

# Regional Dialects Discussion

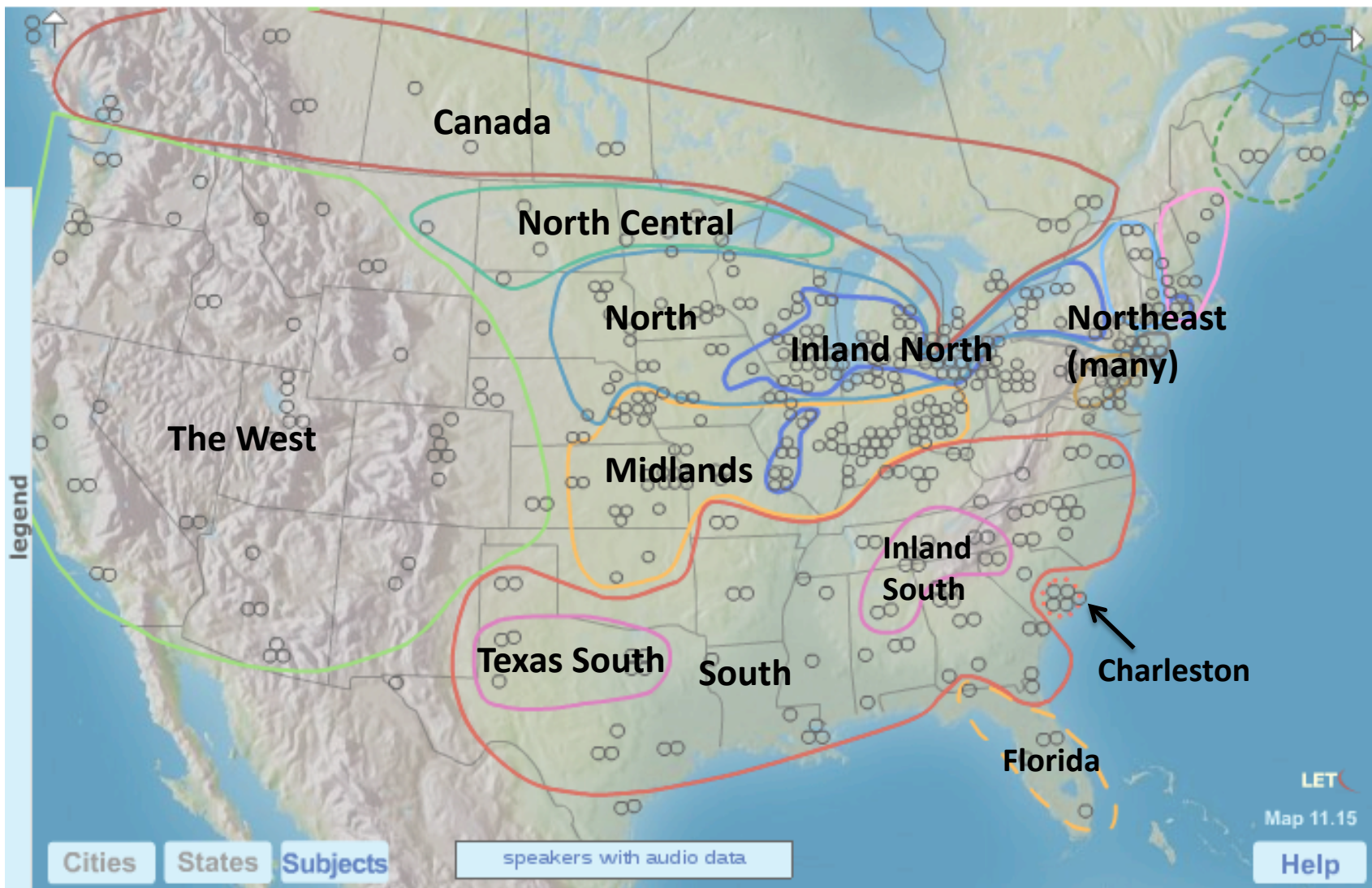
Linguistics 159 – American Dialects

October 15, 2014

# Variation Studies

- Picking a variable
- What are the **variants**?
- How to quantify?
  - **In which contexts** can they occur?
  - Are there cases that are nearly **categorical**?
- What are the **factors** that might predict variation?
  - Structural/Linguistic
  - Social/Extra-linguistic

