Production and perception of FOOT-STRUT and BATH-TRAP vowels in the East Midlands

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Background
This poster provides an apparent-time investigation of the FOOT-STRUT and BATH-TRAP vowels in the East Midlands. These vowels are main indicators of ‘northern’ and ‘southern’ varieties in England (Wells 1982). However, the East Midlands seems to fall between this divide and has until recently been under-researched. Reports state that the FOOT-STRUT split might be diffusing northwards (cf. Trudgill 1985, Mackenzie et al. 2014, Britain et al. 2016).


Research Questions
1) What is the status of FOOT/STRUT and BATH/TRAP in the three counties? Is there a diffusion northwards of ‘southern’ vowels?
2) What are speakers’ perception of these variations?

Methodology
Recordings of 60 speakers from the East Midlands
- old (55+) / young (18-30)
- men / women
Leicestershire/Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire
2x reading passage
Minimal pair tests; production judged by us

Results: Production

Results: Perception

Discussion
- Broad brush approach across the counties
- Strong overlap between FOOT/STRUT and BATH/TRAP in the East Midlands
- No clear split tendencies
- No clear north-south pattern
- FOOT/STRUT: Young speakers show more overlap than old speakers (confirmed by Bhattacharyya’s Affinity) → Why?
- Variation from complete overlap to no overlap in FOOT/STRUT
- ‘Northerners are not aware of the FOOT-STRUT distinction growing up’ (Baranowski & Turton 2018) → data suggest this also the case for our East Midlands speakers