# Levelling in a northern English variety: the case of FACE and GOAT in Greater Manchester

## Hugo Chatellier

HAL Id: hal-04224985
https://hal.parisnanterre.fr/hal-04224985v1

Submitted on 2 Oct 2023

# Levelling in a northern English variety: the case of FACE and GOAT in Greater Manchester

Hugo Chatellier

This chapter offers a description of the main phonological and phonetic features of the variety of English spoken in Manchester, England, on the basis of recent oral data from the PAC-LVTI project. Its starting point is a brief account of levelling in the north of England, a phenomenon that has attracted the attention of many sociolinguists recently. It has been argued that a supralocal northern variety is in expansion in the north of England, and Manchester, as a major urban centre of the north of England, is a prime candidate to test the diffusion of some of the supralocal variants. We then provide a synthetic description of Mancunian English according to previous studies, before presenting our own work, based on a corpus of 31 informants. Our results suggest that Mancunian English is not levelling towards a supralocal northern variety as far as FACE and GOAT are concerned, though other vowels appear to be subject to a more global case of levelling.

## I. Levelling in the north of England

Over the course of the twentieth century, linguists interested in the issues of variation and change have observed a progressive loss of localized features in England, leading to a greater homogeneity of different varieties at a regional, and sometimes national, level. One classic example of such homogeneity is the disappearance of Traditional Dialects, usually associated with rural areas. They have been progressively replaced by a smaller number of "Modern Dialects", which are associated with much bigger areas (see Trudgill 2001:11 *inter alia*). This phenomenon has been called *regional dialect levelling* (Kerswill 2003:223) and is defined as follows: "a process whereby differences between regional varieties are reduced, features which make varieties distinctive disappear, and new features emerge and are adopted by speakers over a wide geographical area" (Williams & Kerswill 1999:149). It is linked to two mechanisms of linguistic change. The first is the *geographical diffusion* of variants, often from a dominant centre to other areas. The second mechanism is called, somewhat awkwardly as Kerswill points out, *levelling*. It is defined as "the reduction or attrition of marked variants" (Trudgill 1986:98), and related to the phenomenon of

accommodation: speakers who wish to communicate have been shown to tone down some of their own linguistic features and adopt some of their interlocutors'. These acts of *short-term accommodation* (speakers usually revert to their typical features after the conversation) can lead, over a long period of time, to *long-term accommodation* and levelling of some variants: "If a speaker accommodates frequently enough to a particular accent or dialect, I would go on to argue, then the accommodation may in time become permanent, particularly if attitudinal factors are favourable" (Trudgill 1986:39). But why would regional dialect levelling be particularly prevalent now? Britain (2010:197-199) puts forward a number of factors which have contributed to an increasing mobility of speakers in England, which has in turn led to more contact between speakers of different varieties:

- an increase in urbanization, with a vast majority of the population living in urban areas

- an increase in the number of people who go to university

- an increase in mobility (for work or leisure-related reasons for example)

- different family ties, with an increasing number of people living in single-person households

Now, though regional dialect levelling should lead to a convergence of all varieties in a given area, studies have shown that the situation is not quite as straightforward. Trudgill agrees that modern varieties are much closer to one another, at least from a morphological, syntactic and lexical point of view. However, it seems that these new varieties are currently diverging from a phonological point of view:

> The dialects and accents associated with these [Modern Dialect] areas are much less different from one another, and much less different from RP and Standard English, than the Traditional Dialects were. However, and this is crucial, in terms of phonology they are for the most part currently diverging, not converging (Trudgill 2001:12).

One specific case of divergence from the standard that has attracted attention is the diffusion of supralocal variants for the vowels of FACE and GOAT (Wells 1982) in the north of England. While Standard Southern British English (SSBE) speakers have diphthongs in these lexical sets (respectively /eɪ/ and /əʊ/), traditional dialects in the north of England (with the exception of the far north and Merseyside) have /eː/ and /oː/ (Beal 2008:133). However, research on the realizations of FACE and GOAT in Tyneside (whose local variety does not traditionally have monophthongs for these lexical sets) has yielded interesting results (Watt 1998; 2002). Watt analyses the realizations of FACE and GOAT by 32 speakers. For each lexical set, three main realizations are used: supralocal variants, found over a large area in the north of England ([eː] for FACE and [oː] for GOAT); local variants, which are centring diphthongs (respectively [ɪə]and [ʊə]); and national variants, similar to the diphthongs found in the south of England ([eɪ] and [əʊ]). Watt's results show that the most common variants are the supralocal variants [eː] and [oː], and that local variants are less frequently used by younger speakers (Watt 2002:56). This indicates that the Tyneside variety of English is neither levelling towards the standard nor becoming more distinctive than surrounding varieties. An explanation put forward by Watt is that younger speakers consider local variants to be old-fashioned, and consequently disfavour them. At the same time, they wish

to retain a northern identity, and adopting supralocal variants allows them to signal an attachment to the local community while sounding "modern".

Finally, one last argument supporting the claim that new dialect areas cover larger zones than those of traditional dialects comes from perceptual dialectology. As Beal reminds us (2010:217), the 1970s saw huge administrative changes take place in England. The *Local Government Act 1972* modified the boundaries of several counties, and established metropolitan counties. These were usually created from several existing counties, and centred around large urban areas (for example Greater Manchester). This administrative reform was not, however, without effects on dialects. People who were born in the same place, only a few years apart, could actually be born in different counties. Beal claims that one consequence of this reform was a shift in regional identities (2010:221-222). For instance, research on working-class speakers in Middlesbrough (Llamas 2007:593-596) has shown that while many older speakers identify with Yorkshire, this is not the case for younger speakers who define their accent as "Middlesbrough". More generally, studies in perceptual dialectology (Montgomery 2006 & 2012) have suggested that counties no longer serve as "markers of linguistic identity", and have been replaced by major conurbations (Beal 2010:220-221). The case of Manchester is particularly interesting, as Montgomery's work has revealed that Greater Manchester is now an emerging dialect area, while it was rarely recognized as a dialect area before (Montgomery 2012:659-661).

