

Ethnolectal variation ov(er) time: Word-final (er) in Australian English

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Ethnolectal variation



- Increasing migration across the globe, resulting in highly multicultural and multilingual urban centers
- Research on ethnolectal variation (cf. Labov 1966)
 - New York (e.g., Becker 2010, Newlin-Lukowicz 2014)
 - Toronto (e.g., Hoffman & Walker 2010)
 - London (e.g., Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox, Torgersen 2011)
 - Berlin (e.g., Jannedy 2010, Wiese 2009)
 - Sweden (e.g., Gross, Boyd, Leinonen, Walker 2016)

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Ethnolectal variation and language change



- Ethnically and linguistically diverse communities
 - High degree of variability and innovation
 - Context propitious to rapid change (Cheshire, Nortier & Adger 2015)
- Multicultural London English (e.g., Cheshire, Kerswill, Fox, Torgersen 2011)
 - Ethnolectal features adopted and spread through multi-ethnic friendship groups
- Sweden (Gross, Boyd, Leinonen, Walker 2016)
 - Ethnic minorities in Gothenberg leading in the adoption of changes taking place in Stockholm, as they make use of features undergoing change to mark their difference
- Sydney, Australia (Horvath 1985)
 - Change towards more "general" Australian English vowel realisations (away from both "broad" and "cultivated" vowels) led by 2nd generation migrants of Greek and Italian background in an effort to "sound Australian", and not like their accented parents (1985:176)

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Ethnolectal variation and language change



- Lasting language change or transitory? (Cheshire, Nortier & Adger 2015)
 - Associated with young people (e.g., Quist 2008, Wiese 2013)
 - Indication of language change for Multicultural London English
 - spread beyond ethnic groups,
 - and to young adults (beyond adolescents)
- Real-time test of the role of ethnic minorities in language change
 - English in Sydney
 - 1970s (Horvath 1985) vs. 2010s

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Word-final (er)

- Word-final (er)
 - variably produced as [ə, e]

Jocelyn: .. if I do five now,
five .. next semester,
I'll do,
.. two over summer? [Syds_AYFU_016]

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Word-final (er)



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Word-final (er)

- Salient ethnolectal feature in Australia
(Kiesling 2005:2, Warren 2001:86)
 - one of “the most conspicuous phonological features of the [Greek] ethnolect” (Clyne, Eisikovits & Tollfree 2001:228)
- Appeared to be undergoing change in Australia in 1990s
 - Young Greek Australians using a longer and backer variant
(Kiesling 2005:18)

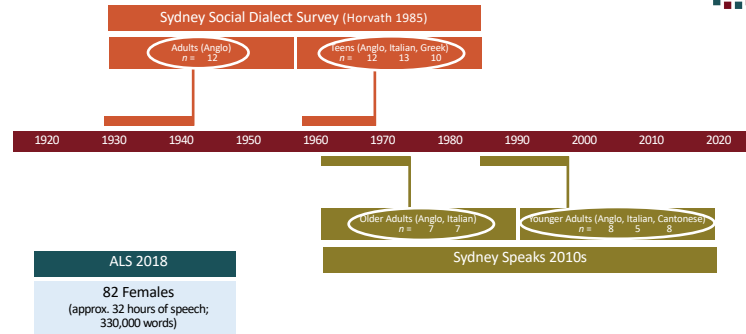
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Sydney Speaks

- Document and explore Australian English,
as spoken in Australia’s largest city
 - Real and apparent time
 - Across two points in time (1970s, 2010s)
 - Two age groups at each point in time
 - Sydney’s diverse population
 - Anglo (parents and grandparents born and grew up in Australia)
 - Migrant background (2nd Generation, born in Australia)
 - from largest migrant groups: Greek, Italian and Chinese

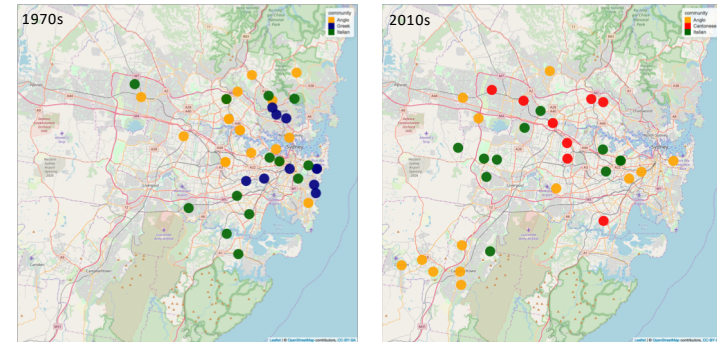
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Sydney Speaks Corpora