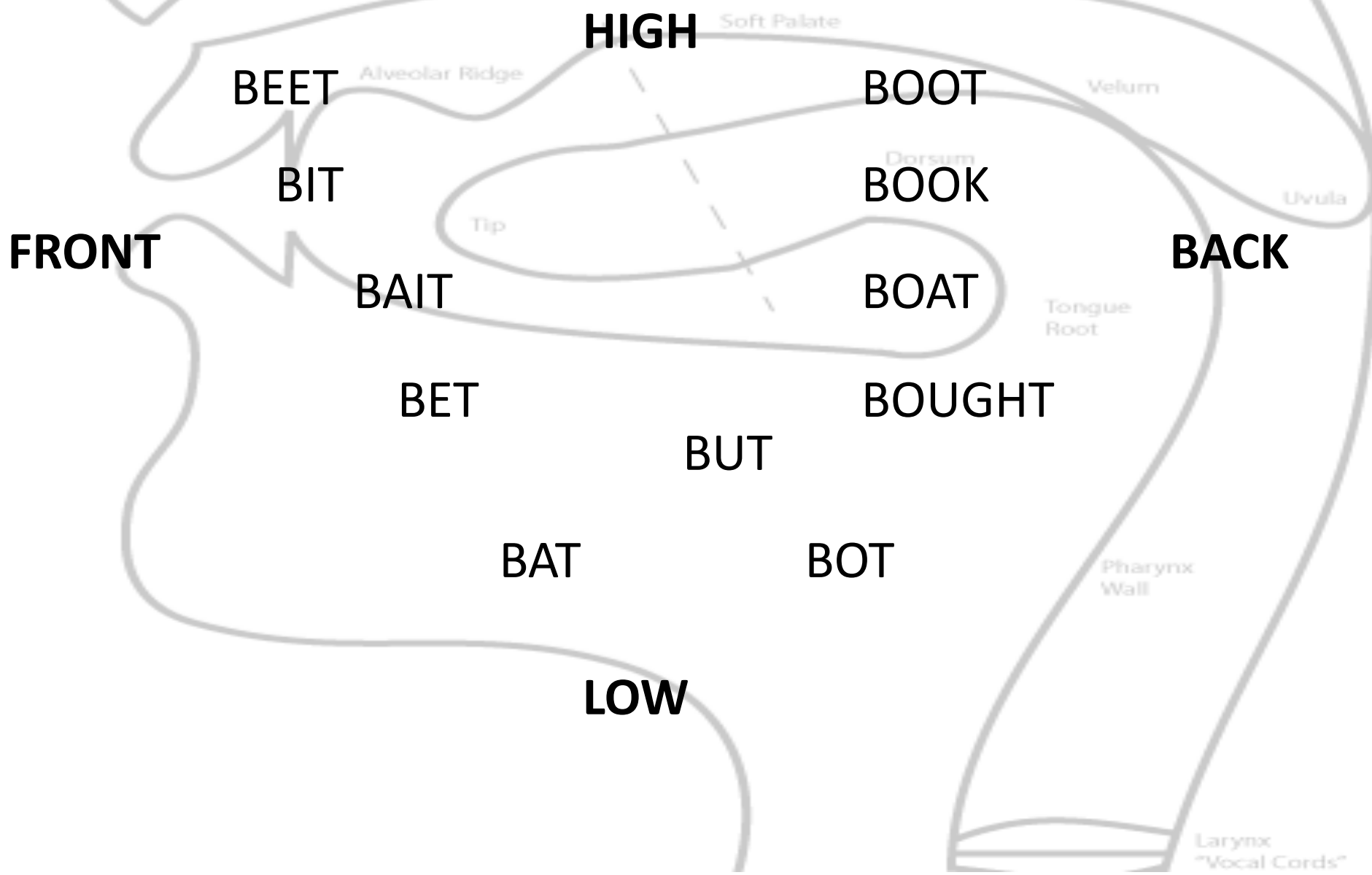
# North American English Dialects



# Summarize

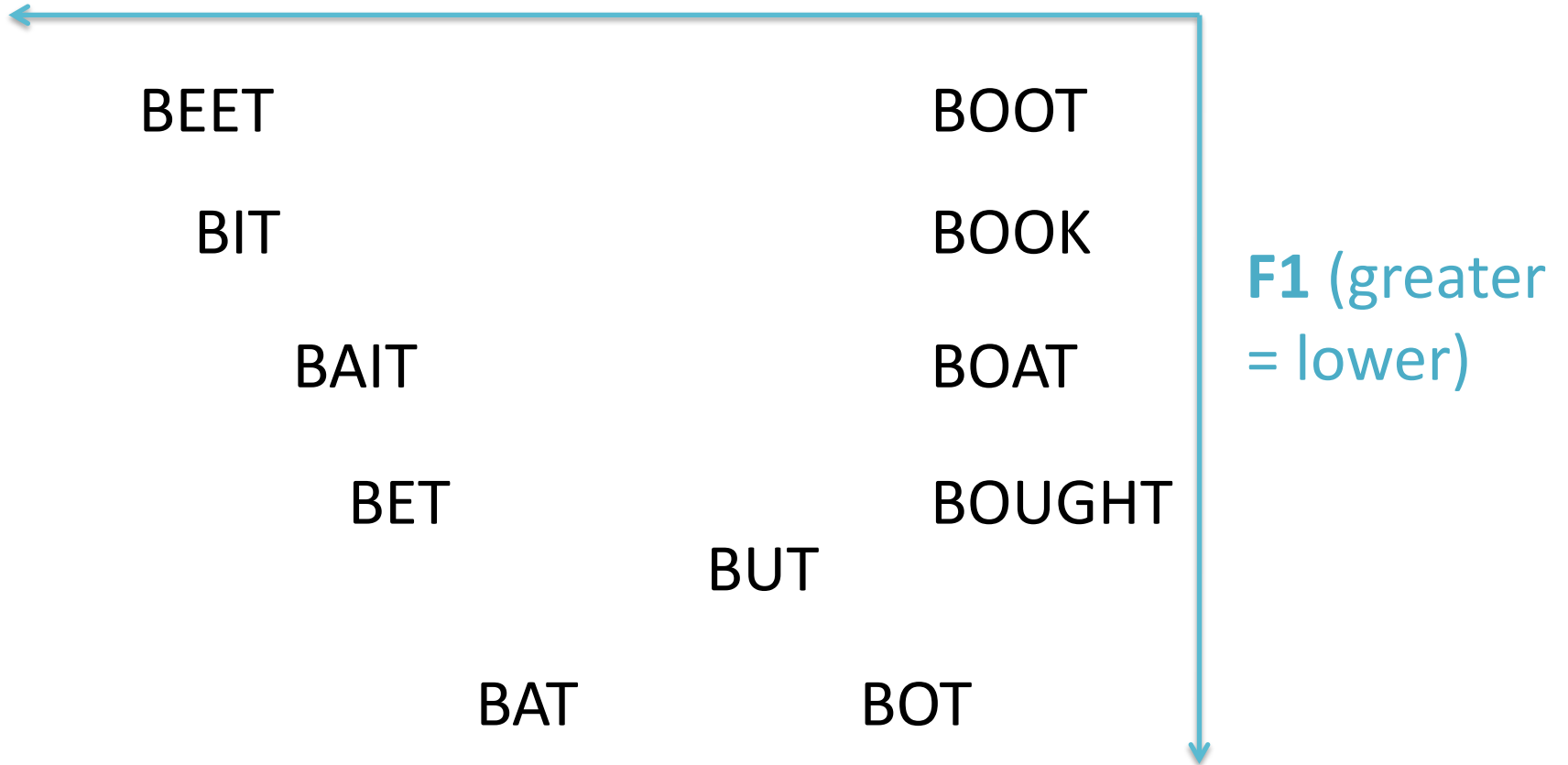
- Which variable (or system of variables) is investigated?
- What is the research question?
- Where was the research conducted?
- Who were the speakers?
- How was data elicited?
- Why were these methods chosen?
- What were the findings?