# II. Manchester

Despite its importance as an urban centre in contemporary England (there were 2.7 billion inhabitants in Greater Manchester in 2011, with more than 500,000 people in the city of Manchester alone[1]), the Mancunian variety (or "Manc") has received relatively little attention compared to other varieties in the north of England (for example Newcastle), although a resurgence in studies focusing on Manchester has been observed recently (notably Baranowski & Turton 2015). As we mentioned earlier (Montgomery 2006:214), until very recently Manchester was seldom recognized as a variety of its own. According to Montgomery, it is probably the media coverage that Manchester has received in the past few decades that has led to acknowledging the existence of a dialectal area centred around the city. The importance of Manchester's musical scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to an increasing presence of the city in the media, and so did its bid to host the 2002 Commonwealth Games and the relocation of part of the BBC to Salford (Montgomery 2006:215, 2012:659). A case could also be made for the importance of sports in accounting for Manchester's presence in the media: the end of the 1980s marks the beginning of the Alex Ferguson era at Manchester United, which saw the club become one of England's most successful football clubs, and one of the richest on earth.

While few studies focused solely on the phonology and phonetics of Manchester, a number of remarks concerning the area can be found in the literature on northern accents of British English.

---

1    Office for National Statistics 2012

Located in what Wells calls the "middle north" (1982:349-350), and placed in the "Northwest Midlands" by Trudgill (1999:66-67), the Mancunian variety is consistently described as a northern variety, though some of its features are also said to be more localized. As we present our own results based on the PAC-LVTI corpus in IV. Results, we shall only make reference to our work here (Chatellier 2016) for variants that we will not discuss in detail later on.

## II.1 Vocalic system

The absence of the southern /ʊ/ - /ʌ/ opposition, due to a phonemic split of Middle English /u/ during the seventeenth century (Beal 2008:131) is a feature of most accents in the north of England, and Manc is no exception (Baranowski & Turton 2015:295), even though Wells (1982:351-352) points out that there is a strong correlation between social class and absence of an opposition between FOOT and STRUT: "broad working-class speakers certainly do not have any control of a FOOT vs. STRUT opposition, which is associated with 'good' speech only." This means that words such as *put* and *putt*, while they form a minimal pair in the south, are pronounced the same in northern varieties of English.

The difference in the lexical distribution of the vowel of TRAP (RP /æ/ or General British /a/, Cruttenden 2014:119-121), the other major feature of northern accents, is also typical of Manchester. Most words belonging to BATH have the short vowel of TRAP instead of the long vowel generally found in southern accents (usually transcribed /ɑː/ and also a southern innovation). However, there is still a long "a-like" vowel in PALM and START. It is worth noting that compared to the absence of the FOOT-STRUT split, the use of a "short a" in most BATH words does not seem to suffer from the same sociolinguistic stigma:

> Retention of a short vowel in BATH words extends much further up the social scale than does the retention of unsplit /ʊ/… There are many educated northerners who would not be caught dead doing something so vulgar as to pronounce STRUT words with [ʊ], but who would feel it to be a denial of their identity as northerners to say BATH words with anything other than short [a] (Wells 1982:354).

If Manchester English seems to conform with the majority of northern varieties so far, the case of FACE and GOAT is less clear. As we have seen in I. LEVELLING IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND, both sets are frequently realized with a monophthong in the north of England. After the completion of the Long Mid Mergers, the subsequent diphthongization process that gave the vowels of Standard Modern English only took place partially in the middle north (Wells 1982:357). However, while they are aware of the existence of monophthongs in several varieties to the north of the city, Baranowski and Turton (2015:294) consider that the supralocal variants are not found in the accent of Manchester per se, which they define as the variety found in:

> the area within the M60 ringroad, including parts of Wythenshawe and Stockport immediately south of the M60. The motorway represents a geographical boundary and as such is useful for distinguishing between Manchester as a uniform dialect area and the surrounding dialect regions, particularly those to the north.

Wells mentions the presence of open realizations, close to [ɒː], for FORCE and NORTH in the middle north, which he ascribes to the presence of monophthongs (whose quality is generally [oː]) in GOAT. On the other hand, Baranowski and Turton's work shows that there is a contrast between NORTH and FORCE (whose vowel is closer and backer) among working-class speakers in Manchester. Baranowski and Turton claim that the opposition between the two vowels might be stronger in north Manchester, and we shall return to this issue when we discuss our own data (see IV. RESULTS).

Baranowski and Turton (2015:295) also indicate that the vowel of GOOSE is now fronted in Manchester English: "[the nucleus of GOOSE] is now in high front position for all social groups in the community". This is a change shared with many other accents of English (*inter alia* Ferragne & Pellegrino 2010, Fridland 2008 and Haddican et al. 2013), but according to Baranowski and Turton, the fronting of GOOSE applies across all phonological environments in Manc, even after non-coronal onsets or before /l/ (contrary to other northern dialects of English).

While NURSE and SQUARE are variably merged in Lancashire (which is located directly to the north of Greater Manchester), Beal (2008:135) along with Baranowski and Turton (2015:296) suggest that this is not the case in the city of Manchester itself, where there does not seem to be a phonemic merger.

The unstressed vowels of lettER and happY are generally considered to be backer and more open in comparison with Standard Southern British English. Though Beal mentions the presence of a realization similar to [ɒ] for lettER in Manchester English (2008:136), Baranowski and Turton consider that this variant is an "exaggeration" (2015:296), and they claim that the main difference in realization relies on the F2 dimension: the Mancunian variants are often backer, but they are rarely much lower than their SSBE counterparts. The vowel of happY does show difference on both dimensions: Baranowski and Turton associate it to "the vowel in DRESS" ([ɛ]), although they seem to suggest that these realizations are limited to utterance-final positions. Our own research shows that this seems to be the case: even for speakers who exhibit an [ɛ]-like vowels for happY in utterance-final position, realizations in other positions are much closer and fronter, not unlike the variants of SSBE (Chatellier 2016:279).

## II.2 Consonantal system

Traditionally, Lancashire accents are thought to be rhotic, but Wells stresses that most urban Lancashire varieties, and Manchester English, are non-rhotic nowadays: /r/ is not realized in coda position (see also Beal 2008:139). Wells does mention, however, a patch of residual rhoticity in the north of Greater Manchester, near Accrington and Rochdale (1982:367-368).

As most urban accents in England, Manchester English is subject to the phenomenon known as H-dropping[2]. Baranowski and Turton show that H-dropping is stable in Manc (age is not a significant variable), with working-class male speakers having the highest rate of H-dropping (2015:298-302).

---

2    The name *H-dropping* implies that /h/ is present in the phonemic system but not realized. However, it is also possible, for speakers who consistently exhibit "H-less" pronunciations, to consider that they lack a /h/ phoneme in their inventory.

