



# Multicultural youth speech as the source of innovation in London English

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

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

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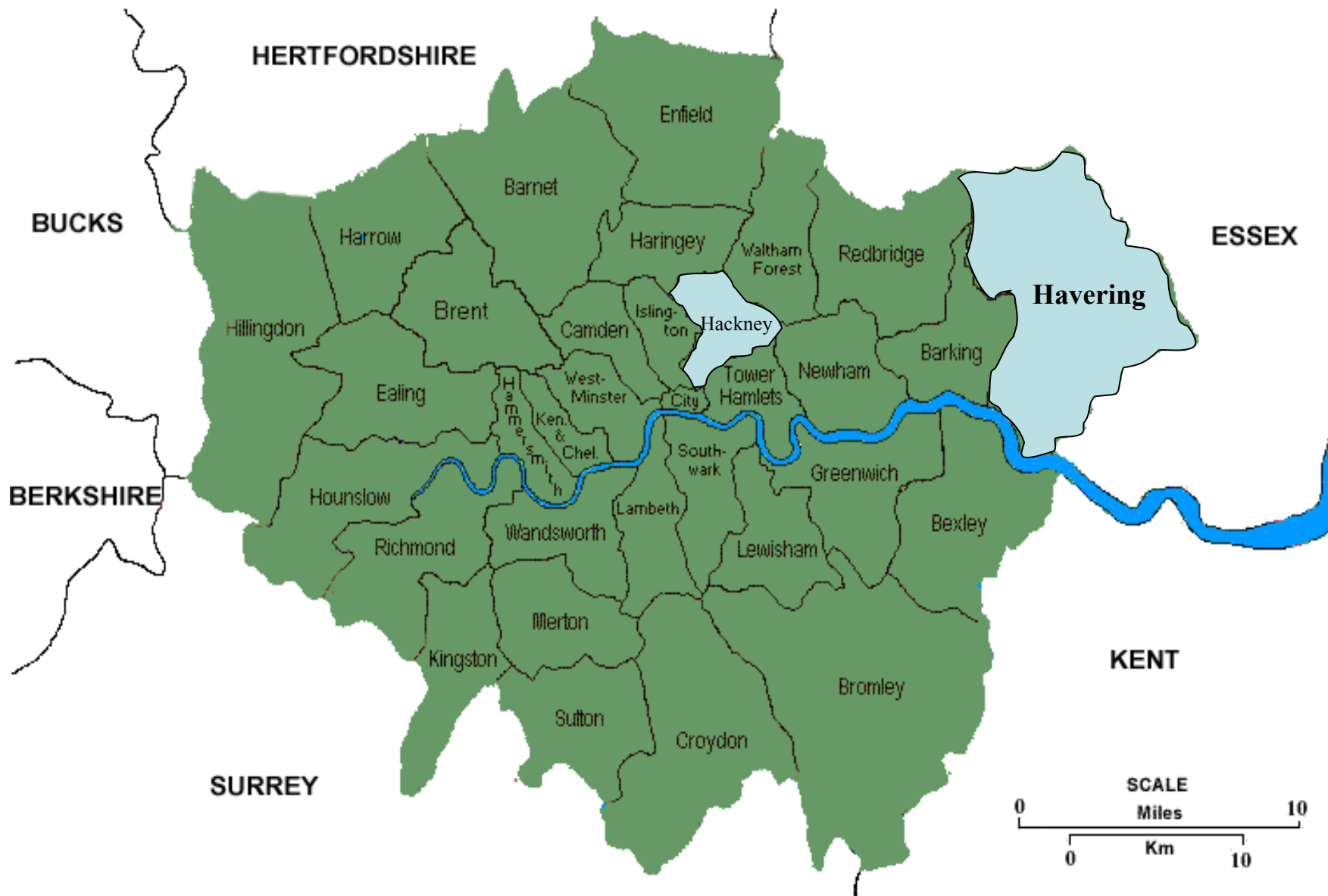
Eivind Torgersen (Lancaster University)

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Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/innovators/>

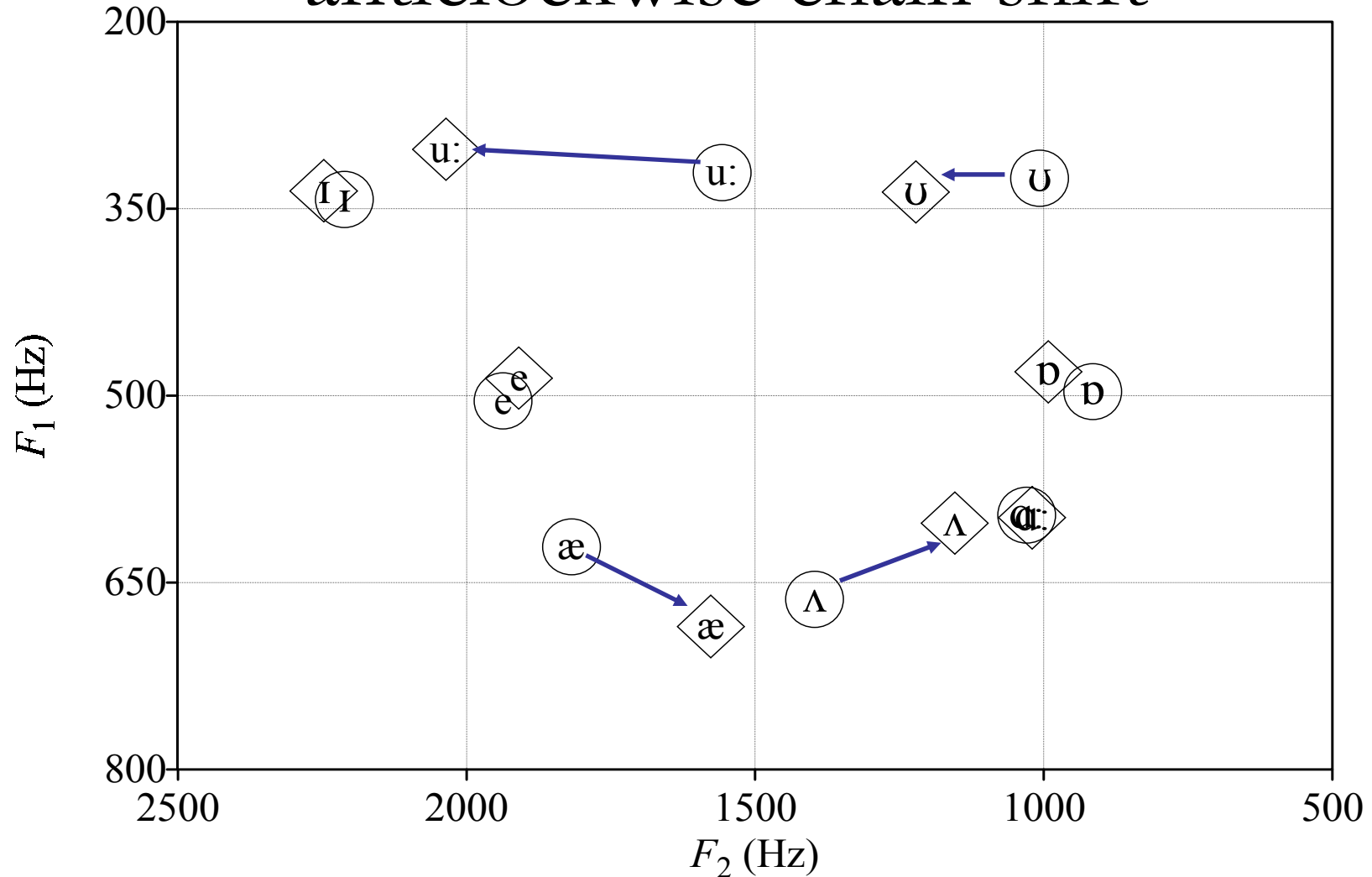
<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/multicultural/>



