

Regional or Regionless?

Investigating RP with privately educated speakers in the
North East and South East

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Outline

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- 2 Background
 - The Variety
 - The Variables
- 3 Methodology
- 4 Results
 - FOOT~STRUT
 - TRAP~BATH
- 5 Conclusion
- 6 Further Research



Variation & Change in Modern Received Pronunciation



Variation & Change in Modern Received Pronunciation

- The Who, Where and How of RP in the 21st Century
- Is variation the same in different areas?
- Is there still a non-regional accent?
- *10 speakers from MA - part of 30+ speakers in PhD*



The Variety

Why RP?

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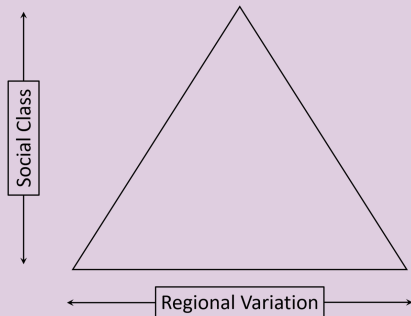


Figure 1: (adapted from Wells (1982a))

Why RP?

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 - Unusual origins (Jones 1917, Trudgill 2002)
 - Real speakers (Fabricius 2002)
 - *“for sociolinguistic modelling, a continuum of which one pole just does not exist, would not be very convincing” (Fabricius 2002, p. 357)*

Why RP?

- RP is an accent of English
 - Unusual origins (Jones 1917, Trudgill 2002)
 - Real speakers (Fabricius 2002)
- What are the speakers at the top doing?

The Variety

Why RP?

Who? - Defining a Speaker Group

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Why RP?

Who? - Defining a Speaker Group

- Two regions - South East & North East
- Two vowel distinction - FOOT~STRUT & TRAP~BATH
- Privately Educated Speakers



The Variables

FOOT~STRUT

FOOT~STRUT

- e.g. *look~luck, put~putt*
- FOOT
 - /ʊ/
- STRUT
 - /ʊ/ in the North
 - /ʌ/ in the South
- Difference is mostly in height
- All words from one or two sources in Middle English

FOOT ~ STRUT

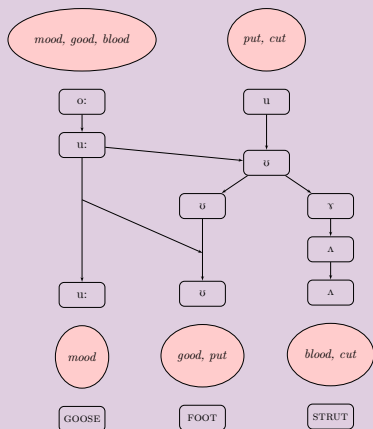


Figure 1: Baranowski & Turton (2018), adapted from Wells (1982a, p. 198)



The Variables

TRAP~BATH



TRAP~BATH

- TRAP
 - /æ/ or /a/
- PALM (/START)
 - /ɑ:/

TRAP~BATH

- TRAP
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 - /ɑ:/
- BATH
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TRAP~BATH

- TRAP
 - /æ/ or /a/
- PALM (/START)
 - /ɑ:/
- BATH
 - /æ/ or /a/ in the North
 - /ɑ:/ in the South
- Difference is perceived to be in frontness (F2) and duration but hasn't been quantified

TRAP~BATH

- Usually described as pre-fricative (and nasal) lengthening, minimal pairs are rare e.g. *ant~aunt*
- [open V] → [long V] / __Voiceless Fricative (adapted from Wells (1982a))
- Very socially salient (Beal 2004, Fraser Gupta 2005)

TRAP~BATH

- phonologised but lexical diffusion did not complete
- different isoglosses for different words, with a lot of variation

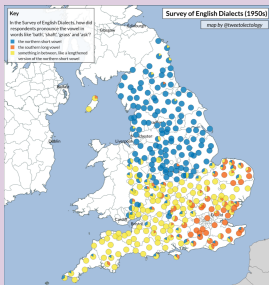


Figure 2: Tweetolectology
(<http://www.ling.cam.ac.uk/socmedia/>)