Two other consonantal features that are widely attested in many other varieties of English are also found in Manchester English, namely TH-fronting and T-glottalling. Baranowski and Turton's work on the first phenomenon, the realization[3] of /θ/ and /ð/ as respectively [f] and [v], reveals that this is a change led by younger speakers, as age is the strongest predictor as in other urban English varieties. There is also evidence that supports the claim that TH-fronting is a male-led change (2015:302-306). As for T-glottalling, the authors note that glottal replacement ([ʔ] for /t/) is more frequent than pre-glottalized variants ([ʔt] for /t/), which are often found in the southern varieties. Glottalling in final position (e.g. in *cat*), for which age is a significant predictor, has now spread to all social groups, which leads Baranowski and Turton to conclude that this is a change which is now near completion (2015:307-308). On the other hand, T-glottalling in intervocalic position is not quite as widespread yet. Age is still a significant predictor, but contrary to glottalling in final position, so are gender and social class. This suggests that T-glottalling in intervocalic position is a more recent change, led by males and working-class speakers (2015:308). Baranowski and Turton claim that T-glottalling started in Manchester as a phonological process affecting only codas, before spreading to other "non-stressed (t)s" (2015:310).

One characteristic that Manchester English shares with the majority of the linguistic north, is the absence of a clear /l/ vs. dark /l/ allophony: /l/ is realized as [ɫ] in all positions (Wells 1982:370-371, Cruttenden 2014:221, Baranowski & Turton 2015:297), whereas SSBE speakers use a clear allophone [l] before vowels and /j/, and the dark allophone [ɫ] in all other positions (Cruttenden 2014:217-221).

Finally, there are also more localized consonantal characteristics in Manchester English. One example is the non-coalescence of <ng>, attested in the West of England (Trudgill 1999:59). Indeed, Manc retains /ŋg/ in environments where most other English accents have /ŋ/, as in *ring* and *singer* (Wells 1982:365-366, Baranowski & Turton 2015:296-297). Baranowski and Turton note however that the (ing) variable (in the word *jumping* for instance) is usually pronounced [ɪn], except in the most formal speech styles.

## III. PAC-LVTI

The LVTI[4] project follows in the footsteps of the PAC[5] programme in that it aims at recording corpora of native speakers of contemporary English and shares the same goals as the original programme (Durand & Przewozny 2015:63, Chatellier 2016:168-191). A common protocol of Labovian inspiration is applied to all locations under study, allowing us to obtain comparable oral data with several degrees of formality, thanks to the following tasks:

---

3  One could also argue that /θ/ and /ð/ are gradually merging with /f/ and /v/ in certain positions, but Wells is adamant that this is only a neutralization at the phonetic level: according to him, there are no examples of hypercorrection such as *[leθt] for *left*, which supports the existence of an opposition at the phonological level (1982:328-329).
4  LVTI stands for "Langue, Ville, Travail, Identité" (French for "Language, Urban life, Work, Identity).
5  "Phonologie de l'anglais contemporain" (Phonology of Contemporary English).

- the reading of two wordlists

- the reading of a text

- a semi-guided interview between the informant and the fieldworker, based on a sociolinguistic questionnaire

- an informal conversation, ideally between two informants and without the fieldworker.

However, while LVTI shares a common protocol with PAC, a new set of questions, integrated into the formal interview, has been devised in order to investigate more closely the dynamics of urban varieties of English. Moreover, whereas traditional PAC studies include from 10 to 20 speakers, the PAC-LVTI protocol is planned to be applied to larger groups of speakers (60 informants per location on average).

Greater Manchester is the first location investigated by PAC-LVTI. The first recordings took place in 2012, and after 4 fieldwork trips between 2012 and 2015, the PAC-LVTI Manchester corpus now counts 67 speakers, which makes it the largest corpus within the PAC programme database.

## III.1 Methodology

Among the 67 speakers from the PAC-LVTI corpus, 31 (15 male and 16 female speakers aged 22 to 65 years old) were selected for a phonetic-acoustic analysis of the vocalic system of Manchester English (see Chatellier 2016). Informants were selected in order to constitute a representative sample of the different socio-economic groups within our corpus (unfortunately this was not always possible) and were divided into three groups G1, G2 and G3, which we can respectively equate with working-class (WC), upper working-class/lower middle-class (UWC/LMC), and middle-class (MC). Note that not all of our speakers come from within the M60, and some of our speakers originate from the area to the north of Manchester, which will be of interest when we discuss our results on FACE and GOAT.

The reading tasks were fully transcribed in Standard Orthographic Transcription under Praat, as well as, for each speaker, 5 to 10 minutes of both the semi-guided interview and the informal conversation.

In order to investigate the presence of monophthongal variants of FACE and GOAT in Mancunian speech, a formant analysis of the realizations of each speaker was conducted. So as to avoid phonetic environments whose influence on the vocalic signal is too important, the following contexts were excluded:

- following /l, r, n, m, ŋ/

- preceding /w, j, t, d/

- preceding obstruent + liquid consonant cluster (e.g. /bl/)

- vowels adjacent to another vowel (as in the sequence *the art*)

Vowels were manually segmented and the values of F1 and F2 were automatically measured at 1/3 and 2/3 of the duration of the vowel. Values were then manually checked and discarded when there was a clear mismatch between the formant measured and the auditory evaluation of the token. Finally, our results were normalized using the Lobanov procedure (Lobanov 1971). This left us with a total of 15556 tokens (710 FACE tokens and 865 GOAT tokens) on which we based our analysis. The statistical significance of our results was also tested.

# IV. Results

We shall provide here a summary of the main findings of our study, focusing mainly on the realizations of our WC and MC speakers, and what they involve at a phonological level, before discussing FACE and GOAT in detail in IV.5 FACE & GOAT. Where relevant, we shall also underline the effect of sociolinguistic factors such as age, socio-economic group or gender on our results.

Figure 1 shows the mean values of F1 and F2 for each standard lexical set (with the exception of comma, letter and happy). It is hard to decide whether FOOT and STRUT are pronounced with the same vowel on the basis of Figure 1 alone. Previous studies on the subject have indicated that the presence of a FOOT-STRUT split is strongly correlated to social class, and so, average realizations for all speakers cannot really shed light on the absence of an underlying opposition for WC speakers. In the same way, the vowels of TRAP and BATH seem quite similar, but this tells us nothing of their duration.

