

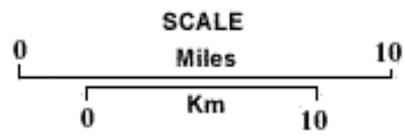
***Emergent cross-ethnic varieties  
and linguistic innovation in  
European metropolises***

***Organisers:***

***Paul Kerswill, Eivind Torgersen,  
Jenny Cheshire, Sue Fox & Arfaan Khan***

*The temporal and lifespan trajectory  
of 'Multicultural London English'  
as a clue to its origins and vitality*

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**□ *Linguistic innovators: the English of adolescents in London (2004–7)***

PI Paul Kerswill, CI Jenny Cheshire  
RA1 Eivind Torgersen, RA2 Sue Fox

**□ *Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety (2007–10)***

PI Paul Kerswill, CI Jenny Cheshire  
RA1 Eivind Torgersen, RA2 Sue Fox, RA3 Arfaan Khan

**□ *Analysis of spoken London English using corpus tools (2008)***

PI Eivind Torgersen, CI Paul Kerswill  
RA Costas Gabrielatos

# Change patterns in London English

- Linguistic innovation in inner London
- Limited spread of features to outer London
- London English is diverging from the rest of the south-east

# Research questions MLE project

- Characterisation of the ‘multiracial vernacular’ of London: is it ethnically neutral?
- Are there differences between areas within London?
- How does it spread?
- Is it changing?
- Is it age-graded?
- Are there effects of home language?

# Project design: MLE project

- 4, 8, 12, 17 year olds and adults
- North London
- female, male
- “Anglo” and “non-Anglo”
- Free interviews in pairs
- Phonological and grammatical analysis
- Perception tests