# Project design: ‘Innovators’ project

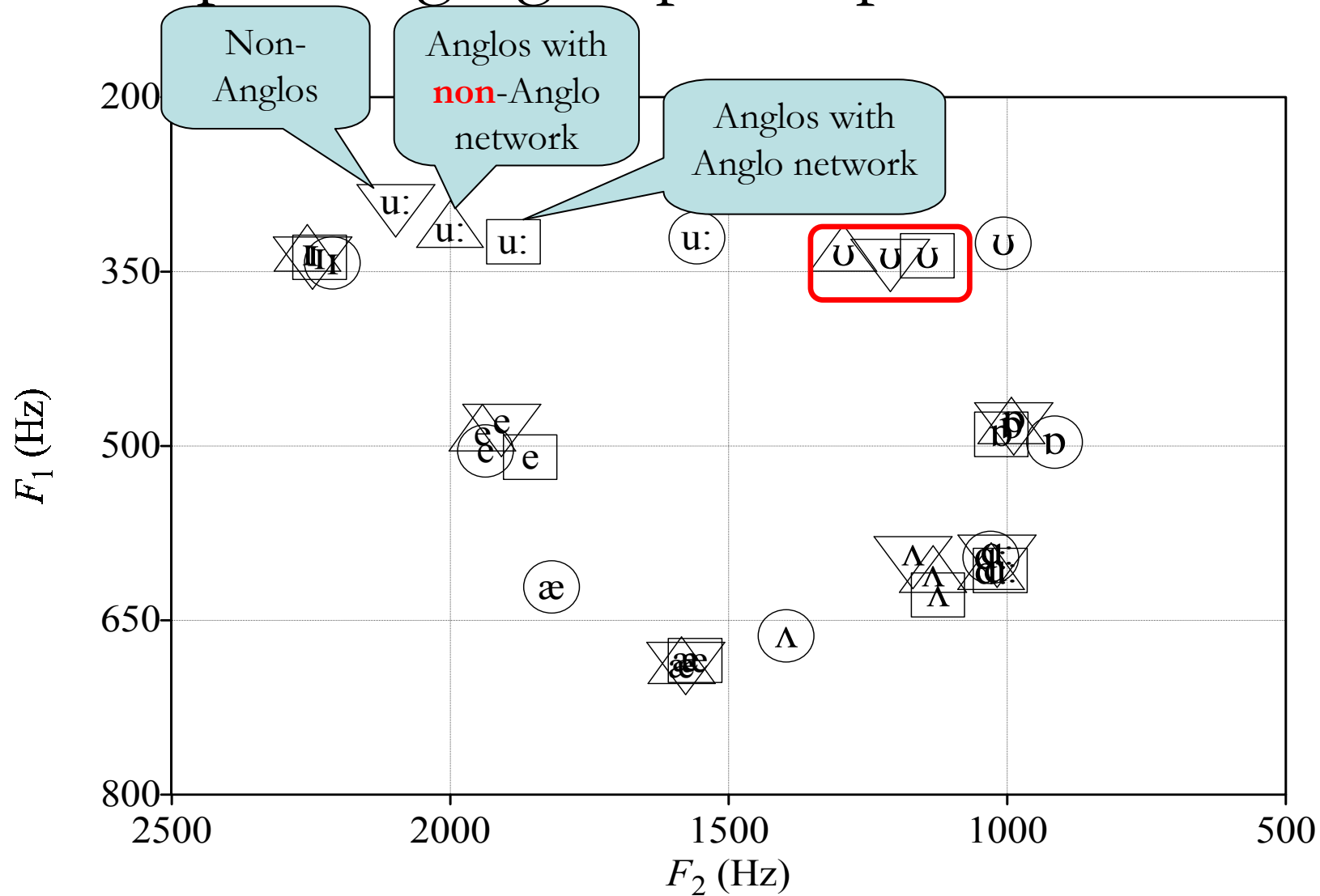
- 16 elderly Londoners
- 98 17 year old Londoners
- from inner London (Hackney) and outer London (Havering)
- female, male
- “Anglo” and “non-Anglo”
- Free interviews in pairs
- 1.4m words transcribed orthographically, stored in a database time-aligned at turn level

# Monophthongs in Hackney – anticlockwise chain shift



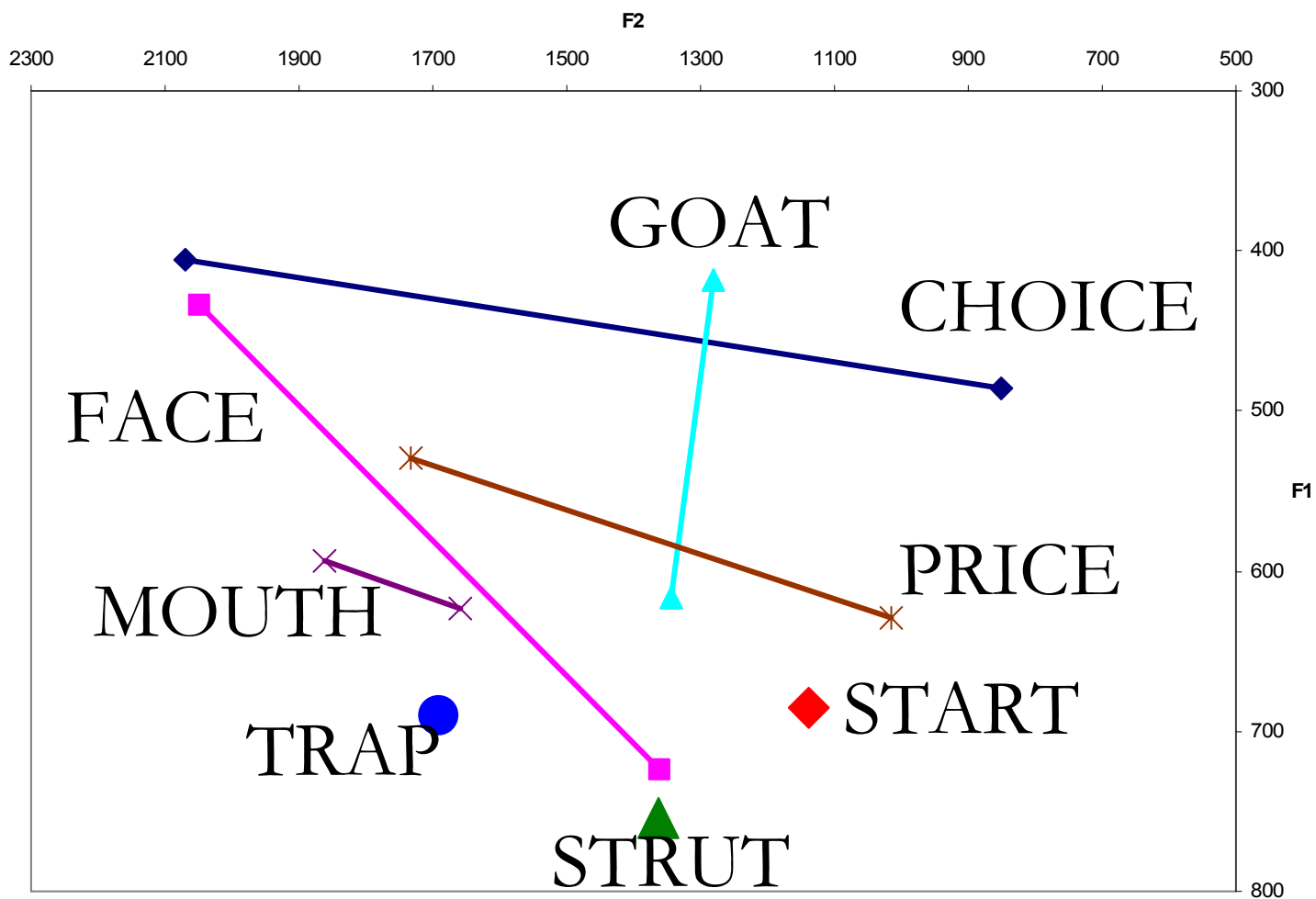
Elderly speakers (circles), Young speakers (diamonds)