Nonetheless, other vocalic features are already noticeable. There seems to be a contrast between FORCE and NORTH, with the former being a closer and backer vowel. The vowel of GOOSE is very fronted: it has now become a front vowel. Finally, the way FACE and GOAT are represented indicates that they are diphthongs in Manchester English. We shall get back to this and put forward an explanation for this situation (see IV.5 FACE & GOAT), but wish to focus on the realizations of the different socio-economic groups for the moment.

## IV.1 FOOT & STRUT

A first look at the realizations of FOOT and STRUT reveals that their F1 and F2 values are similar among WC speakers (see Figure 2). On the other hand, there is a clear difference between these vowels for MC speakers (see Figure 3). These results are corroborated by a t-test (Baayen 2008:75-77): the formants of FOOT and STRUT are not significantly different for WC speakers (this is also the case for UWC/LMC speakers), while there is a significant difference for MC speakers for both formants (respectively $p=2.813.10^{-14}$ for F1 and $p=0.006378$ for F2[6]). We interpret these results as showing a lack of opposition between FOOT and STRUT for WC speakers, which is in accordance with previous studies. In other words, our data confirm that the presence of a FOOT-STRUT split is correlated with social class.

---

6    We considered a probability value of less than 0.05 to be statistically significant (Baayen 2008:68).
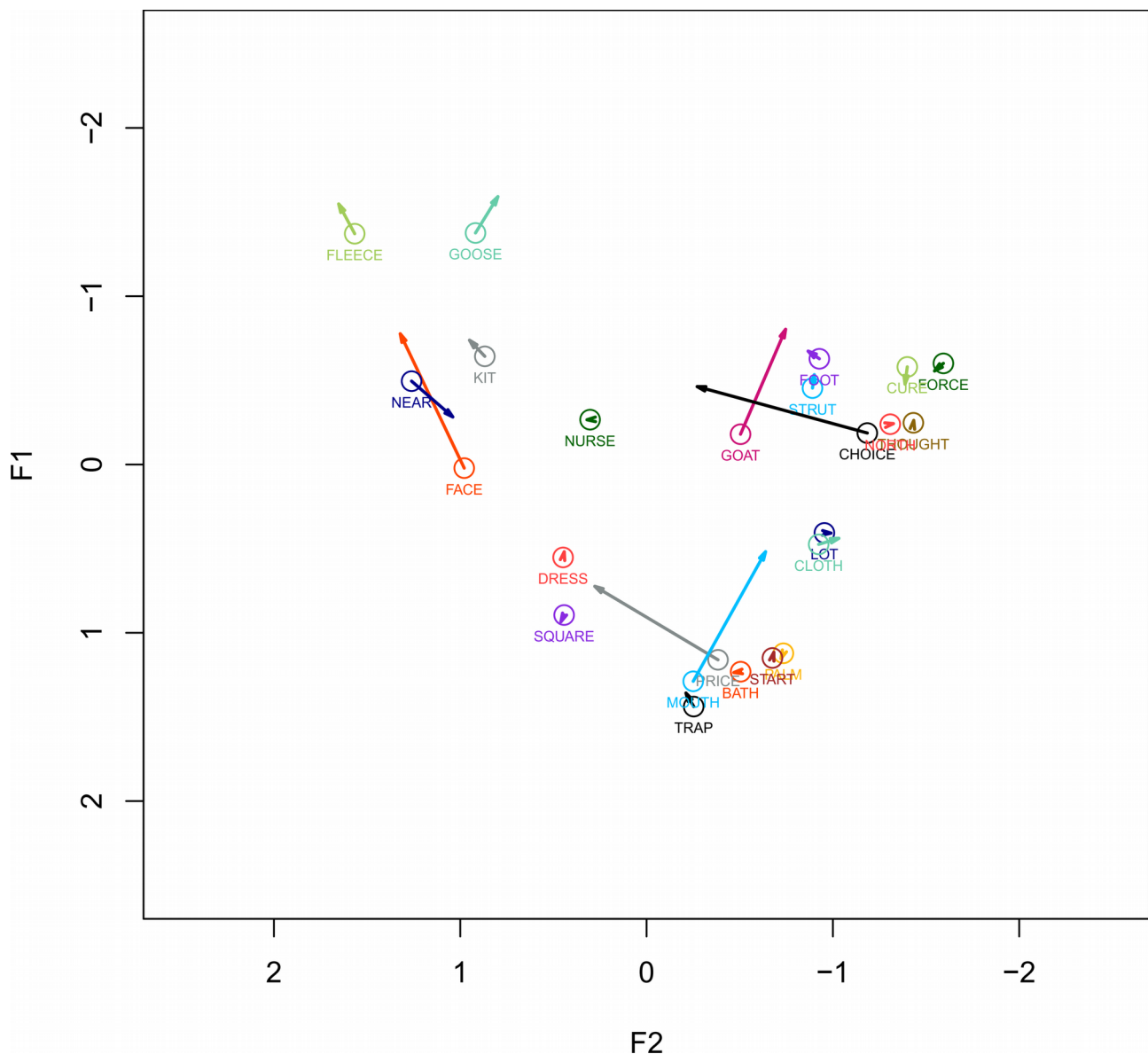
*Figure 1: Average F1 and F2 values for the standard lexical sets (all speakers)*

## IV.2 TRAP & BATH

MC speakers also show values for the vowel of BATH that suggest this vowel is backer than TRAP, though it is not located quite in the same area as START (or PALM, but the smaller number of tokens for this lexical set makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions). A closer examination of the reading tasks reveals that most MC speakers use the same short vowel in TRAP and BATH, with the exception of DS1, who clearly exhibits a vowel similar to that of START in BATH words. Besides, most WC speakers also use the short vowel of TRAP in BATH words. However, for these speakers, the opposition between TRAP/BATH and START relies solely on length, as both vowels have a similar quality. This is not the case for MC speakers, who usually display differences in quality as well as length between TRAP and START, even if they use a short vowel in BATH. This has interesting consequences for the phonological status of length in the vocalic system of Manchester English, though we shall not discuss them here (see Chatellier 2016:296-303). Again, our results are consistent with previous work on northern varieties: the fact that a short vowel for BATH is found in the speech of most MC speakers indicates that this feature does not seem to suffer from the same

