic research has been concentrated on diachronic idiolect change: the change of an individual's dialect over time. This paper adds to this growing topic by analyzing the English idiolect change of Giada De Laurentiis, a heritage speaker of Italian. The study analyzes De Laurentiis' LOT, START, and GOAT vowels, as well as the voice onset time (VOT) of voiceless stops [k] and [p] by measuring the utterances of the code-switched word 'mascarpone' across 20 seasons on television. The data reflect the influence of L2 US English (rhoticity, diphthongization, lengthened VOTs) on heritage Italian in De Laurentiis' idiolect.

1 Introduction

It has long been assumed that the ability of an individual to modify his or her language decreases substantially after the individual has passed through the critical period, a period of time in which variability within a child's grammar becomes less plastic, and it becomes harder for a child to learn new aspects of the grammar. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) was popularized in Lenneberg (1967) and has been adopted by many acquisitionists, with a few tweaks and modifications to the theory emerging through the decades.

However, with the emergence of the study of idiolect change over the lifetime, the CPH seems to have lost some potency. As recent studies have shown, individuals *do* change their idiolect over time, with factors like geographic location, socioeconomic mobility, and societal pressures all contributing to this language change at the individual level (e.g., Tagliamonte and Molfenter 2007, Rickford and Price 2013, Mechler and Buchstaller 2019). The CPH seems to support the idea that the basics of grammar are learned and cemented in the mind of the child during the critical period, while leaving open the opportunity of slight variability within smaller aspects of language, like the positioning of vowels in the mouth and the variation of individual morphosyntactic features. While it would be groundbreaking to bridge both the CPH and the current theories of idiolect change, that is not the purpose of the current research.

This paper will look at the process of diachronic idiolect change of a heritage speaker of Italian. This study adopts the definition by Valdés (2005:412) of a heritage speaker (in the United States) as "raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken. The student may speak or merely understand the heritage language and be, to some degree, bilingual in English and the heritage language". Additionally, the heritage language is usually constrained to niche domains of life, like religious ceremonies, cultural gatherings, or speech with (great)-grandparents (Polinsky and Kagan 2007, Sorace 2005).

Returning to the scope of diachronic idiolect change, a sociolinguist's approach to studying a heritage speaker would be to examine the influence of the L2 on the heritage language (or vice-versa) over time. In the case of the current study, we will look at the effect of English on a code-switched Italian lexical item in an English sentential frame. As explained previously, the critical period can be described as the stage of development when the foundations of language and language-specific grammar are fortified in the brain. Children absorb content from the linguistic environment around them and statistically deduce which patterns of prosody, morphosyntax, phrase structure, etc., are more attested and thus more likely to be considered grammatical in the input language (Bates and MacWhinney 1987). For adult heritage speakers, the foundations of their L2 language were forged in a linguistic environment that was different from that of their heritage language. Patterns of prosody in Italian that were engrained in a heritage speaker's mind at a young age mean something different in an English-dominant linguistic environment, but nevertheless remain a part of the individual's grammar. The internal "language contact" that results from the interactions of these two (or more) grammars impact the idiolect development past the critical period and into adulthood.

This study analyzed multiple recordings of Giada De Laurentiis code-switching to the Italian word 'mascarpone' within a US English sentential frame, across 20 seasons (12 years) on television. De Laurentiis' START, LOT, and GOAT vowels (Wells 1982) were measured and analyzed against the Italian vowel equivalents produced by a group of native Italian speakers. The results reflect the influence of vowel rhoticity in US English START (absent in Italian) and the diphthongization of GOAT (a monophthong in Italian). The study also measured the voice onset time (VOT) of De Laurentiis' voiceless stops [k] and [p] and compared them to those of the native Italian speakers. While the VOT of De Laurentiis' [k] was remarkably Italian, the VOT of her [p] was quite long, perhaps due to factors such as syllable stress and onset structure. The results of this study reflect a gradual shift away from Italian-like vowels and VOTs in this code-switched word as the seasons progress.

2 Background

2.1 Giada De Laurentiis

Born in Rome in 1970, Giada de Laurentiis spent her early life completely immersed in Italian culture and the Italian language. Following her parents' divorce in 1976, De Laurentiis immigrated with her mother to California at the age of 7, at what some consider to be the upper bound of the critical period. She earned a degree in social anthropology at UCLA in 1996, married American Todd Thompson in 2003, and gave birth to a daughter in 2008 (De Laurentiis 2013). From the moment De Laurentiis set foot in the United States, she was immersed in the English language, recounting that she only spoke Italian at home with her mother. It is for this reason that this study treats De Laurentiis as a heritage speaker of Italian: her use of Italian was constrained to a specific type of interaction and with a specific interlocutor.

