Innovation in London is not equal to levelling in south-east England

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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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Wandsworth

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Bexley

Merton

Lewisham

Kingston

Sutton

Croydon

Bromley

SCALE

0   Miles   10

0   Km   10

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: groups of speakers in Hackney
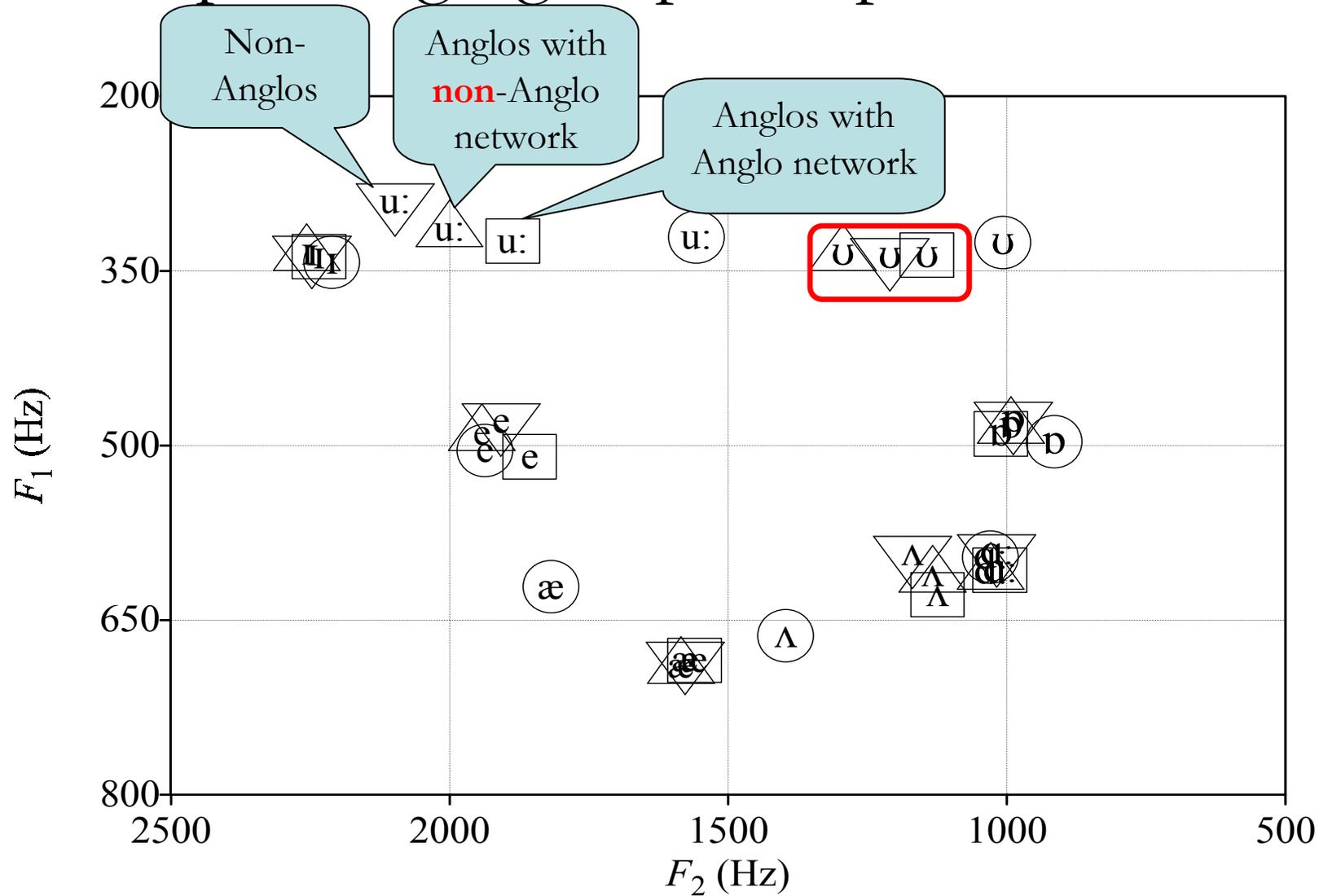
Elderly speakers (circles), non-Anglo speakers (inverted triangles), Anglo speakers with non-Anglo networks (triangles), Anglo speakers with Anglo networks (squares)

Working-class white Londoner born 1938 (Hackney)

F2

2300 2100 1900 1700 1500 1300 1100 900 700 500

F1

GOAT
CHOICE
FACE
PRICE
MOUTH
START
TRAP
STRUT

300
400
500
600
700
800
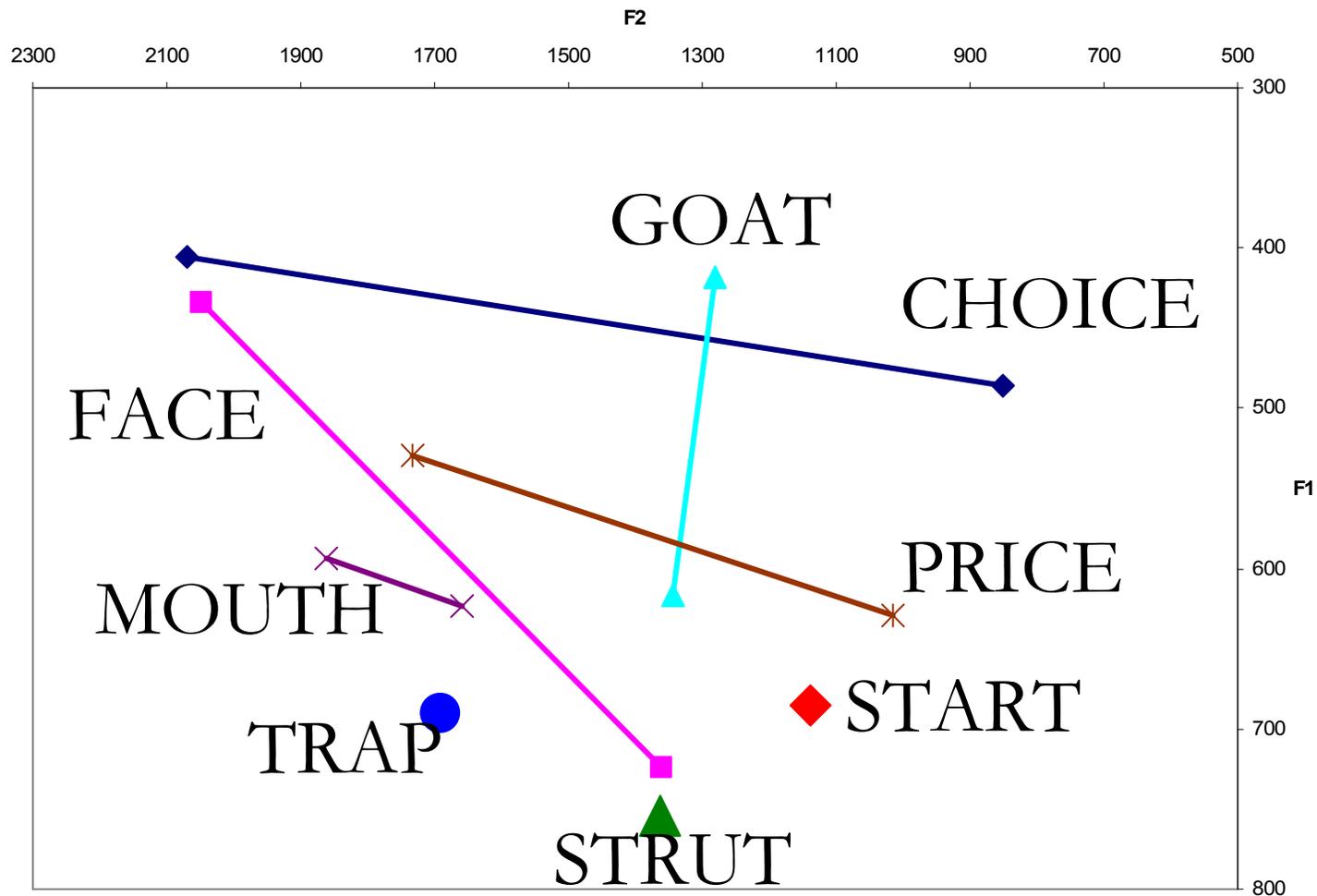
# Vowel changes in south-east England

