Multicultural London English and linguistic innovation

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

HERTFORDSHIRE
BUCKS
ESSEX
BERKSHIRE
KENT
SURREY
Enfield
Barnet
Harrow
Haringey
Waltham Forest
Redbridge
Havering
Hillingdon
Brent
Camden
Isling-ton
Hackney
Barking
Newham
Tower Hamlets
City
West-Minster
Ealing
Ham-mersmith
Ken. & Chel.
South-wark
Greenwich
Hounslow
Lambeth
Bexley
Wandsworth
Richmond
Lewisham
Merton
Kingston
Bromley
Sutton
Croydon
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

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
  - Extreme GOOSE-fronting
  - little FOOT-fronting
  - near-monophthongal qualities for diphthongs
  - higher degree of DH-stopping
  - innovative quotative 'this is me'
  - lower level of was/were levelling

- some evidence of **diffusion** to south-east periphery
  - reversal of diphthong shift
  - reduction of H-dropping
- but also **levelling** in periphery, without involvement of inner London
  - GOAT-fronting
  - higher level of was/were levelling
- 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

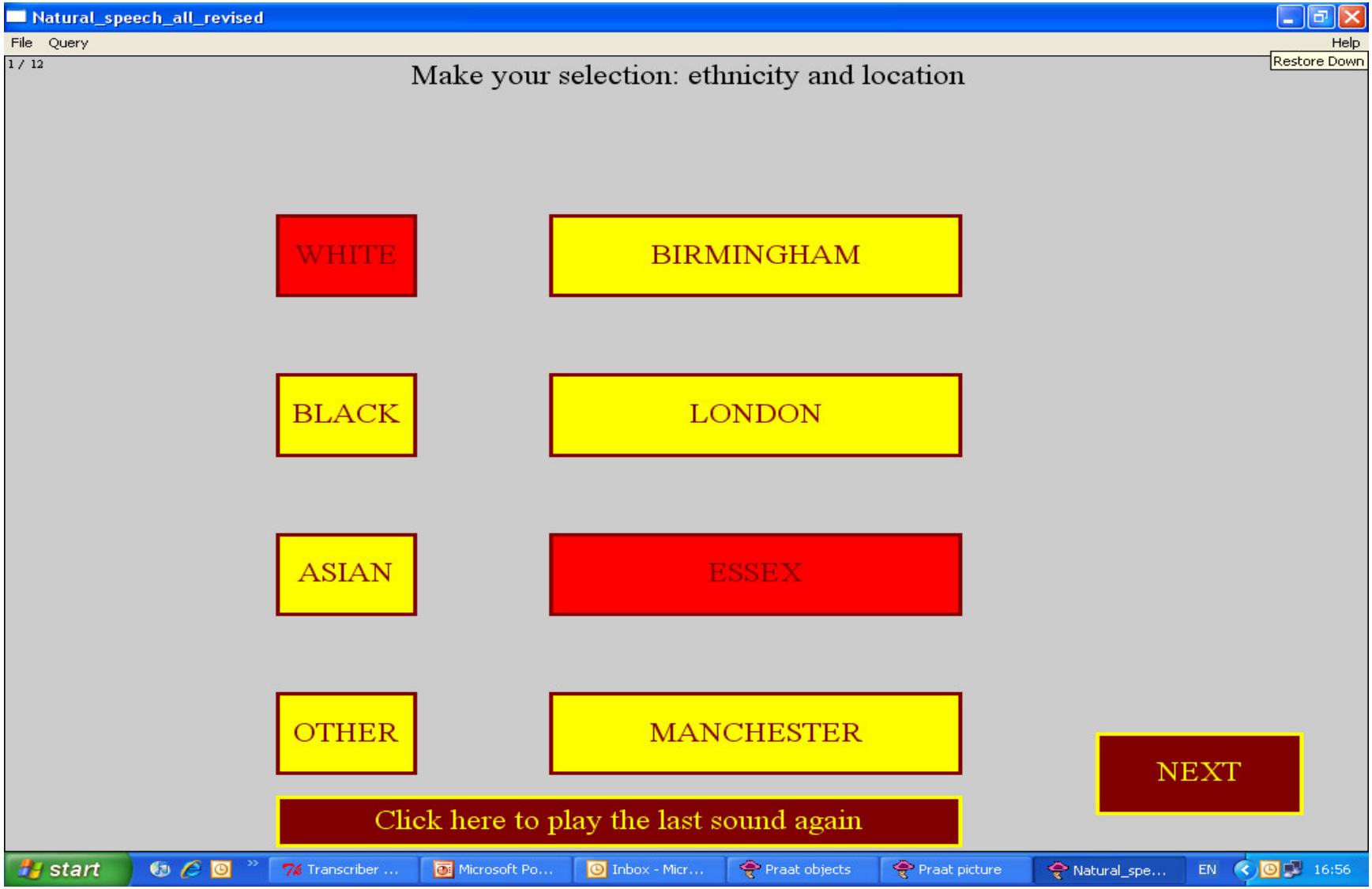
Perception tests

- 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

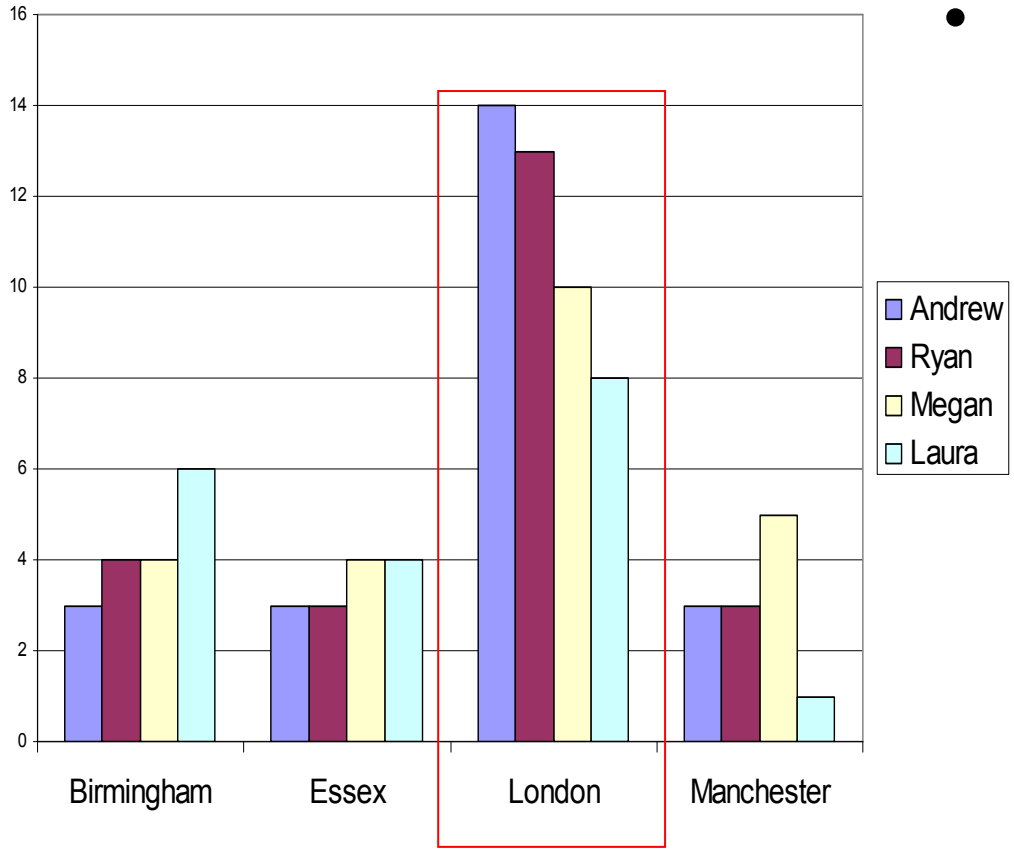
Who are the speakers?