# Monophthongs: groups of speakers in Hackney

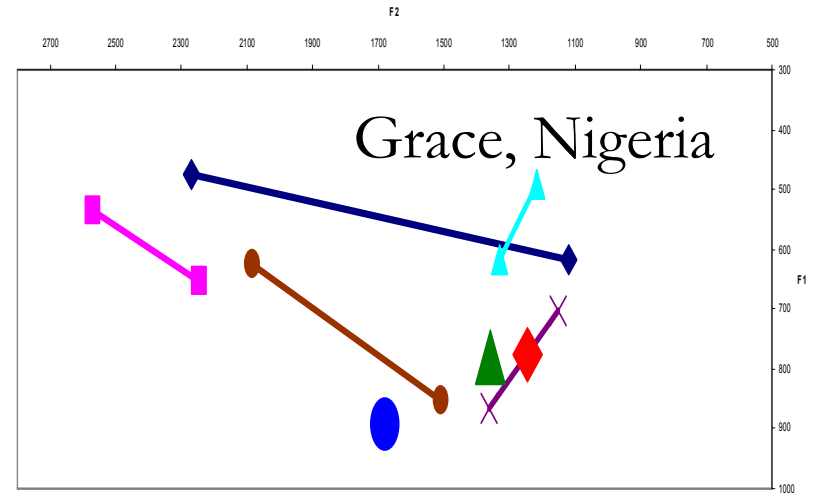
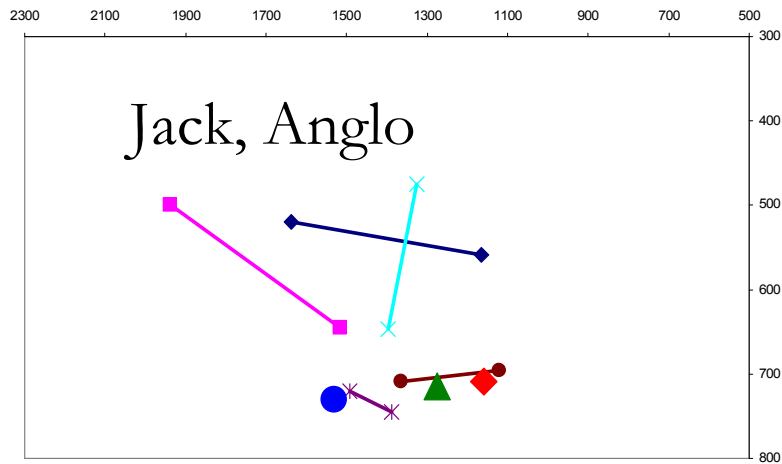
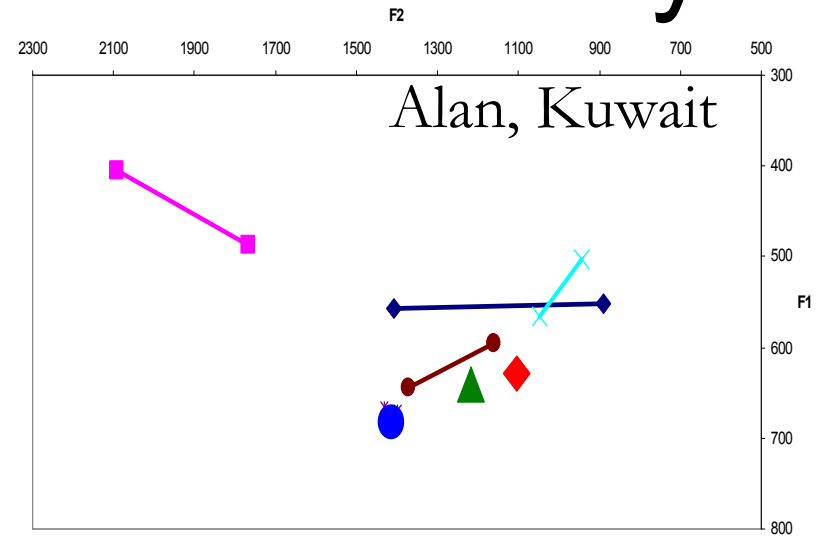
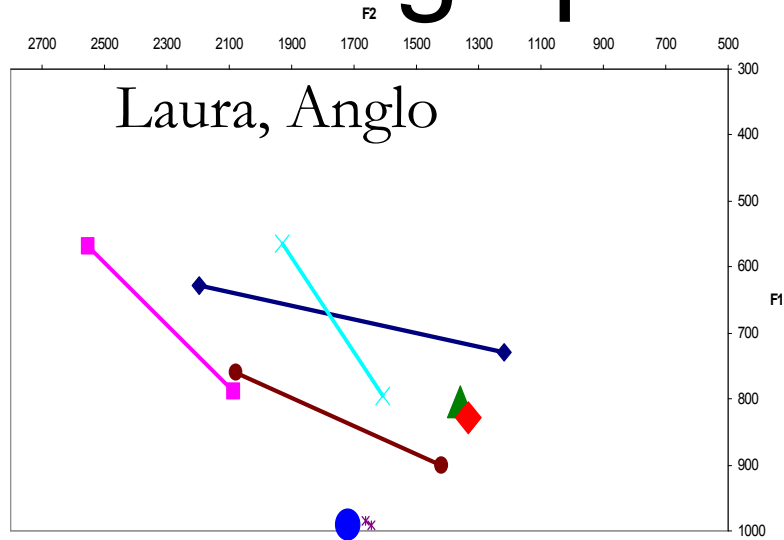


Elderly speakers (circles), non-Anglo speakers (inverted triangles), Anglo speakers with non-Anglo networks (triangles), Anglo speakers with Anglo networks (squares)

# Working-class white Londoner born 1938 (Hackney)

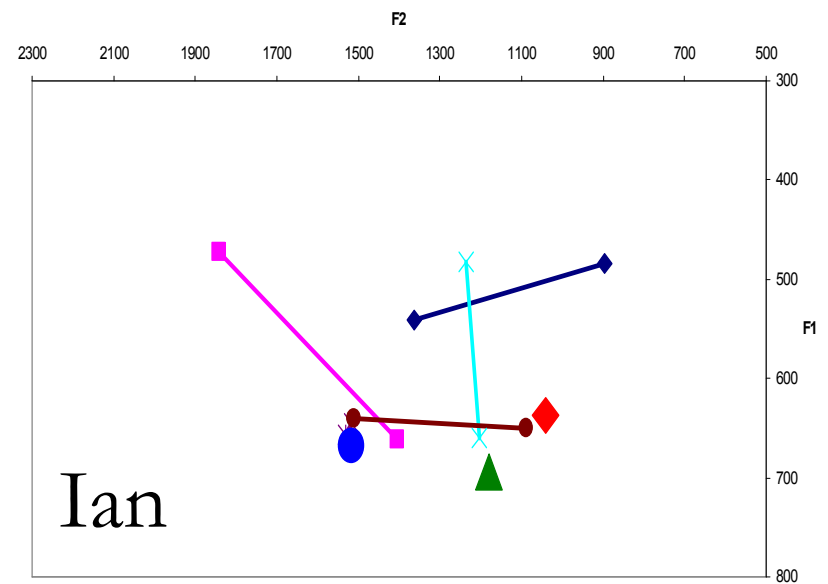
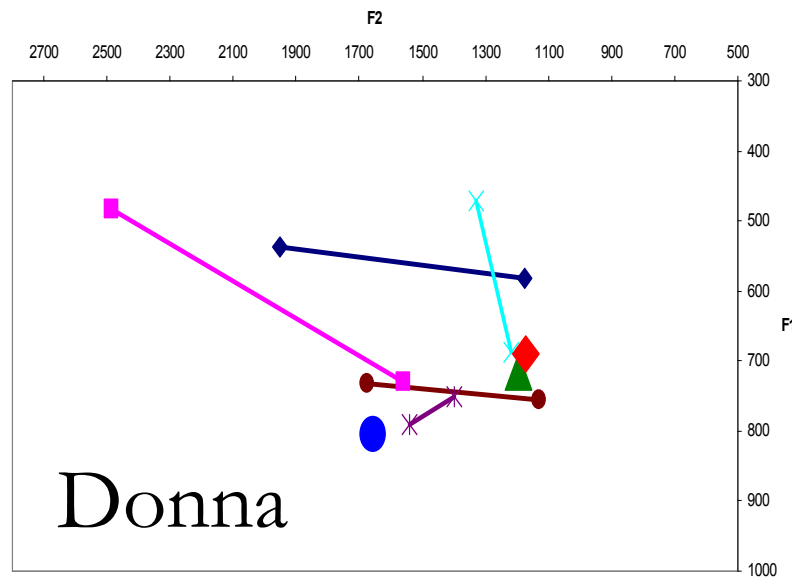


# Young speakers in Hackney





# Young Havering Anglo speakers

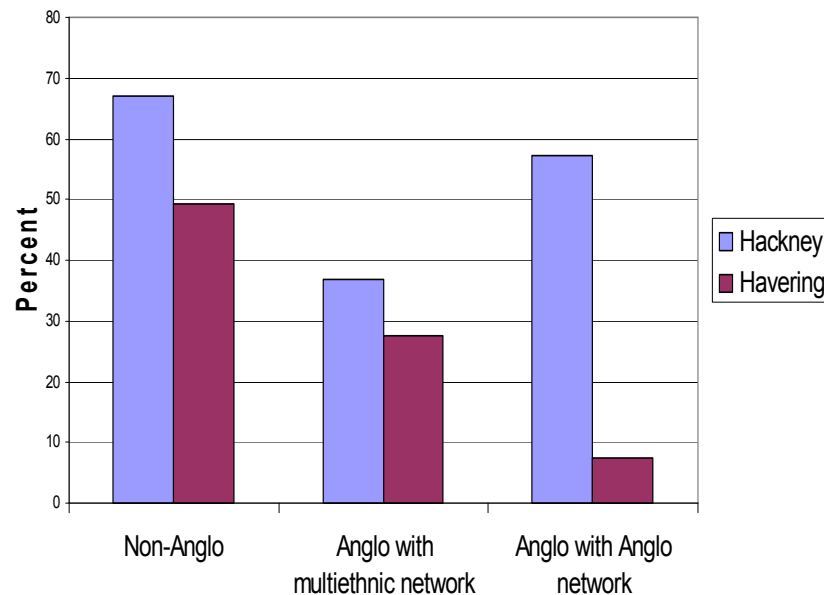


# H-Dropping

Milton Keynes & Reading elderly (1995)	Milton Keynes 14 year olds (1995)	Reading 14 year olds (1995)	Hackney 17 year olds (2005)	Havering 17 year olds (2005)
92%	14%	35%	9%	32%

Hackney non- Anglo	Hackney Anglo
4%	18%

# DH-Stopping



- More DH-Stopping in Hackney than in Havering
- Non-Anglo speakers have more DH-Stopping
- DH-Stopping is avoided by Anglo speakers with Anglo network in Havering