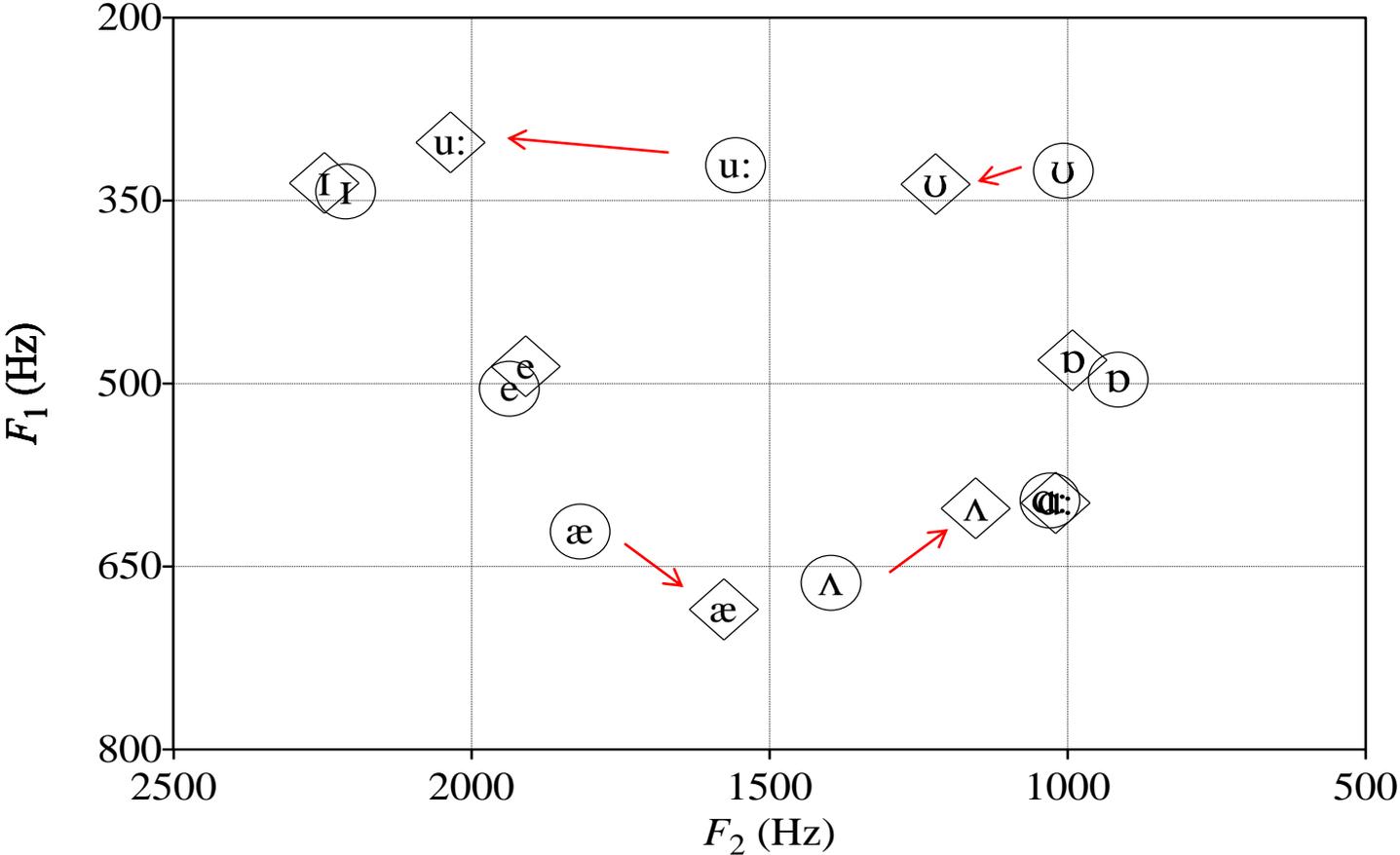
# Traditional Cockney system

- Diphthong shift
  - FACE [æɪ], PRICE [aɪ], GOAT [ɛʊ]
- Pre-south-eastern vowel shift
  - FOOT [ʊ], GOOSE [uː], DRESS [e], TRAP [æ], STRUT [ɐ]
- H-dropping

# Levelled system in south-east England

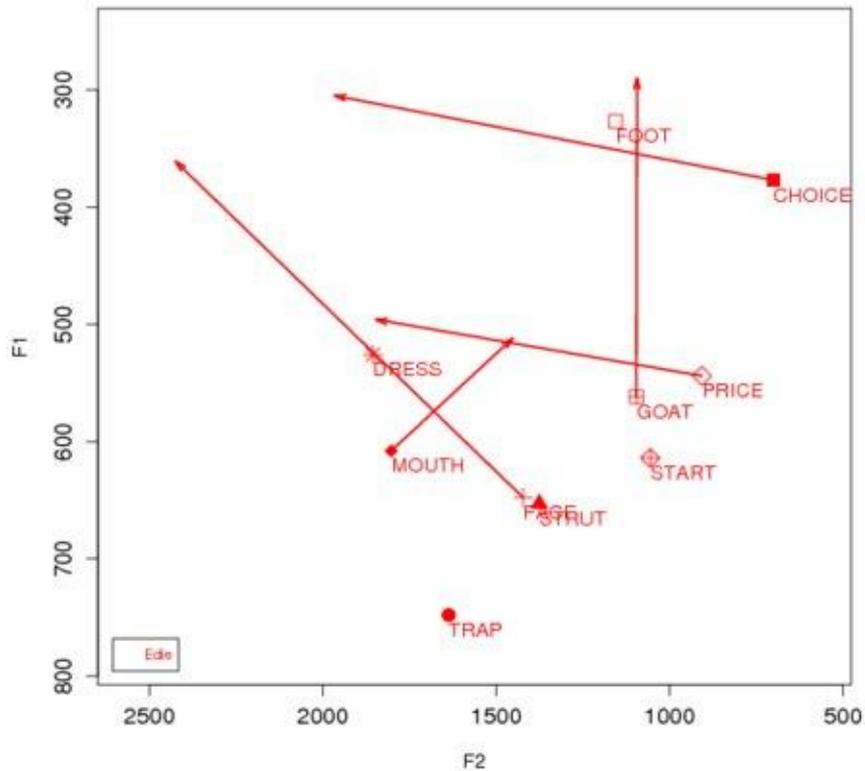
- Un-shifted diphthongs (RP-type)
  - FACE [ɛɪ], PRICE [aɪ], GOAT [əʊ]
- South-eastern vowel shift
  - FOOT [ə], GOOSE [ʊ:], DRESS [ɛ], TRAP [a], STRUT [ʌ]
- ‘Milton Keynes’ GOAT [əʏ]
- Fronted GOOSE [y:]
- Reduction in H-dropping