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	

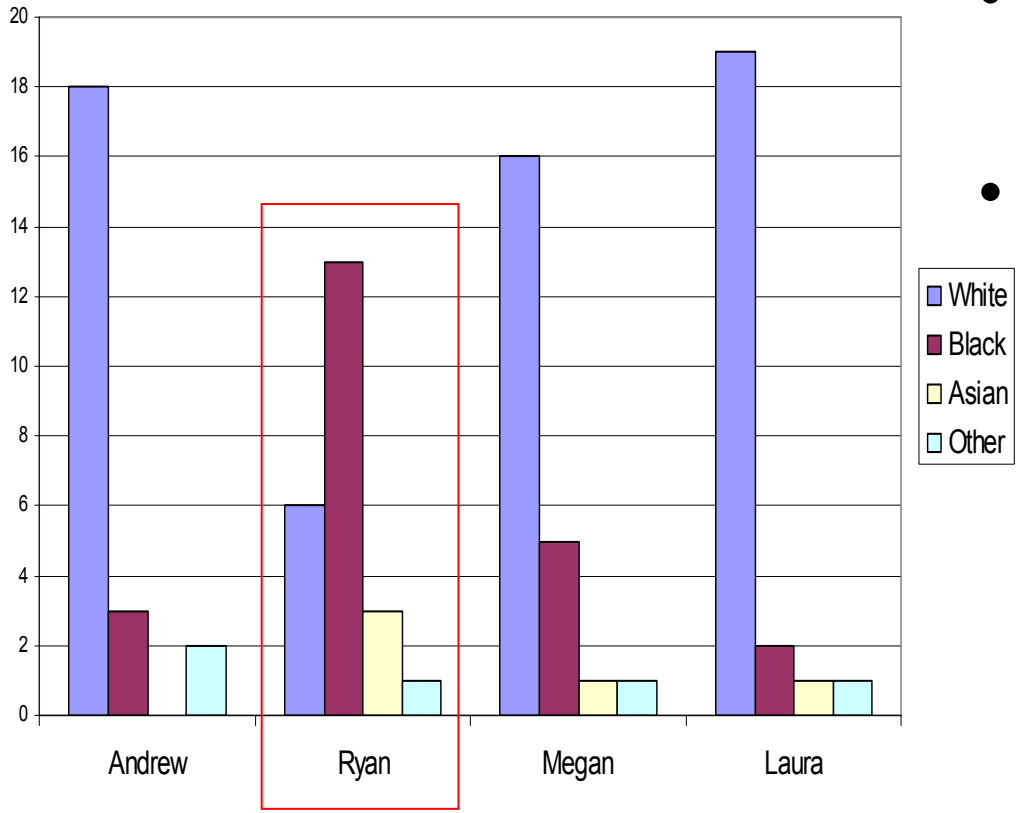
Perception test screen



Hackney Anglo voices

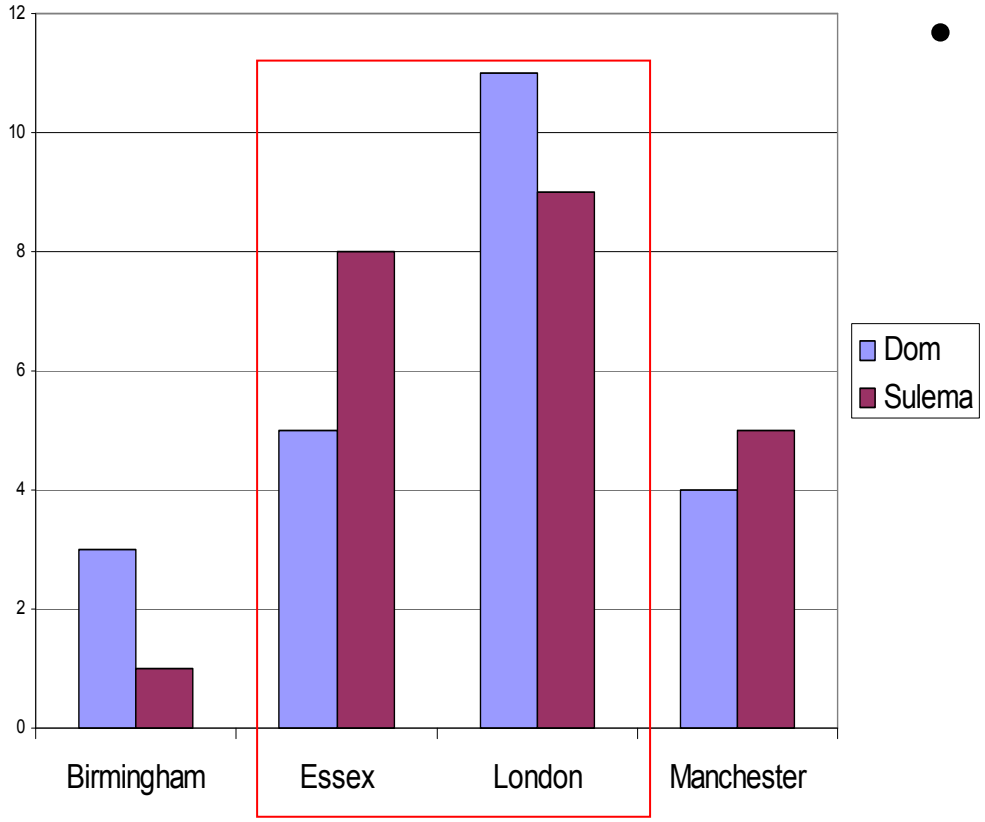