- Reversal of diphthong shift:
- PRICE
  - Fronting and lowering of onset
- GOAT
  - Raising of onset, fronting of offset
- FACE
  - Raising of onset

Young speakers in Hackney
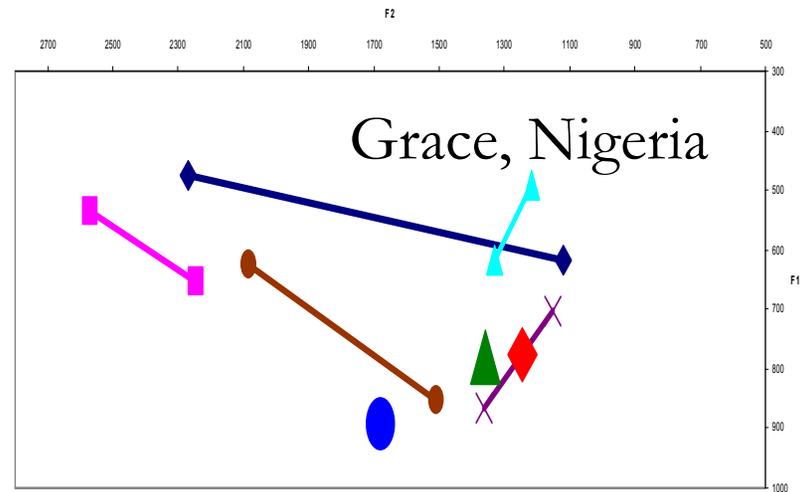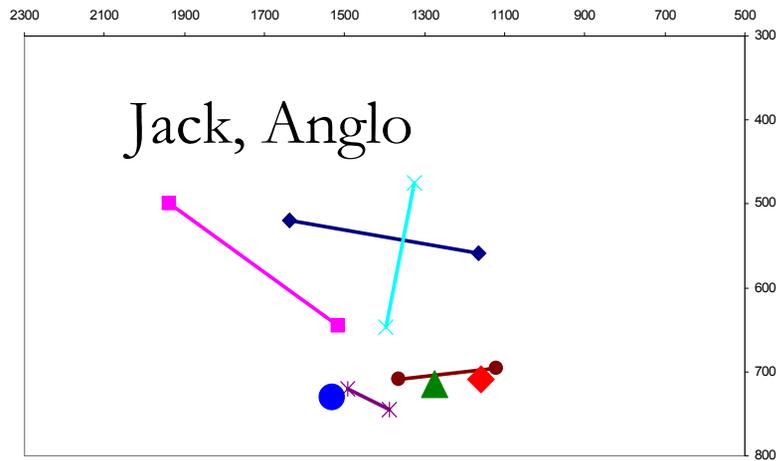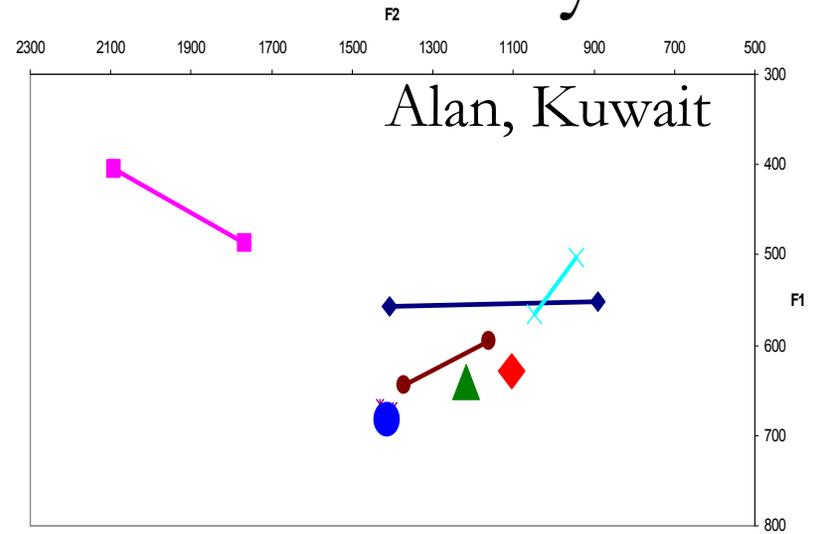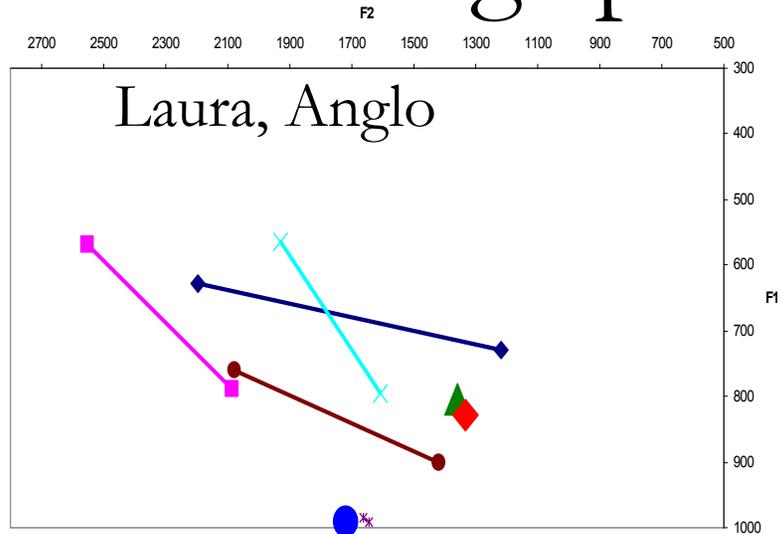
Young Havering Anglo speakers