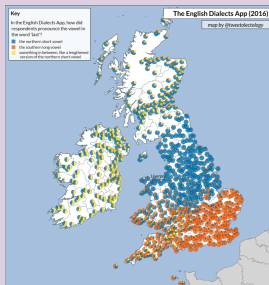


Figure 3: Tweetolectology

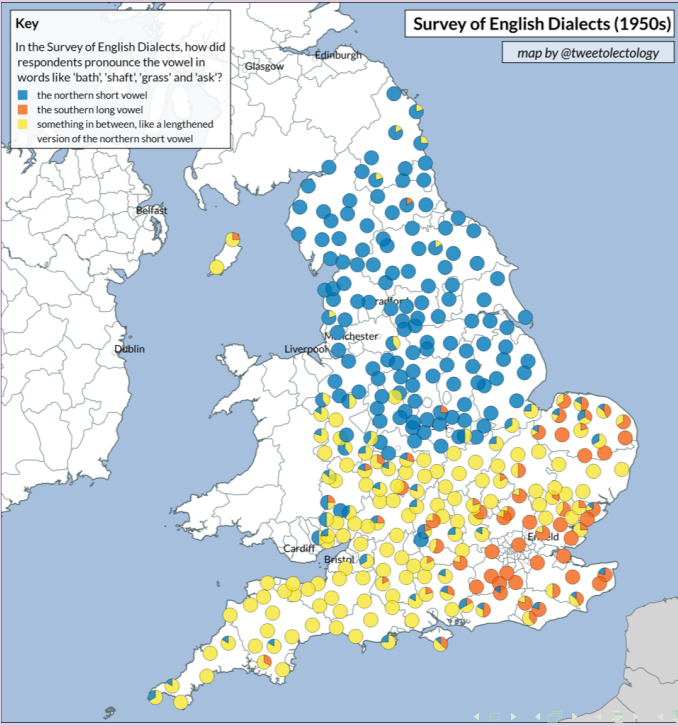
Survey of English Dialects (1950s)

map by @tweetolectology

Key

In the Survey of English Dialects, how did respondents pronounce the vowel in words like 'bath', 'shaft', 'grass' and 'ask'?

- the northern short vowel
- the southern long vowel
- something in between, like a lengthened version of the northern short vowel



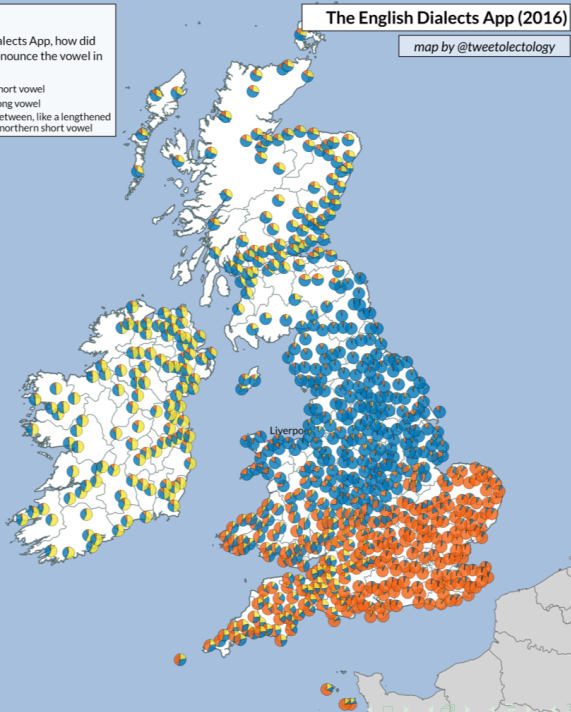
The English Dialects App (2016)

map by @tweetolectology

Key

In the English Dialects App, how did respondents pronounce the vowel in the word 'last'?