# Formants (F1, F2)



# Formants (F1, F2)

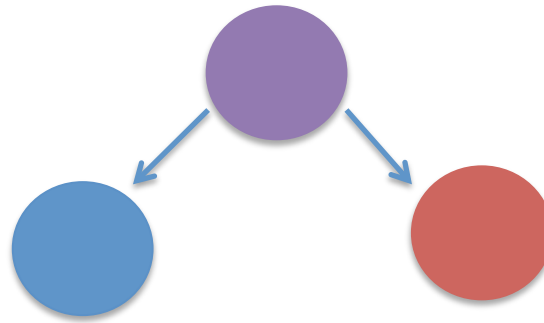
F2 (greater = fronter)



# Northeast



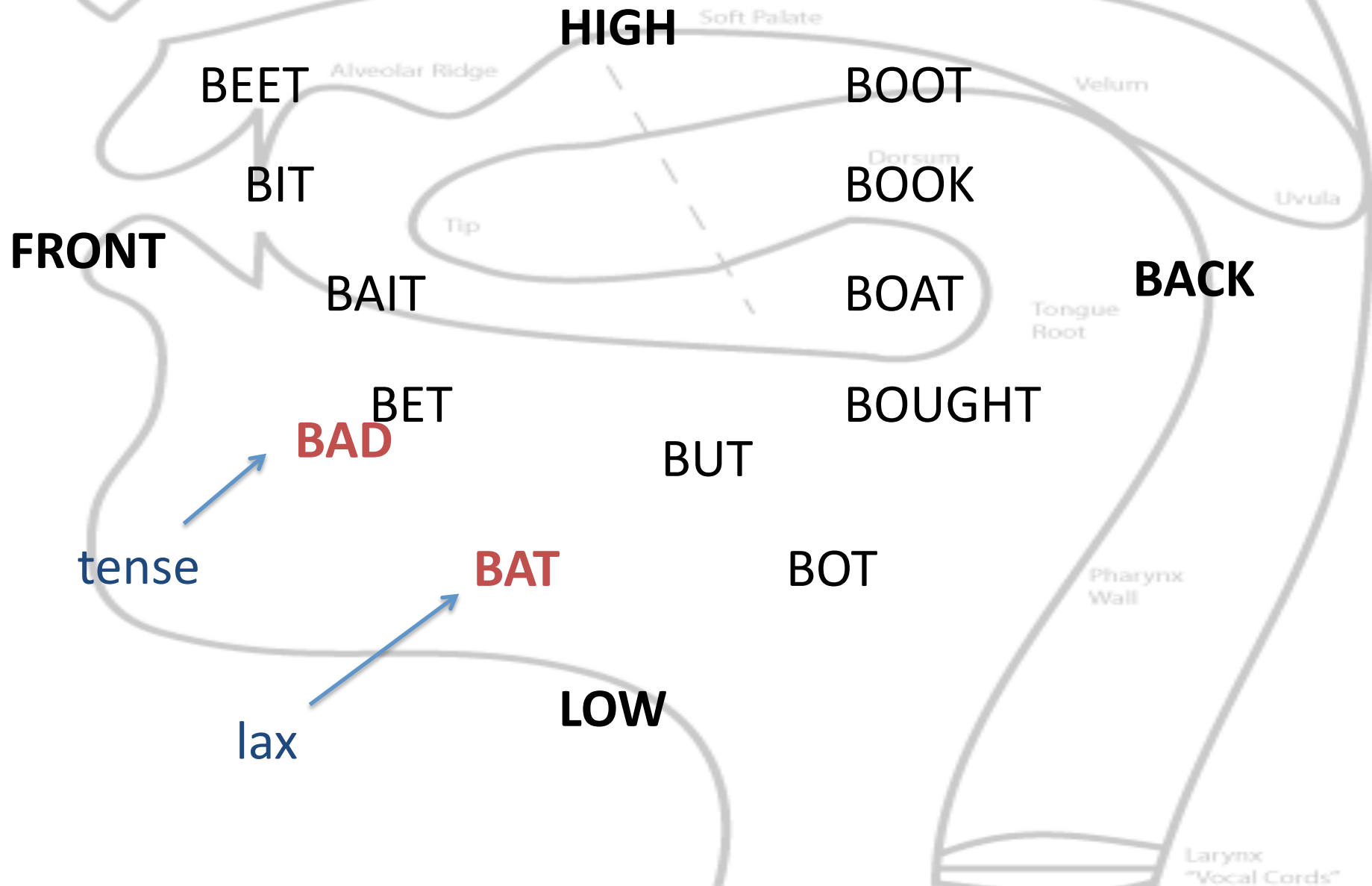
# Split short-a system



- **Split** conditioned by phonological environment (with some exceptions)
- “Tense” variant and “lax” variant
- NYC and Mid-Atlantic



# Split short-a system



# NYC short-a system

FRONT

TENSE  
short-a

Before: Voiced Stops (*bad, lab, rag*)

Voiceless fricatives (*cash, bath, laugh*)

Front nasals /m/ & /n/ (*ran, dam*)

LAX  
short-a

Before: elsewhere (*bat, lap, rack, have, sang*)

Open syllables (*manner, grabbing*)

Function words (*can't, am*)

LOW

# Philadelphia short-a system

**FRONT**

**TENSE**  
short-a

In the words *mad, sad, glad*

**Before:** Front Voiceless fricatives (*bath, laugh*)  
Front nasals in closed syll. (*ham, hand*)

**LAX**  
short-a

**Before:** elsewhere, including:

Voiced stops, see exc. (*bad, lab, rag*)  
Back fricatives (*cash*)