# Grammatical features

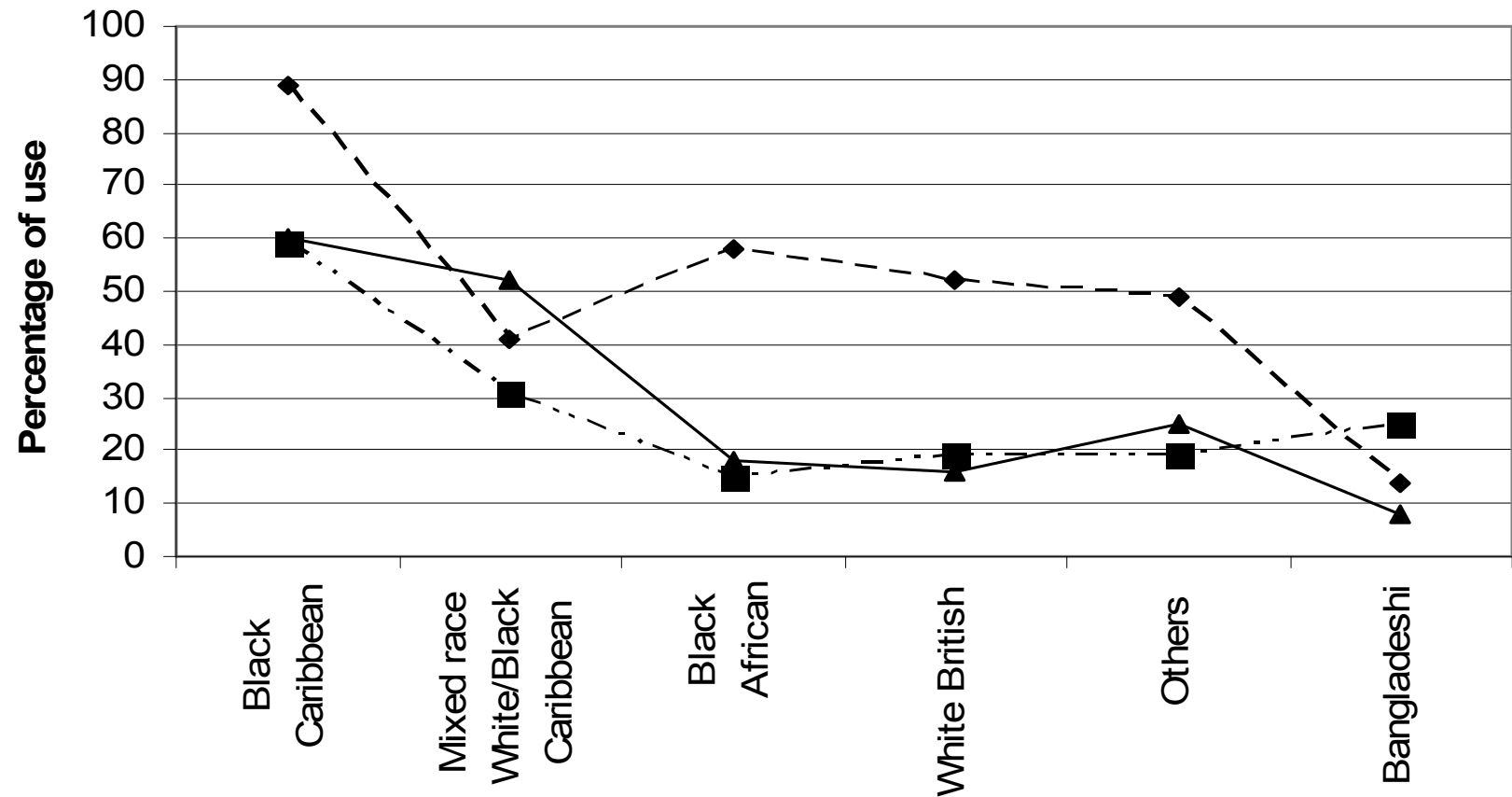
- Innovations include:
  - pronoun *youse* (2nd person plural): *and then youse can start talking that way*
  - indefinite pronoun *man*: *it's her personality man's looking at*
  - conjoined verbs without *and*: *like we just sit smoke*
  - absence of preposition *to*: *I'm going countryside*
  - plural *-dem*: *one of the boydem then went*
  - *why...for* question frame: *I said "why you searching my jacket for?"*
  - *this is* + Subject quotative expression
  - *enough* (and *nuff*) as intensifier

# Was/were variation: positive polarity

	Hackney young	Hackney elderly	Havering young	Havering elderly
<i>Subject</i>	% was	% was	% was	% was
<i>First person We</i>	51.8	46.3	78	39.4
<i>Third person They</i>	29.4	42.6	45.2	10.6
<i>NP plural</i>	34.6	53.1	27.8	8.3



## Distribution of non-standard WAS in positive polarity contexts by Ethnicity

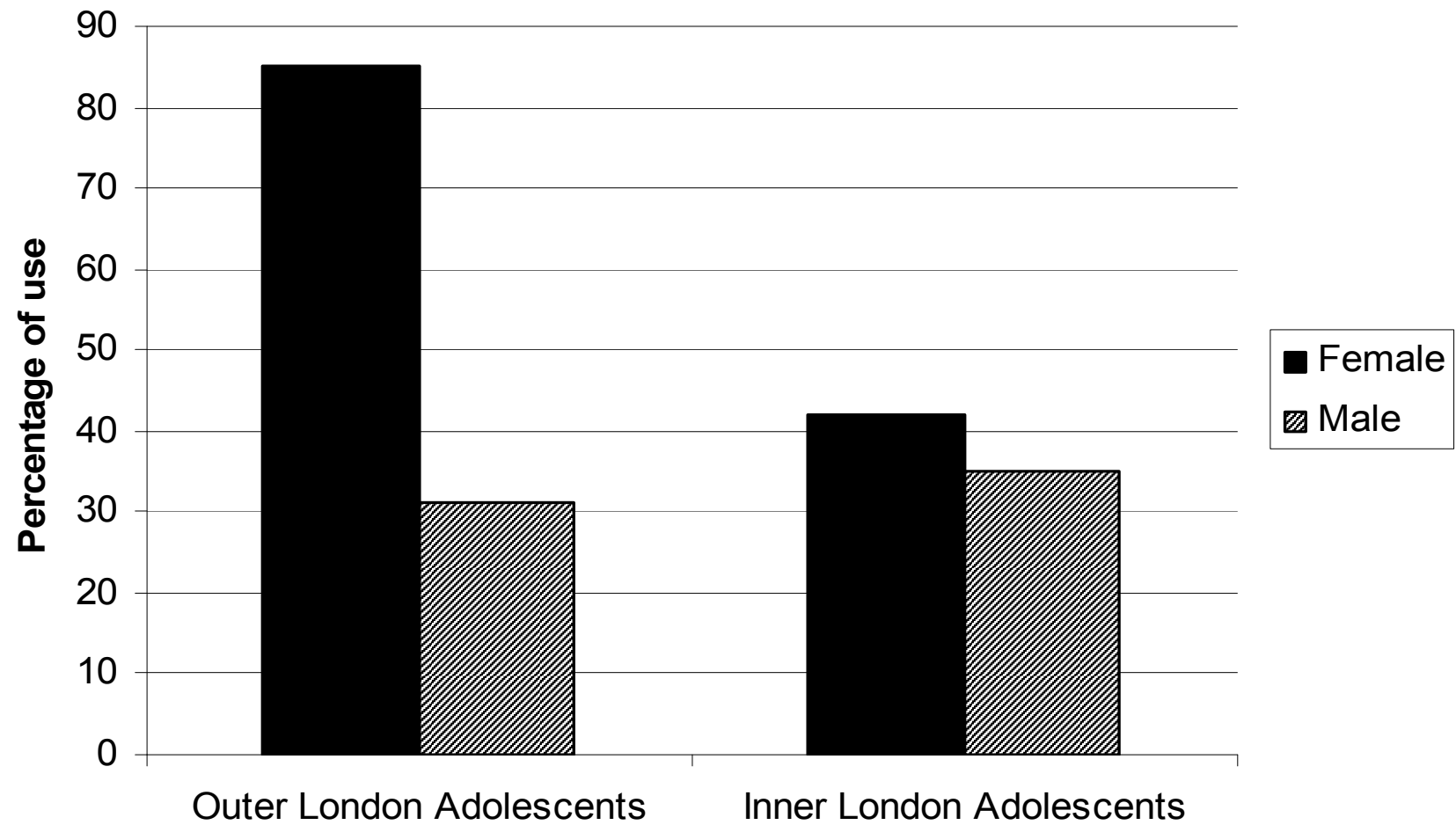


— ◆ — First Person Plural - WE    — ▲ — NP Plural    — ■ — Third Person Plural - THEY