negative evaluations as the absence of a FOOT-STRUT split (see II.1 VOCALIC SYSTEM). Many informants were aware of this aspect of northern English, and pointed it to us when justifying the description of their own speech as northern (for instance here is LN1's description of her own Manchester accent: "*I think it's northern in terms of the fact that I use flat As*").
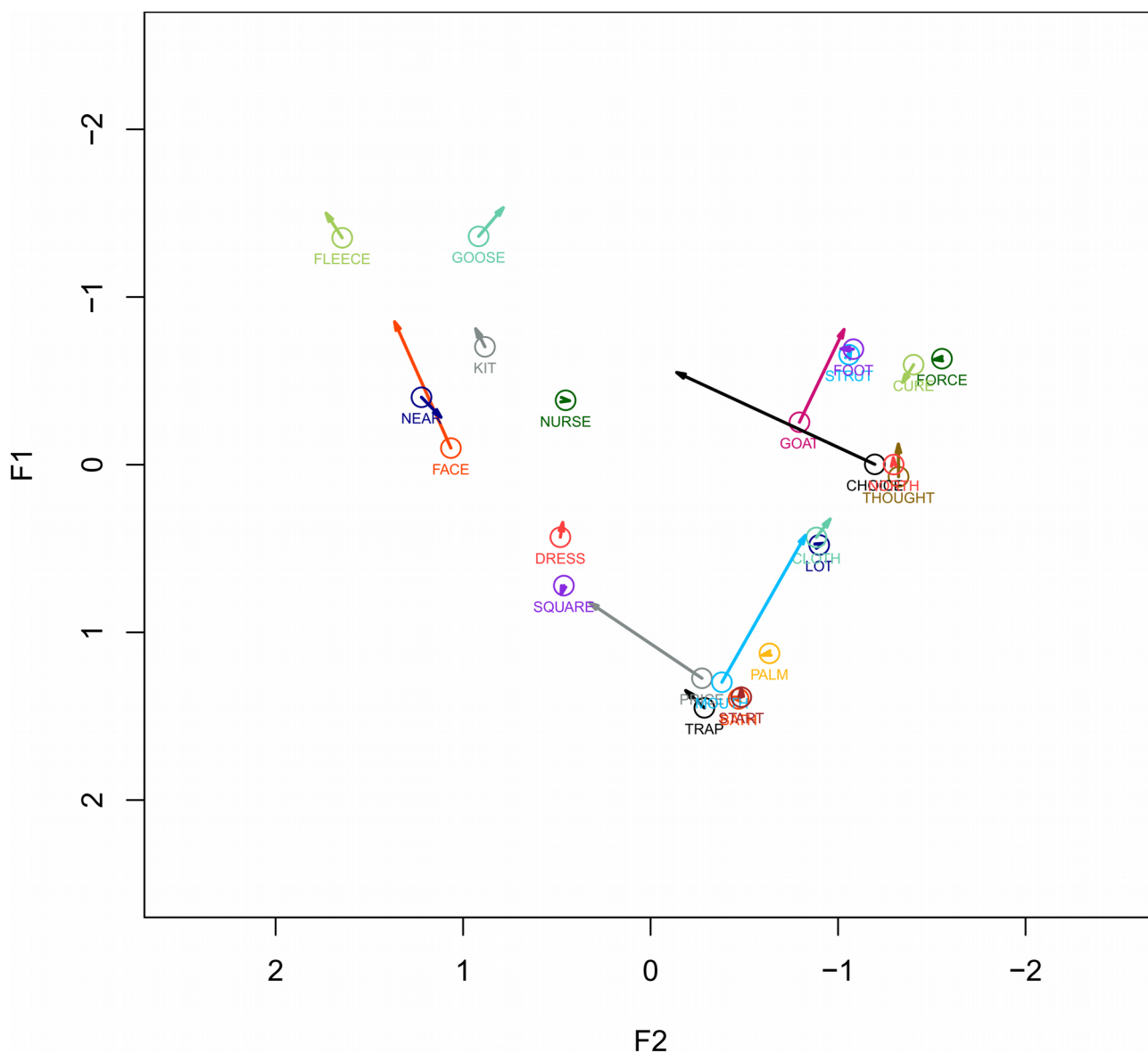


*Figure 2: Average F1 and F2 values for the standard lexical sets (WC speakers)*

## IV.3 FORCE & NORTH

From a phonetic point of view, the vowel of FORCE is often closer and backer than that of NORTH. This is corroborated by a t-test, which shows that F1 and F2 values for FORCE and NORTH are significantly different, for all groups of speakers. However, the inspection of the realizations of individual speakers reveals that many female speakers do not display this distinction, in particular among MC speakers. This implies that despite what our graphs suggest, a phonological opposition between FORCE and NORTH is not always present in the speech of Mancunians. Incidentally, 9 informants (8 belong to the WC or UWC/LMC) exhibit a particularly clear distinction between FORCE