**Open syllables** (*manner, grabbing*)

**LOW** In the words *ran, swam, began*

# Nasal short-a system

**FRONT**

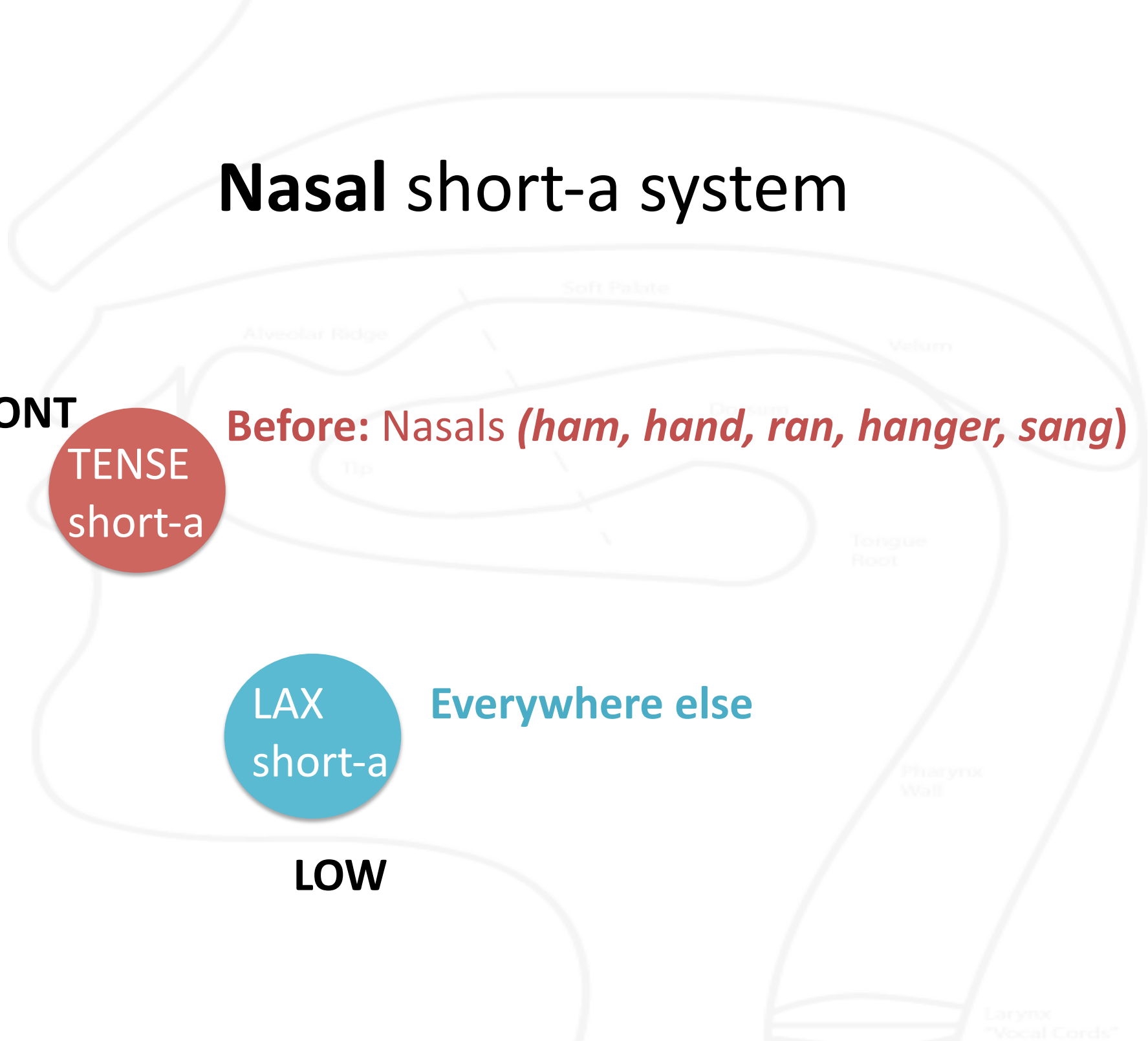
**TENSE**  
short-a

**Before: Nasals (*ham, hand, ran, hanger, sang*)**

**LAX**  
short-a

**Everywhere else**

**LOW**

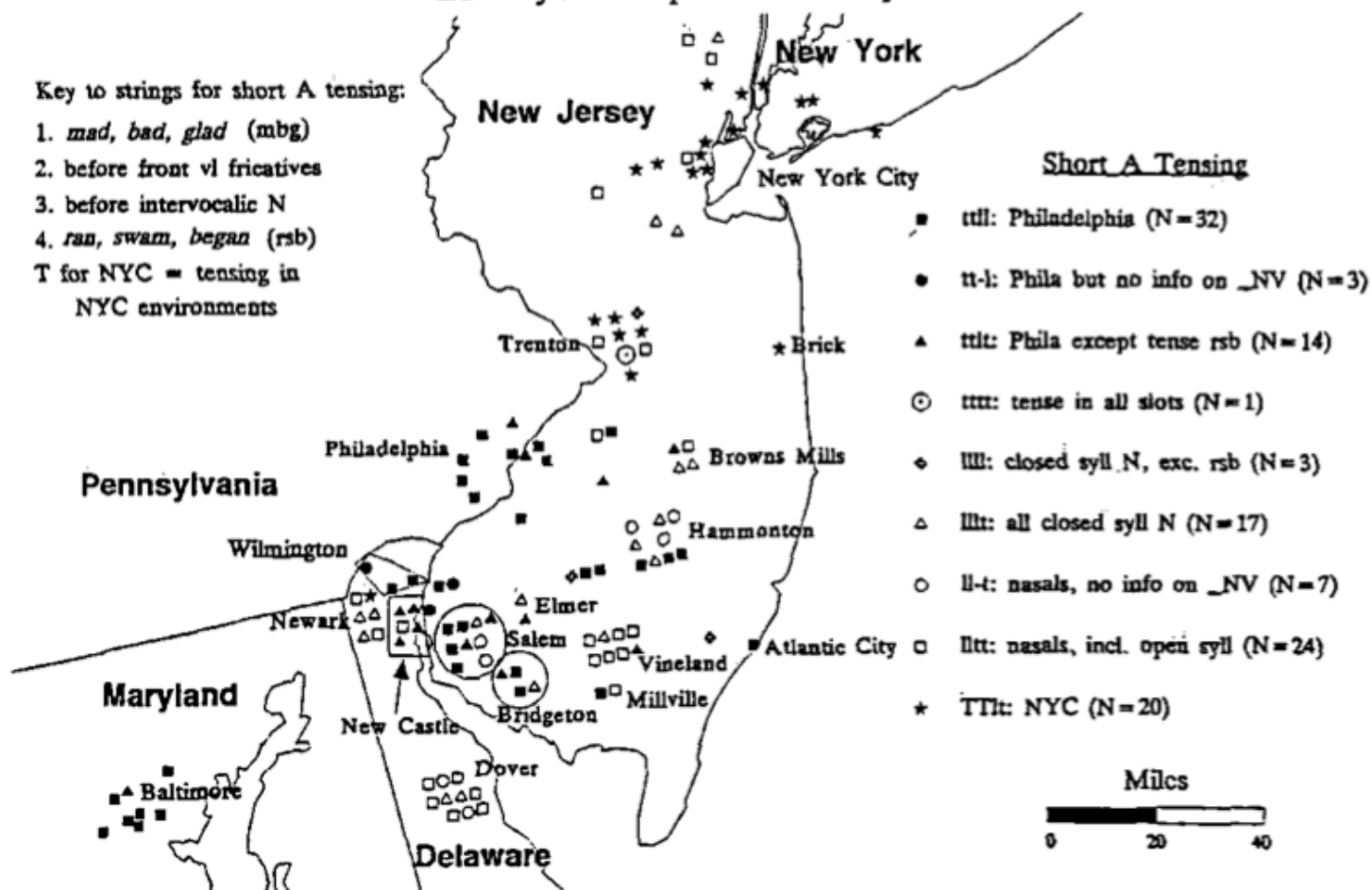


# Short-a system

- **Allophonic split**
  - tense versus lax conditions completely predictable by *phonological* environment
