Variation and Change in Modern Received Pronunciation

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Questions
1. **Descriptive aim** - What pronunciation differences exist between north-eastern and southern speakers of Received Pronunciation (RP), particularly focussing on vowels and diphthongs?

2. **Social aim** - What insights does this give on the nature of a non-regional sociolect made up of diffuse speech communities?

3. **Theoretical Aim** - Can the variation seen in RP shed light on the interactions between phonetics, phonology and morphology during a sound change in progress?
• RP is an accent of English
• A non-regional sociolect

(adapted from (Wells 1982a))
Background and Literature (1)

- RP is an accent of English
- A non-regional sociolect
- Historically tied to schooling & socio-economic class (Jones 1917, Trudgill 2002)
- Subvarieties (Wells 1982b, Fabricius 2000)
Recent studies of variation

- Newsreaders (Bjelaković 2016, Hannisdal 2006)
- Little to no current literature on variation in vowel/diphthong pronunciation

Sociolect is accepted but rarely defended (Przedlacka & Baghai-Ravary 2015, Wolfram & Schillings-Estes 1998)
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Calls for study (Fabricius 2002a, Britain 2017)
Methodology and Methods

- Quantitative methodology
- Sociolinguistic interviews (Labov 2011, Tagliamonte & Mesthrie 2006)
- Phonetic analysis
- Collect and code for as many social factors as possible (age, gender, area, class etc.)
- Statistical Analysis
  - A difference is indicated by statistically significant differences in vowel realisations
Research Question 1

What pronunciation differences exist between north-eastern and southern speakers of RP, particularly focusing on vowels and diphthongs?

- Quantitative methodology
- Sociolinguistic interviews (Labov 2011, Tagliamonte & Mesthrie 2006)
- Phonetic analysis → formant values
Methodology and Methods

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- Statistical Analysis
- A difference is indicated by statistically significant differences in vowel realisations
What insights does this give on the nature of a non-regional sociolect made up of diffuse speech communities?

- Mixed Methodology - quantitative and qualitative
- Interviews and surveys
  - Class measurements
Methodology and Methods

Research Question 3

Can the variation seen in RP shed light on the interactions between phonetics, phonology and morphology during a sound change in progress?
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hope
Methodology and Methods

Research Question 3

Can the variation seen in RP shed light on the interactions between phonetics, phonology and morphology during a sound change in progress?

hope  hole
Can the variation seen in RP shed light on the interactions between phonetics, phonology and morphology during a sound change in progress?

hope  hole  holy
Can the variation seen in RP shed light on the interactions between phonetics, phonology and morphology during a sound change in progress?

hope hole holy holey
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Methodology and Methods

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- Effect of morphology on the phonetics of a sound change (Strycharczuk & Scobbie 2016)

![Graph showing interaction between morpho-syntactic condition and age in a linear mixed-effects regression model predicting the F2 (in Hz) measured at the acoustic onset of the vowel.]

(Strycharczuk & Scobbie 2016)
Methodology and Methods

Research Question 3

Can the variation seen in RP shed light on the interactions between phonetics, phonology and morphology during a sound change in progress?

(Halfacre 2017)
Research Question 3

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(Graph of $F_2$ of the Nucleus by Speaker)

(Halfacre 2017)
Limitations and Obstacles

- How to measure class? (Britain 2017, Savage et al. 2013, Newport 2002)
- Recruitment
  - Defining the criteria for the accent - is this circular? (Britain 2017)
- Sociolinguistics interview & Target variables
URL: http://www.journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1360674316000253

Britain, D. (2017), ‘Beyond the ”gentry aesthetic”: elites, Received Pronunciation and the dialectological gaze’, *Social Semiotics* 27(3), 288–298.


Hannisdal, B. R. (2006), Variability and change in Received Pronunciation A study of six phonological variables in the speech of television newsreaders, PhD thesis, University of Bergen.


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