- Heard as coming from London

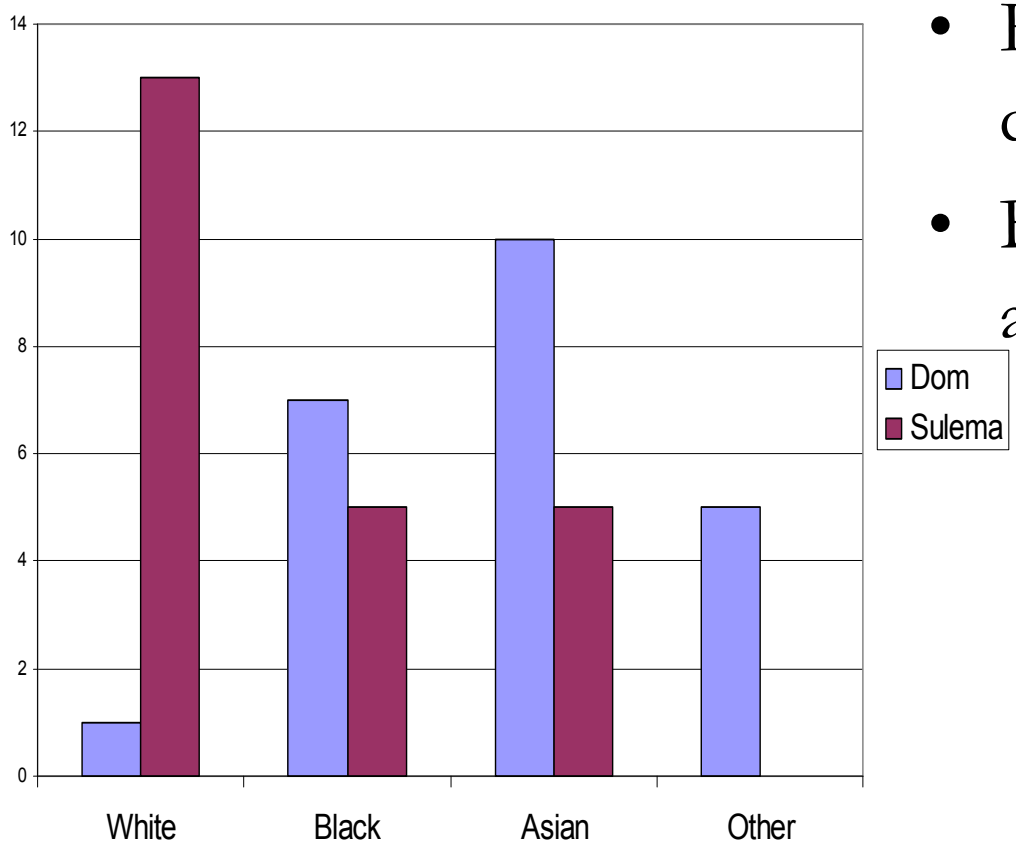


- Heard as ‘white’, but there is some variation
- Ryan, who has a multiethnic friendship network, is heard as ‘black’