To say that De Laurentiis has had a successful career as a chef would be an incredible understatement. At just 50 years old, De Laurentiis has enjoyed the spotlight as arguably one of the most popular *Food Network* chefs of all time, starring in 10 series and releasing dozens of specials in her nearly 20 years of service to the Network. In 2017, De Laurentiis became the first female chef to open two independent restaurants along the Las Vegas Strip (*GIADA* and *Pronto by Giada*), and she added to her restaurateur fame in 2018 with the addition of her restaurant *GDL Italian by Giada* in Baltimore. In the realm of printed media, De Laurentiis has penned (at least) 10 cookbooks, two of which reached the number one spot on the *New York Times* Best Seller list. De Laurentiis has attained and maintains a social media presence with the launching of her how-to video account *Giadzy* in 2017 (De Laurentiis 2020). De Laurentiis has worked hard to achieve the status she holds now, and she shows no signs of slowing.

It is precisely this media presence that has made De Laurentiis an excellent candidate for a longitudinal study of idiolect change. Apart from the achievements listed above, De Laurentiis has garnered fame for another, rather notorious reason. Being of Italian heritage and cooking Italian-style dishes, De Laurentiis has a way of pronouncing “anglicized Italian words” (*mozzarella*, *parmesan*, *prosciutto*, etc.) with their traditional Italian pronunciations, which to some viewers seems forced and unauthentic. Marinaccio and Naccarato (2015) (of no relation) wrote about the phenomenon of the perceived hyperarticulation of Italian words by Italian-American chefs on television and referenced several examples from De Laurentiis herself. In fact, “fans” created a Facebook page titled “Giada de Laurentiis Over-pronounces Italian Words” to record instances of these Italian “hyperarticulations”. Chefs opt for the Italian pronunciations of these words as a way to assert their authority and authenticity as *real* Italian chefs presenting *real* Italian cooking. However, as exemplified in Jagers (2018:38–39), “the use of more source-like variants seems to be associated with prestige, both positively (“correct”) and negatively (“pretentious”)”. Thus, it appears that viewers can fall into one of two camps: those that appreciate the authenticity of these chefs' pronunciations, and those who find it overbearing. In the case of De Laurentiis, this is an interesting sociolinguistic topic to explore, given that she *is* authentically Italian. Even though Italian has the status of a heritage language in her grammar, the phonology of Italian is engrained in the grammar to a degree, since phonological inventories tend to be determined quite early in pre-adolescence (de Boysson-Bardies and Vihman 1991). Thus, we can trust that De Laurentiis' pronunciations are somehow “linguistically valid”. The study that this paper outlines looks precisely at De Laurentiis' pronunciation of one of these Italian words over time, compared to the pronunciation of the same word by native (L1) Italian speakers.

2.2 Prior Studies

An increasing amount of sociolinguistic studies has been aimed at analyzing idiolect change over the lifespan. A handful of studies have been conducted with similar research aims as the study at hand, analyzing the effect of a heritage speaker's L2 (second language) on their heritage language.

Elias et al. (2017) examined a group ($n=11$) of American-born young adults (mean age: 18.5 years) whose parents were born in Mexico, and who had self-identified as Spanish heritage speakers. They were recorded as they read three different short stories: one in English, one in Spanish, and one that code-switched between the two. They also participated in a sociolinguistic interview with interlocutors of differing Spanish fluency. The goal of the study was to see how different factors affected the qualities of Spanish vowels of the heritage speakers. These factors were intra- versus inter-sentential code-switching, distance from the code-switch, and lexical stress. The study found that vowels within a code-switched word or phrase tended to occupy a more central position on the vowel space, whereas the vowels in both monolingual passages occupied the outer edges of the vowel space. This study also provided evidence for the argument made by Fletcher (2010) that vowel quality in Spanish is unaffected by lexical stress. Although durations of Italian vowels are affected by stress in so far as vowels are lengthened in stressed syllables without codas (Rogers and d'Arcangeli 2004), the quality of these vowels is unchanged from stressed to unstressed syllables (Esposito 2002).

