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From London Jamaican to British youth language: The transformation of a Caribbean post-creole repertoire into a new Multicultural London English

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Outline

1. The London multiethnolect and early linguistic inputs to it
2. Brief migration and post-migration history
3. Research questions: Caribbean input and changing post-migration repertoires
4. What was the input and what is the outcome 50 years on? Jamaican and London vowels then and now
5. Multicultural London English
6. Changing repertoires 1970–2010

1. The London multiethnolect and early linguistic inputs to it

- We investigate whether London youth language contains **traces** of Caribbean creoles
 - Slang
 - Phonology
- The **multiethnolect** construct
 - Northern Europe
 - In London, we argue it has emerged from a **feature pool** (Mufwene) with many sources

- The input varieties in London's inner city include:
 - Creole-influenced varieties
 - Ex-colonial Englishes
 - Learner varieties: 300+ languages spoken in primary schools
 - The local London vernacular
- Monolingual English speakers have also been exposed to all these varieties
- These are the inputs to the **feature pool**

2. Research questions: Caribbean input and changing post-migration repertoires

- RQ1: What is the Caribbean, specifically Jamaican, input to London's multiethnolect?
 - Koineisation and/or founder effect?
 - Fashion for Caribbean language and styles?
- RQ2: From the vantage point of the African-Caribbeans themselves, how have their own linguistic repertoires changed across the three or more generations who have grown up in London?
 - Accommodation or expansion of stylistic repertoires?
 - Code-switching?

Corpora

- Recordings (elicitation and short interviews) of c. 70 Jamaican men and women residing in London, by John C. Wells. Recorded **1970**.
- Recordings of London Caribbeans by Mark Sebba in **1983–4**.
- Recordings of late-teenage Londoners of various ethnic backgrounds, made by Sue Fox as part of projects led by Paul Kerswill, in **2005** and **2008**.



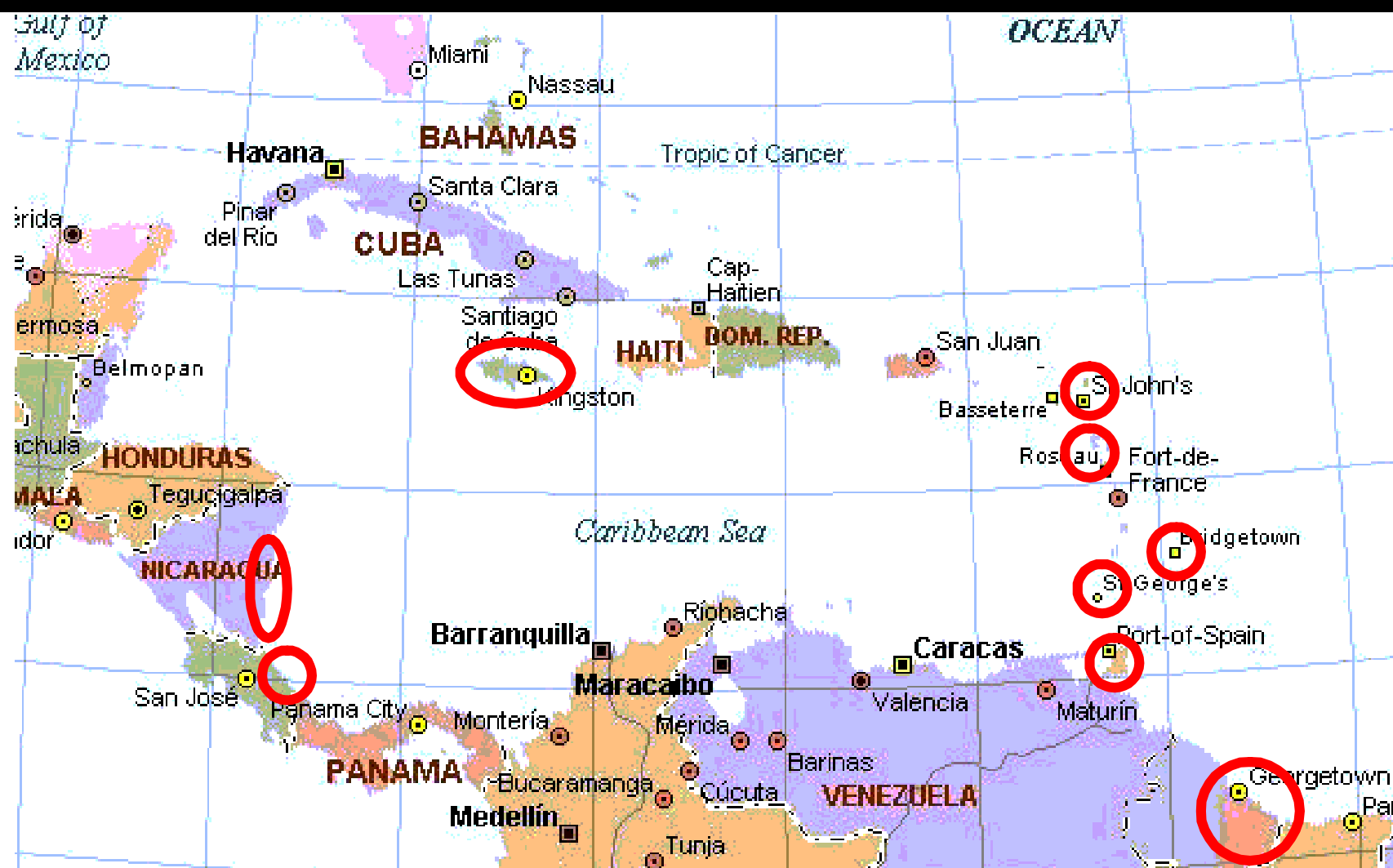
Migration from the Caribbean colonies to UK

Empire Windrush 1948



m.v. 'EMPIRE WINDRUSH' 14,651 tons

English-lexicon Creoles of the Caribbean



Creole in England: the first and second generations

1st Generation:

People born in... spoke...

GUYANA:

GUYANESE Creole

JAMAICA:

JAMAICAN Creole

DOMINICA:

DOMINICAN Creole

BARBADOS:

BARBADIAN Creole

TRINIDAD:

TRINIDAD Creole

Creole in England: emergence of London Jamaican

Social processes (Gilroy's interpretation)

1st Generation:

GUYANESE TRINIDADIAN JAMAICAN DOMINICAN
BARBADIAN experiences of race and class

.....
(see Gilroy 1987): '*There ain't no black in the Union Jack*'.)