Donna

Ian
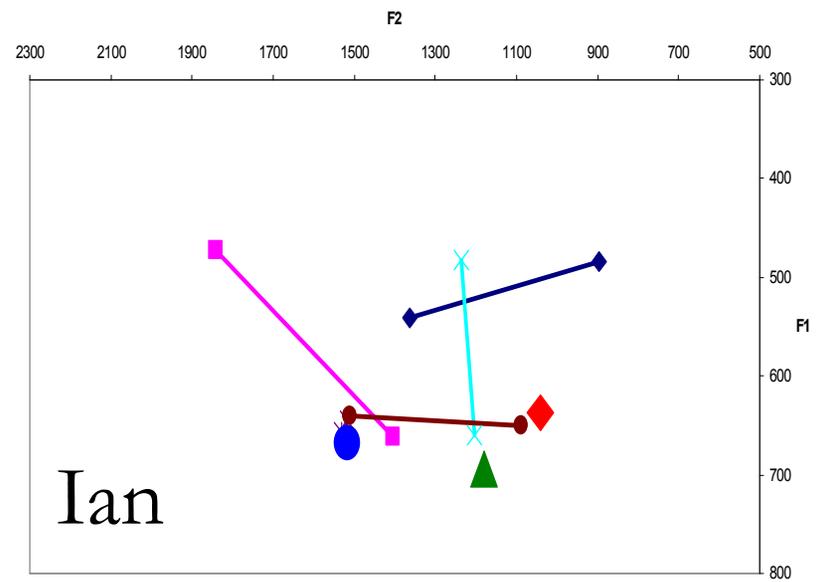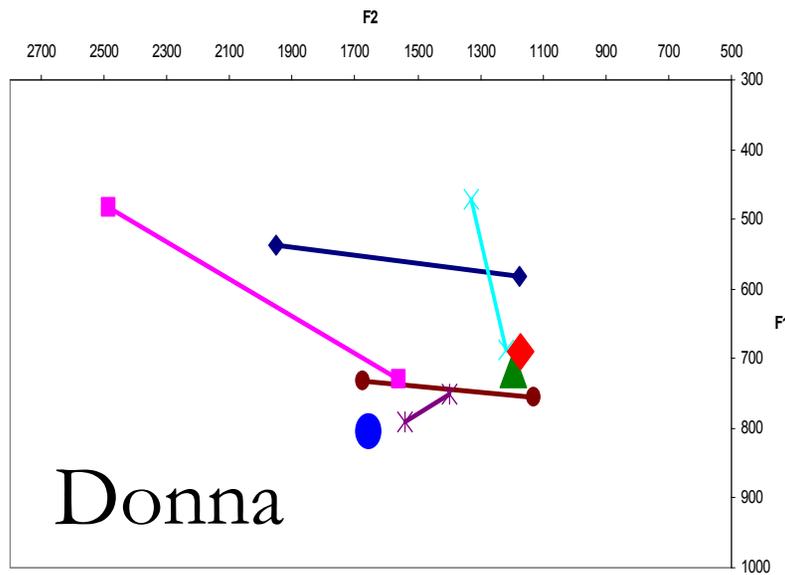
H-Dropping

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%

Was/were variation: positive polarity

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

Was/were variation: negative polarity

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

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?

