Title: A Synchronic Study of the Phonological Variants of the RP diphthong [ai] in the Lancashire Dialect during the XIX Century.

Northern dialects, particularly the Lancashire dialect, have been widely represented in the English literature. Regional literature can be principally classified into two distinct approaches: dialect literature and literary dialect. While the first type of representation refers to those works entirely composed in a non-standard variety, the second encompasses those texts that are wholly written in the Prestige Variety, except the characters’ speeches, which are marked with the vernacular variety. As literary-dialect authors’ main concern was not the accurate depiction of the dialect, they tend to adopt readable orthographical conventions, based on semi-phonetic spellings of Standard English. Thereby, readers unfamiliar with the dialect represented in the novels would not find the reading cumbersome. As a complete research of the dialect would be beyond the scope of this paper, the present work aims at analysing those deviant spellings and their suggested pronunciations related to the RP diphthong [ai] in the XIX century in Lancashire. For this purpose, we examined nineteen Lancashire literary-dialect works written by five nineteenth-century writers; this type of literature is a useful tool for dialect study, since the representation of the deviant spellings provides evidence of the dialect pronunciations at a certain period of time. In so doing, those non-standard spellings related to that RP diphthong were grouped together and subsequently attributed to their possible realizations in the Lancashire dialect. The synchronic research on the Lancashire dialect via the study of literary-dialect texts involve two distinct issues. On the one hand, the novels examined may show old or archaic realizations, which were probably vanishing during the XIX century, and novel sounds as a result of the influence of the Prestige Variety over the different English dialects. On the other hand, as literary-dialect authors were not linguists or dialect experts, they probably used stereotyped pronunciations as a means to denote the locality’s vernacular of the characters represented in their works. This paper attempts to set out the possible realizations related to the RP sound [ai] as well as discussing the coexistence of these variants considering historical, dialectal, and sociolinguistic reasons. The findings reveal that the underlying motives for such a concurrence are rooted in conservatism, the emergence of novel realizations, and stereotyped forms.

Keywords: Lancashire dialect, dialect representation, literary dialect, deviant spellings, suggested pronunciations, PRICE words

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