Bilingual children's acquisition of laterals in a London-Bangladeshi community

Sam Kirkham[1] & Kathleen McCarthy[2]
[1]*Lancaster University*, [2]*Queen Mary University of London*

BACKGROUND

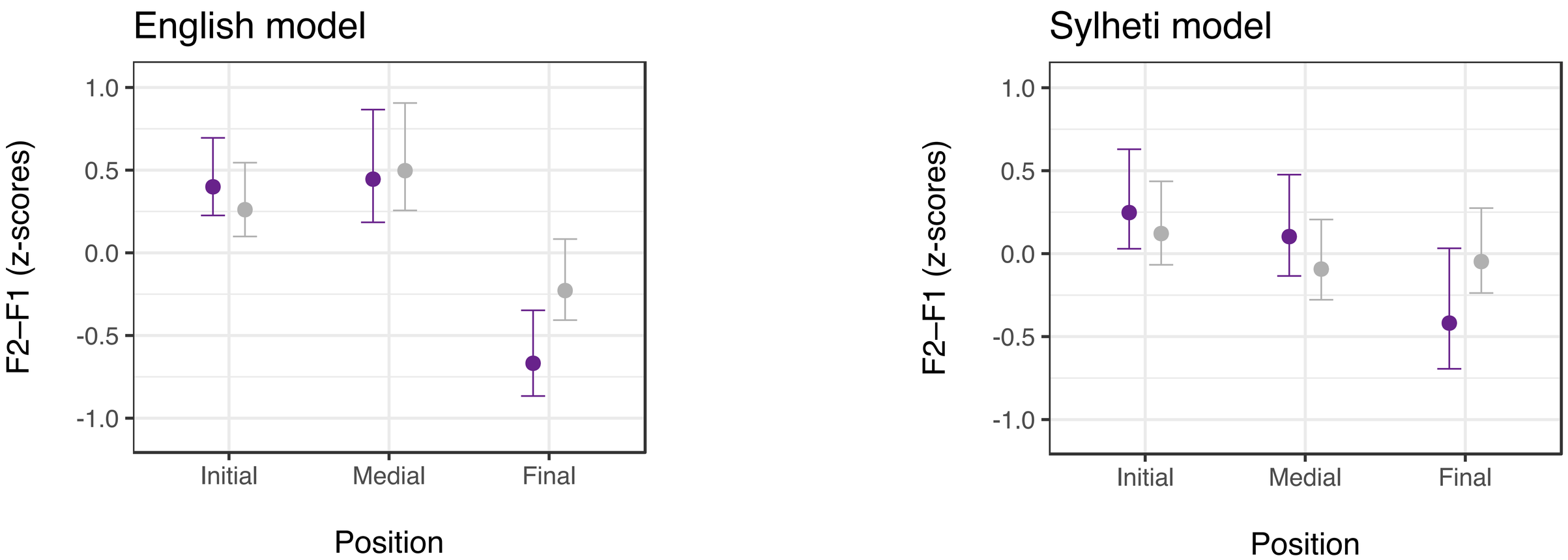
- New varieties hypothesised to emerge from language and dialect contact in large multicultural cities [1, 2, 3]
- Cross-lx similar sounds as locus of contact [4, 5, 6]
- But the precise dynamics of individual bilingualism remain poorly understood in the formation of new varieties
- **What is the role of bilingual transfer in the development of new varieties?**

STUDY: LATERALS IN BILINGUALS

- 14 Sylheti-English bilinguals & 10 English monolinguals, aged 6–7 y/o; plus 4 Sylheti monolingual adults