'Creole' variety, London 1983
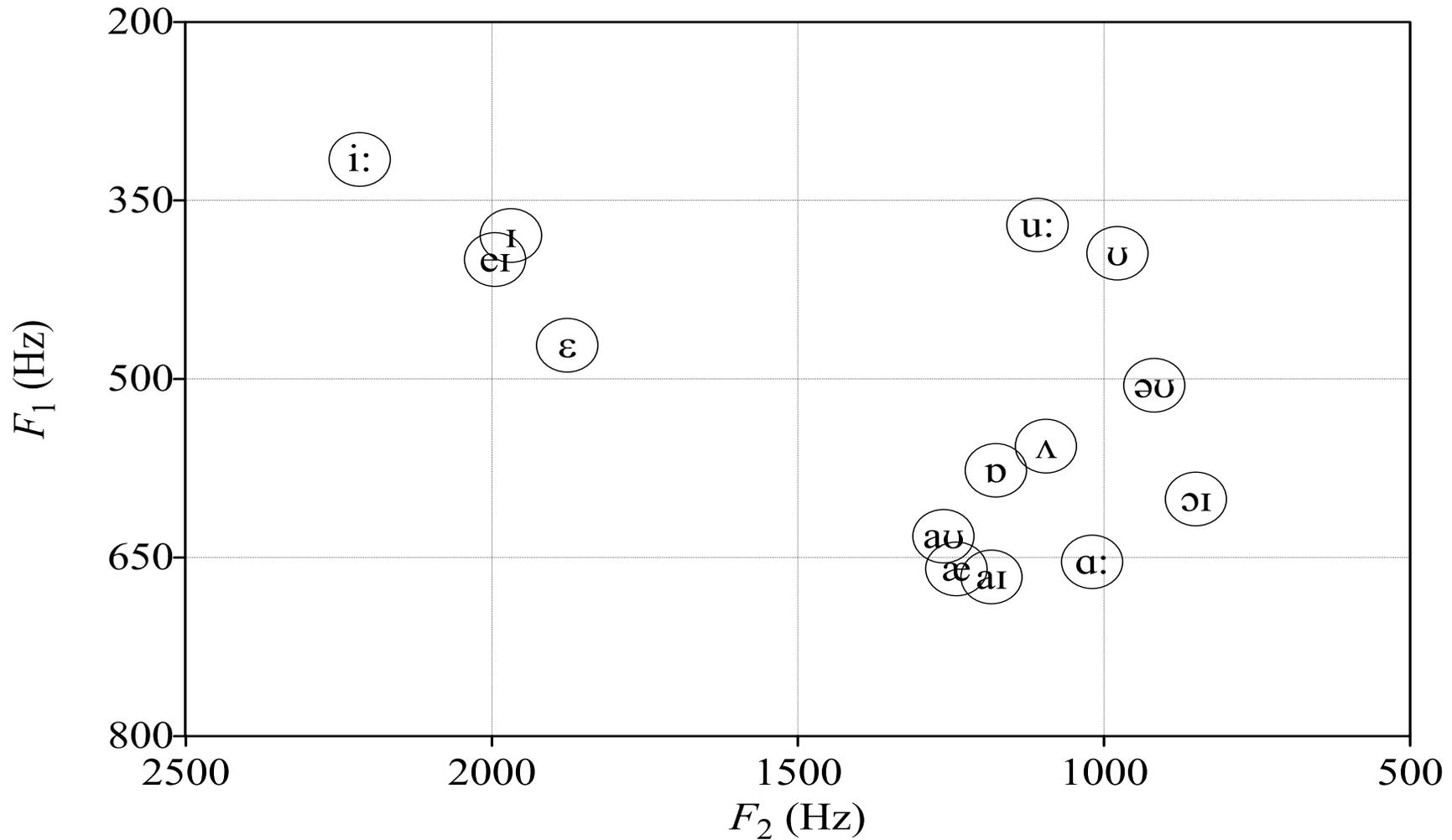
# Intonational Variation in English, London 1993
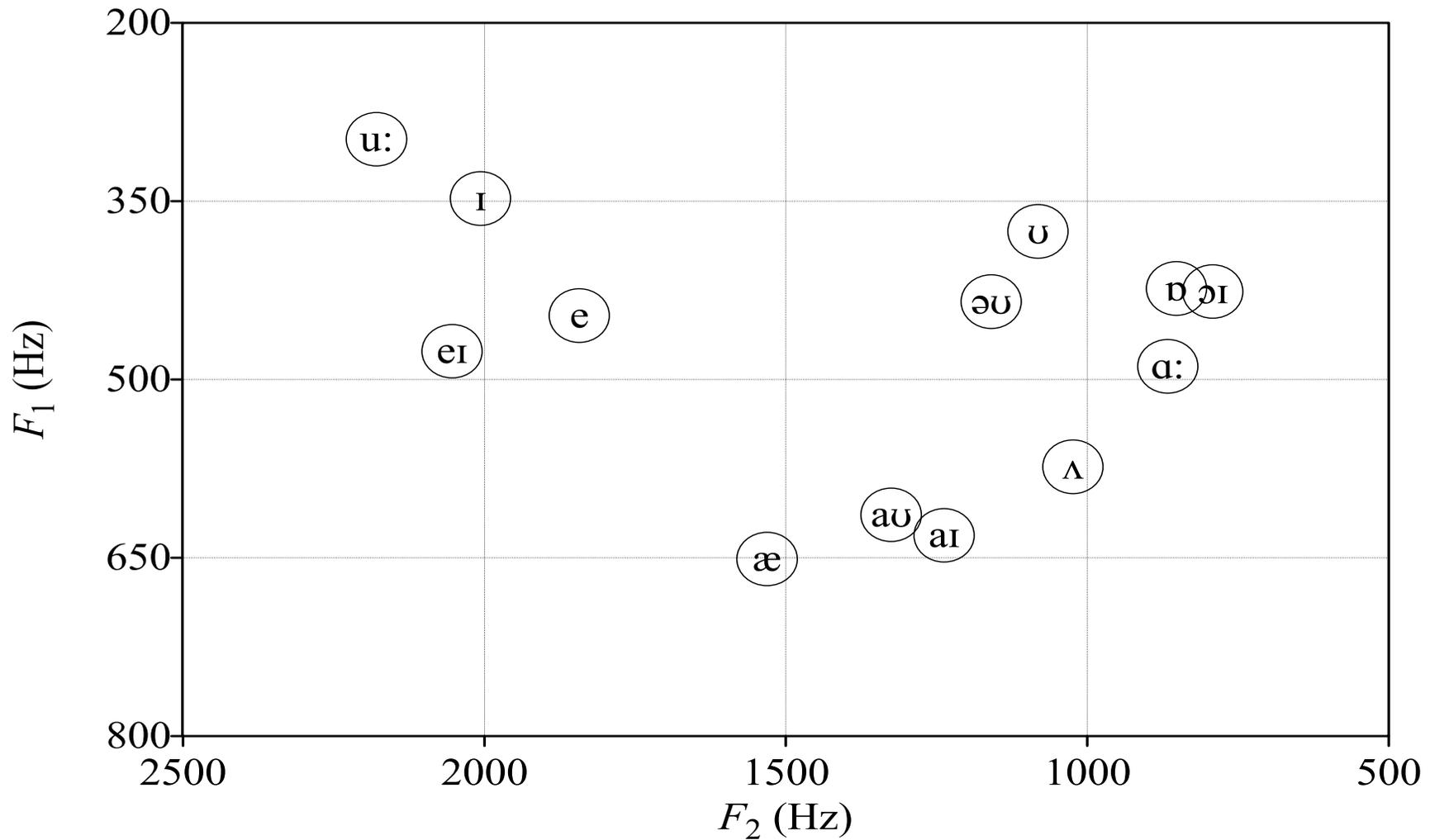
Project design: MLE project