2nd Generation:

=====BLACK BRITISH IDENTITY=====

Creole in England: emergence of London Jamaican

Linguistic outcome:

1st Generation:

GUYANESE TRINIDADIAN JAMAICAN DOMINICAN BARBADIAN ...
Creole Creole Creole Creole Creole
(Mesolectal varieties)

2nd Generation:

'London Jamaican'

Linguistic outcome

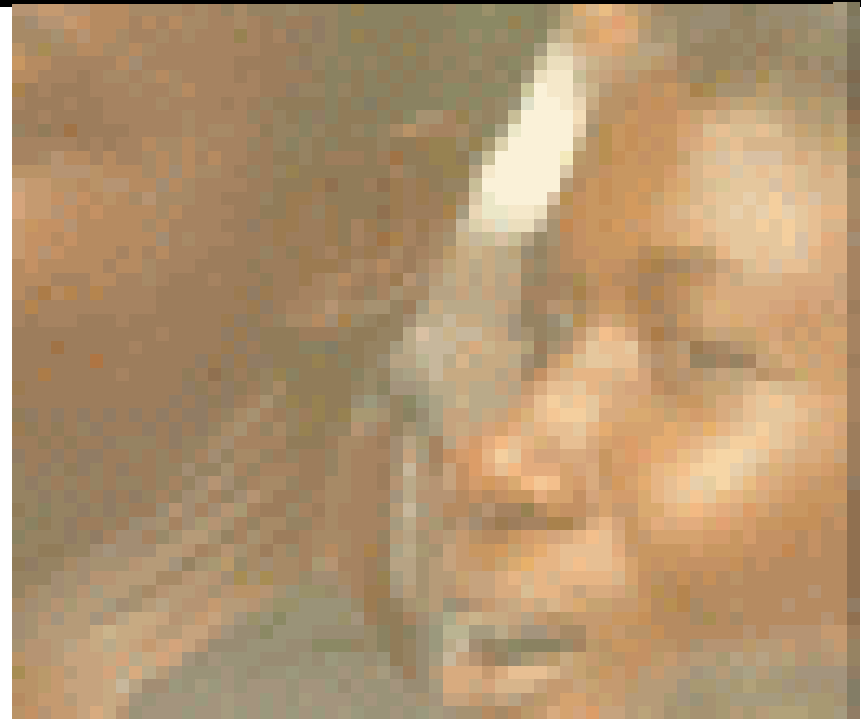
**2nd Generation
(1975 on):**

People of Caribbean
heritage born in...

LONDON

Spoke ...

LONDON ENGLISH + 'LONDON JAMAICAN'



‘London Jamaican’

a vernacular which emerged after 1975

Spoken by –

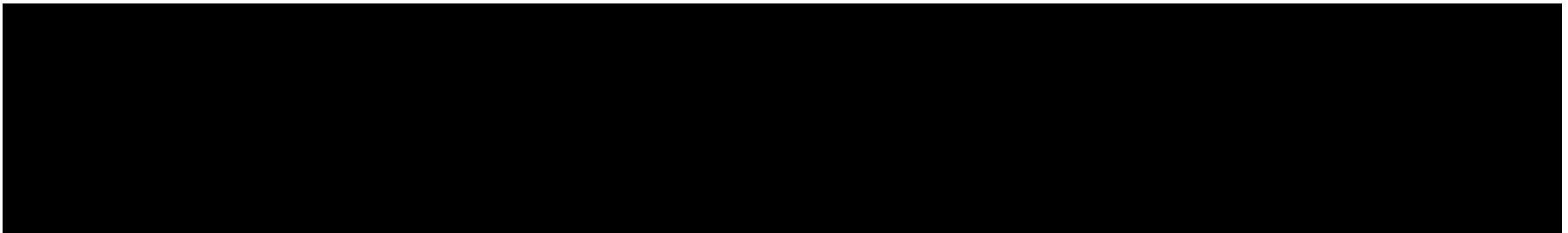
- British Caribbean adolescents in London
whether or not they had Jamaican ancestry.
- Some adolescents not of Caribbean ancestry,
e.g. White, Asian, African

Why London *Jamaican*?

Why not **koineisation** or **levelling**, when there were several similar language varieties coming into contact among Caribbeans in London?

Four reasons (from Sebba 1993; Cheshire, Kerswill et al. 2011):

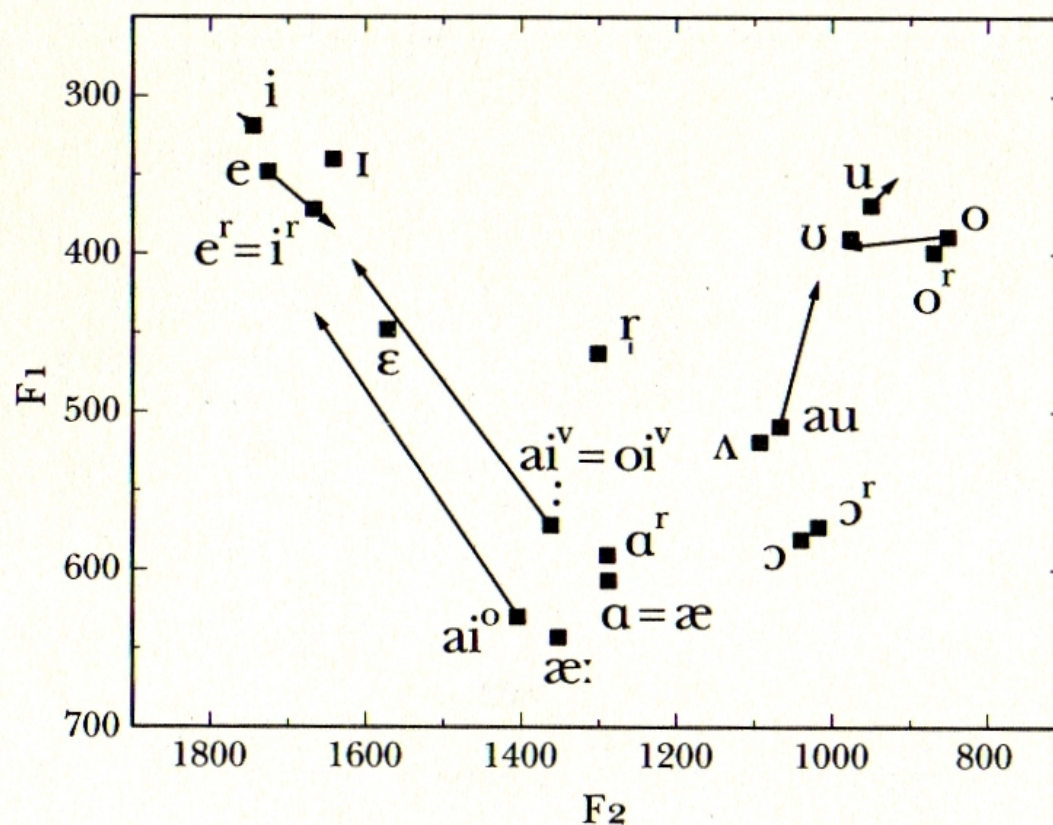
1. Jamaicans were the largest single group, in the majority in some areas (but not all)
2. Jamaicans belonged to the founding groups for post-war youth language in London (Mufwene)
3. The popularity among Caribbean youth of reggae music, which had its origins in Jamaica and whose single most influential exponent, Bob Marley, was a Jamaican;
4. The popularity of the Rastafarian religious and cultural movement (closely linked to reggae music), which was also largely Jamaican.