- the northern short vowel
- the southern long vowel
- something in between, like a lengthened version of the northern short vowel





Methodology

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- Linear Mixed Effect models (lme4-lmer in R)



FOOT~STRUT

Results

FOOT~STRUT

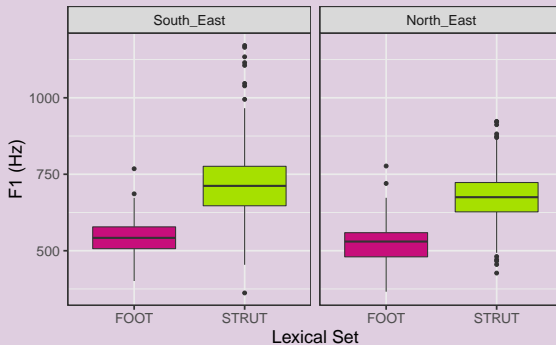


FOOT~STRUT

Results

FOOT~STRUT

Overall, FOOT~STRUT distinction seen in both regions

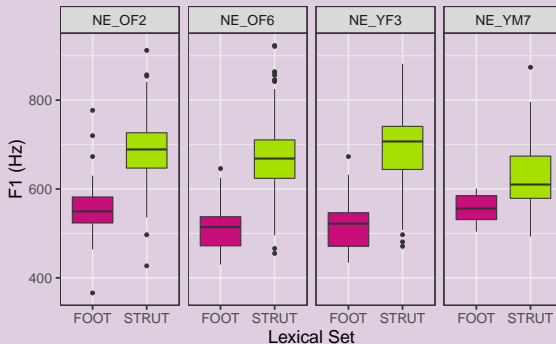


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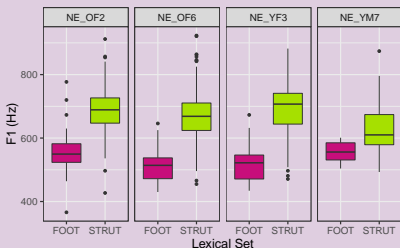


FOOT~STRUT

Results

FOOT~STRUT

Overall, FOOT~STRUT distinction seen in both regions
Speaker YM7



- doesn't have a phonological split (minimal pairs)
- phonetic split is far smaller than other speakers but still significant
- possible support for phonetic basis for split (Baranowski & Turton 2018)

TRAP~BATH

Results

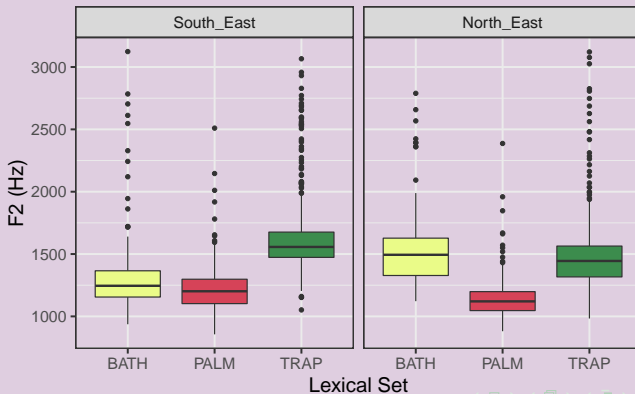
TRAP-BATH

TRAP ~ BATH

Results

TRAP-BATH

Speakers' behave like their region



TRAP~BATH

Results

Understanding variation within BATH

- BATH in SE speakers is straightforward

Results

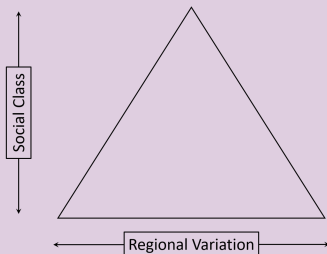
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Understanding variation within BATH

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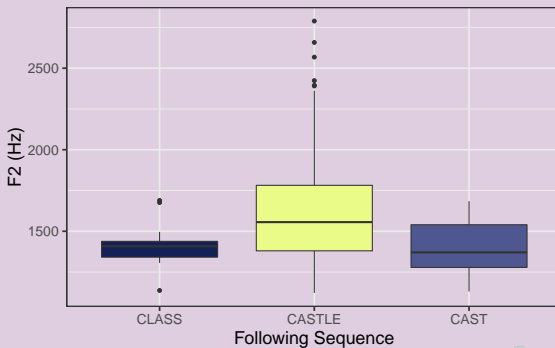


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Understanding variation within BATH

Could this be rule simplification?