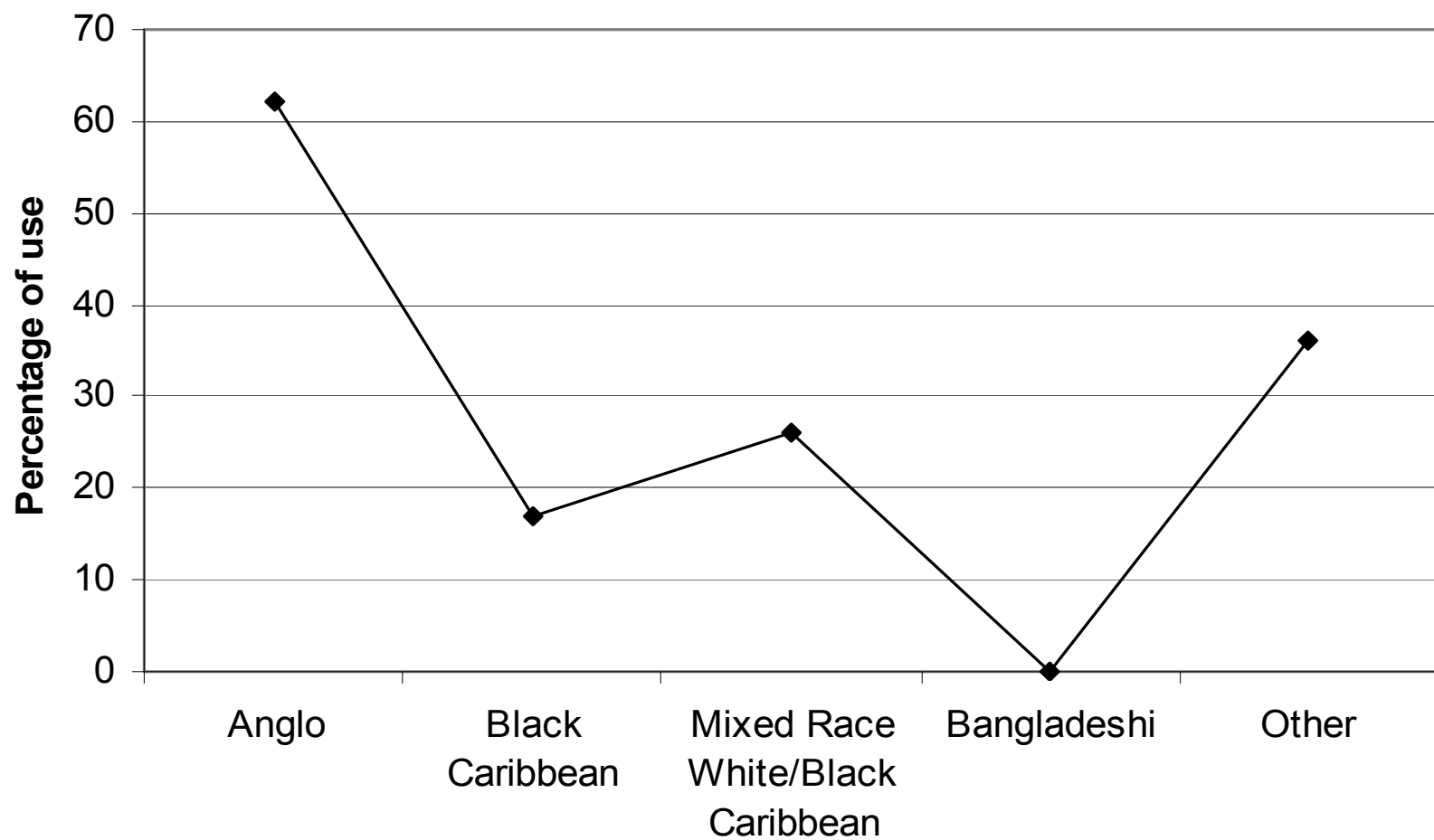
# Was/were variation: negative polarity

	Hackney adolescents	Hackney elderly	Havering adolescents	Havering elderly
<i>Subject</i>	% weren't	% weren't	% weren't	% weren't
<i>First person singular I</i>	40.0	8.0	54.0	0
<i>Third person singular he/she</i>	40.0	25.0	62.0	33.0
<i>Third person singular it</i>	45.0	25.0	82.0	16.0

## Use of WEREN'T in standard WASN'T contexts according to gender



## Use of WEREN'T in standard WASN'T contexts according to ethnicity



# Quotatives

	Hackney elderly	Havering elderly	Hackney young	Havering young
<i>Say</i>	70.8% (261)	73.5% (200)	27.4% (351)	31.2% (328)
<i>Think</i>	4.1% (15)	10.3% (28)	12.8% (164)	6.1% (64)
<i>Go</i>	4.6% (17)	0.4% (1)	11.7% (150)	26.5% (279)
<i>Zero</i>	18.9% (70)	12.9% (35)	15.1% (193)	12.3% (129)
<i>Be Like</i>			24.4% (313)	20.8% (219)
<i>This is (subject)</i>			4.8% (61)	
<i>Tell</i>			1.9% (24)	
<i>Others</i>	1.6% (6)	2.9% (8)	2% (26)	3.2% (33)
TOTAL N	370	272	1282	1052



## New quotative: 'this is me'

- i) *This is them* 'what area are you from . what part?' *this is me* 'I'm from Hackney'
- ii) *This is her* 'that was my sister'
- iii) *This is him* 'don't lie . if I search you and if I find one I'll kick your arse'
- iv) *This is my mum* 'what are you doing? I was in the queue before you'
- v) *This is my mum's boyfriend* 'put that in your pocket now'

# Contact, innovation, diffusion and levelling in dialectology

## (1) Overall patterns:

- **divergence/innovation** in inner London
- non-Anglos and Anglos with non-Anglo networks in the lead in innovation
- some evidence of **diffusion** to south-east periphery
- but also **levelling** in periphery, without involvement of inner London
- Havering lies between inner London and periphery

## (2) Locus of contact in dialectology

- In modern metropolises new **contact varieties** result from language contact following large-scale concentrated immigration
- Transmission of innovations through **social networks** can be demonstrated quantitatively (harder to show in individual cases!)
- Contact varieties have the potential to spearhead language change, given the right social relations and favourable identity factors

# Consequences for dialectology

- Sources of innovation must today be sought in minority-ethnic metropolitan varieties

and:

- need to recognise a more complex diffusion and levelling model

# 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

- 112 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

# Perception tests

- We examine:
  - speaker ethnicity and location
  - salience of individual features (vowel qualities)
- Classification of real speech
  - 10 second sound clip per speaker
  - Classification: speaker's ethnicity, social network type and location
- Vowel quality preferences
  - FOOT, GOOSE, FACE, PRICE
  - Acoustic manipulation of formant frequencies

# Who are the speakers?

Megan	Hackney	Anglo	Anglo network
Andrew	Hackney	Anglo	Anglo network
Laura	Hackney	Anglo	Multiethnic network
Ryan	Hackney	Anglo	Multiethnic network
Sulema	Hackney	Non-Anglo	Multiethnic network
Dom	Hackney	Non-Anglo	Multiethnic network
Kelly	Havering	Anglo	Anglo network
Dale	Havering	Anglo	Anglo network
4 other speakers	Birmingham	Anglo and non-Anglo	

# Perception test screen

Natural\_speech\_all\_revised

File Query Help

1 / 12

Make your selection: ethnicity and location

Restore Down

WHITE	BIRMINGHAM
BLACK	LONDON
ASIAN	ESSEX
OTHER	MANCHESTER

Click here to play the last sound again

NEXT

start

Transcriber ...

Microsoft Po...

Inbox - Micr...