While exposure at a young age to a given language has a somewhat more concrete effect on phonological development, short but immersive contact with a heritage or L2 language has been shown to have an effect on phonology, as well. Tobin et al. (2017) studied a group ($n=10$) of Spanish-English bilinguals living in the United States and measured the VOT of their voiceless stops both before and after vacationing abroad in a Spanish-speaking country for 2–4 weeks. In each measuring session, the individuals read several sentences aloud in both English and Spanish, and their VOTs were recorded and compared. The goal of this research was to test the hypothesis that accommodation of VOT is bidirectional for Spanish-English bilinguals. In other words, it investigated whether being immersed in Spanish (with short VOTs) showed any effect on English stops (with long VOTs), and vice-versa. The results of the study showed that the VOTs of English voiceless stops drifted toward more Spanish-like VOTs, but the VOTs of Spanish voiceless stops did not drift toward the longer English VOTs. Similar results were found in Sancier and Fowler (1997), but with Portuguese-English bilinguals. Given that Italian is phonetically similar to Spanish and Portuguese, it would follow that this kind of unidirectional accommodation of VOT should be attested in Italian, too.

Following the pattern of the heritage speakers of Spanish in the Elias et al. (2017) study, it can be hypothesized that De Laurentiis' vowels within a code-switch will occupy a more central vowel space on the plot, as a type of accommodation between the English sentential frame and the code-switched Italian lexical item. A prediction for the VOT portion of the study is less certain, since the study at hand relies on VOT measurements of a single lexical code-switch, whereas Tobin et al. (2017) studied VOT accommodation following weeks of immersion in the target language. Having lived in an English-dominant environment for most of her life, it can be expected that De Laurentiis' VOTs in the code-switched word will be measurably different from the VOTs of the group of adult Italian speakers.

The evolution of De Laurentiis' idiolect — that is *how* her idiolect changes from season to season as she navigates her growing stardom — reflects a pressure to be Italian without being *over*-Italian. As her shows garner increasingly more viewers, how does De Laurentiis modify her speech to portray the persona of an authentically Italian chef presenting real Italian cooking? Throughout her years on television, De Laurentiis accrued more than just viewership; she attracted criticisms. In addition to regular viewers, talk show hosts (notably Ellen DeGeneres and Jimmy Fallon) have poked fun at De Laurentiis for her “hyperarticulation” of Italian words on television. De Laurentiis' television persona has to find the balance of being “Italian enough” while avoiding the criticisms of being “obnoxiously Italian”. Therefore, in line with the vowel centralization prediction above, it should be expected that De Laurentiis' vowels will fluctuate from being “very Italian” to being “very US English” throughout the seasons, as she seeks to perfect her television persona. Given that VOT is less perceptibly adjustable, it is expected that the VOTs of De Laurentiis' voiceless stops will move away from VOTs of the Italian comparison group as the seasons progress.

3 Methods

These predictions were tested by measuring select phonemes of the single word ‘mascarpone’ (Italian: /ma.skɑr.'po.ne/). This word was chosen for a few reasons. Firstly, this word is readily available in the data, as De Laurentiis enjoys cooking with this ingredient. Secondly, the word itself is composed of a variety of phonemes that are appropriate to the present study: the bilabial and velar voiceless stops [p] and [k], contained within their own syllables, the low vowel [a] (LOT), the (pre-)rhotic vowel [ar] (START), the back vowel [o] (GOAT), and the front vowel [e] (FACE). The FACE vowel was dropped from the study, as it was often elided through the process of apocope.

The data collection itself required a bit of research about the television series themselves. During the selected time period, De Laurentiis starred in two separate series: *Everyday Italian* (12 seasons, 2003–2008) and *Giada at Home* (8 seasons, 2008–2015). The study focuses on the years 2003–2015, with 20 seasons filmed during this period (De Laurentiis was 33–49 years old). The study measured the phonemes in ‘mascarpone’ of one episode per season. The data are displayed in terms of “season” (1–20), rather than by “year”.

The *Food Network* website was searched for recipes that both contain mascarpone as an ingredient and that also appeared in the previously mentioned series. The goal was to find one episode for each of the 20 seasons that presented a recipe with mascarpone. The initial search yielded a bounty of recipes ($n=175$), so a new search limited the results to only recipes that list mascarpone as a main ingredient. Narrowing the criteria in this way ensured that multiple utterances of ‘mascarpone’ were recorded per episode. There was an average of 5.5 instances of ‘mascarpone’ per episode, with a maximum number of 10 instances in Season 12 and a minimum number of 3 instances in Season 1.