# The south-eastern vowel shift

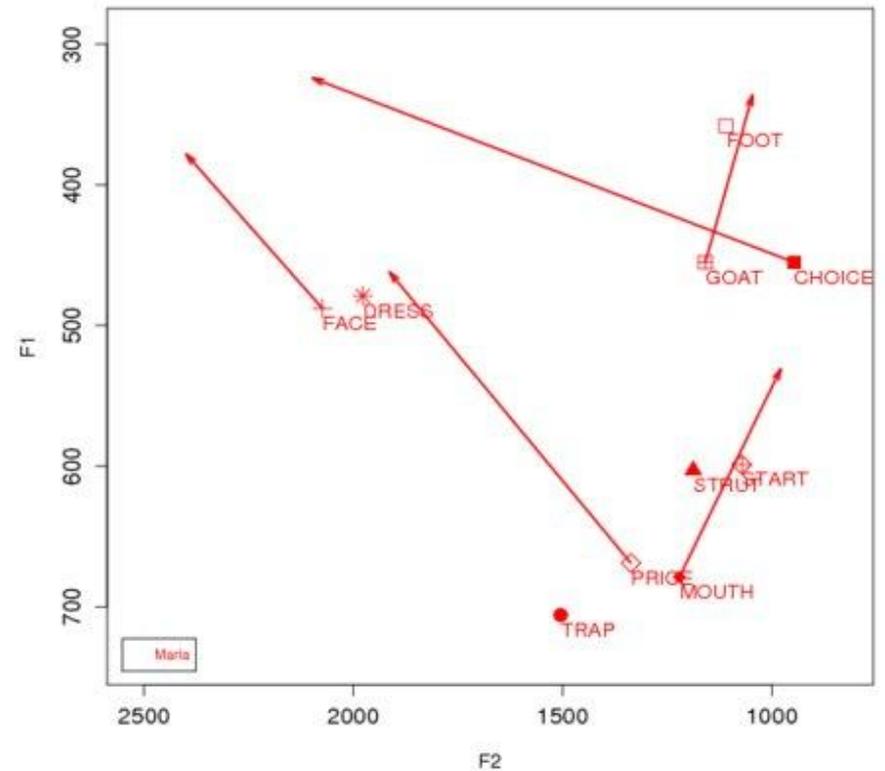


○ Elderly speakers      ◇ Teenagers

# Diphthong shifting and un-shifting



Traditional London

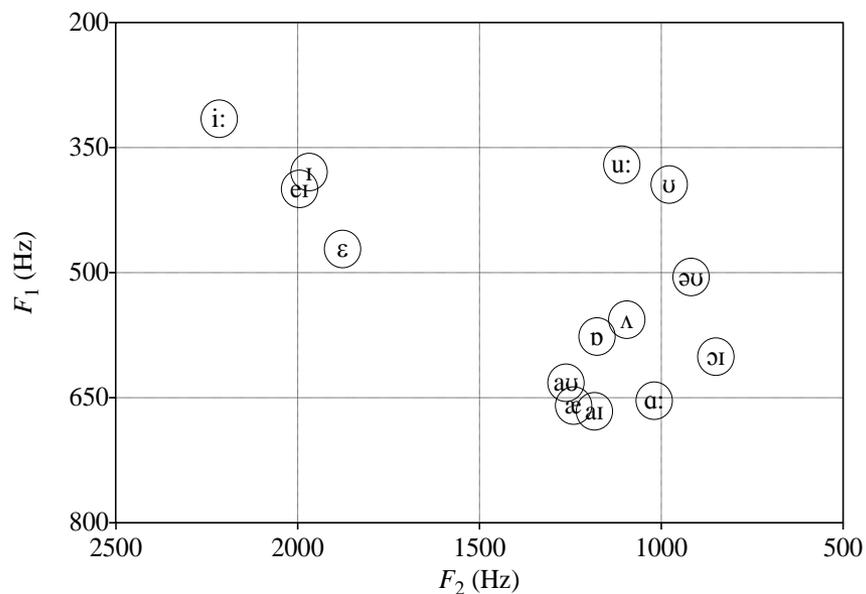


London teenager

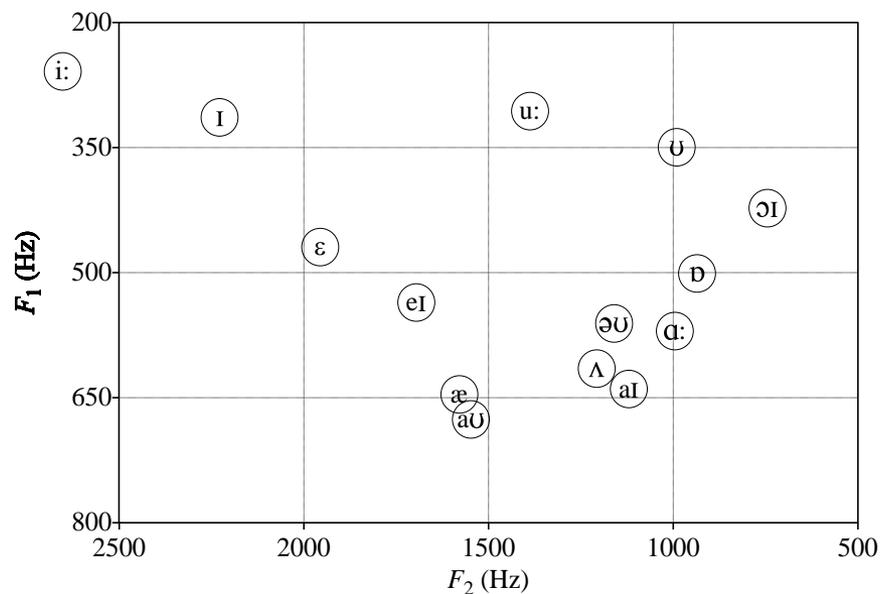
# Complicating factor: ethnicity

- Extensive dialect and language contact in London
  - Non-UK varieties of English
  - L2 varieties of English
  - Other languages
- Different processes at different stages
  - Distinct and separate varieties at the beginning