and NORTH. Among these 9 informants, 6 originate from the north of Manchester (within the boundaries of the M60), which supports Baranowski and Turton's hypothesis that the contrast between the two vowels may be stronger in the north of the city.
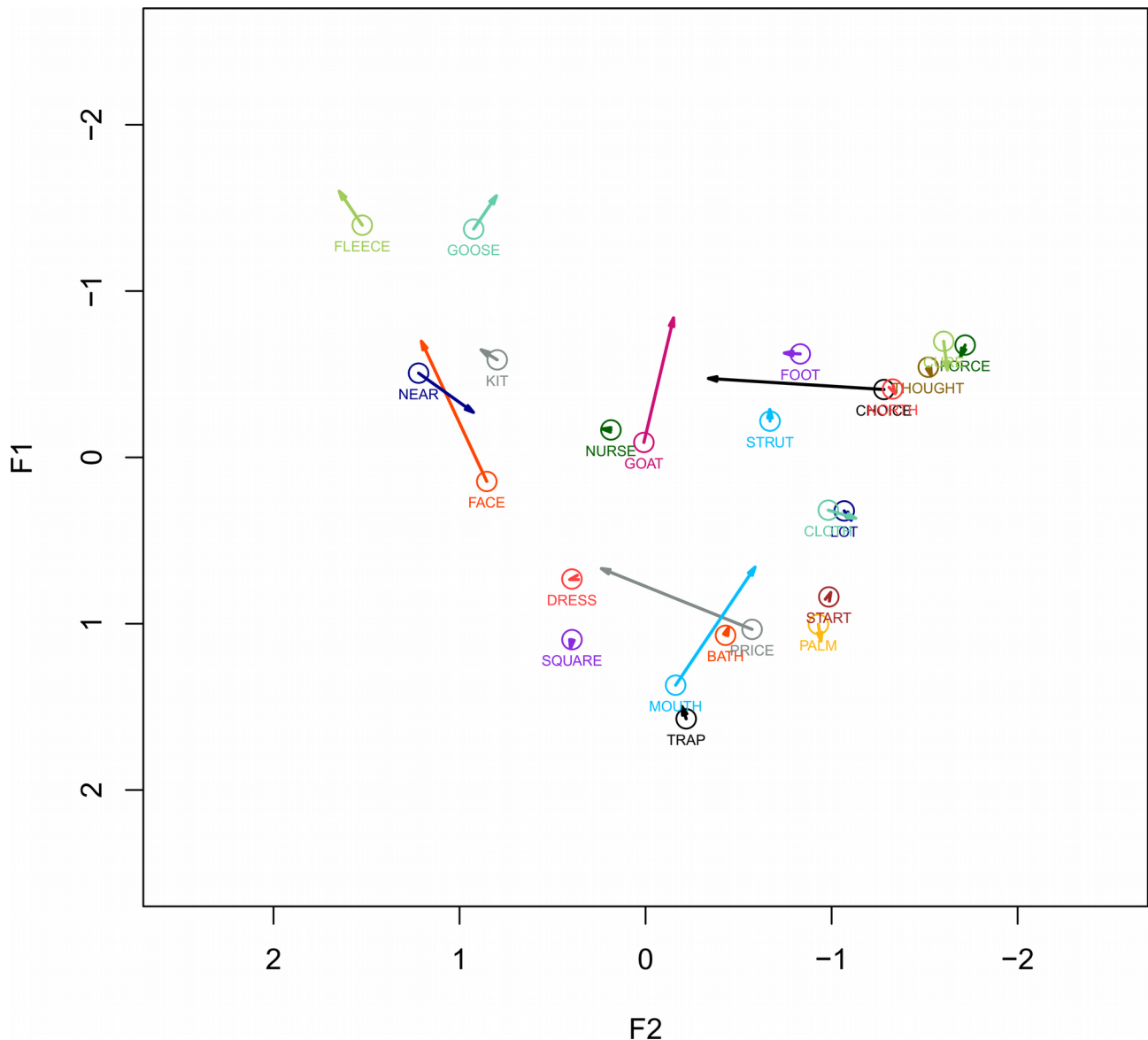


*Figure 3: Average F1 and F2 values for the standard lexical sets (MC speakers)*

## IV.4 GOOSE

As Figure 1 indicates, GOOSE is very fronted in our corpus. Though GOOSE-fronting is mentioned in the literature, the extent of this phenomenon warrants further investigation. We initially suspected that the phonetic environment of the GOOSE tokens might have been responsible for the high F2 values. This is for example the case of coronal and palatal consonants. However, we excluded initial /t, d, j/ before proceeding with the extraction of formant values (see III.1 METHODOLOGY). This leaves us with initial /k, g, tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/, which make up close to 60% of all GOOSE tokens (112 tokens). As is shown in Figure 4, these tokens are clearly fronted. What is unexpected however, is the fact that the tokens that do not start with one of the consonants mentioned above (i.e. /k, g, tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/), which make up 40% percent of all GOOSE tokens (77 tokens), are almost as fronted as the other tokens (see Figure 4). Once more, this supports Baranowski and Turton's claim that GOOSE is

fronted in all environments in Manchester English (unfortunately, we cannot investigate GOOSE-fronting before /l/ as such contexts were excluded). There does not seem to be much difference between the typical GOOSE realization of WC speakers and that of MC speakers. This is corroborated by an ANOVA, which reveals that social class is not a significant factor, contrary to gender and, above all, age: younger speakers exhibit significantly more fronting.

## IV.5 FACE & GOAT

The most common realization of FACE in our corpus is a diphthong, not unlike the main variant found in SSBE. Monophthongs do exist in the speech of our informants, but they are limited to a small number of contexts, for example *make* in the text (Chatellier 2016:265). Considering the high frequency of this item, and given that it is not found in final position in a rhythmic group in the task in question, the use of these monophthongs can probably be accounted for with usage-based frameworks (see Bybee 2001 and Pierrehumbert 2006 *inter alia*), and we do not think that they are the sign of a levelling process towards a supralocal northern variety. However, other uses of monophthongs deserve a closer analysis. Indeed one speaker in particular, VH2 (and, to a lesser extent, her husband IH1) makes a greater use of monophthongs in FACE compared with the rest of the informants. VH2 regularly uses monophthongs in all tasks, even in wordlists, which leads us to believe that her monophthongs do not have the same status as those sometimes encountered in the speech of other speakers. Unfortunately, due to the presence of background noise during the recording, formants could not be measured accurately for most of these tokens, and the measures were excluded during the verification process. Nevertheless, VH2 also makes use of diphthongs, notably in words such as *weight* or *eight*, which used to have a final fricative in Middle English (Wells 1982:357). Consequently, *wait* and *weight* constitute a minimal pair for her. The sociolinguistic profiles of VH2 and IH1 are similar, and their study further supports the hypothesis that Manchester English is not levelling towards a supralocal northern variety as far as FACE is concerned. In fact, both belong to the oldest generation of speakers in our corpus; IH1 was born in Wigan and VH2 in Westhoughton, and they currently reside in Horwich, close to Bolton. All these locations are outside of the area demarcated by the M60. Furthermore, they do not define themselves as Mancunians, or even Greater Manchester speakers: VH2, for instance, describes her accent as "Lancashire".

At first sight, the case of GOAT looks similar to that of FACE, but further investigation of our speakers' realizations reveals two major differences. Firstly, even though the majority of GOAT realizations are clear diphthongs, a greater number of WC and UWC/LMC speakers (6 informants) show monophthongs with an [oː]-like quality in conversational context, whereas very few GOAT tokens are realized with a monophthong in the reading tasks. As could be expected, given the results for the vowel of FACE, we find VH2 and IH1 among these 6 speakers. Once more, VH2 exhibits the greater number of monophthongs for GOAT: she hardly uses diphthongs, even in the reading tasks. It is worth noting that none of the speakers who regularly use monophthongs are under the age of 30, which bodes ill for the diffusion of these variants in Manchester English. Secondly, there is fronting of both the nucleus and the glide of the GOAT diphthong among MC speakers, which

appears clearly on Figure 3. We found social class to be highly significant (p<2.10$^{-16}$ for both nucleus and glide), and these results echo again those of Baranowski and Turton. We also found gender to be highly significant, with women showing more advanced tokens, but the lack of MC female speakers over 55 in our corpus prevents us from concluding, at this stage, that there is a straightforward correlation between gender and GOAT-fronting in our corpus.