Hackney non-Anglo voices

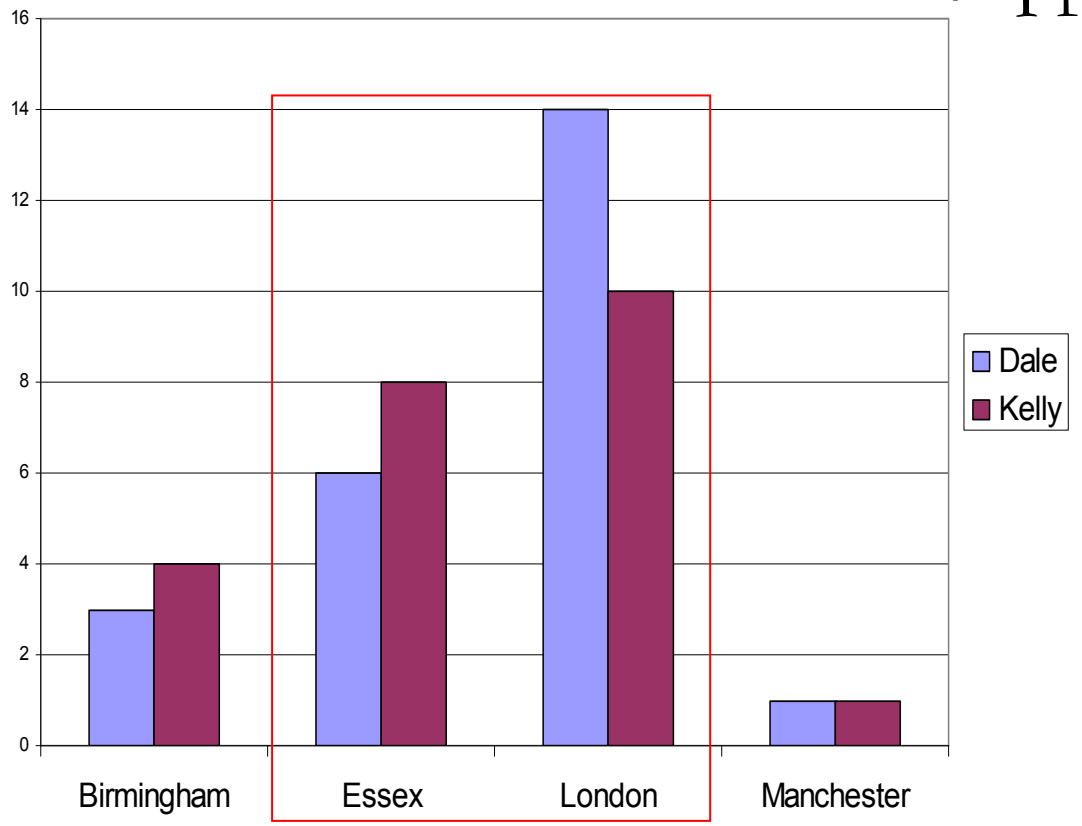


- Classified as London and Essex

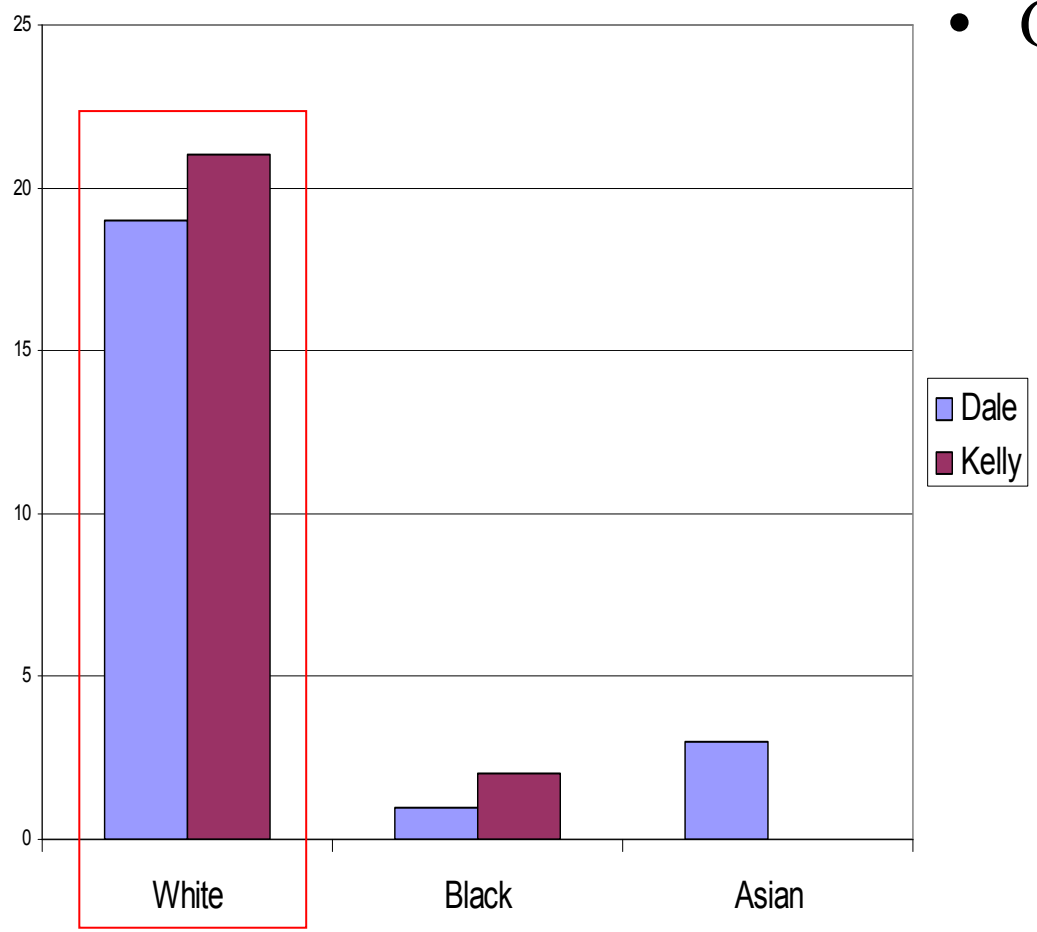


- Ethnicity is more difficult to classify
- But: Dom (Columbian) and Sulema (Moroccan)