  - Code-switching
  - Crossing

# 'Creole' and 'London' varieties by speakers of Jamaican background (1983)



'Creole' variety



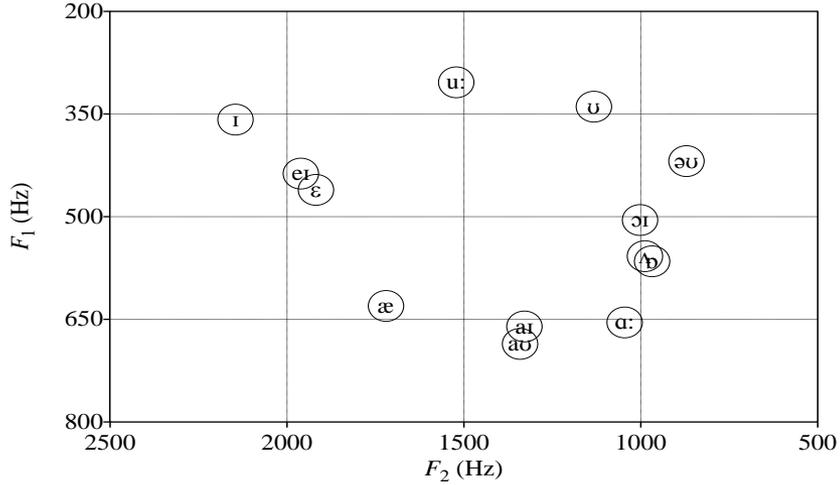
'London' variety

# London data (1983)

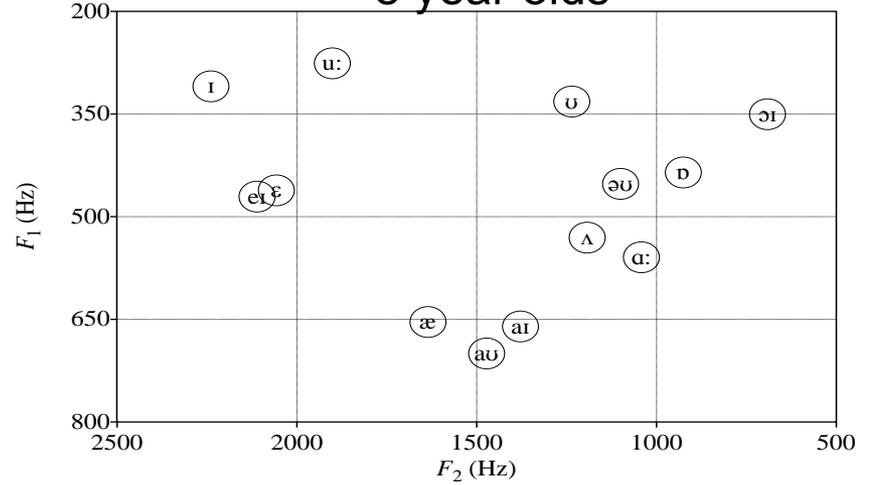
- Possible origins of MLE-features
  - GOAT [oː], FACE [eː]
- Not found in 1983 data
  - Heavily fronted GOOSE [yː]
- Several vowel qualities in ‘creole’ variety not found in current MLE (LOT, TRAP, PRICE, MOUTH, GOOSE)
- Today: some parents speak creole at home, children don’t speak creole