  - One variant always arises in one environment and never in the other
- **Phonemic split**
  - tense versus lax conditions *not* predictable by environment
  - Both variants *share* at least one phonological environment
  - Could be conditioned by grammar, lexicon, semantics

# Ash (2002)

Figure 1. Short A Tensing in the Mid-Atlantic Region  
Each symbol represents one speaker



# Becker & Wong (2010)

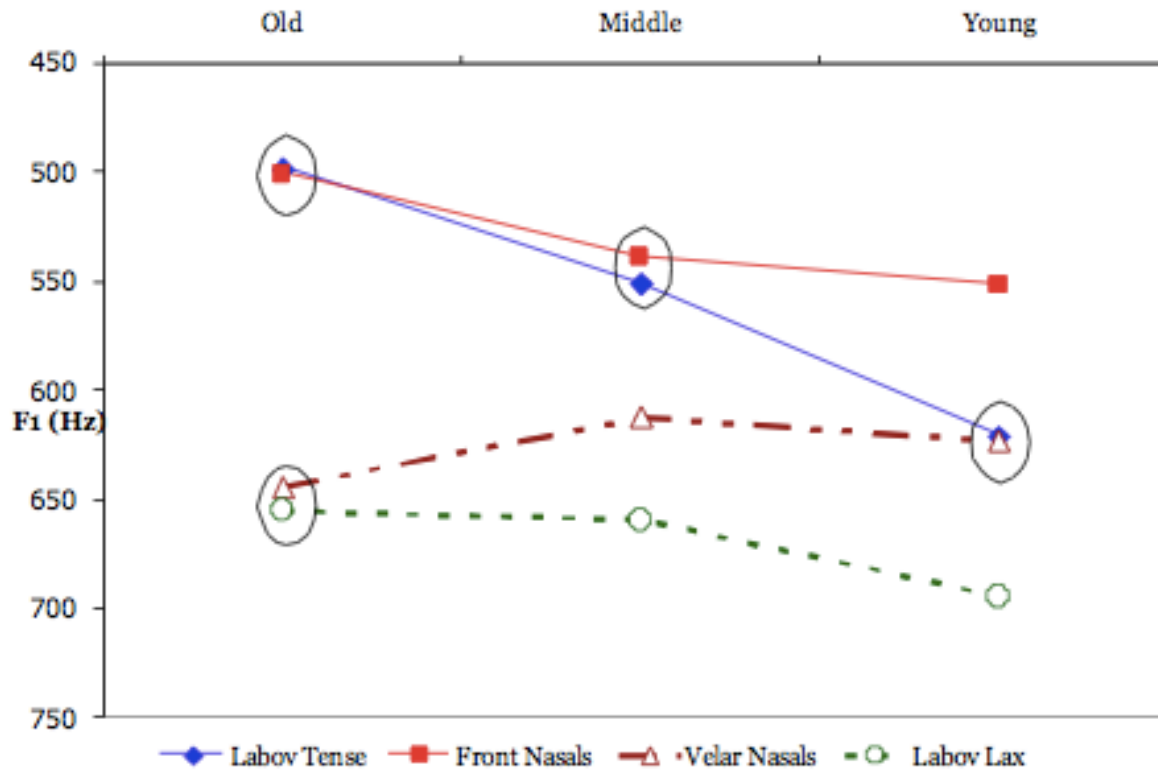


Figure 5: Mean F1 (height) of /æ/ for white New Yorkers.