- 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

MLE Teenagers
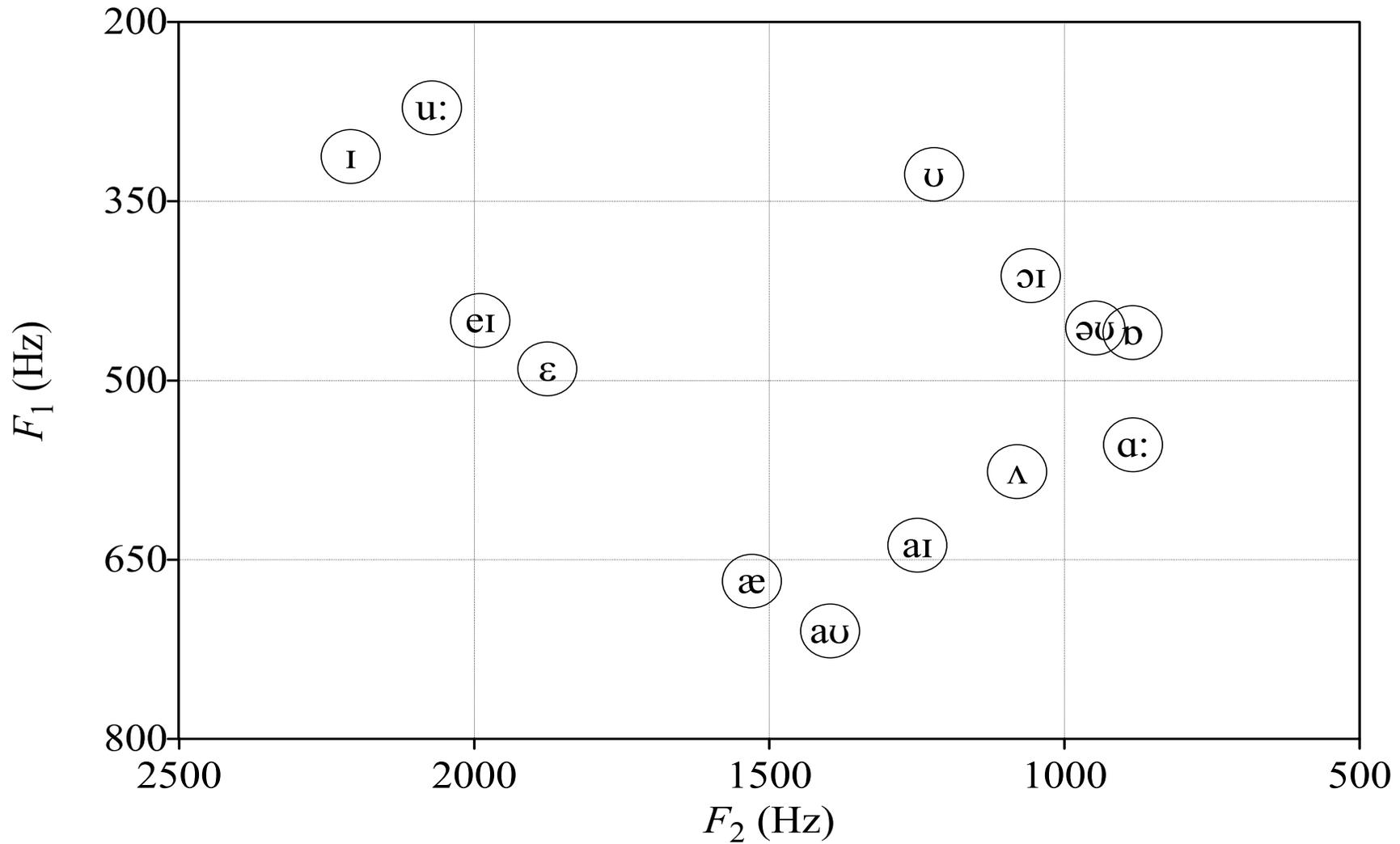
MLE 12 year olds
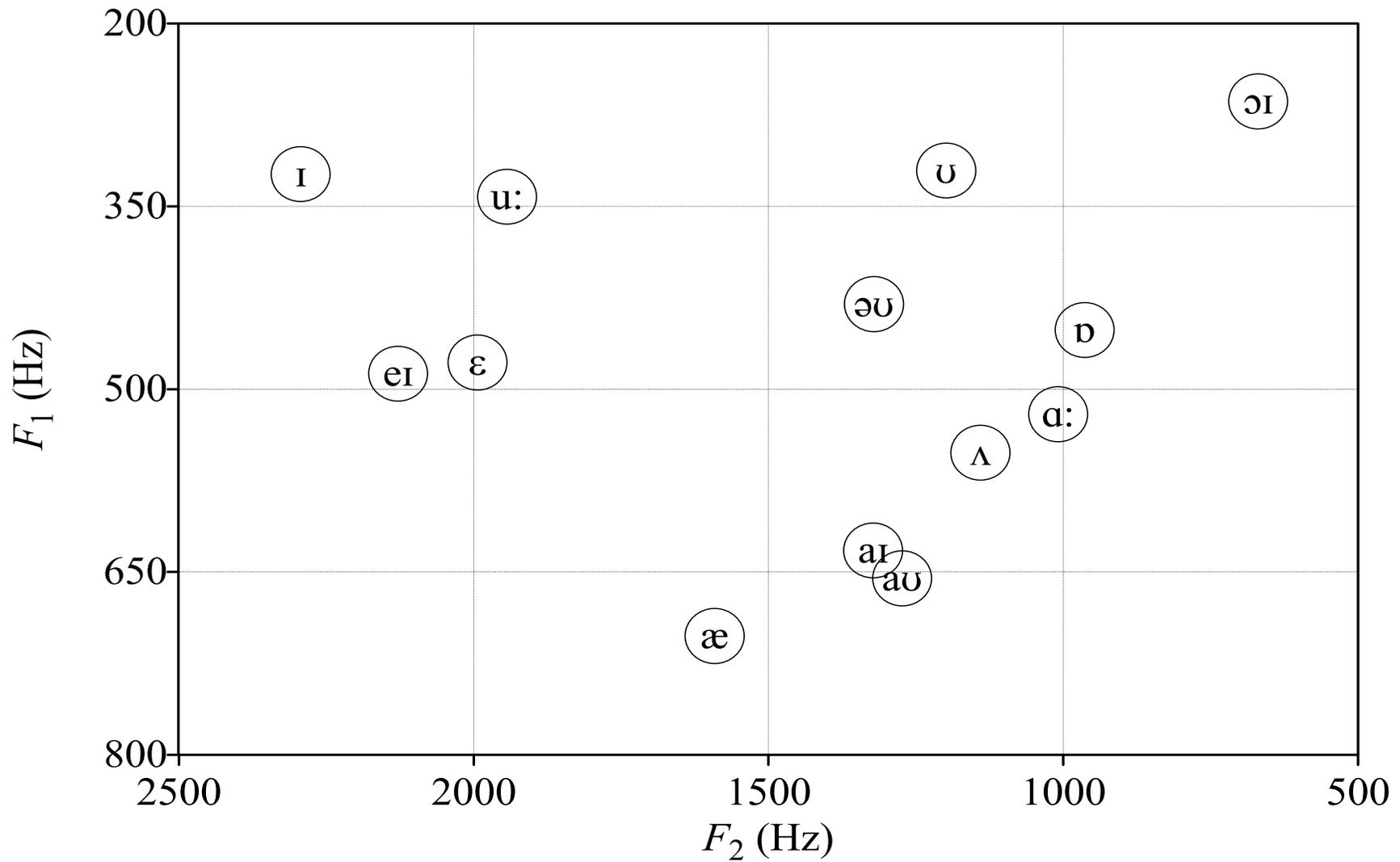
Findings so far

- Teenagers in North London have a vowel system that strongly resembles that in Hackney
- The 12 year olds are more 'levelled' (few speakers analysed so far)
  - General south-eastern GOAT [əʏ], not monophthongal [oː]
  - Back MOUTH diphthong, not monophthongal [ɐː]
  - Not extreme GOOSE fronting
- Further development of MLE after the age of 12?