Havering Anglo voices



- From London and Essex

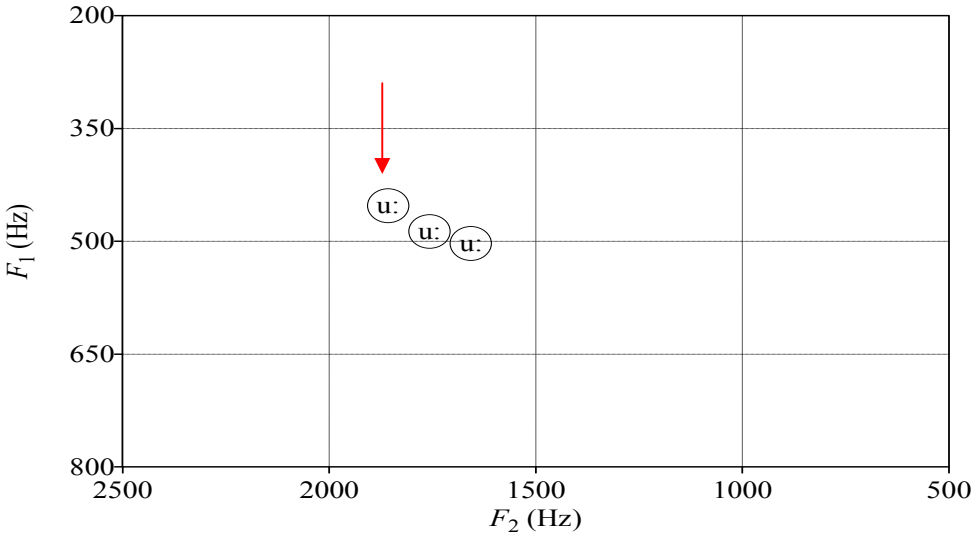


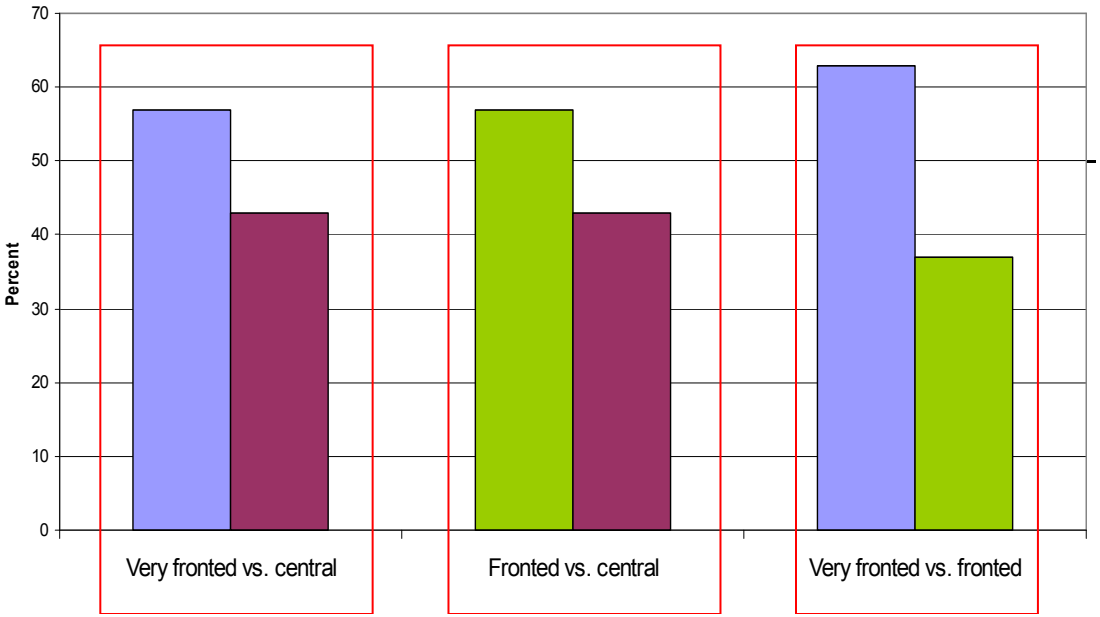
- Clearly heard as ‘white’