SPEAKER 137

Male, Born 1944, from Kingston, Jamaica

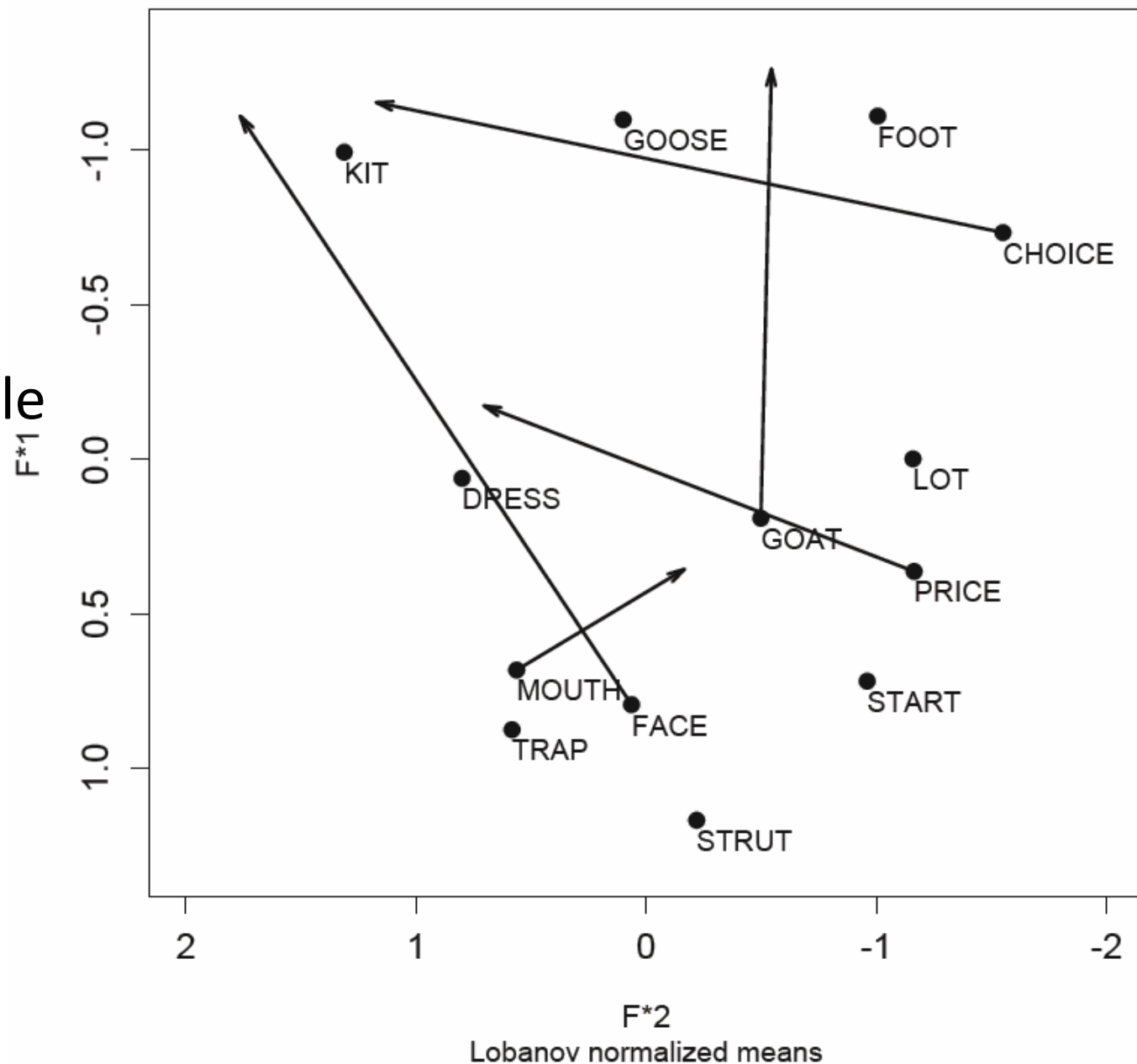
(mesolectal speaker; courtesy of Peter Patrick; recorded in 1989)