Contact, innovation, diffusion and levelling in dialectology

(1) Overall patterns:

– **divergence/innovation** in inner London

– non-Anglo teenagers and Anglo teenagers 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

Perception test

- We examine:
  - speaker ethnicity and location
- Classification of real speech
  - 10 second sound clip per speaker
 - Classification: speaker's ethnicity, social network type and location

Who are the London 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
Amjad	Hackney	Non-Anglo	Multiethnic network
Chris	Hackney	Non-Anglo	Multiethnic network
Grace	Hackney	Non-Anglo	Multiethnic network
Kirsty	Hackney	Non-Anglo	Multiethnic network
Kelly	Havering	Anglo	Anglo network
Dale	Havering	Anglo	Anglo network

# Perception test screen

# Hackney Anglo voices
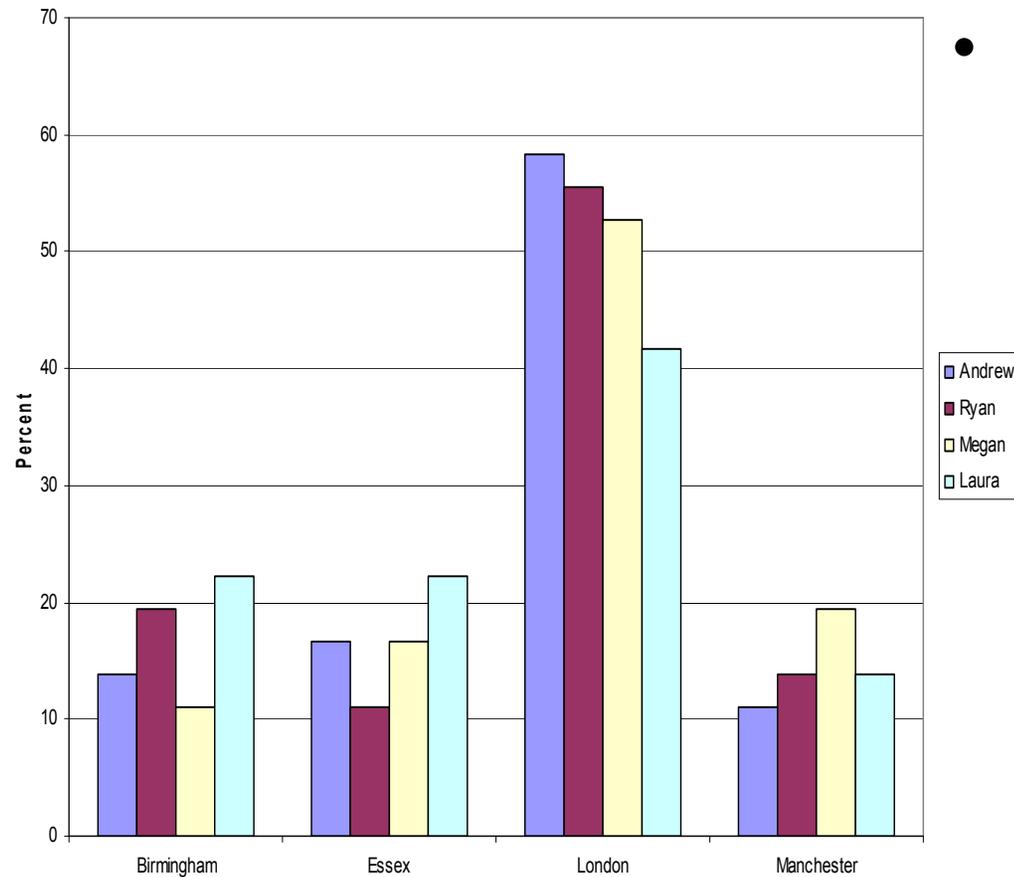
- Heard as coming from London
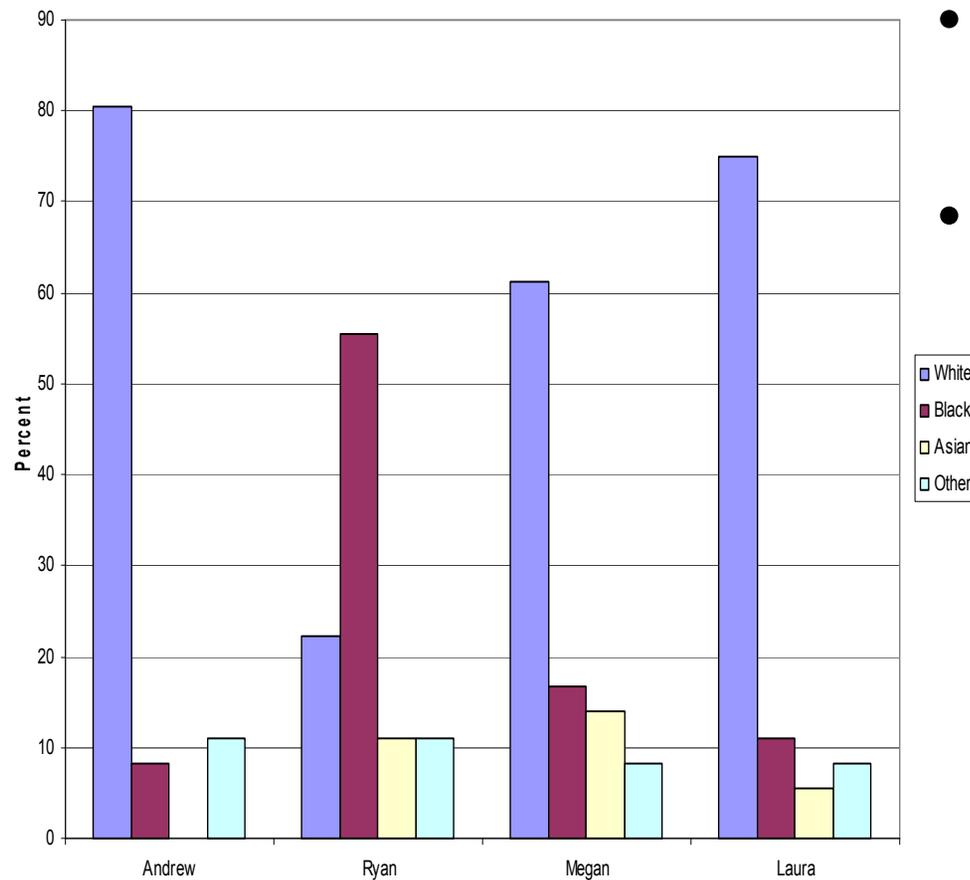
- Heard as 'white', but there is some variation
- Ryan, who has a multiethnic friendship network, is heard as 'black'