Praat objects

Praat picture

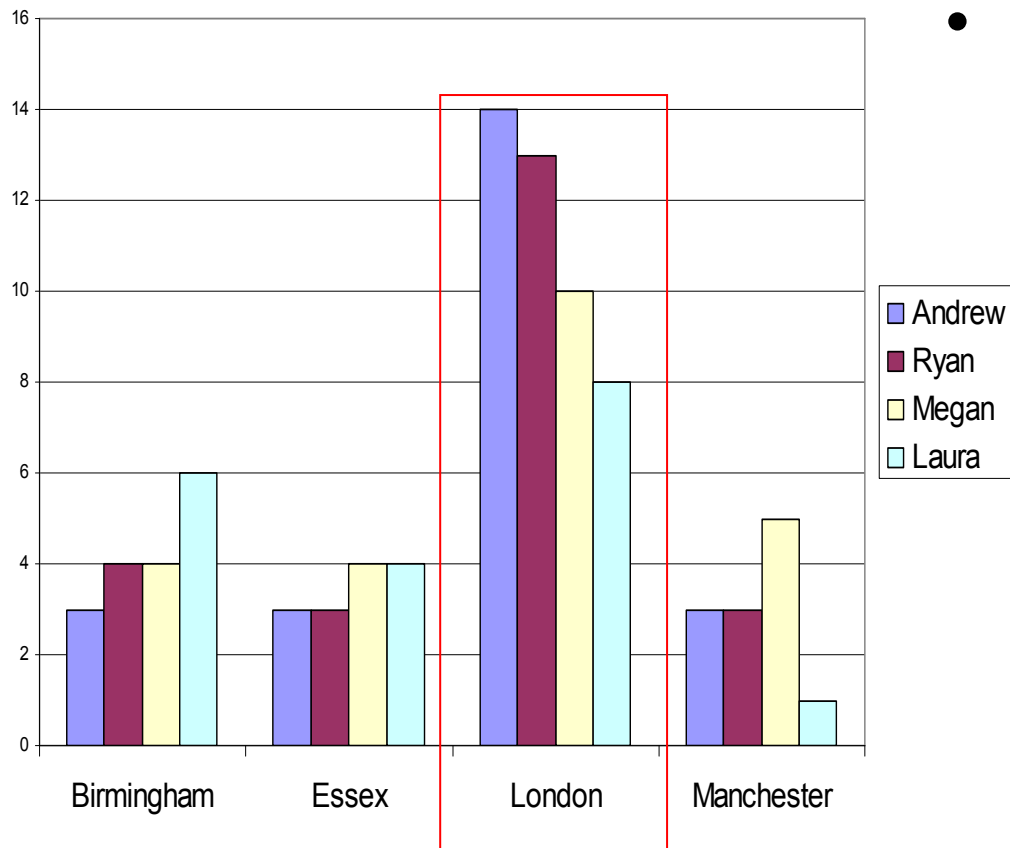
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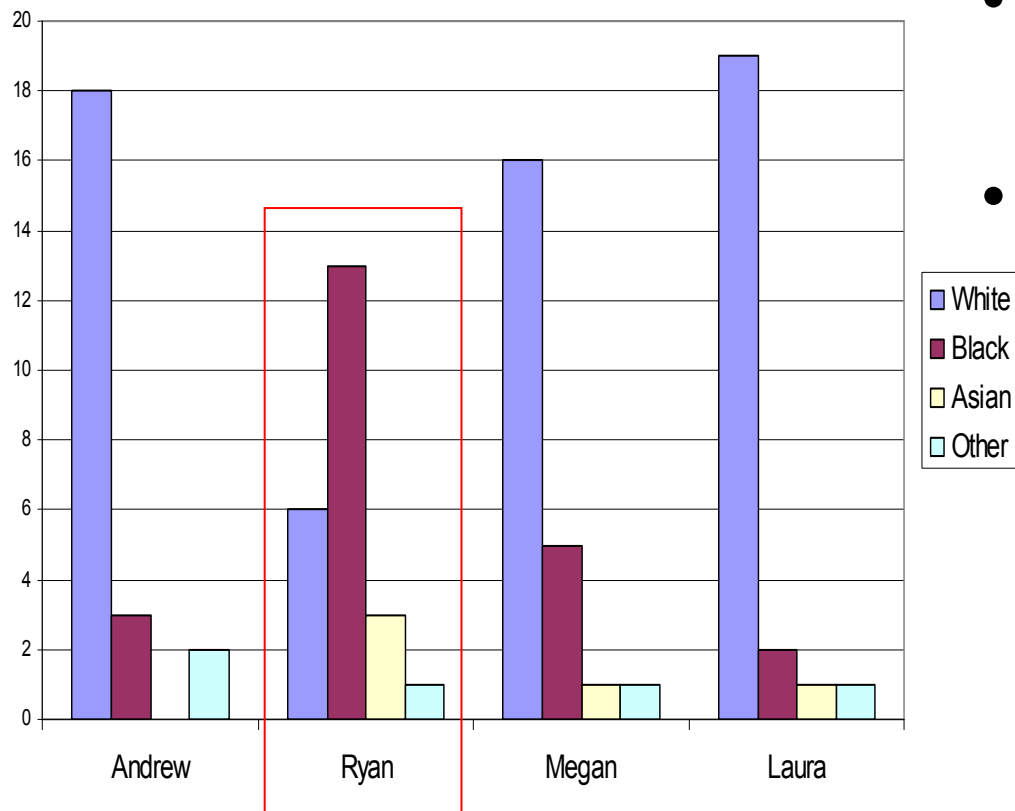
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# Hackney Anglo voices

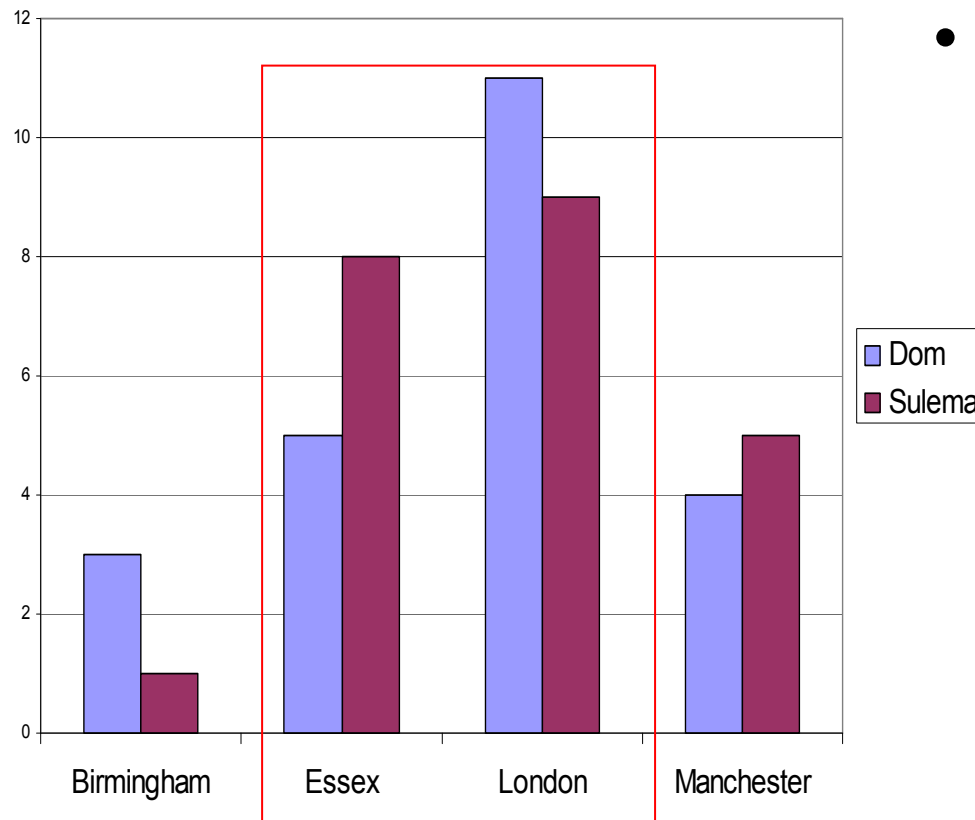
- Heard as coming from London



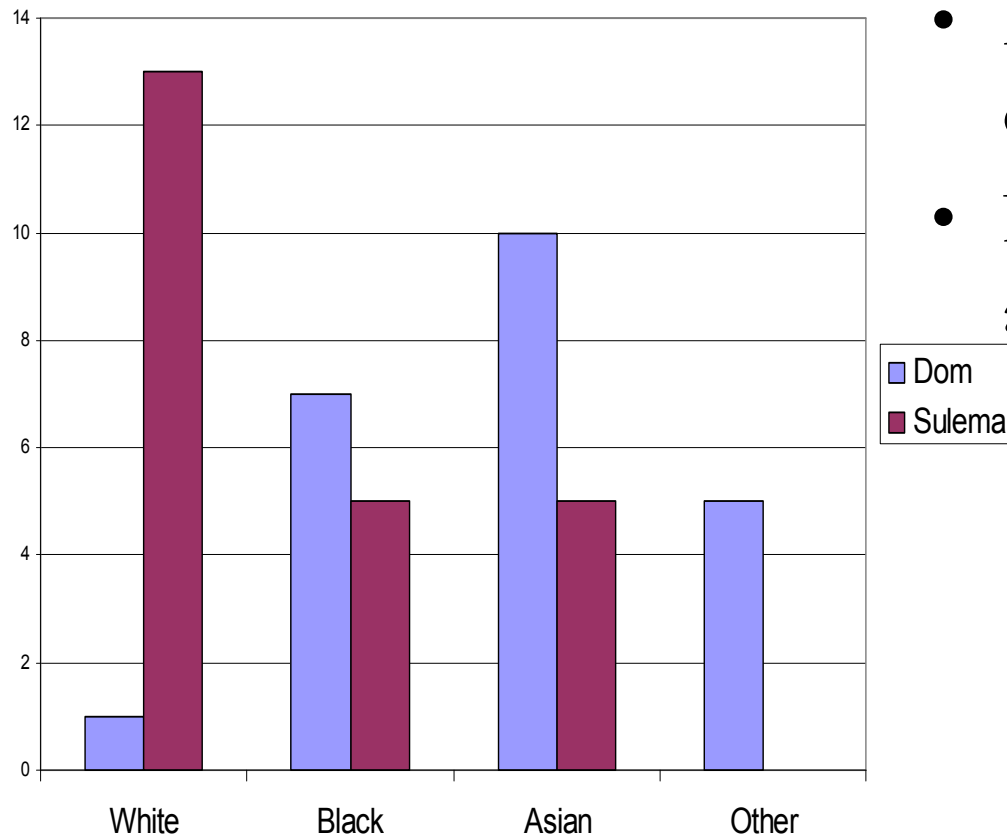


- Heard as ‘white’, but there is some variation
- Ryan, who has a multiethnic friendship network, is heard as ‘black’

