Endogenous linguistic change in inner-London teenage speech as the generator of vowel innovations: Implications for models of innovation, levelling and diffusion

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www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/innovators/index.htm
Reading/Ashford normalised data
Diphthongs in southeast England

• change in MOUTH (onset being lowered and backed to a low-front position):
  
  \[
  [\varepsilon\varsigma] \rightarrow [\varepsilon\omega] \rightarrow [\alpha\nu]
  \]

  (rural S.E. → urban S.E. → ‘levelled southern’?)

• change in PRICE: [ɔɪ] → [ɔɪ]

• stability in FACE – broad diphthong of the type [æɪ]
Reasons for this choice

• Diversity:
  – Social network type, including mobility
  – Ethnicity
  – Language contact

• This leads to presumed different language change patterns
Sample (for both Inner London and Outer London)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>32 students aged 16-19 in each borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 white ‘Anglo’ native to London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 other-ethnic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 working-class Anglo adults aged 65-80 (4 women, 4 men) in each borough
Hypothesised changes

• Inner city vs. outer city: hypothesis that features originating or are widespread in outer London will have a better chance of spreading to e.g. Milton Keynes and Reading

• Changes in Inner London (inner city) may originate within the community, but may also arise through language contact

• Changes here may have difficulty in diffusing because of supposed lack of contact

• Changes in Outer London (outer city) may be towards levelled forms because of greater mobility and more open communities
Inner London elderly informants 2005

Graph showing the relationship between $F_1$ (Hz) and $F_2$ (Hz) with various symbols representing different phonetic features.
Labov 1968
Inner London young informants 2005

The diagram shows the distribution of vowel sounds in terms of $F_1$ and $F_2$ frequencies. The vowels are marked with symbols: $i$, $u$, $e$, $e$, $a$, and $o$. The $F_1$ frequency is plotted on the vertical axis, ranging from 0 to 2000 Hz, and the $F_2$ frequency is plotted on the horizontal axis, ranging from 3150 to 7000 Hz.
Outer London elderly informants 2005

Diagram showing the distribution of vowels in the frequency domain with $F_1$ (Hz) on the Y-axis and $F_2$ (Hz) on the X-axis. The vowels include /i/, /u:/, /ʊ/, /æ/, /ə/, and /ŋ/.
Summary of recent London monophthong changes

• TRAP: backing
• STRUT: backing and raising
• TRAP and STRUT backing is more advanced in London than in South East periphery
• FOOT: fronted in Outer London, but not fronted in Inner London
• GOOSE: strongly fronted in Inner London, less so in Outer London
• Effects of ethnicity?
Elderly informants in Inner London and Outer London

Mr D, b1918, Inner London

Mrs E, b1928, Inner London

Mr J, b1938, Inner London
Jack, Anglo

Mark, mixed heritage

Laura, Anglo
Outer London young speakers

John, mixed heritage

Ollie, Anglo

Carl, Anglo
Summary of recent London diphthong changes

- **PRICE**: fronting and lowering of onset among Inner London and Outer London youth - reversal of diphthong shift
- Also, **PRICE** often a near-monophthong among Inner London young people, especially non-Anglo
- **MOUTH**: remains low-front near-monophthong for all speakers – stability of diphthong-shifted variant over time and across ethnicities. Little sign of levelled southeastern [au]
- **FACE**: reversal of diphthong shift to a front closing diphthong, most strongly among non-Anglo
- **GOAT**: fronted offset (‘Milton Keynes’ variant) OR a back close monophthong
Endogenous vs. exogenous change?

• Endogenous change: generated from within the speech community

• Exogenous change: caused by dialect contact
### Types of diphthong changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FACE</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>MOUTH</th>
<th>GOAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monophthongisation</td>
<td>Inner London NA</td>
<td>Inner London NA</td>
<td>Inner London Outer London Elderly</td>
<td>Inner London NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset raising</td>
<td>Inner London A Outer London</td>
<td>Inner London A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset fronting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inner London A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset lowering</td>
<td>Outer London MK/Reading</td>
<td>Outer London MK/Reading</td>
<td>MK/Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offset fronting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MK/Reading Outer London Inner London girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = Anglo, NA = non-Anglo

**Innovation (endogenous)**

**Anti-diphthong shift**

**Levelling (exogenous)**
Conclusion

• Vowel changes in inner London and in the South East follow different paths
• Backing of TRAP and STRUT is more advanced in London than in the South East periphery
• FOOT-fronting is widespread in South East periphery
  – Also found in Outer London, but not in Inner London
• For FACE, PRICE and GOAT, the reversal of diphthong shift is more advanced in Inner London than in Outer London
• Non-Anglo boys seem to be strongly in the lead
• MOUTH retains its diphthong-shifted vowel in London
  – But London does not take part in the South East periphery lowering to [au]
• All these developments lead to:
  – divergence/innovation in inner London (endogenous)
  – levelling in the periphery – Outer London, Reading, Milton Keynes and Ashford (exogenous)
  – the outer periphery, e.g. Milton Keynes, in the lead in levelling
Bibliography


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  av språkleg variasjon og endring i to tilgrensande dialektområde, Røros og Tynset. PhD