Given these results, we are inclined to conclude that there is no sign of levelling towards a supralocal northern variety as far as FACE and GOAT are concerned. Our speakers, especially among the youngest generations, exhibit few monophthongs and favour diphthongal realizations.
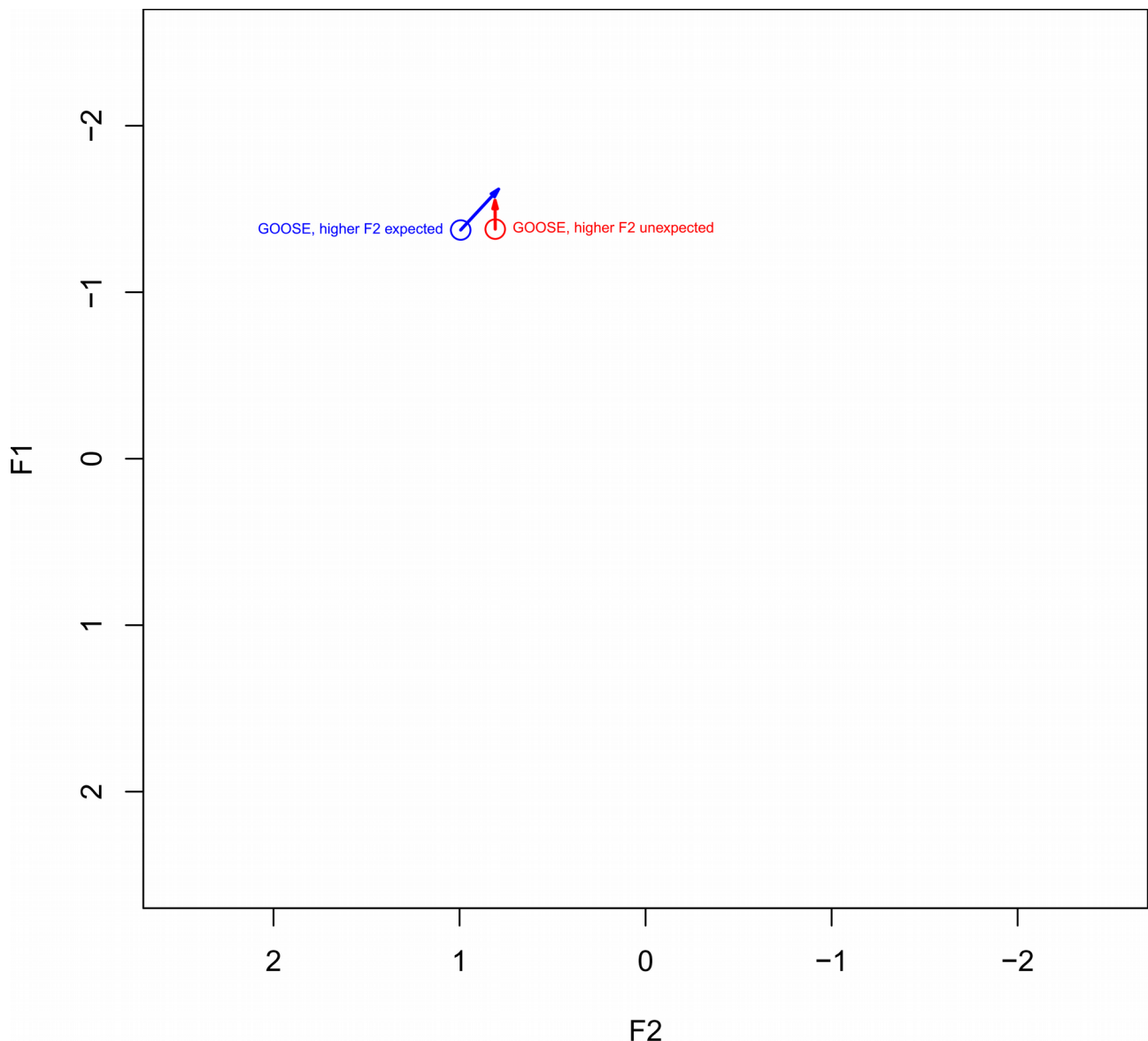


*Figure 4: Average realizations for GOOSE*

# V. Discussion

Our results regarding FACE and GOAT might be surprising in the light of studies showing a diffusion of supralocal variants in the north of England (see I. LEVELLING IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND). Nevertheless,

we think that the investigation of sociolinguistic evaluations associated with these variants can shed light on the subject. The diffusion of monophthongs for FACE and GOAT is an example of change from above[7] (Labov 1999:78): it operates above the level of consciousness. Watt's informants were aware of the existence of monophthongs for FACE and GOAT, and chose to adopt them to express their identity of Northerners. The same variants also seem to be prominent in York (Haddican et al. 2013:382-384). Our own informants are also aware of these variants, just as they recognize the presence of a FOOT-STRUT split or BATH-broadening in the south of England, even though they cannot name these phenomena in those terms. These characteristics were often mentioned when our speakers wished to describe a northern accent. However, if monophthongs for FACE and GOAT are mentioned in the PAC-LVTI corpus, they are not associated with a general northern accent, nor with a supralocal variety. Instead, they are associated with the area directly to the north of Manchester. For instance, during one conversation, JA1 talks about people in Greater Manchester who say "No [oː], no [oː], I don't think so [oː]". Her father PA1 agrees and claims this is typical of people from the Bolton area. This leads us to suspect that these variants do not share the same sociolinguistic evaluations as those that they have in Newcastle: we suggest that monophthongal variants of FACE and GOAT in Manchester are not associated with a supralocal accent, but with the varieties located in the north of Greater Manchester.

It is particularly interesting to compare monophthongal variants of FACE and GOAT with other variants that show diffusion in Manchester English, i.e. fronted variants of GOAT and GOOSE. Not a single informant seems to be aware of the existence of these variants, and no mention of them is to be found in our recordings. This is hardly surprising for GOOSE: several studies on the subject have concluded that GOOSE-fronting is a change taking place below the level of consciousness (e.g. Haddican et al 2013:393 in York). Fridland (2008:449-450) stresses that groups of speakers that traditionally do not take part in the same linguistic changes as the rest of their community are also affected by GOOSE-fronting. So why are speakers of different English varieties all over the world adopting these variants? Unfortunately, it is too early at this stage to give a definite answer. One avenue that could be explored brings us back to Labov's principles on linguistic change: GOOSE and GOAT would be involved in a chain shift. According to Labov's principle III, "in chain shifts, back vowels move to the front" (Labov 1999:116): this is consistent with what we have observed in Manchester English. Furthermore, while all groups of speakers now use fronted variants of GOOSE, the fronted variants of GOAT are, for the moment, only used by MC speakers. This echoes the patterns seen in other (seemingly unrelated) varieties of English, for instance Philadelphia. If GOAT is fronted in these varieties, it appears to lag behind the fronting of GOOSE: "When /ow/ is fronted, it is always in parallel with /uw/ and considerably behind it" (Labov 1999:208). In the light of the absence of clear social evaluations of fronted variants, this raises the question of the role of system-driven factors, namely balance and economy of the system, in what could potentially be a case of global levelling.