For the acoustic analysis, episodes were accessed from the *Food Network* website. The audio from these episodes was processed through Soundflower (Ingalls 2012), an application that creates an uninterrupted WAV file directly from the online video. The WAV files were then uploaded into Praat (Boersma 2001) and prepared for auto-segmentation via DARLA (Reddy and Stanford 2015). Although the software has formant-measuring

capabilities, the vowels in question were either too short to be accurately measured automatically or simply not in the stressed (measured) syllable. DARLA provides phoneme-segmented textgrids, which makes it easier to hand-measure the formants of the vowels.

The phoneme-segmented textgrids were opened in Praat with their appropriate sound file, and the segmentation was verified for accuracy. For each of the vowels, the midpoint of the phoneme was estimated and the formant values (F1, F2, F3) were measured. These were Bark-difference normalized using NORM (Thomas and Kendall 2007). The VOTs of voiceless stops were measured by hand. VOT is the measurement of the duration from the release of a stop to the vibration of the vocal folds. Italian voiceless stops have relatively short VOTs, whereas English voiceless stops have long VOTs (Beller-Marino 2014, Chodroff and Wilson 2017).

Native speakers of Italian were recruited to serve as a comparison group for this study.¹ Four native Italian speakers read a short abstract of an Italian academic paper from Academia.com. Resmini et al. (1984), a paper written about the chemical and molecular composition of mascarpone cheese, was chosen because the abstract was not too dense, it could be read in about 3 minutes, and it contained 4 instances of 'mascarpone'. Although the data collection was exacerbated by the outbreak of Covid-19, the four native speakers were able to record themselves reading the abstract aloud via the microphone on their smartphones. The phonemes in question were measured and normalized in the same way as mentioned above. The Italian comparison group consisted of 2 male and 2 female participants, all of whom lived in areas around central Italy (and not too far from De Laurentiis' birthplace of Rome). Data were Bark-difference normalized. One female speaker is a self-identified heritage speaker of Italian. Her data were included in the study because they were quite similar to the data of the rest of the speakers in the comparison group. The measurements of De Laurentiis' phonemes were compared to these four speakers as she progressed throughout all 20 seasons.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The Vowels

Although the vowels will be analyzed individually in turn, there are important aspects of the vowel space that should be noted. Firstly, Italian does not exhibit as dramatic a vowel reduction as US English, where a reduction to schwa [ə] is common (Farnetani and Busà 1999). Therefore, it can be anticipated that the unstressed START vowel will be more susceptible to the impact of US English phonology on the code-switched word. Secondly, Italian and US English treat vowel rhotacization differently. Rhotacized vowels exist in the vocalic inventories of less than one percent of the world's languages (Ladefoged and Maddieson 1996), with US English being one of these minority languages. This is important to consider because the vowels in this study have been Bark-difference normalized, a metric that relies heavily on F3 values. Rhotacized vowels have lower F3 values (Lindau 1978), which typically cause the vowels to shift slightly higher and fronter on a Bark-difference normalized vowel plot (Traunmüller 1990). Both of these factors will be taken into account in the analysis of the START vowel.

Figure 1 plots the Bark-difference normalized formant values of LOT (and its Italian counterpart). The Italian speakers' tokens (in black) are spread across the x-axis and are relatively uniform in terms of vowel height, with Speaker C's "LOT" articulated slightly lower than the other Italian speakers. De Laurentiis' LOT has rather sporadic movement during the first 10 seasons on television. In the first season, De Laurentiis' LOT is much lower than that of the Italian speakers. The LOT vowel approaches and maintains the height of the Italian "LOT" vowels during Seasons 2–6, only to lower again in Seasons 7–10. However, during the second half of the period in question (Seasons 11–20), the tokens cluster at an area slightly below the "Italian zone" on the plot. This movement is consistent with the vowel-central hypothesis exemplified in Elias et al. (2017). De Laurentiis' LOT occupies a space on the plot that is somewhat midway between the Italian and US English realizations of the 'sca' in 'mascarpone'. The seemingly random movement of LOT in earlier seasons followed by a period of relative stability may reflect the process by which the speaker develops a persona that validates her Italian authenticity while remaining accessible to an English audience.

¹ An anonymous reviewer suggested eliciting a US English pronunciation of 'mascarpone' to establish a US English comparison sample. I refrained from eliciting this sample simply because many speakers of US English metathesize the phones of the word and omit the final vowel, producing /mar.skə.'poon/. I believe that the resyllabification and change of phonemic environments create too many confounds to provide a reliable comparison sample. A quick internet search returns countless articles (both academic and non-academic) utilizing the orthographic spelling ('marscapone') of this marked pronunciation.