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Sydney Speaks Corpora



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Sydney Speaks Corpora

- Sociolinguistic interviews (Labov 1972)
- Conducted by community members (cf. Clyne, Eisikovits & Tollfree 2002)

Amanda: *like a lot of times, the patients can't speak Cantonese or [some- -- [Hm].*

Jill: *like can't] speak English sorry.*

Amanda: *... And like the doctor is not able to speak it either. ... and they've got no other person around, and they can't get an interpreter, ... the last resort is to get the ward clerk to go and um, translate.* [Syds_CYFM_025]

- Prosodically-based transcription
 - Intonation Unit
 - "a single, coherent intonation contour" (Du Bois et al. 1993:47; cf. Chafe 1994:58-60)
 - Each IU is represented on a new line, punctuation marks final prosody
- IU-position is relevant to (er)
 - IU-final
 - IU non-final

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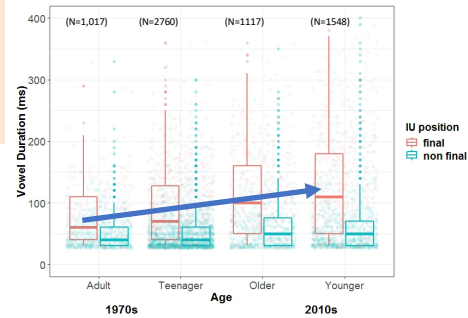
Variable word-final (er)

- Word-final, unstressed vowel followed by 'r' in the orthography, in minimally disyllabic words
 - Primarily -er
 - remember, other, over, teacher (≈ 90% of the data)
 - Other
 - culture, hour, popular, centre
- All tokens extracted (n = 6,442)
 - Measured acoustically for
 - Realisation in the vowel space
 - Duration

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Duration of (er) and Intonation Unit position

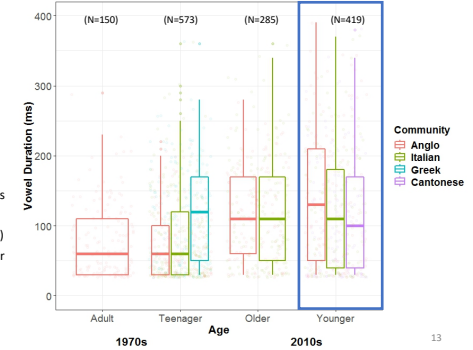
- IU final (n = 2,010)
she was a terrific teacher? [SSDS_GTFW_865]
- IU non-final (n = 4,432)
and sometimes the teacher caught them? [SSDS_GTFW_865]
- IU-final (er)
 - longer than non-IU-final (er)
 - lengthening over time
- Focus on IU-final position



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Duration of (er) over time by community

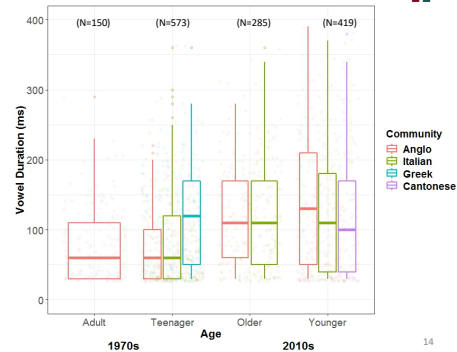
- 1970s teens (Anglo, Italian, Greek)
 - Lengthening is attributable to the Greek Australians – significantly longer than Anglos and Italians
 - Ethnolectal difference (cf. Clyne 2001, Kiesling 1995)
- 2010s older adults (Anglo, Italian)
 - Anglos and Italians remain similar to each other
 - Both significantly longer than they were as 1970s teens
- 2010s younger adults (Anglo, Italian, Cantonese)
 - Anglos have marginally lengthened further
 - Anglos, Italians, Cantonese similar to each other



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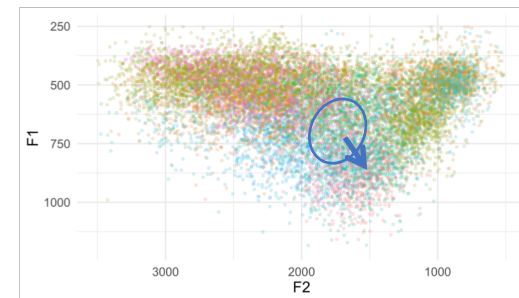
Duration of (er) over time by community

