

Ahm jast fahn or I'm just fine?
Auditory and acoustic analyses of young Southern speakers'
pronunciation of PRICE

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One of the most characteristic features of Southern American English is the ungliding of the PRICE vowel; this means the pronunciation of the diphthong [aɪ] as a monophthong, so that words like *life* and *fine* sound like 'lahf' and 'fahn'. Yet, over 15 year ago Tillery and Bailey (2005) already noted that the standard pronunciation was spreading in larger cities of the urban South and that it had become the dominant variant for urban speakers.

The present analysis empirically tests whether this spread is still ongoing. It focusses on methodological challenges for studies of this kind. The results of an auditory analysis of over 350 PRICE vowels found in interviews with speakers of Southern American English reveal that young urban speakers are indeed much less likely to unglide PRICE vowels than older rural speakers. This first analysis, however, also indicates that a binary distinction between glide and non-glide may be unsuitable to represent the true range of pronunciations in the South. We show that acoustic analyses with the help of PRAAT may solve this problem as they allow the researcher to represent gliding and ungliding as gradual phenomena.