

Beckhams 'getting posher'

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(Phys.org) —David and Victoria Beckham have changed the way they speak to sound less working class, according to a study by University of Manchester linguistics students.

Using YouTube videos from before and after the high profile couple's 2007 move to America, one team found that Becks was less likely to drop his 'H's and use cockney sounding [vowel](#) sounds.

Another team found that Posh was nowadays more likely to pronounce the 'L' at the end of [words](#) such as 'all'.

According to the students, in her days with the Spice Girls she would have made 'all' sound like 'aw', in line with the way working class people speak in the South East of England.

The final year students are studying how changing circumstances affect the way we pronounce words, under the guidance of [linguistics](#) lecturer Dr Laurel MacKenzie.

Dr MacKenzie said: "Linguists have determined that when languages change, it is primarily children and teenagers who drive those changes.

"Pronunciation isn't static, but changes gradually over hundreds of years. This is why Chaucer sounded so different 600 years ago – and it's children who facilitate this process.

"The general assumption is that once we pass [puberty](#), our way of

speaking is fixed. But recent research has revealed the extent to which we can be chameleons in the way we speak, even into [adulthood](#).

"Factors such as [social mobility](#) and [geographical location](#) can have an impact on the way adults pronounce words, because our [peer groups](#) and communities are influential on our language too.

"But it's important to remember that adults can only change so much: phonemes such as the different vowel sounds in the words 'cot' and 'caught', to many Americans like me, have identical sounds and there's not much anyone can do about that."

From the videos that Charles Boorman and Alix Roberts studied, Becks dropped his 'Hs' 80 per cent of the time before his move to the US. After the relocation, the figure fell to 20 per cent.

From the analysis of Posh by Naomi Proszynska and James Pickett, she pronounced her 'l's only 25 per cent of the time aged 23 in 1997, a figure which nearly doubled to 46 per cent of the time by age 38 in 2012.

Naomi Proszynska said: "Our analysis shows that Posh's speech is definitely getting posher because of changes to her L vocalisation.

"In 1997, her speech resembled what we associate with the classic 'Essex girl'. But by 2012, her speech no longer so strongly represented her Essex roots. We think this may be connected with the fact that she's forged a different career as a widely respected fashion designer."

Charles Boorman said: "It's clear that Becks, once a broader Cockney, nowadays speaks with more of a standard English accent.

"In fact, he's even hypercorrecting himself because he puts 'Hs' into words when it's not really required.

"In America, they use the 'H' sound more, which explains how he acquired it. But my guess is that his dropping of those Cockney sounding vowels was linked to his ambassadorial role for the Olympics and his subsequent high social status."

Provided by University of Manchester

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