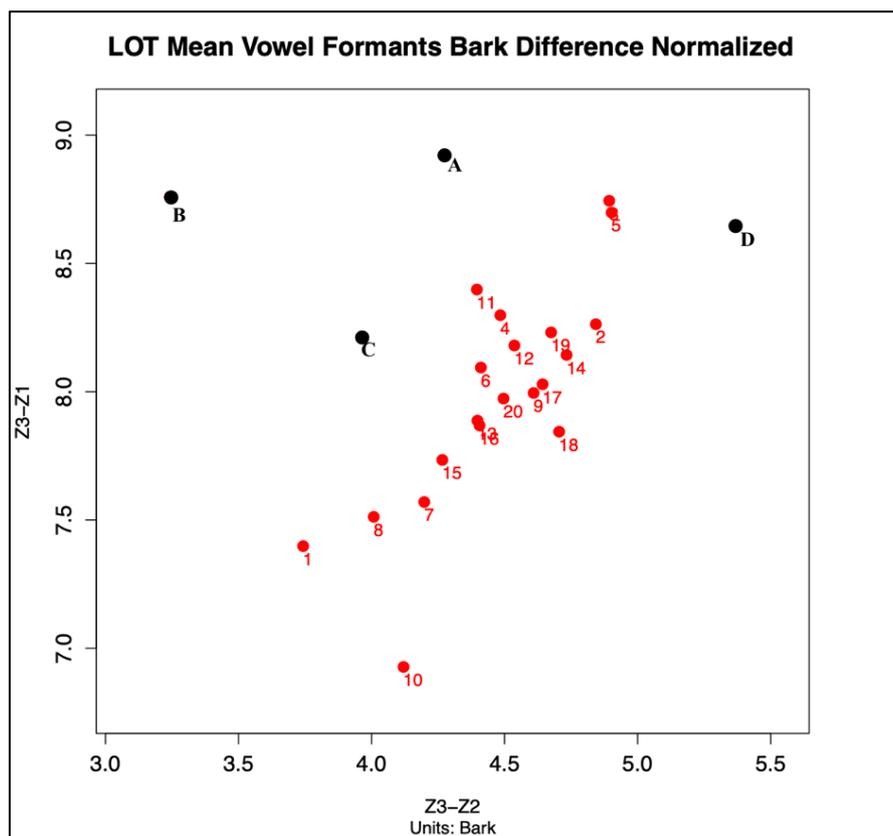


Figure 1: This Bark-difference normalized plot displays the LOT vowel. The red points indicate De Laurentiis' tokens and the seasons in which they were recorded (1–20), and the black points indicate the four native Italian speakers (A–D).

Figure 2 plots the Bark-difference normalized formant values of START (and its Italian counterpart). Although De Laurentiis' START is within the “Italian zone” for the first couple of seasons, it moves away from this area of the plot somewhat sporadically. After Season 14, the tokens cluster in an area of the plots slightly higher and fronter than the “Italian zone”, in line with the predictions from Trautmüller (1990). This plot evidences the impact of US English phonology on De Laurentiis' START. For the Italian speakers, this vowel is actually closer to US English 'LOT' and followed by the rhotic consonant [r]. The effect of the low F3 of the following [r] is not as strong, since Italian phonology does not have rhotacized vowels. It can be postulated that De Laurentiis' START is much higher and fronter because it is *truly* a START vowel, a rhotacized [a] (or even reduced [ə], as it occurs in an unstressed syllable). In the early seasons this vowel maintained its non-rhoticity, but by the last few seasons it clustered away from the “Italian zone”, strengthening the hypothesis that vocalic rhoticity in US English influenced De Laurentiis' articulation of this code-switched Italian word.

Figure 3 plots the Bark-difference normalized formant values of GOAT (and its Italian counterpart). Three of the Italian speakers' tokens cluster toward the upper-right corner of the plot, whereas speaker A's GOAT lands lower and fronter than the others. As for De Laurentiis' GOAT, there is no discernable pattern as she moves through the seasons, except that her GOAT is always fronter than the cluster of Italian speakers (B, C, and D). It is worth mentioning again that De Laurentiis has spent a majority of her life in California, a region where GOAT-fronting is a common feature of the English dialect and may thus have an impact on these formant values (Kennedy and Grama 2012). There is somewhat of a clustering of vowel tokens from Seasons 15–19, but it is a much looser clustering than the LOT and START clusters. However, the GOAT vowel equivalent for Italian speakers is monophthongal, whereas the GOAT vowel for De Laurentiis is perceptibly diphthongal. Since the vowels were all hand-measured, variation in where the formants within the diphthong were measured (however slight) will have an impact on the overall plotting of GOAT. It is possible that some of De Laurentiis' tokens toward the top of the vowel plot (in Seasons 5, 6, 7, 9, for example) represent the movement from [o] to [ʊ] as the diphthong raises.