# Hackney non-Anglo voices



- Classified as London and Essex

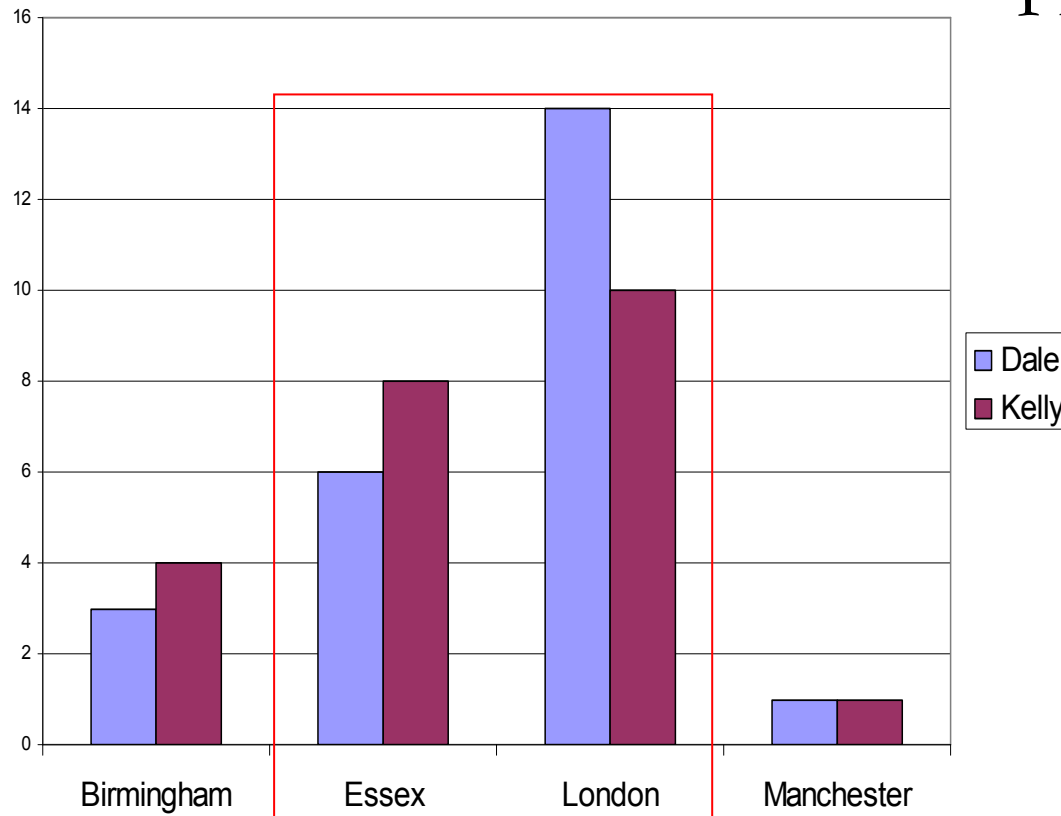


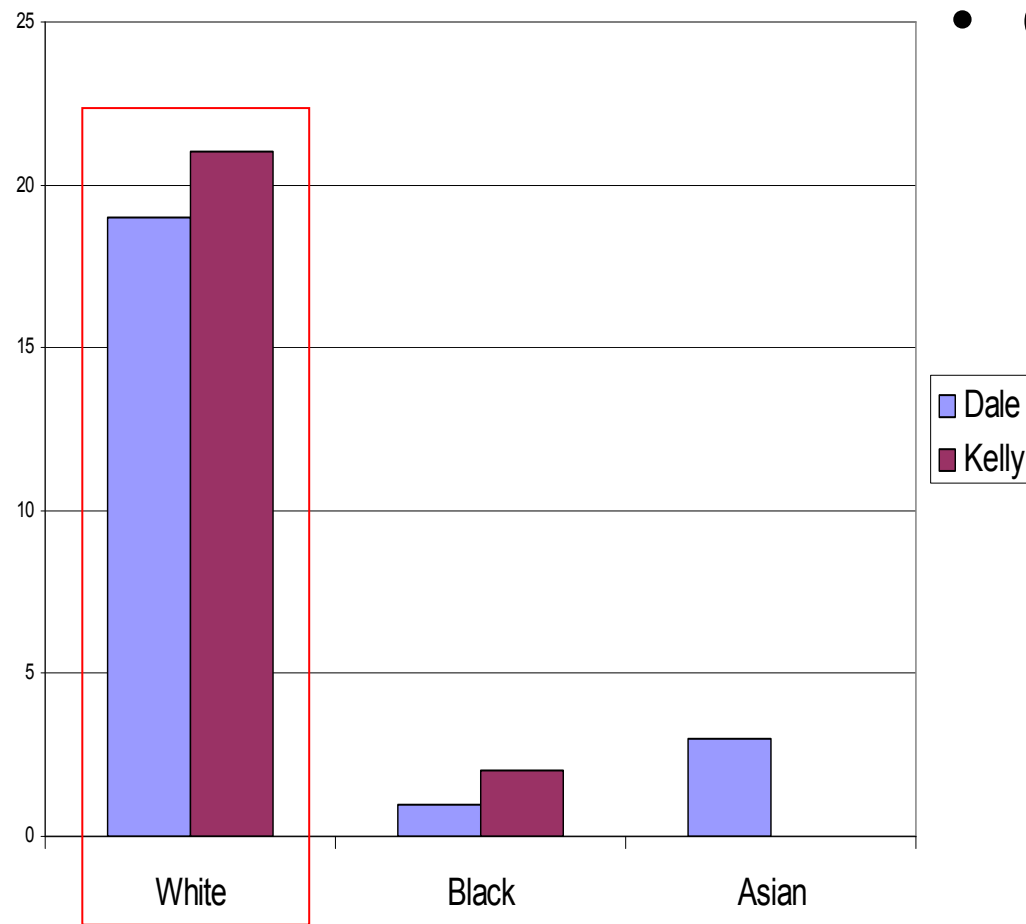
- Ethnicity is more difficult to classify
- But: Dom (Columbian) and Sulema (Moroccan)



# Havering Anglo voices

- From London and Essex



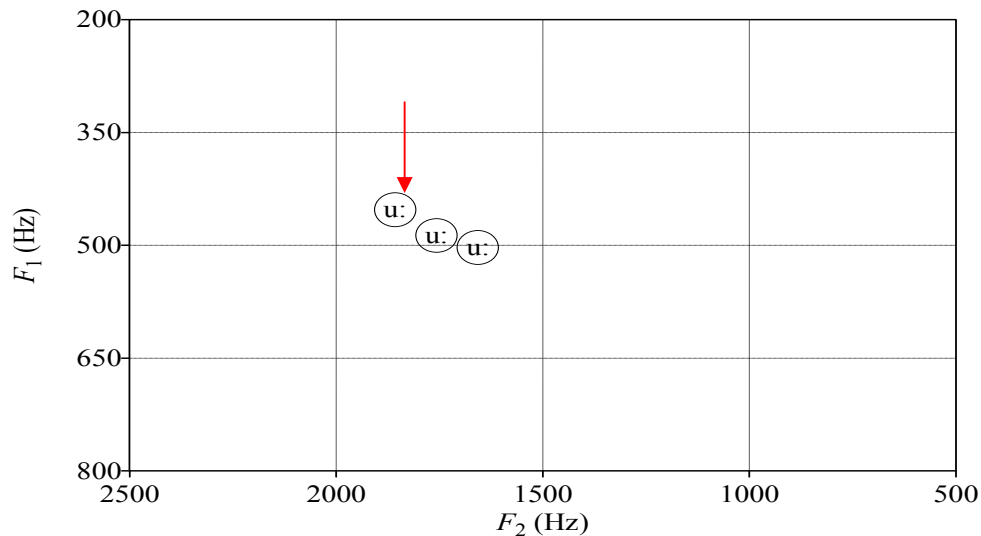


- Clearly heard as ‘white’

