PAPER 5:

Acquisition of Creaky Voice in English

Angeliki Athanasopoulou, Nadya Pincus, Irene Vogel
University of Delaware

It has been observed that creaky voice has been increasing in American English, particularly among young women. The question we address is whether children who are exposed to this variety of speech develop creaky voice as an integral part of their language acquisition. To this end, we analyze the speech of children 5, 7 and 10 years old, and adults, specifically the first and final words in sentences of the structure: “Tom’s/Emma’s X is at the top/bottom.” As expected, the adults use creaky voice extensively at the end of the sentence, but less at the beginning, and a similar pattern is observed in the oldest group of children. The younger children use more modal phonation, however, it appears that they are indeed acquiring creaky voice as they develop other aspects of their phonology and creaky voice is thus becoming a standard, as opposed to a stylistic, aspect of English prosody.