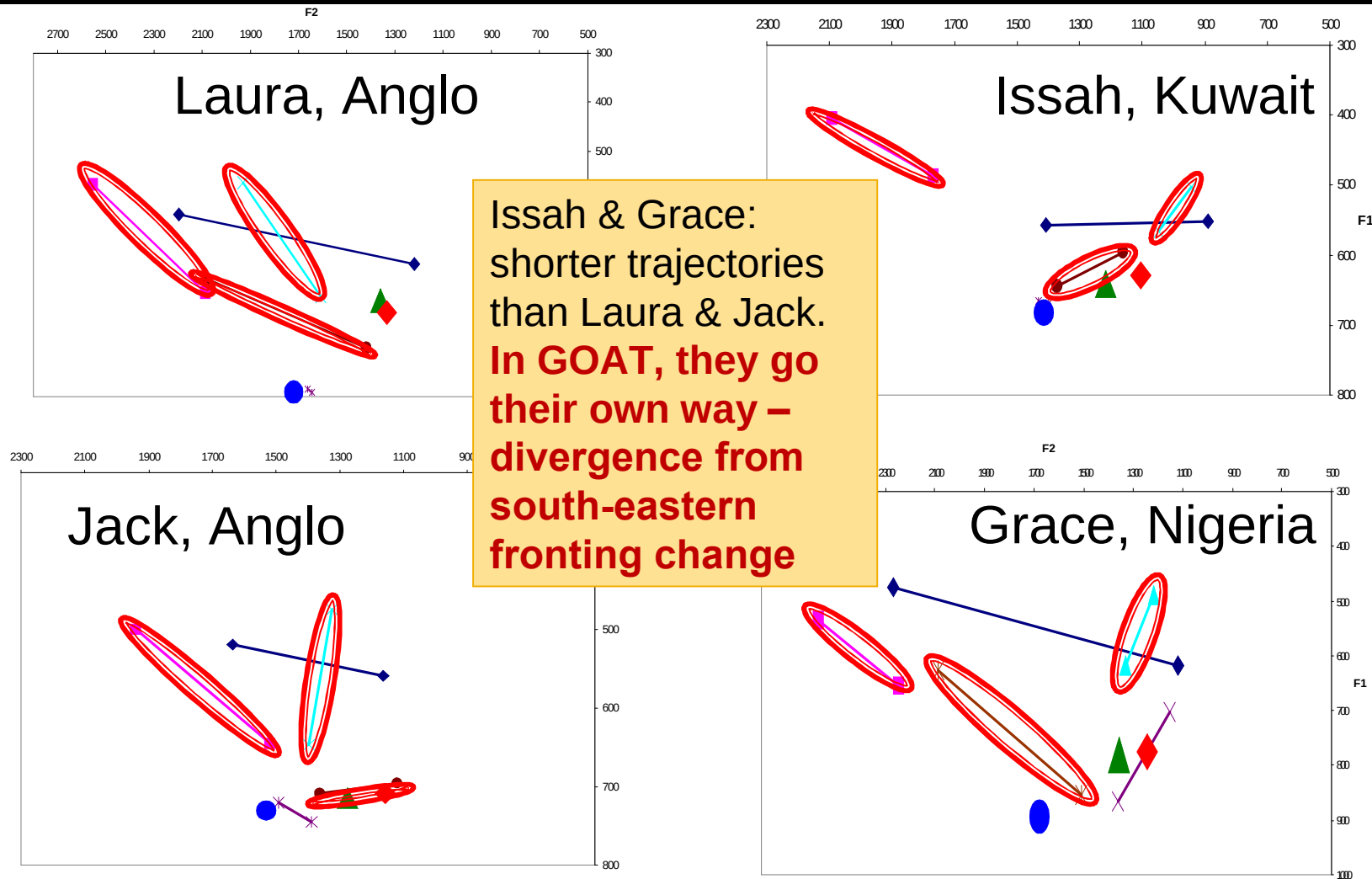
(Thomas 2001)

NOTE: He shows a typical Jamaican vowel configuration, with ingliding /e/ and /o/. His stressed syllabic /r/ is usually *r*-ful; otherwise he is mostly *r*-less. (conversation; NCSU)

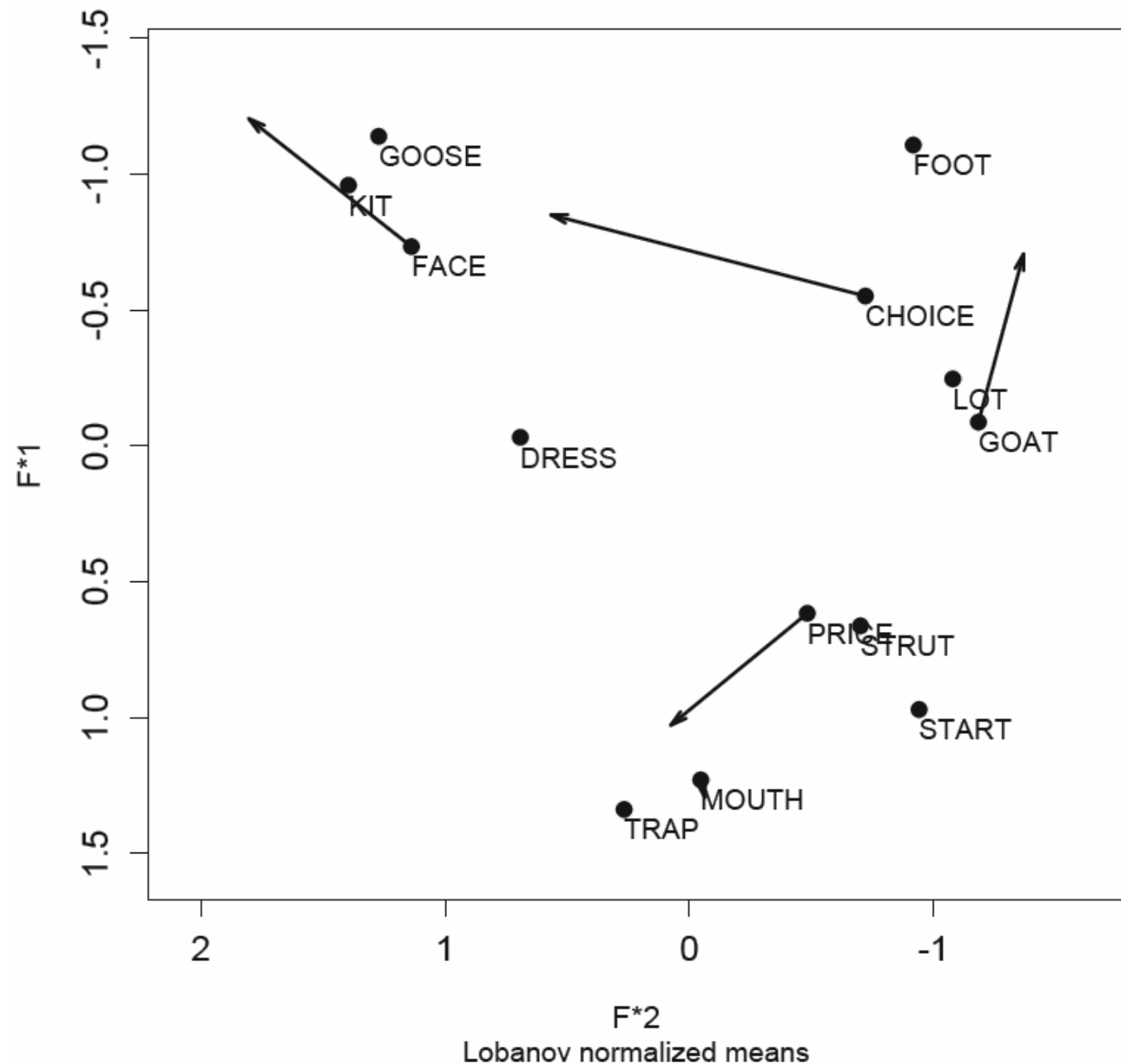
Diphthong
system of
elderly male
speaker
from
Hackney
born 1918