# Development in vowel system

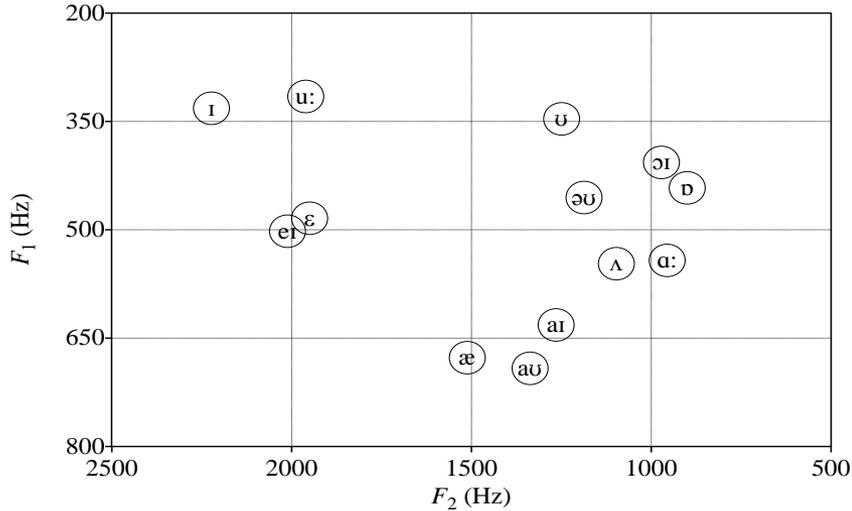
## 4 year olds



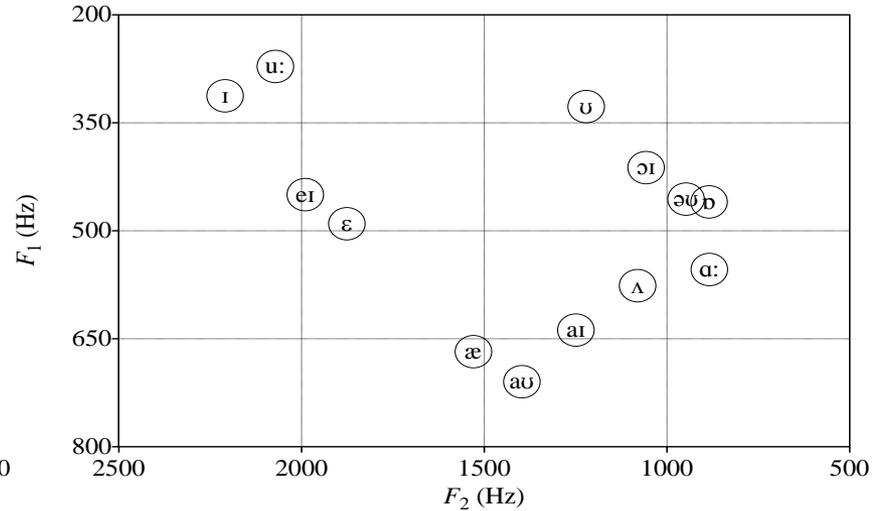
## 8 year olds



## 12 year olds



## Teenagers (2008)



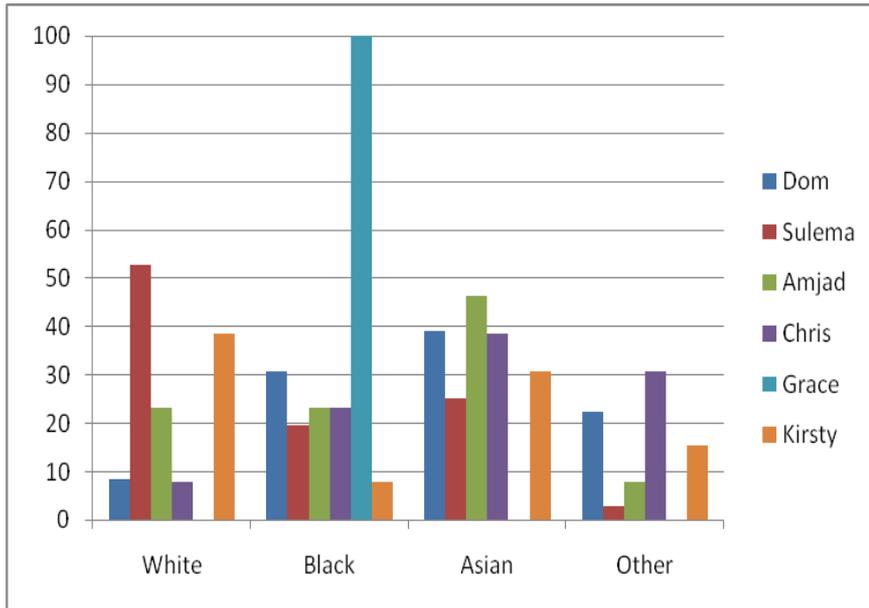
# Timeline of MLE acquisition

- The 8 and 12 year olds are more 'levelled'
  - General south-eastern GOAT [əʊ], not monophthongal [o:]
  - Not extreme GOOSE fronting
  - Not raised FACE
- Development of MLE-features after the age of 12 as members of multicultural friendship groups
- Full set of features at the age of 16-17

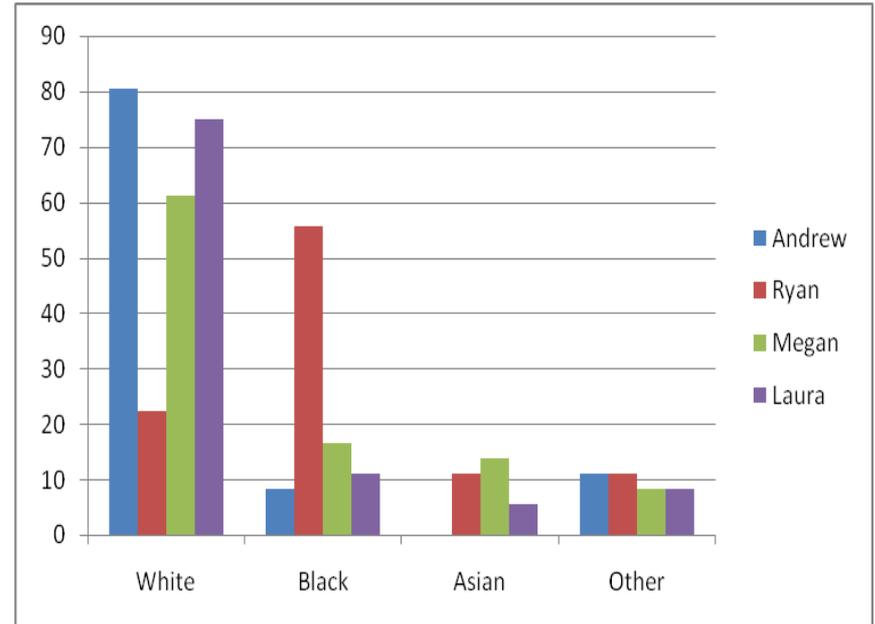
# Is MLE a single variety?

- Similarities in vowel systems between teenagers in the two London projects (Hackney and North London)
- Spoken regardless of ethnic background (non-Anglo speakers in particular)
- Perception test
  - Listeners have problems identifying non-Anglo speakers' ethnic background

# Identification of speakers' ethnicity in London



Non-Anglo speakers



Anglo speakers

# Conclusions

- Spectrum of varieties
  - Taking ‘new’ features we discussed earlier
  - Plus general south-eastern consonants, especially th-fronting, r-labiodentalisation and t-glottalling
  - Wholesale reinstatement of /h/
- Acquisition through childhood to adolescence
  - Evidence of Labovian ‘adolescent peak’, given extreme heterogeneity of the ‘speech community’, with children acquiring English in ways not easily accounted for in the Labovian model