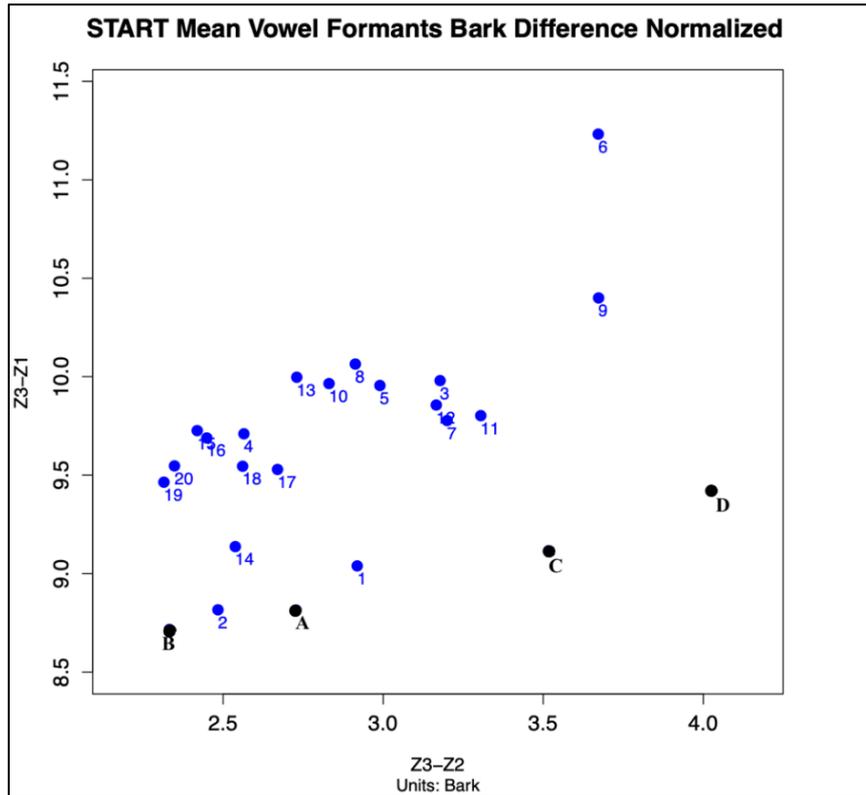


Figure 2: This Bark-difference normalized plot displays the START vowel. The blue points indicate De Laurentiis' tokens and the seasons in which they were recorded (1–20), and the black points indicate the four native Italian speakers (A–D).