= m & n      = "ng"  
(*ham*,      (*hang*)  
*hand*)

# Becker & Wong (2010)

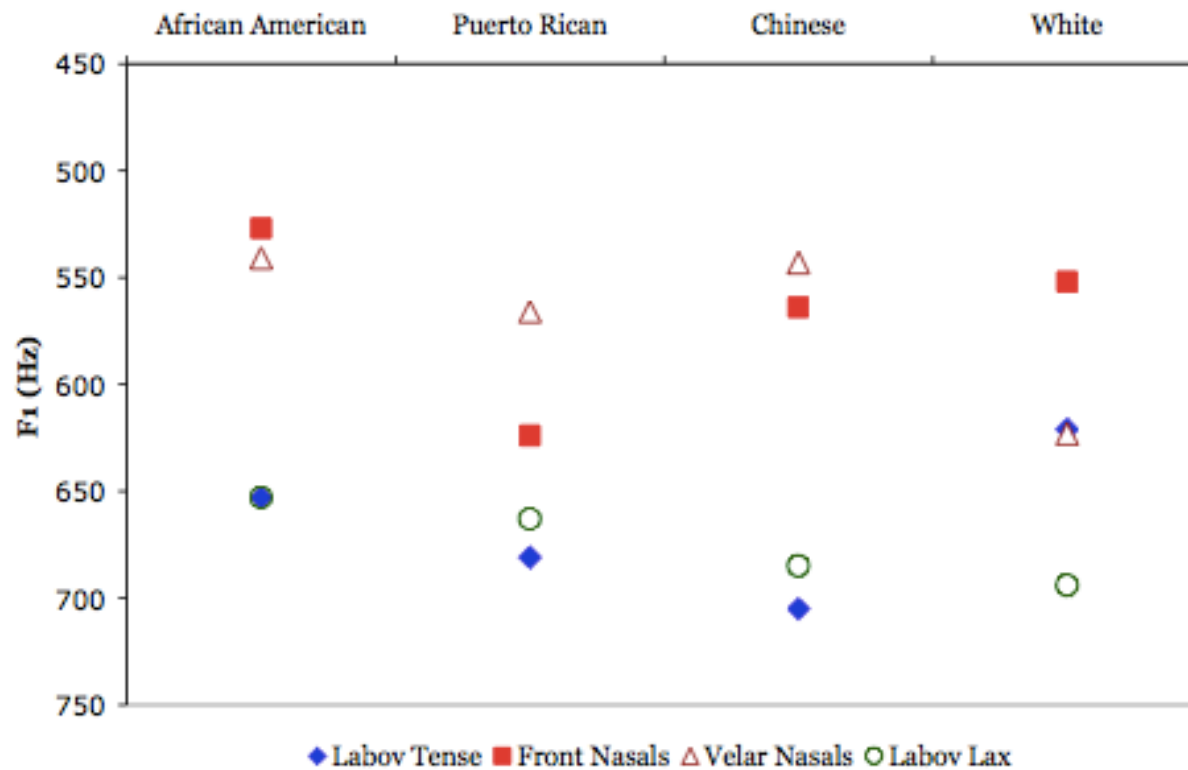
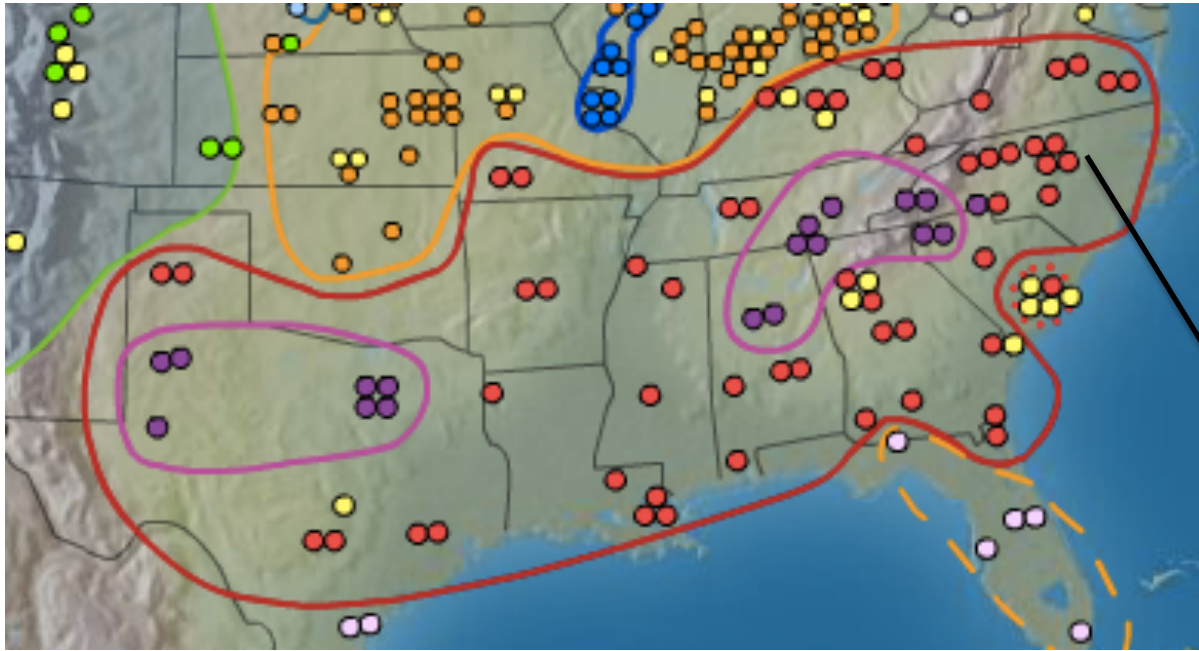


Figure 6: Mean F1 (height) of /æ/ for young New Yorkers.



