

incrementation of u-fronting in Southern British English

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Background: language change

- **Incrementation:** successive generations 'advance the change beyond the level of their caretakers and role models' (Labov, 1994)

Case-study: GOOSE-fronting

- /u/: *boot, news, few, school*. Fronting through vowel space in many varieties (Wells, 1982; Labov, 1994 etc.)
- Data from age-and-gender stratified sample from Hastings, southeast England

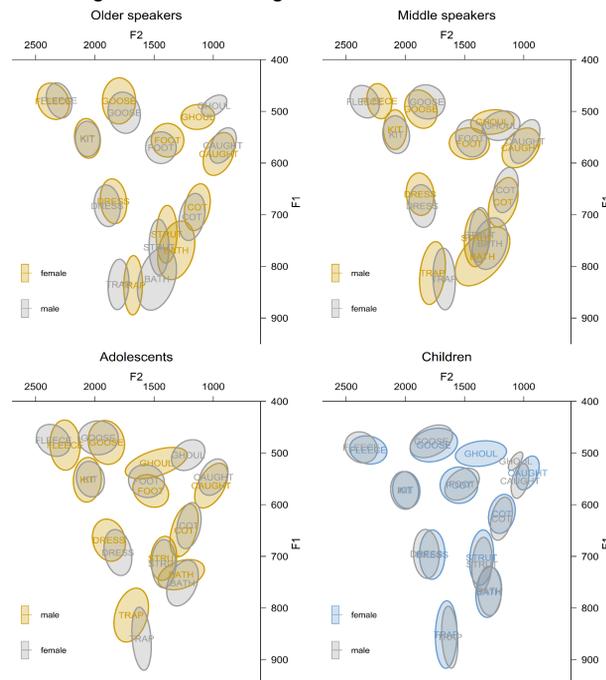


Figure 1. Vowel space across age cohorts

- Adults (yellow) show steadily fronting GOOSE target. Child cohort (blue) lag behind
- Creates 'adolescent peak' in apparent time (Fig. 2)

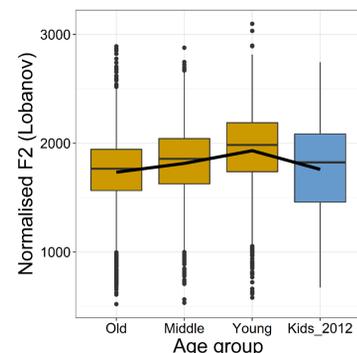


Figure 2. Normalised GOOSE F2 in apparent time

- Children's target more like that of caretakers'
- Have not yet learned to lead

'To understand change, we have to understand how children identify the newer pattern in the community system that they are learning, adopt that pattern, then move further in that direction' (Labov, 2014:34)

- Implies period of individual instability
- Need real time panel study to track this

Current study: Generation Why



- 13 speakers, 2 time points:
 - 2012: aged 9-11
 - 2016: aged 13-15

- Sociolinguistic interviews
- FAVE-aligned and extracted
- Lobanov normalised
- Shown to best 'preserve meaningful sociolinguistic variation' in longitudinal child data (Kohn & Farrington, 2012)

GOOSE-fronting in real time

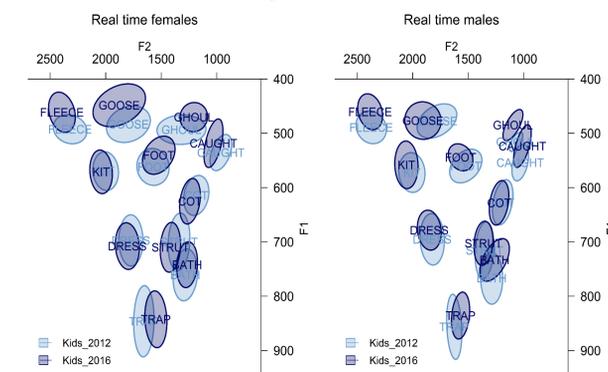


Figure 3. Vowel space in real time for females (left) and males (right)

- Visible incrementation over real time: GOOSE moves nearer FLEECE and away from GHOUL

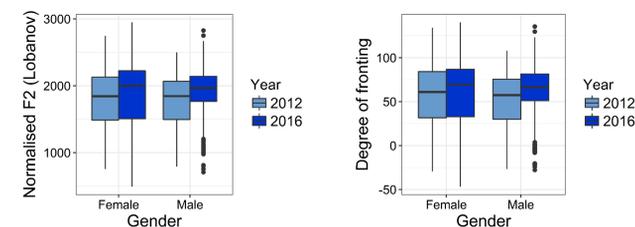


Figure 4. GOOSE: normed F2 (left), relative GHOUL - FLEECE (right)