# Perception test results: real speech

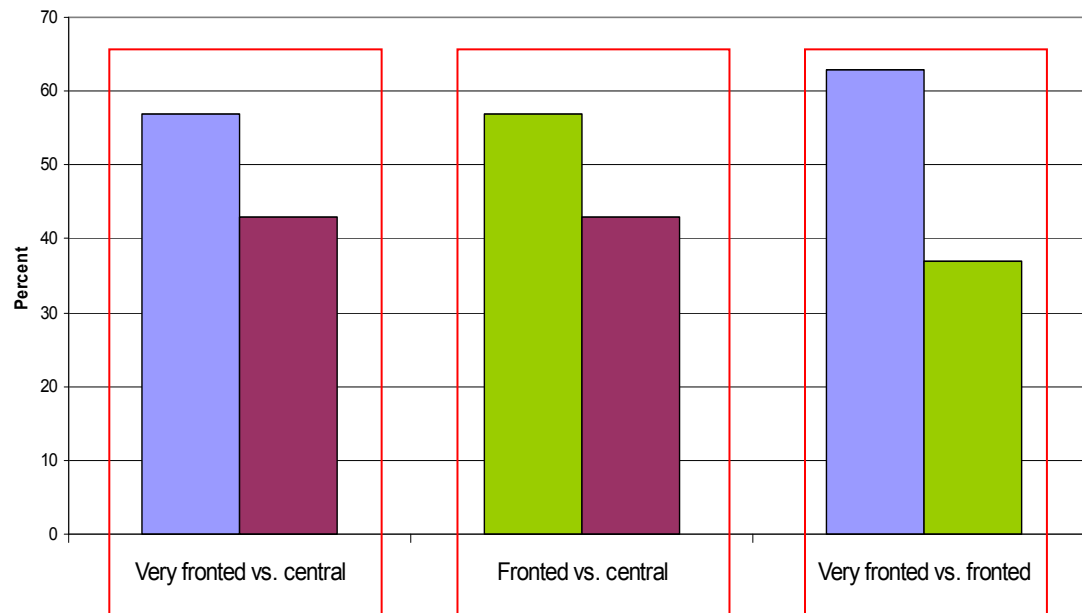
- Listeners can place location fairly well
- Can distinguish between local and non-local voices
- Anglos from Havering are overwhelmingly heard as ‘White’, while those from Hackney are variably judged as ‘Black’
- The speaker’s friendship network has an effect on assigning ethnicity to a voice
- We will add more non-Anglo speakers to examine how well particular ethnicities are detected

# Perception test: manipulated vowels



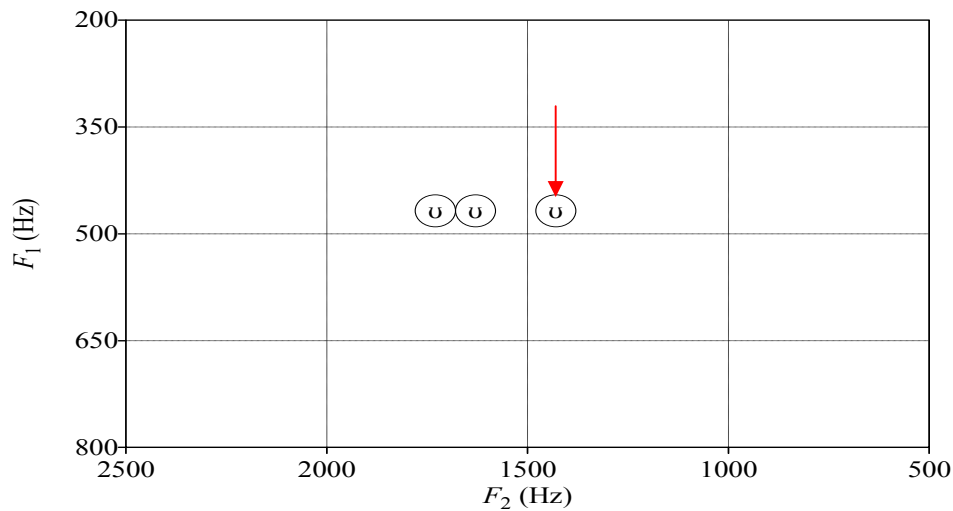
- 'BOOT'

- Very fronted quality is preferred to central quality
- Fronted quality is preferred to central quality

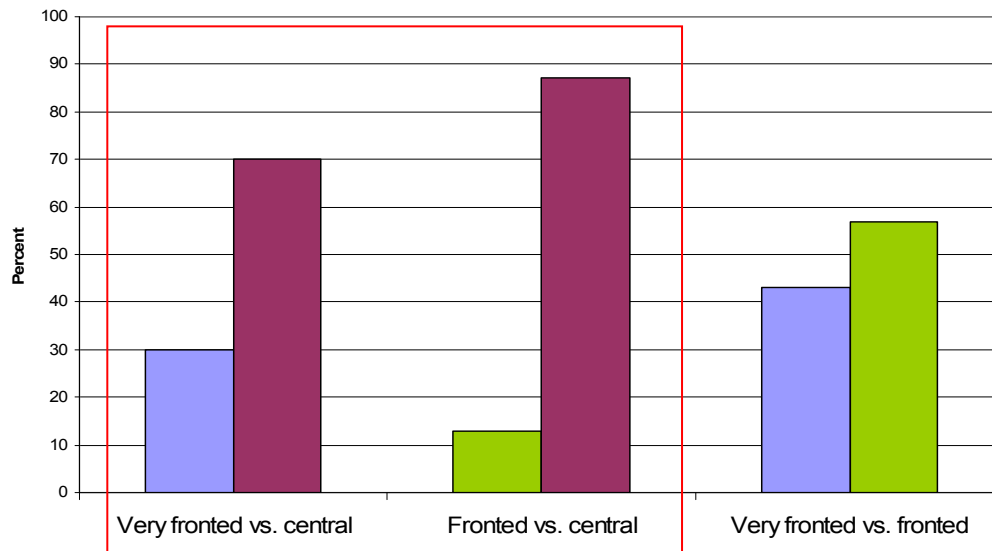


Very fronted quality is preferred to fronted quality

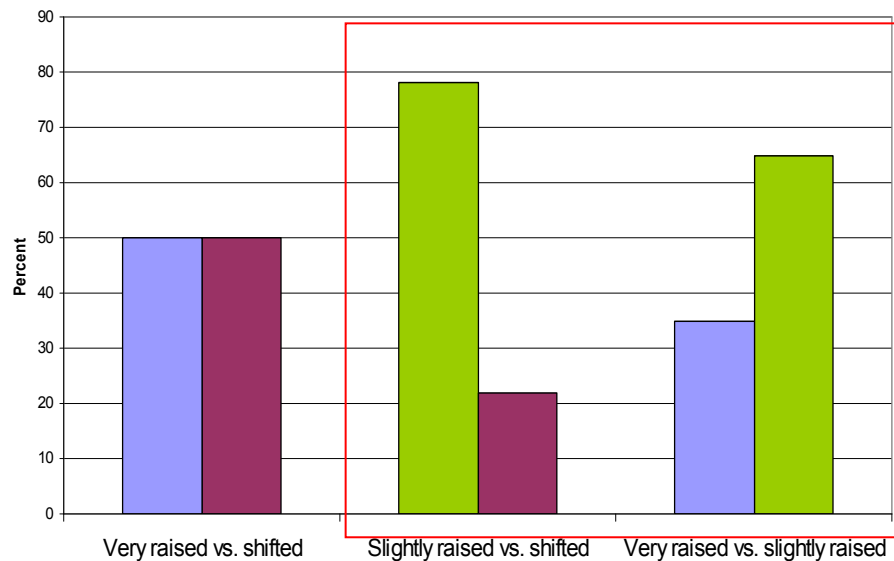
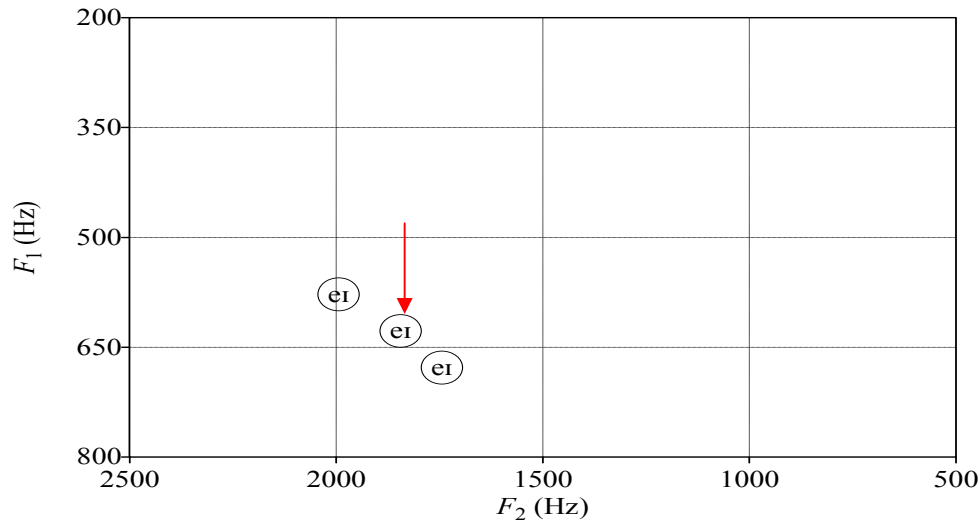
# Perception test: manipulated vowels



- 'GOOD'
- The central quality is preferred to both the fronted ones



# Perception test: manipulated vowels



- 'CAKE'
- Slightly raised/fronted is preferred to shifted and to very raised/fronted quality
- Very raised/fronted is not preferred to shifted quality

# Perception test results: manipulated vowels

- In general listeners prefer vowel qualities that resemble the ones they produce themselves
- Preference is for vowels found to be characteristic of **non-Anglo** speakers
- Fine grained vowel differences are salient

# Summary

- Perception test results from North London correspond to production results from Hackney
- MLE features seem to be salient in perception
- Inner London speech is more ethnically neutral than outer London speech
- Data collection is currently underway and we will have production results ready at a later stage