# The South



**Raleigh, NC**  
(Dodsworth &  
Kohn 2012)

# Dodsworth & Kohn (2012)

## The Southern Vowel Shift

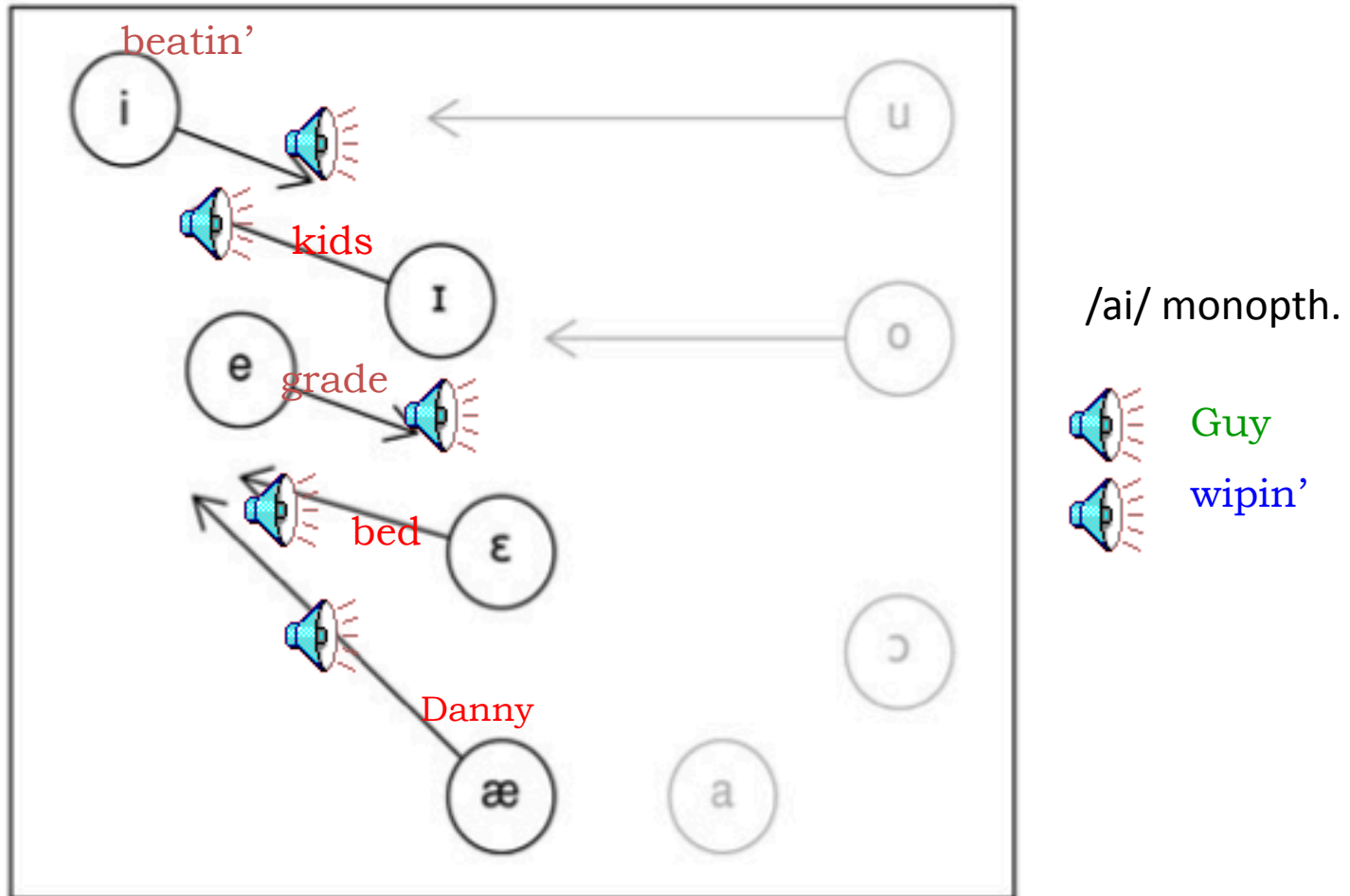