HYPOTHESIS

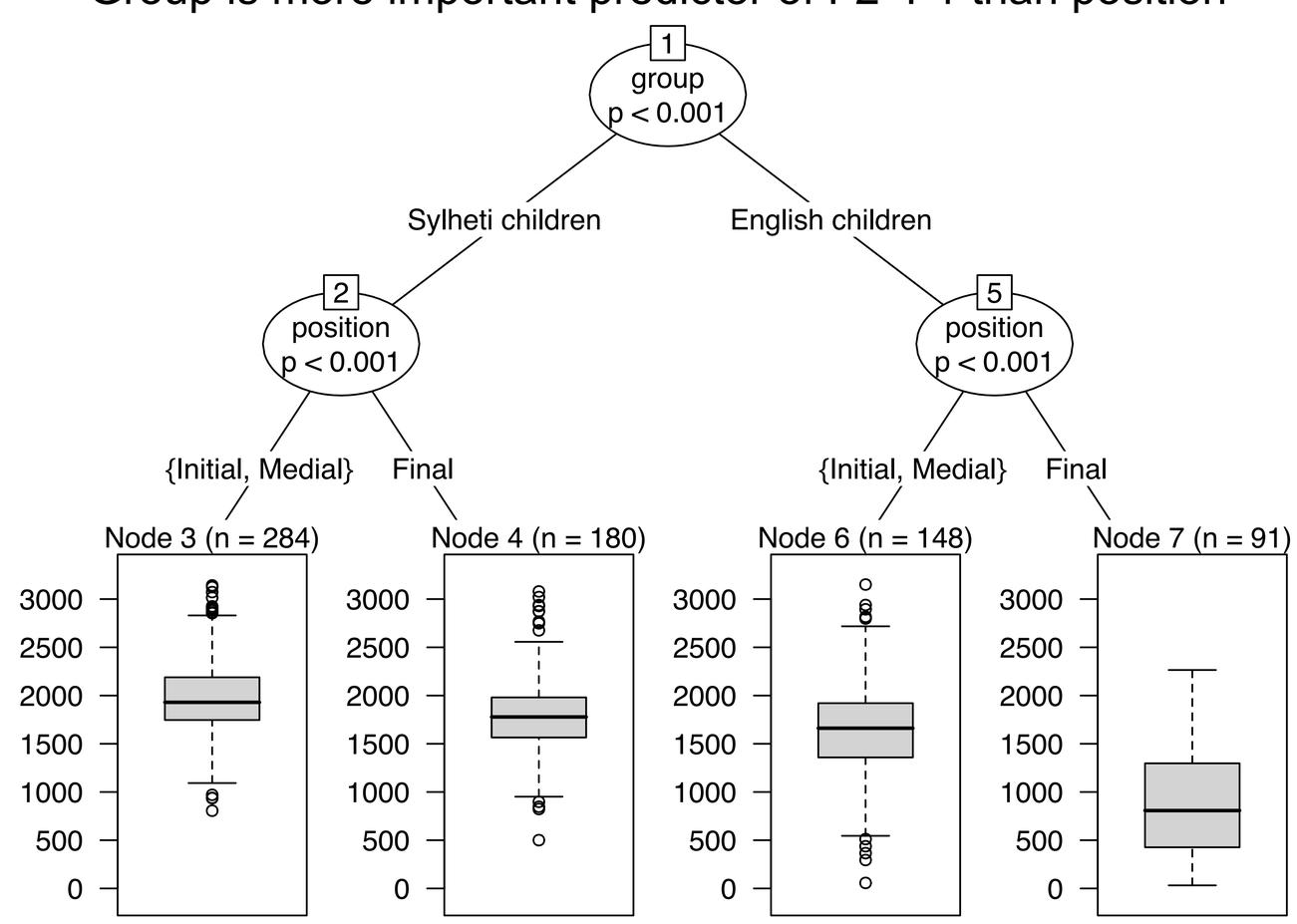
- Sylheti children will produce monolingual-like positional contrast in both languages, but with different phonetic detail in English (i.e. clearer /l/s in onsets and codas)



Sylheti-English bilingual children generalise the very clear onset laterals of Sylheti to the entire systems of both languages

PHONETIC DETAIL IN ENGLISH

- Sylheti bilinguals have higher F2–F1 (Hz) than English monolinguals and a much smaller initial~final contrast
- Group is more important predictor of F2–F1 than position



SUMMARY

- Bilinguals do not produce monolingual-like positional contrast in Sylheti laterals (similar in initial/medial/final)
- Bilinguals do produce monolingual-like positional contrast in English laterals, but to a smaller degree
- Bilinguals produce very clear laterals in all positions in both languages, unlike adult Sylheti monolinguals

SIGNIFICANCE

- Suggests over-generalisation of very clear onset /l/s from Sylheti to the entire English system, but also across the Sylheti system
- Complex links between a bilingual's languages
- Output is not predictable from monolingual input
- New varieties as complex dynamic systems [1]

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Ongoing analysis of rhotics, which show a complex range of categorical variants, especially in Sylheti
- Examine relationships across phonological systems [3]

REFERENCES

[1] Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox & Torgersen. 2011. Contact, the feature pool and the speech community. *JSoc* 15(2). [2] Drummond. 2018. *Researching urban youth language and identity*, Palgrave. [3] Wiese & Rehbein. 2016. Coherence in new urban dialects. *Lingua* 172-173. [4] Flege. 1995. Second language speech learning. In: Strange (ed.) *Speech perception and linguistic experience*, York Press. [5] Mayr, Morris, Mennen & Williams. 2017. Disentangling the effects of long-term language contact and individual bilingualism. *IJB* 21(3). [6] Thomason. 2001. *Language contact: An introduction*, Cambridge.

METHODS

- Initial, medial (post-accentual), final /l/ in English & Sylheti; F2–F1 measured at /l/ steady-state
- Bayesian linear mixed-effects models using weakly-informative priors (plots show 89% interval):
  > F2–F1 (z) ~ position + group + position*group + (1|speaker) + (1|word) + (1+position|speaker)
- Conditional inference tree: > F2–F1 (Hz) ~ position + group (English only)