- The split is complex - lexically specific, with variable isoglosses
→ Likely conditioned by a complex rule system
- Change has possibly already occurred: *plastic* (Wells 1982*b*, Fudge 1976)
- Similar systems, e.g. Philadelphia TRAP-tensing, have been shown to simplify (Payne 1980, Labov et al. 2016, Sneller 2018)

Results

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Understanding variation within BATH

Could this be rule simplification?

(1) /æ/ → [ɑ:] / -/f, v, s, z, n/, syllable boundary

(2)
$$\begin{bmatrix} + \text{low} \\ + \text{front} \\ - \text{long} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} + \text{low} \\ + \text{back} \\ + \text{long} \end{bmatrix} / \left\{ \begin{array}{l} _ \text{fricatives\$} \\ _ \text{nasal\$} \end{array} \right.$$



TRAP~BATH

Results

TRAP-BATH - duration



TRAP~BATH

Results

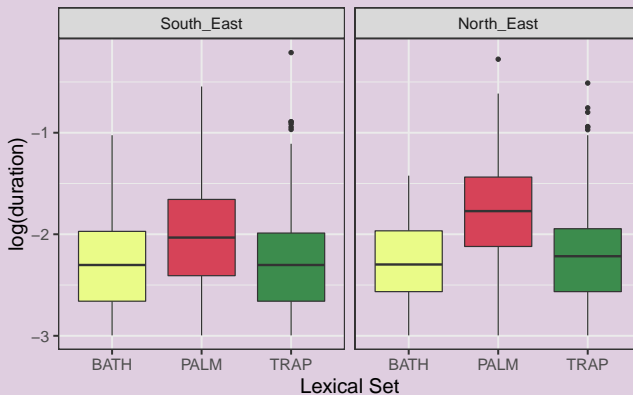
TRAP-BATH - duration

- The split has been described as long/short
- It was triggered by “pre-fricative lengthening” (Wells 1982*a*)

TRAP~BATH

Results

TRAP-BATH - duration



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 - TRAP~BATH behaves regionally

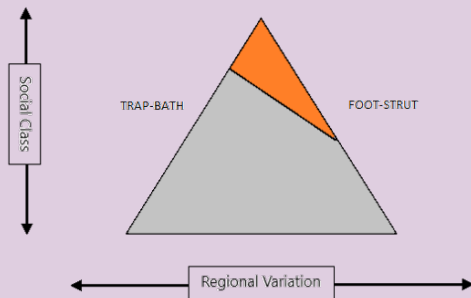
Conclusion

When asking the regionality question, not all variables behave the same:

- In these speakers:
 - FOOT~STRUT behaves non-regionally
 - TRAP~BATH behaves regionally
- Possible effect of social saliency?

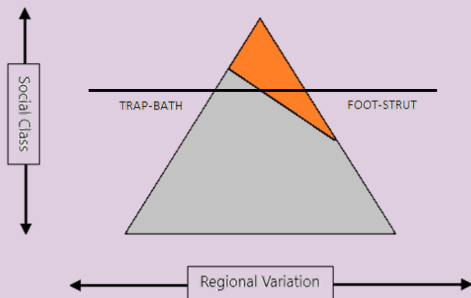
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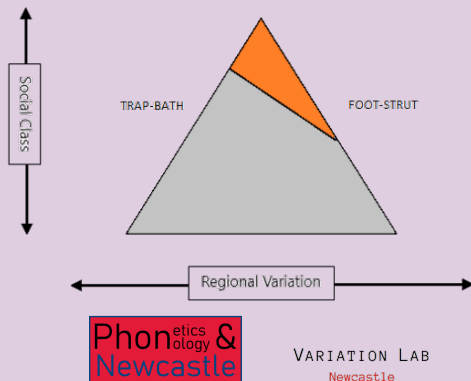
Further Research

- More speakers
- How do other variables act - regional or regionless?
- BATH Duration



Thank you for Listening!

Questions?



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