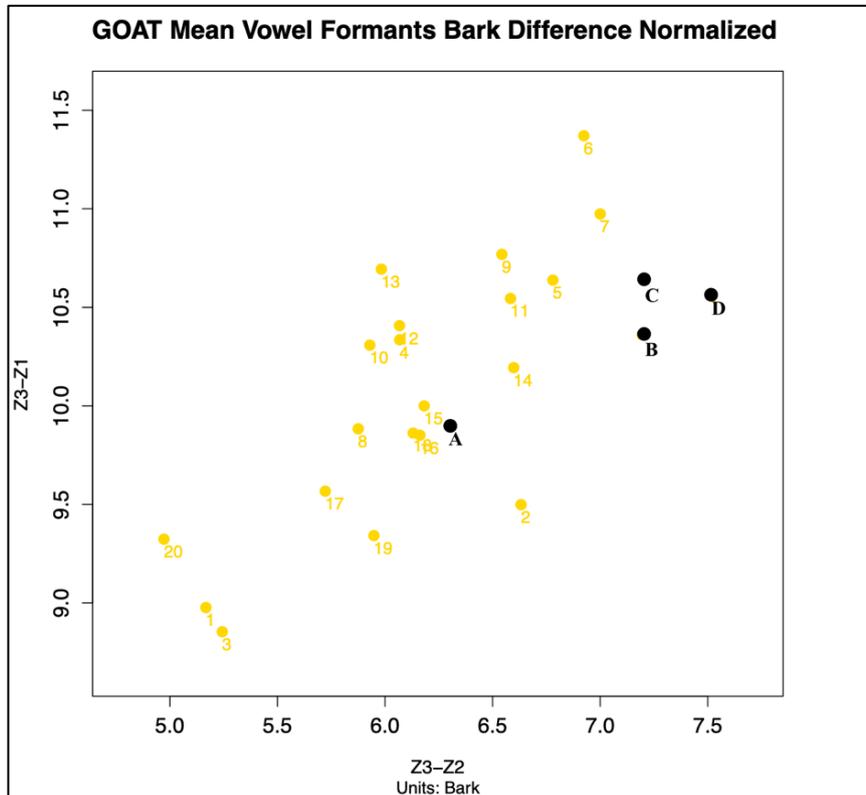
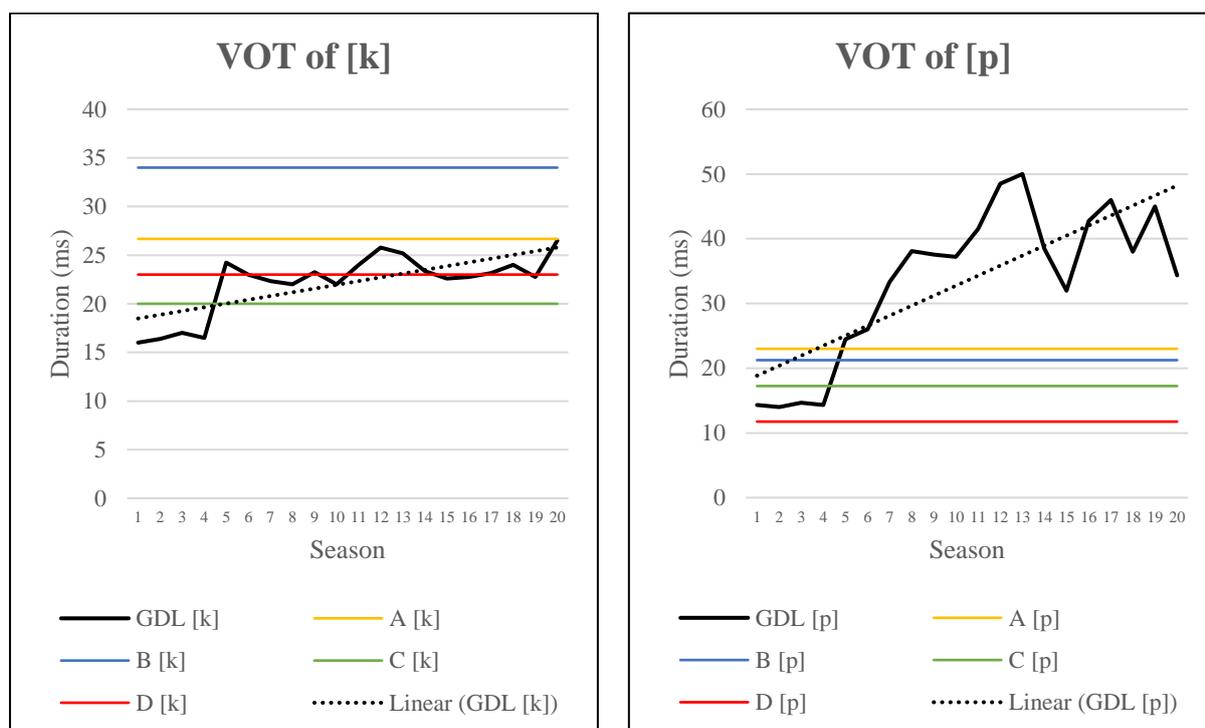


Figure 3: This Bark-difference normalized plot displays the GOAT vowel. The blue points indicate De Laurentiis' tokens and the seasons in which they were recorded (1–20), and the black points indicate the four native Italian speakers (A–D). The somewhat erratic plotting could be due to a measuring inconsistency of the diphthong [oʊ].

Each of De Laurentiis' vowels analyzed here have occupied an area of the vowel space that is different from the vowels of the comparison group, suggesting an influence from US English phonology and a deviation from Italian phonology (albeit slight in some cases). De Laurentiis' LOT was initially lower than the comparison group's LOT vowels but then clustered higher and closer to the comparison group in later seasons, representative of findings from Elias et al. (2017) and the vowel-central hypothesis. The START vowel exhibits heavy influence from the rhotic vowels of US English, with a lowered F3 causing the vowel to be plotted higher and fronter than its non-rhotic Italian counterpart. The measuring inconsistencies of De Laurentiis' GOAT themselves point to another influence of US English on Italian, the diphthongization of [o] to [ou]. The monophthongal [o] of Italian is evident by the relative clustering of the comparison group's vowels in the corner of the vowel space, whereas the arc of De Laurentiis' vowel tokens across the space reflect a vowel movement — measurements taken from different timepoints within the [ou] diphthong track the upward movement of the vowel as it is being articulated.