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

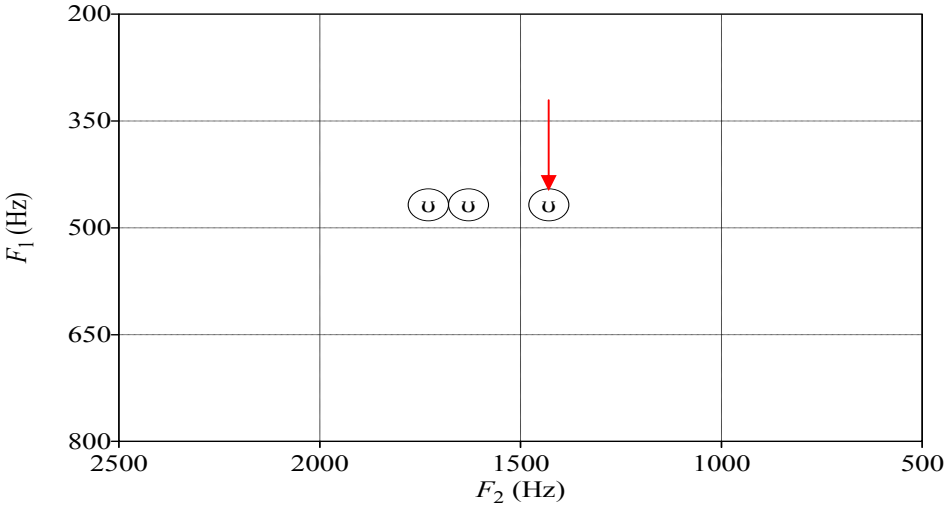
Perception test: manipulated vowels



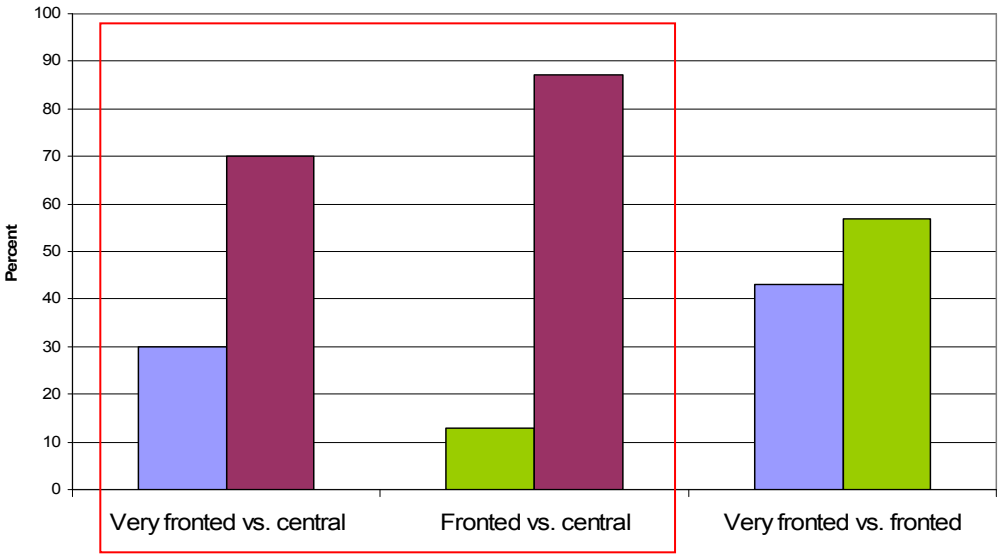


- 'BOOT'
  - Very fronted quality is preferred to central quality
  - Fronted quality is preferred to central quality