---

7    It is not, however, a classic example of change from above: change is not led by the dominant social class, i.e. the middle-class here.

# VI. Conclusion

Our work shows that the Mancunian variety is clearly a northern variety of British English. It lacks a FOOT-STRUT split and the lexical distribution of the "short a" is more limited compared with southern varieties. These features appear to be quite stable in our data, which suggest that the Mancunian variety does not seem to be levelling towards the standard, and retains its northern characteristics. Other vocalic features, which are more localized, are also found in Manchester English, particularly among WC speakers: there is an opposition between FORCE and NORTH, and realizations of happY, when in final position, are frequently more open.

The main goal of this chapter was the investigation of monophthongs in FACE and GOAT in Manchester English, which could have been linked to the diffusion of a supralocal variety in the north of England. Our results suggest that no levelling towards the supralocal variants of FACE and GOAT is taking place in Manchester. We believe that monophthongal variants of FACE and GOAT do not share the same sociolinguistic evaluations in Manchester as in other parts of the linguistic north. In Manchester, they are not associated with a "general" northern accent, but with the varieties spoken in the northern areas of Greater Manchester, and so cannot be used to express local loyalty, contrary to the same variants in Tyneside English.

That is not to say that Manchester English is not currently levelling towards another variety. Our results, which are consistent with Baranowski and Turton's work on Manchester, indicate that GOOSE is now fully fronted, and that GOAT-fronting appears to be under way. This change has been observed in several other varieties of English. However, studies suggest that this is a change from below: no specific sociolinguistic evaluations are associated with the fronted variants, and speakers do not seem to be aware of their existence. If this change is indeed not sociolinguistically motivated, an investigation of the internal dynamics of the system of Mancunian English might be fruitful in explaining this change.

# References

Baayen, R. H. (2008). *Analyzing Linguistic Data. A Practical Introduction to Statistics Using R.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baranowski, M. & D. Turton (2015). "Manchester English". In Hickey, R. (ed) *Researching Northern English.* Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 293-316.

Beal, J. (2008). "English Dialects in the North of England: Phonology". In Kortmann, B. & C. Upton (eds) *Varieties of English. Volume 1: The British Isles.* 122–144.

Beal, J. (2010). "Shifting Borders and Shifting Regional Identities". In Llamas, C. & D. Watt (eds) *Language and Identities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 217–226.

Boersma, P. & D. Weenink (2017). Praat: doing phonetics by computer [Computer program]. Version 6.0.28. Retrieved 23 March 2017 from http://www.praat.org/.

Britain, D. (2010). "Supralocal regional dialect levelling". In Llamas, C. & D. Watt (eds) *Language and Identities.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 193–204.

Bybee, J. (2001). *Phonology and Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chatellier, H. (2016). "Nivellement et contre-nivellement phonologique à Manchester : étude de corpus dans le cadre du projet PAC-LVTI." PhD dissertation, Toulouse II University.

Cruttenden, A. (2014). *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*. 8th edition. London & New York: Routledge.

Durand, J. & A. Przewozny (2015). "La variation et le programme PAC : phonologie de l'anglais contemporain". In Brulard, I., P. Carr & J. Durand (eds) *La prononciation de l'anglais contemporain dans le monde. Variation et structure.* Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi. 55–91.

Ferragne, E. & F. Pellegrino (2010). "Formant frequencies of vowels in 13 accents of the British Isles". *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 40.01*.* 1–34.

Fridland, V. (2008). "Patterns of /uw/, /ʊ/ and /ow/ fronting in Reno, Nevada". *American Speech* 83.4. 432–454.

Haddican, B. et al. (2013). "Interaction of social and linguistic constraints on two vowel changes in northern England". *Language Variation and Change* 25. 371–403.

Kerswill, P. (2003). "Dialect levelling and geographical diffusion in British English". In Britain, D. & J. Cheshire (eds) *Social dialectology: in honour of Peter Trudgill.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 223–243.

Labov, W. (1999). *Principles of Linguistic Change. Volume 1: Internal Factors*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Llamas, C. (2007). "'A place between places': Language and identities in a border town". *Language in Society* 36.4. 579–604.

Lobanov, B. M. (1971). "Classification of Russian vowels spoken by different speakers". *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 49.2B. 606–608.

Montgomery, C. (2006). "Northern English dialects: A perceptual approach". PhD dissertation, University of Sheffield.

Montgomery, C. (2012). "The effect of proximity in perceptual dialectology". *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 16.5. 638–668.

Office for National Statistics (2012). 2011 Census — Population and Household Estimates for England and Wales, March 2011. Retrieved 16 July 2012 from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_270487.pdf (visité le 02/03/2016).

Pierrehumbert, J. B. (2006). "The next toolkit". *Journal of Phonetics* 34. 516–530.

R Core Team (2016). *R: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing*. Vienna: R Foundation for Statistical Computing. http://www.Rproject.org/.

Trudgill, P. (1986). *Dialects in Contact*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Trudgill, P. (1999). *The Dialects of England*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

Trudgill, P. (2001). "Received pronunciation: sociolinguistic aspects". *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 36. 3–13.

Watt, D. (1998). "Variation and Change in the Vowel System of Tyneside English". PhD dissertation, University of Newcastle.

Watt, D. (2002). "'I Don't Speak with a Geordie Accent, I Speak, like, the Northern Accent': Contact-Induced Levelling in the Tyneside Vowel System". J*ournal of Sociolinguistics* 6.1. 44–64.

Wells, J. C. (1982). *Accents of English*. 3 volumes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, A. & P. Kerswill (1999). "Dialect levelling: change and continuity in Milton Keynes, Reading and Hull". In Foulkes, P. & G. Docherty (eds) *Urban Voices: Accent Studies in the British Isles.* London: Arnold. 141–62.