4.2 The Voiceless Stops

The VOTs of [k] and [p] in De Laurentiis' productions of the word 'mascarpone' were measured and graphed in Figures 4 and 5 alongside the VOTs of the speakers in the comparison group. De Laurentiis' VOT data are represented by the black lines, and each of the four native Italian speakers (A–D) are represented by one color. It was hypothesized that the VOTs of De Laurentiis' [k] and [p] would move away from those of the Italian comparison group. The data show that although the VOT of De Laurentiis' [k] remains comparable to the comparison group throughout the duration of the study, the VOT of her [p] increases greatly as the seasons progress, growing farther from the Italian-like VOT of [p]. Phonological factors such as onset structure and syllable stress may explain this trend in the data.



Figures 4 and 5: These graphs compare the VOTs of [k] (left) and [p] (right) of De Laurentiis from Seasons 1–20, as well as the VOTs of the same stops from the four native Italian speakers (A–D).

For the first four seasons of her show, De Laurentiis' VOT of [p] is almost in the average of the VOTs of the native Italian speakers. As for the VOT of [k], De Laurentiis' [k] falls below the native Italian group's VOTs, although just slightly. At Season 5, there is a large spike in VOT of both [k] and [p]. This spike moves De Laurentiis' [p] out of the domain of the Italian VOTs while leaving De Laurentiis' [k] still within the VOTs of the comparison group. From this point on, the VOT of [k] remains relatively stable with a very gradual slope upward to about 20ms, still within the domain of the VOT of Italian [k]. As for the VOT of [p], following Season 5, it does not return even remotely close to the domain of Italian [p]. A reviewer points out that the positioning of [p] in the onset of a stressed syllable might explain why De Laurentiis' VOT of [p] is almost always longer than her VOT of [k]. For English speakers, the VOT of stops in stressed syllables is generally longer than the VOT of the same stops in unstressed syllables (Llewellyn 1994). Additionally, it has been shown that the VOTs of stops

following [s] in onset clusters (like [k] in /ma.skar.'po.ne/) are typically shorter than the VOT of singleton stops in onset position (like [p]) (O'Shaughnessy 1974, Klatt 1975). In this study, [k] is neither a singleton onset nor in the onset of a stressed syllable. Thus, it makes sense that the VOT of De Laurentiis' [k] would remain stably short and comparable to the VOT of the Italian [k].

The results of the VOT study somewhat substantiate the hypothesis that the VOTs of De Laurentiis' voiceless stops will gradually increase over time. The VOT of [k] remains comparable to the VOT of the Italian [k] throughout the duration of the study, possibly due to the phonotactics outlined above. The VOT of De Laurentiis' [p] is interesting because although it moves away from the Italian VOT over time, it oscillates over the [p] trendline. This fluctuating increase and decrease of the VOT could be evidence of a "leveling out" of the VOT of [p] as De Laurentiis navigates an accommodated VOT over time. Similarly to the results of the LOT vowel, the transition away from the Italian phonology is not instantaneous but gradual, perhaps evidencing the development of a television persona that is authentically Italian yet still accessible to an English audience.

5 Conclusion

This study analyzed the vowels and voiceless stops of Giada De Laurentiis, a heritage speaker of Italian with a US English L2, across her 20 seasons (12 years) on *Food Network*. The goal of this study was to examine how US English phonetics and phonology impact the pronunciation of a code-switched Italian word within an English frame over time. It was shown that US English had a strong impact on the vowels, from the rhoticization of the START vowel to the diphthongization of the GOAT vowel. Additionally, factors like syllable stress and onset structure might be impacting the VOTs of the voiceless stops [k] and [p]. This study captured the gradual movement of the phonemes in question away from their Italian counterparts within the code-switched word over time, perhaps reflecting the process of constructing a US English-accessible Italian persona. This paper sought to add to the growing literature on diachronic studies of heritage speakers and the influence of their L2 on their heritage language. This study analyzed a single lexical code-switch, prompting future diachronic studies to analyze other instances of heritage code-switching, both at the lexical and sentential level.

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