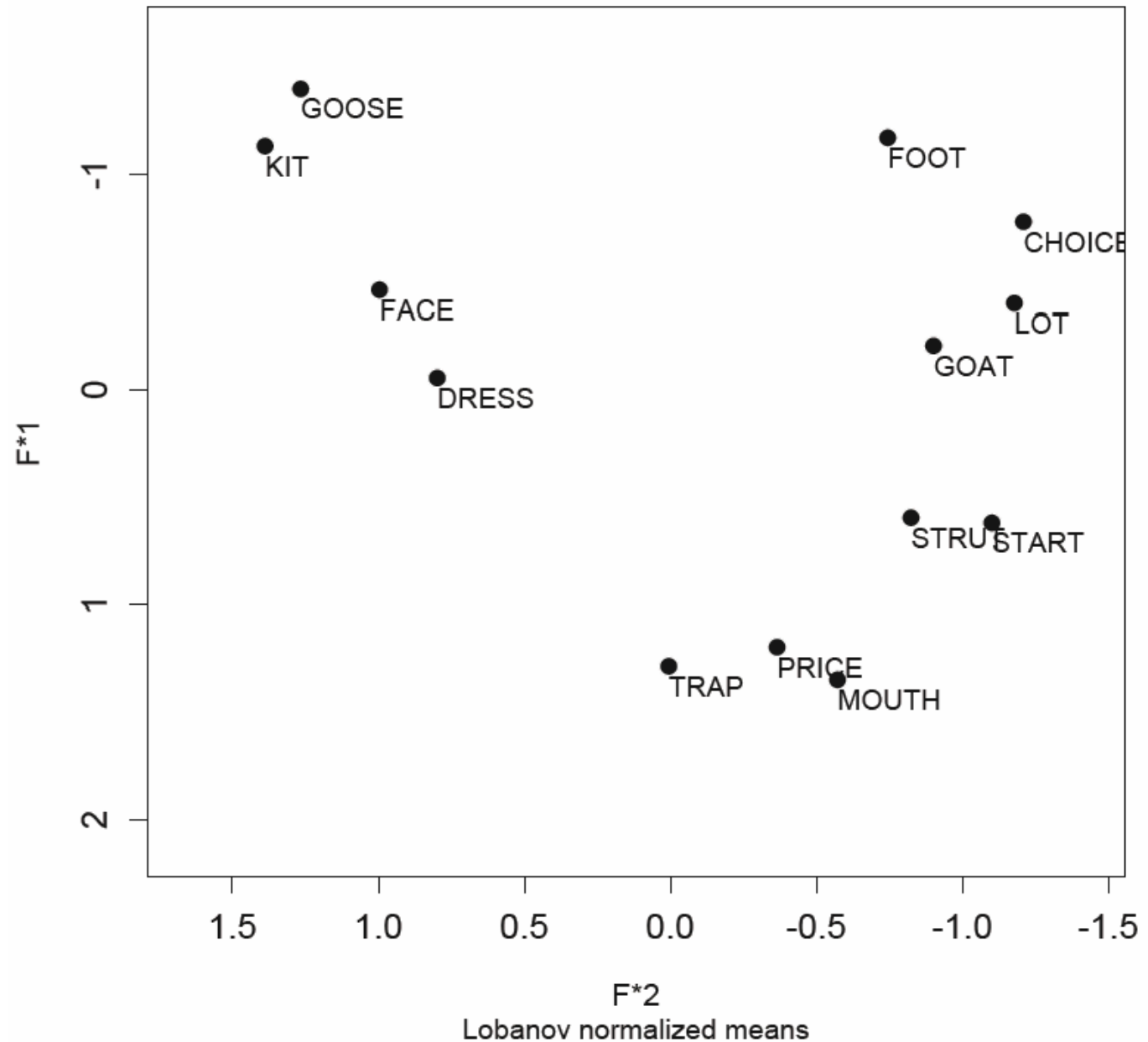
Young Hackney speakers, aged 17



Diphthong
system of
young male
from
Hackney,
Afro-
Caribbean
origin, born
1989



Adolescent speakers
(aged 16–19) of Afro-Caribbean origin, born c 1989.
(For diphthongs, only onsets are shown.)





Linguistic Innovators: the English of Adolescents in London (2004–7)

Multicultural London English:
the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a
new variety (2007–10)

Investigators:

Paul Kerswill (Lancaster University)

Jenny Cheshire (Queen Mary, University
of London)

Research Associates:

Sue Fox, Arfaan Khan (Queen Mary,
University of London)

Eivind Torgersen (Lancaster University)



From Patois to Multicultural London English: The transformation of Caribbean repertoires 1970–2010