  - Very fronted quality is preferred to fronted quality

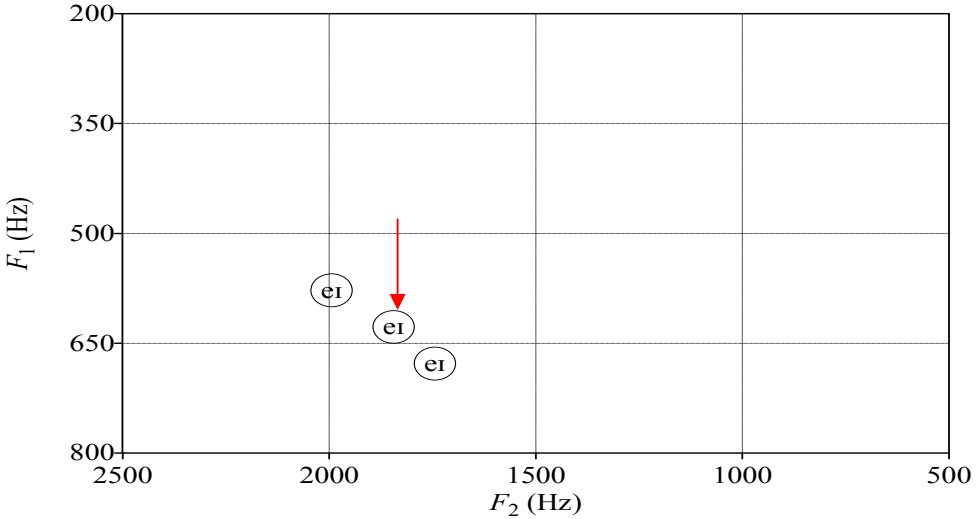
Perception test: manipulated vowels

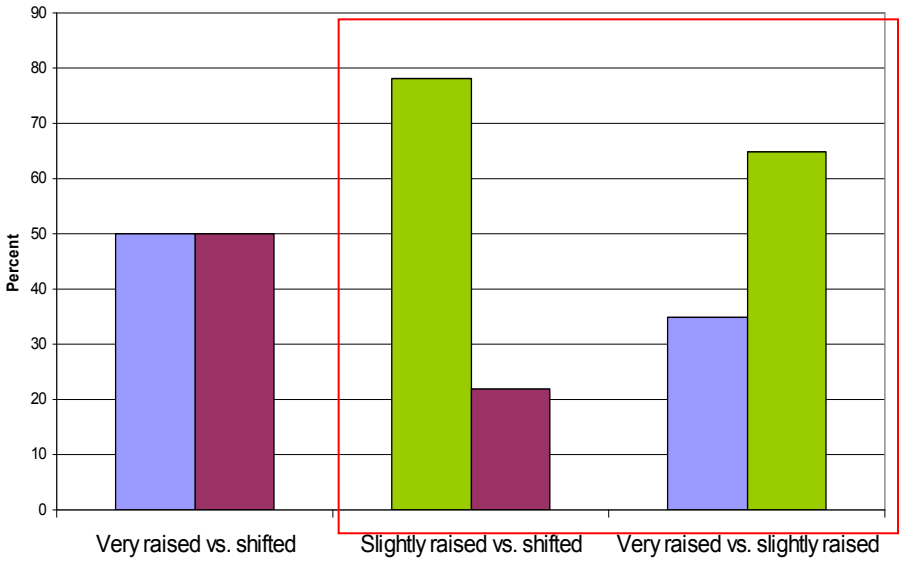


- 'GOOD'
- The central quality is preferred to both the fronted ones



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