Hackney non-Anglo voices
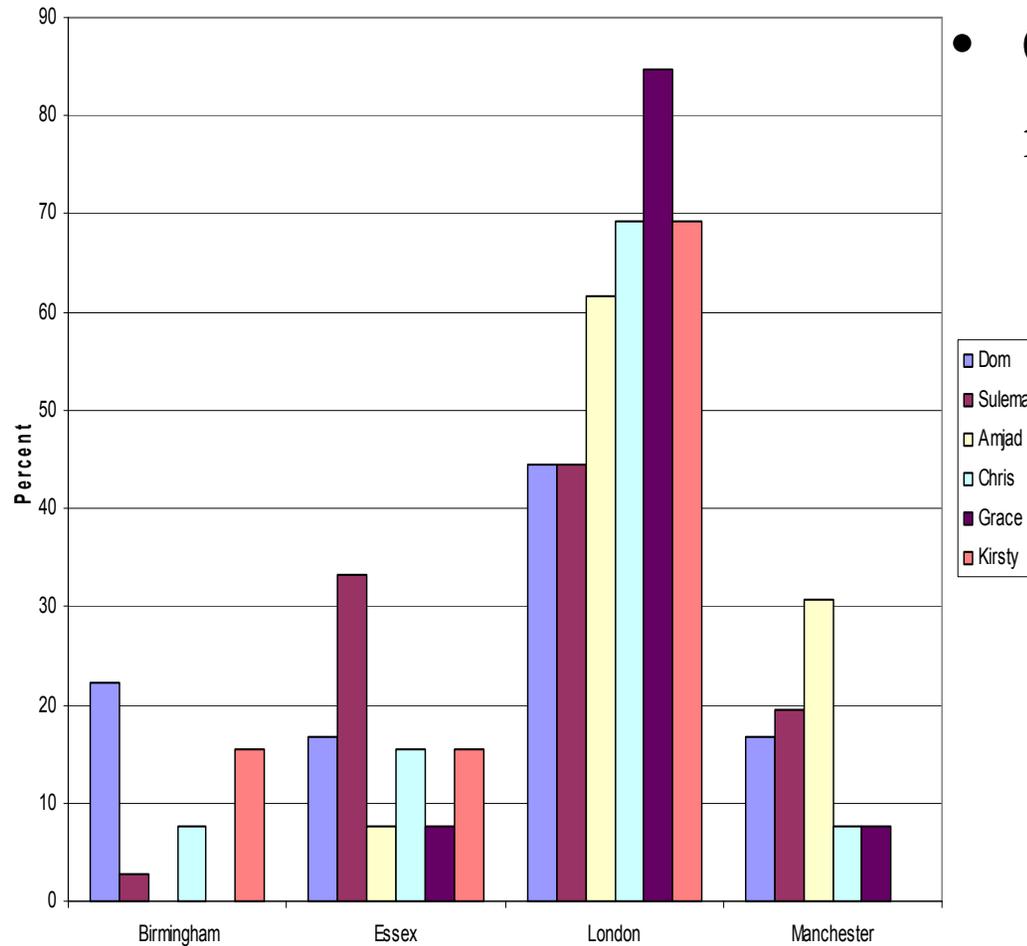

- Classified as coming from London
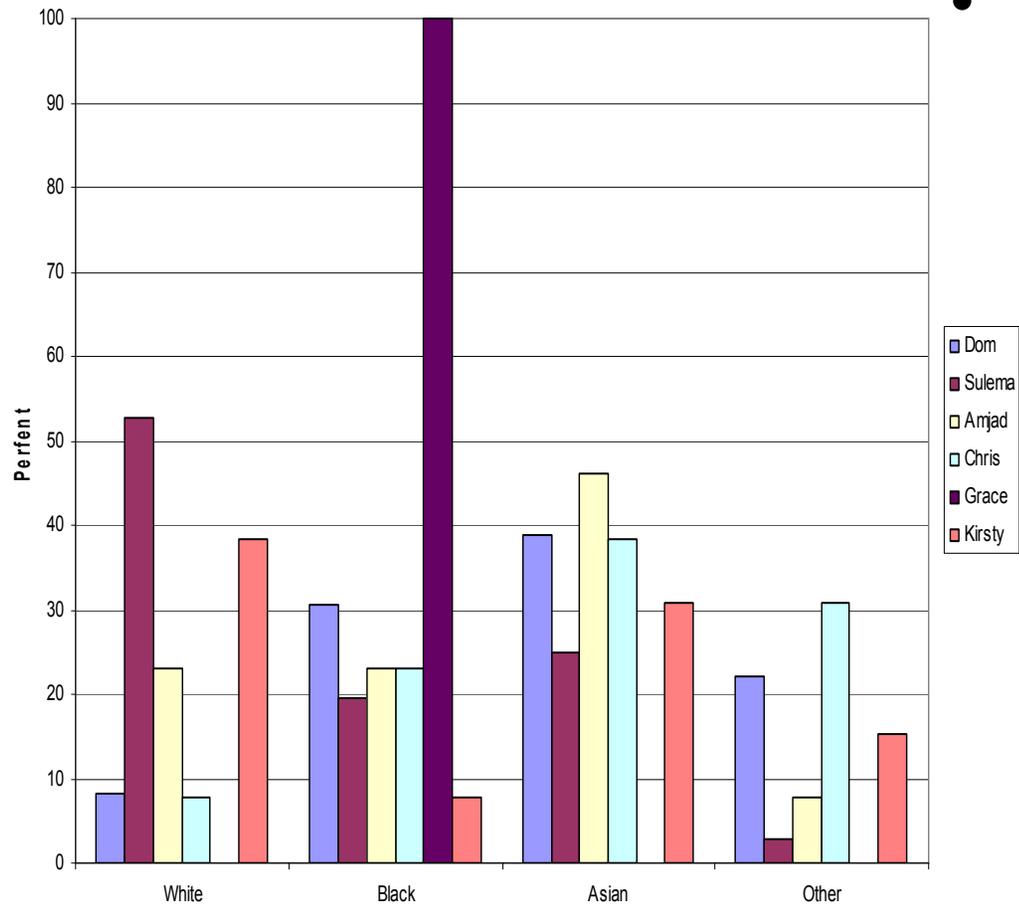
- Ethnicity for non-Anglo speakers is more difficult to classify