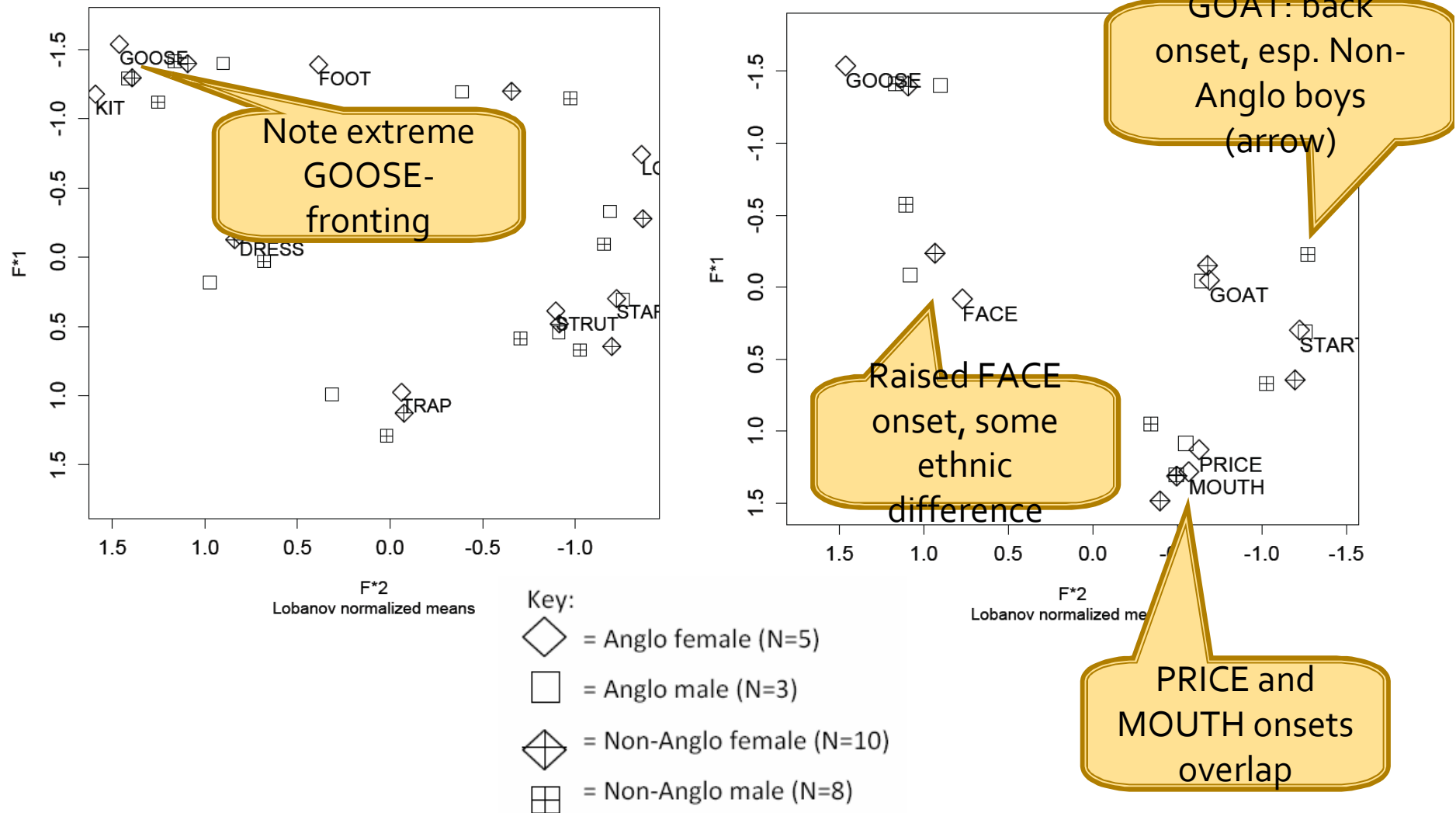
- Paul Kerswill and Mark Sebba, 2011
- Funded by Lancaster University



Children and adolescents in the inner city: language contact and group second-language acquisition

- **Group second language acquisition** (Winford (2003) or **shift-induced interference** (Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Thomason 2001), where minority groups form part of a larger host community and acquire the target language through unguided second language acquisition in friendship groups
- Catalyst for change
- Native speaking descendants of original population take up changes too

The target variety? – Multicultural London English



London inner city vowels: Multicultural London English project adolescent speakers (aged 16–19). (a) Short monophthongs plus GOOSE and START, (b) diphthongs plus GOOSE and START

Style shifting in London's multiethnolect

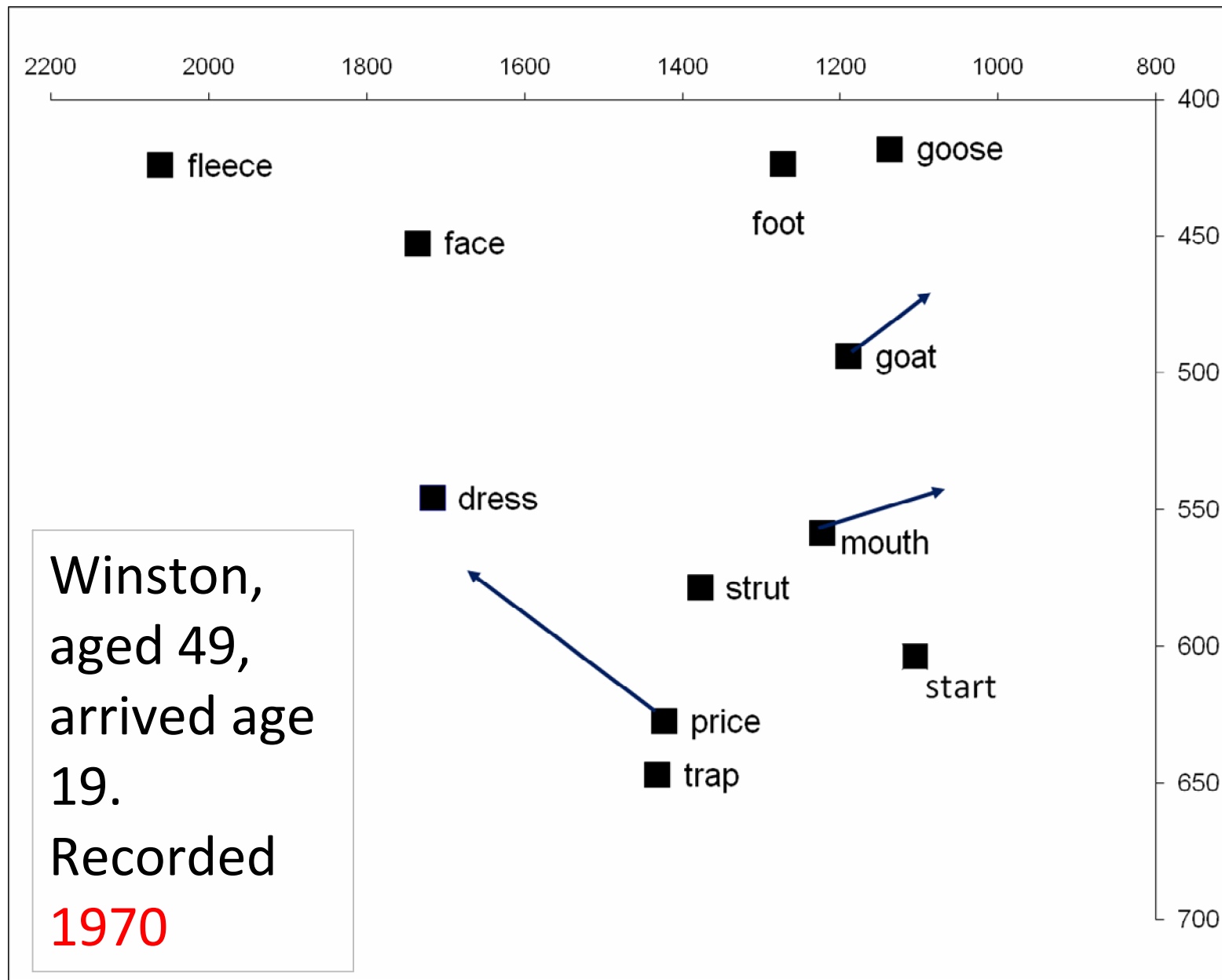
Courtney and Aimee: Afro-Caribbean girls aged 18