- Lengthening among 1970s teens attributable to Greek Australians
- Adopted by 2010s older adults
- Retained by 2010s younger adults, including by the newer migrant group of Chinese background



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Realisation of (er) over time

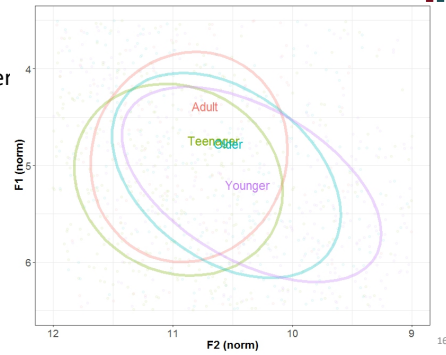


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Realisation of (er) over time

- Incremental move towards lower and backer realisation of (er)

- 1970s Adults
- 1970s Teens / 2010s Older adults
- 2010s Younger adults

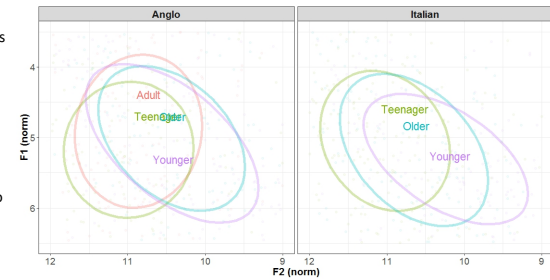


Realisation of (er) over time by community

- Significant lowering/backing over time for both the Anglos and the Italians

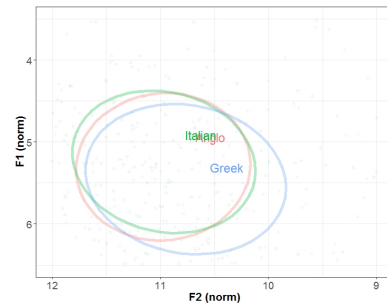
- 1970s Adults
- 1970s Teens / 2010s Older adults
- 2010s Younger adults

- Relationship with duration
- Analyses of F1/F2 for Anglo and Italian communities with age and duration as predictors, both are significant

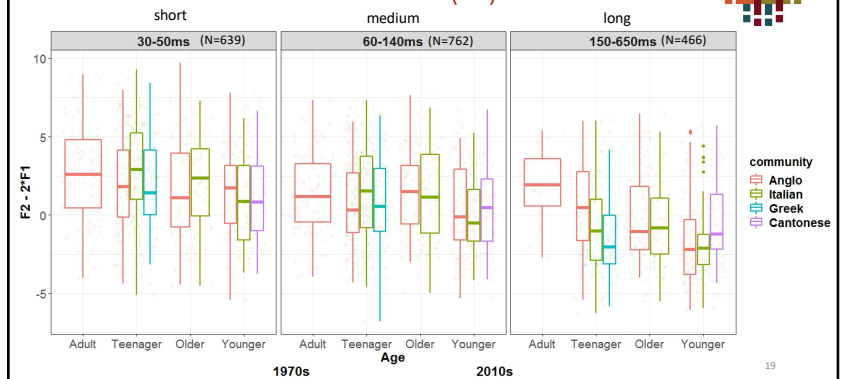


Realisation of (er) by community: 1970s teens

- 1970s Greek teens marginally lower and backer in the vowel space
- Not independent of duration



Duration and realisation of (er) over time



Role of ethnic minorities in language change



- Support for the notion that ethnic communities may drive change
 - Word final (er) in IU-final position has become longer and lower/backer over time
 - Forecast by the behaviour of Greek Australians in the 1970s
 - Adopted today across the community

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Role of ethnic minorities in language change



- Unanswered questions
 - Ethnic minorities as leaders of change
 - More diverse networks (Cheshire et al. 2011)
 - Differentiate themselves from their accented parents (Horvath 1985)
 - less access to an adult Australian English model
 - may further advance changes that are latent in society
 - Why Greeks vs. Italians?
 - Horvath (1985) also observed the Greeks and Italians to be distinct
 - Not an “ethnolect” as such
 - Greeks today? Other ethnic groups? Other linguistic features?

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Thank you

And thanks to the
Sydney Speaks team!



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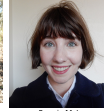
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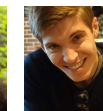
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