- Supported by quantitative analysis: sig. higher values in 2016 for normed F2 ($p < .0001$) and for relative measure ($p < .0001$) (based on lmers)

Individuals

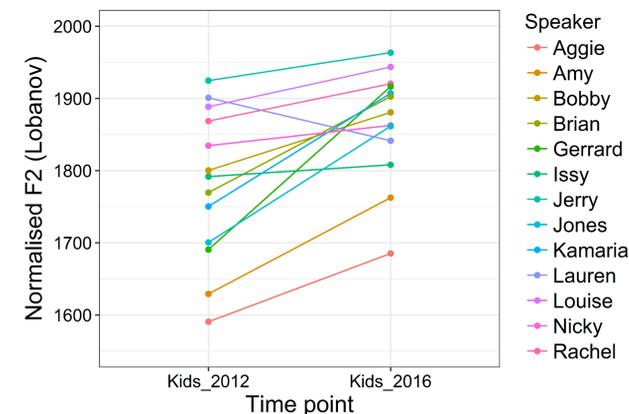


Figure 5. Mean F2 for individuals across 2012 and 2016

- 12/13 individuals show **increase in F2** over time. Ave. increase over time: 98Hz (range 17 – 226Hz)
- Individuals and boxplots show **convergence** over time: 2012 range - 334Hz; 2016 range - 278 Hz.
- Increasing F2 mean indicates change
- Decreasing F2 variance indicates focussing on target (cf Nardy et al., 2014)

Phonetic conditioning

Following: laterals - GOOSE/GHOUL split

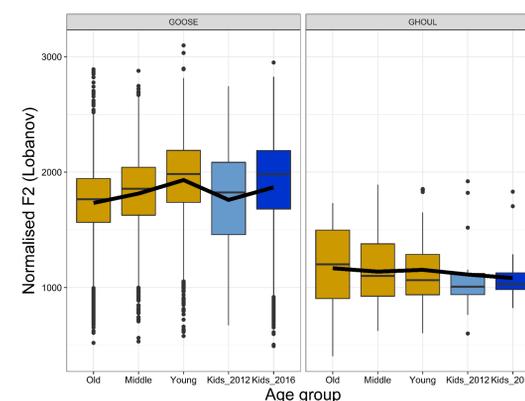


Figure 6. Normalised F2 GOOSE (left) and GHOUL (right)

- GOOSE: adolescent peak and incremental uptick over apparent and real time – evidence of change.
- GHOUL: relatively stable across apparent and real time, decrease in variability – evidence of stability.
- GOOSE/GHOUL split maintained over time (Wells, 1982; Labov, 1994 etc.)

Preceding: palatals, coronals, non-coronals

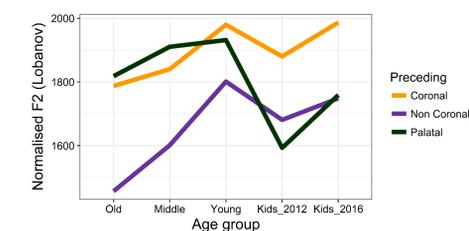


Figure 7. Mean F2 by preceding environment across apparent & real time

- Coronals and non-coronals consistent
- Palatals show disruption of patterning
- Interact with yod-context? (Soskuthy et al., 2015)

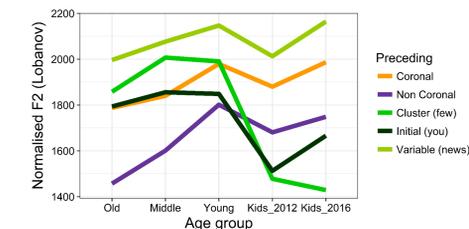


Figure 8. Mean F2 by preceding environment: palatals separated

- Variable contexts consistent; non-variable disrupted
- May indicate weakening/breakdown of conditioning starting in palatals (e.g. Harrington et al., 2008)

Summary & conclusion

- Study shows **real time incrementation** of GOOSE fronting at both **individual** and **community** level
- **Phonetic details** over time showed both stability (GOOSE/GHOUL split) and instability (preceding env)
- Individual instability drives incrementation of **“frequency, extent, scope or specificity of a variable”** (Labov, 1994)
- Weakening of conditioning may suggest coarticulatory mechanism of sound change

References

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