- ❖ Courtney's GOAT vowel at the beginning of the interview
- ▶ Sue: alright so . so yeah er tell me a little bit about what you're doing at college then ..
- ▶ Courtney: we're **both** [əʊ̩] studying forensic science we're in the same class erm . that's it really . come in . **go** [əʊ̩] to our lessons
- ▶ Aimee: and then **go** [ɔ̩] **home** [ɔ̩]
- ▶ Courtney: use the library then **go** [əʊ̩] **home** [əʊ̩] .

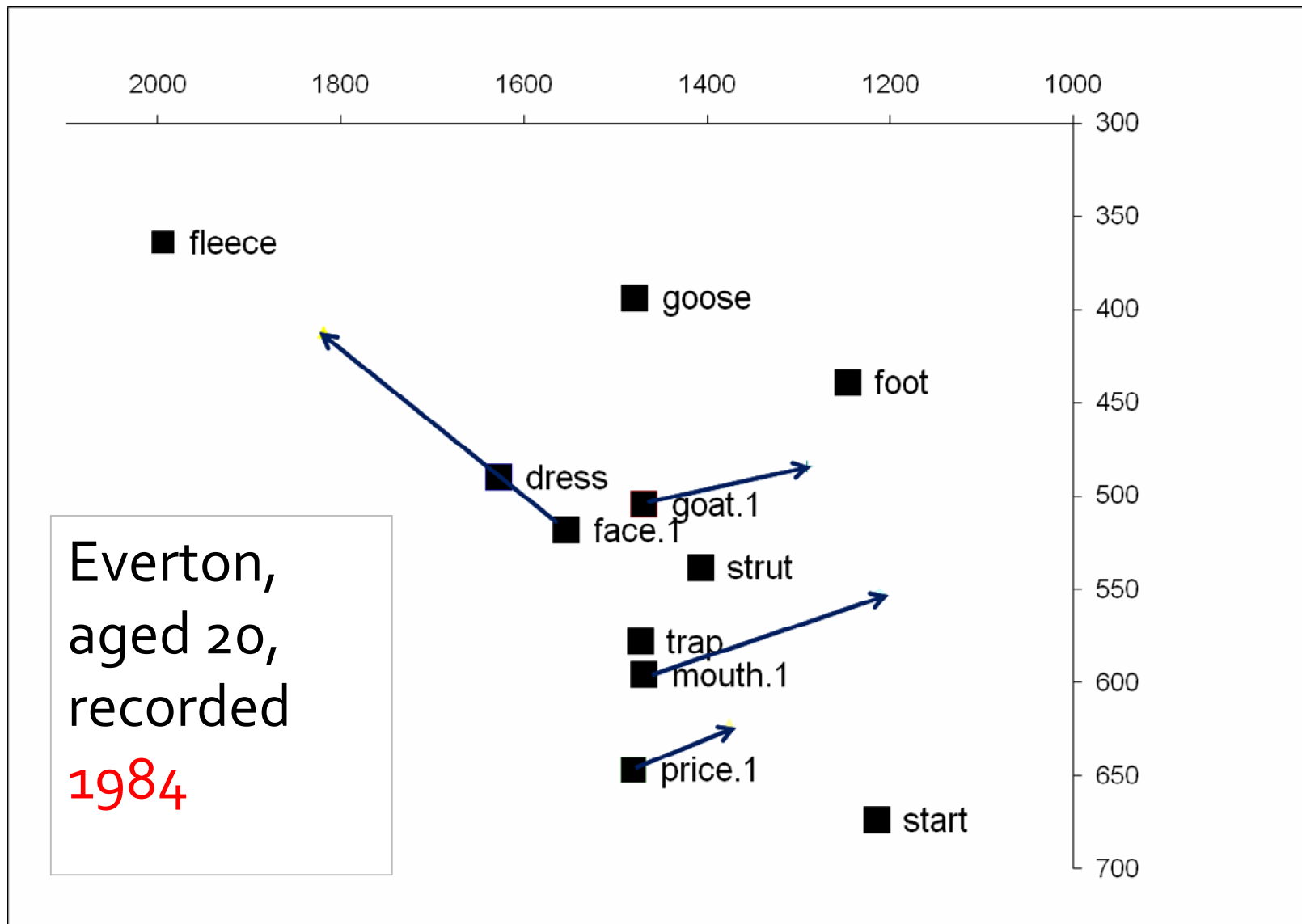
❖ Courtney's GOAT vowel in banter style

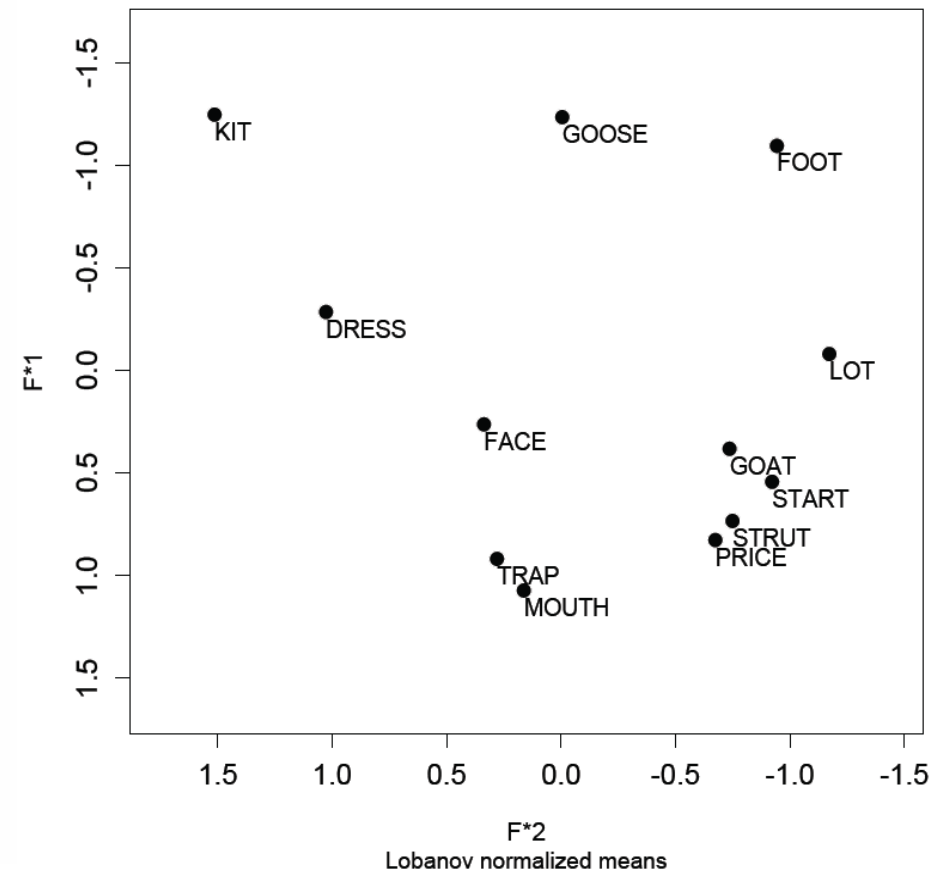
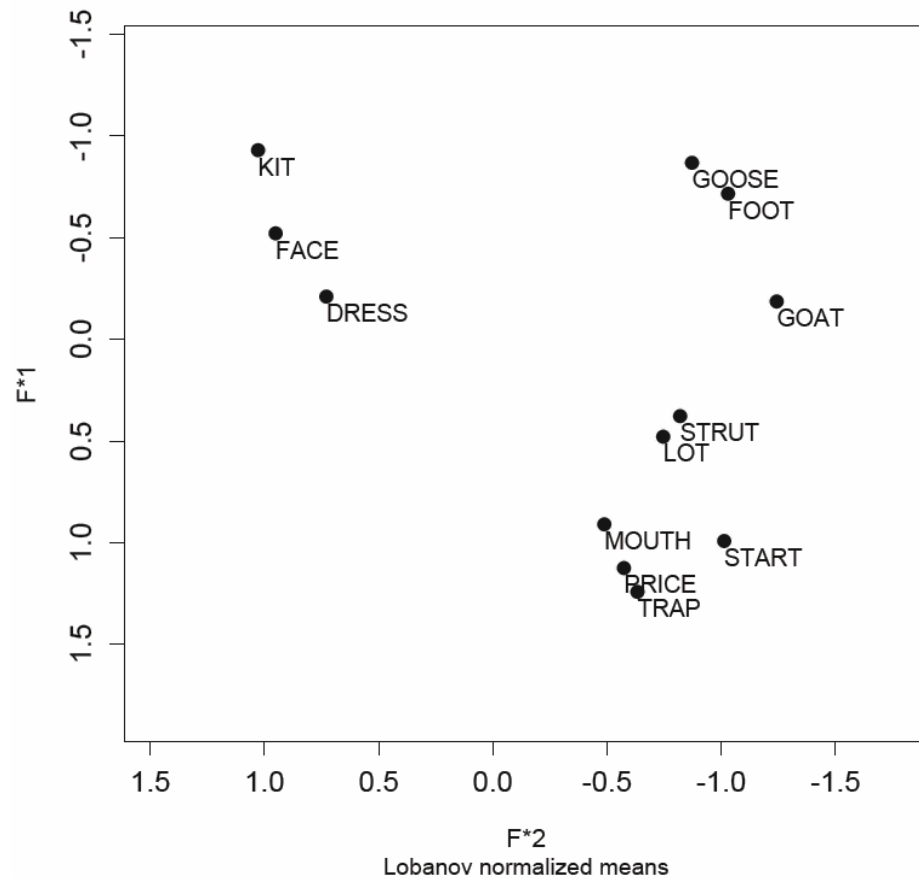
- Aimee: I'd be more allowed to bring home a woman than a [inaudible]
 - Dexter: yeah .
 - Courtney: I **don't** [ɔ̃] **know** [ɔ̃ʊ] **about** . **no** [ɔ̃].
- Multicultural London English is clearly a style, used for in-group communication