Havering Anglo voices
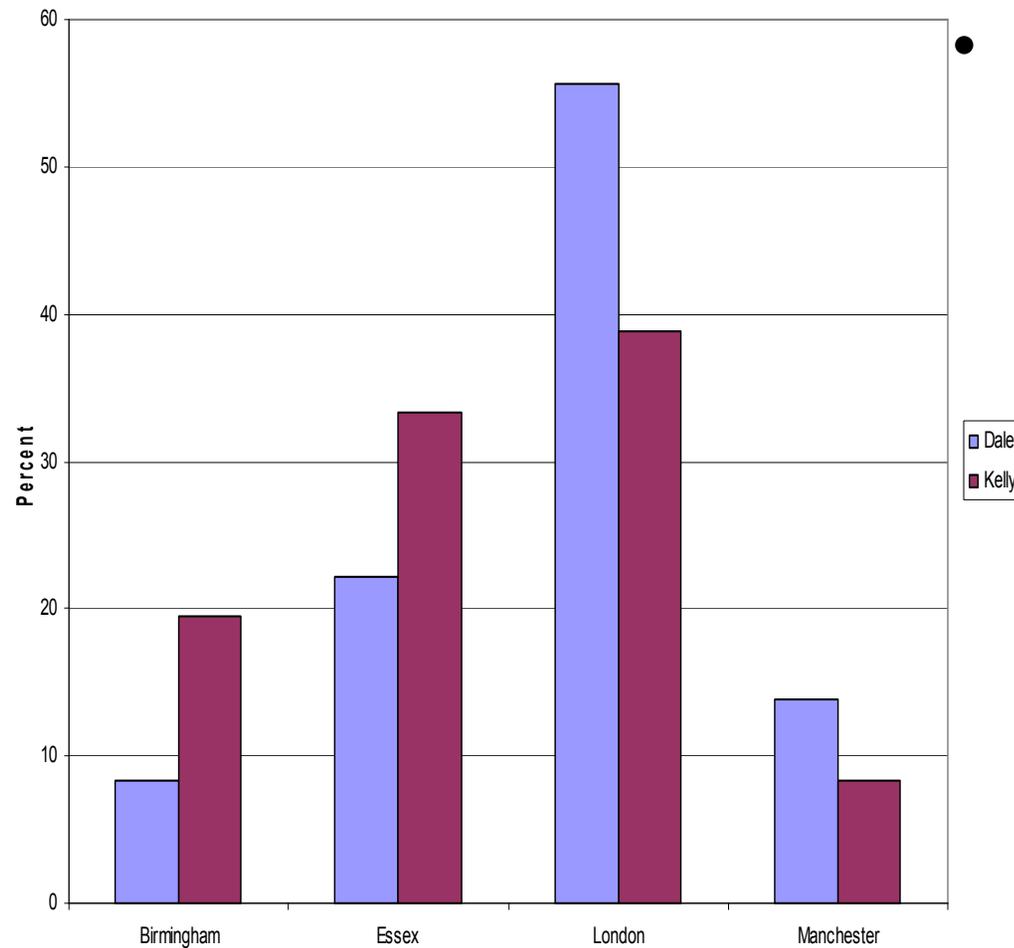
- From London and Essex

• Clearly heard as 'white'
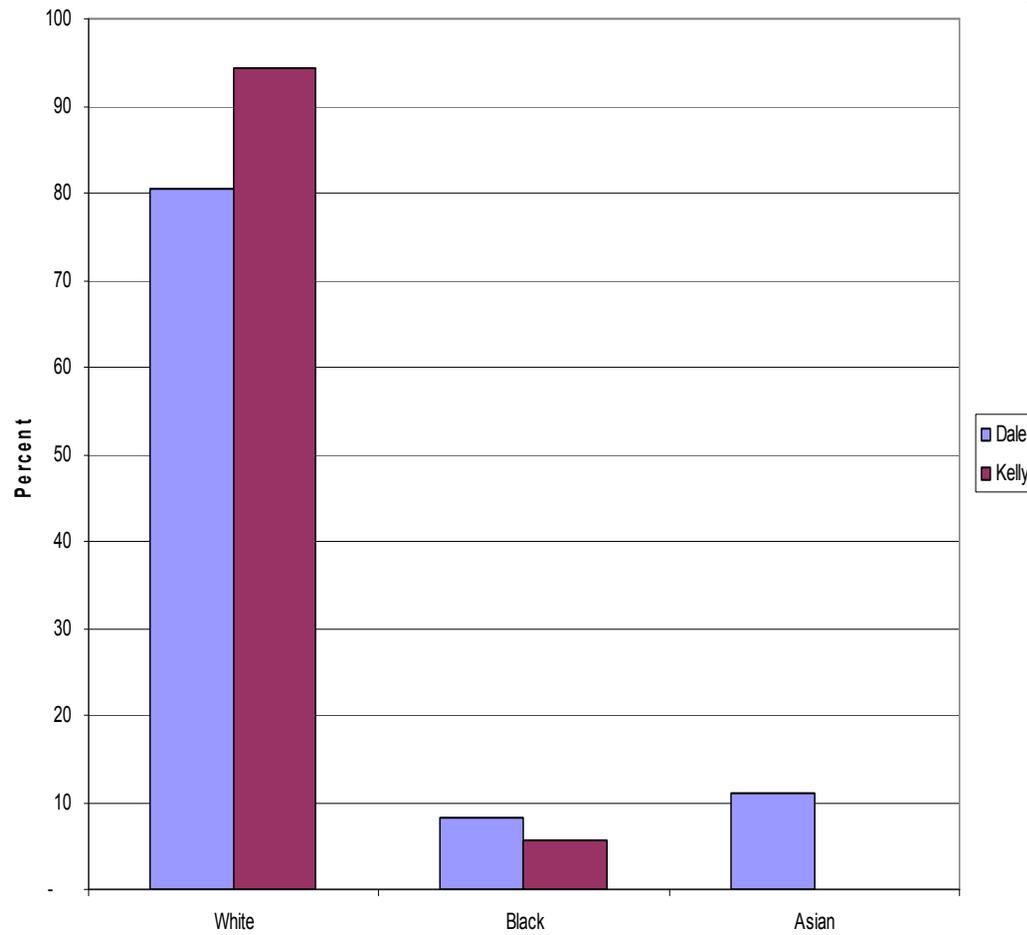
Perception test results: real speech

- 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'
- Difficult to place non-Anglo voices
- The speaker's friendship network has an effect on assigning ethnicity to a voice

Summary

- Perception test results from North London correspond to production results from Hackney
- Inner London speech is more ethnically neutral than outer London speech