Composite vowel systems of 11 adolescent London Jamaicans recorded in 1984. 'Patois' style (left), interview with white fieldworker (right). (For diphthongs, only onsets are shown.)

Conclusions – 1st and 2nd generations

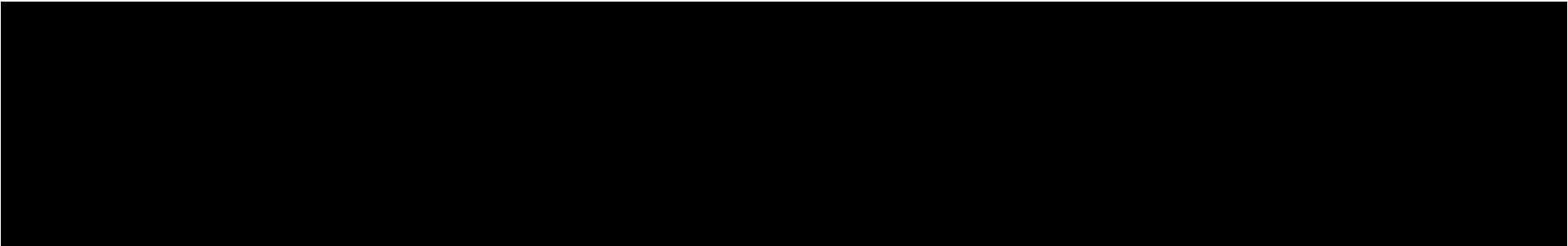
- 1st generation (immigrants, 1960s)
 - Different island creoles + Caribbean English + speech accommodated to London English
- 2nd generation (1980s)
 - Expanded repertoire with London Jamaican and Cockney (London vernacular)
 - Code-switching

Conclusions – 3rd generation

- 3rd generation (2000s)
 - Multicultural London English
 - Based on a feature pool
 - To a large extent shared across ethnicities
 - Some Caribbean components, but many of these could also be from elsewhere
 - But Caribbeans remain somewhat distinct
 - More extreme vowel qualities
 - Heavier use of Caribbean-origin slang than Anglo and other ethnic groups

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