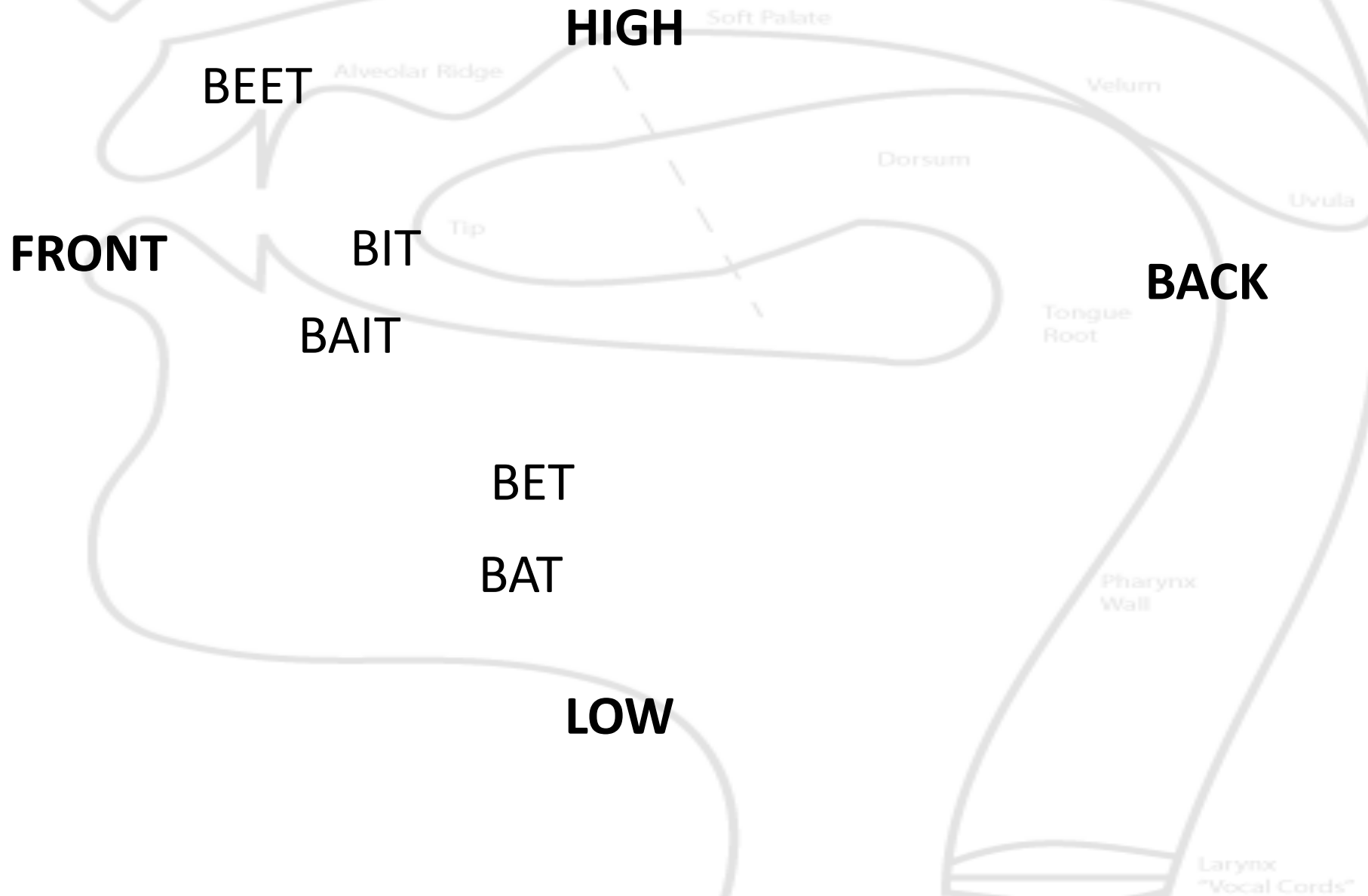
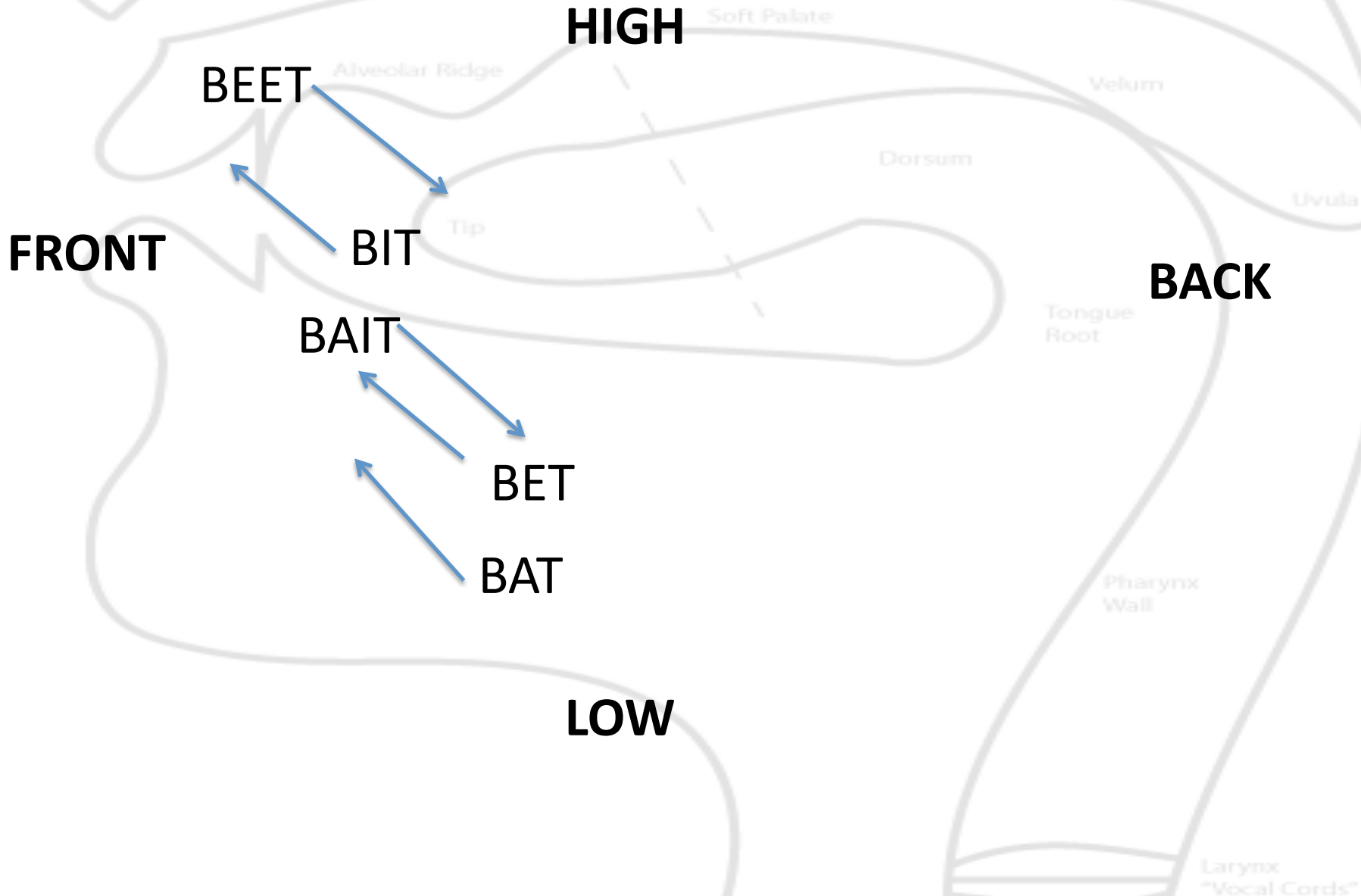


FIGURE 2. The Southern Vowel Shift, front vowels highlighted.

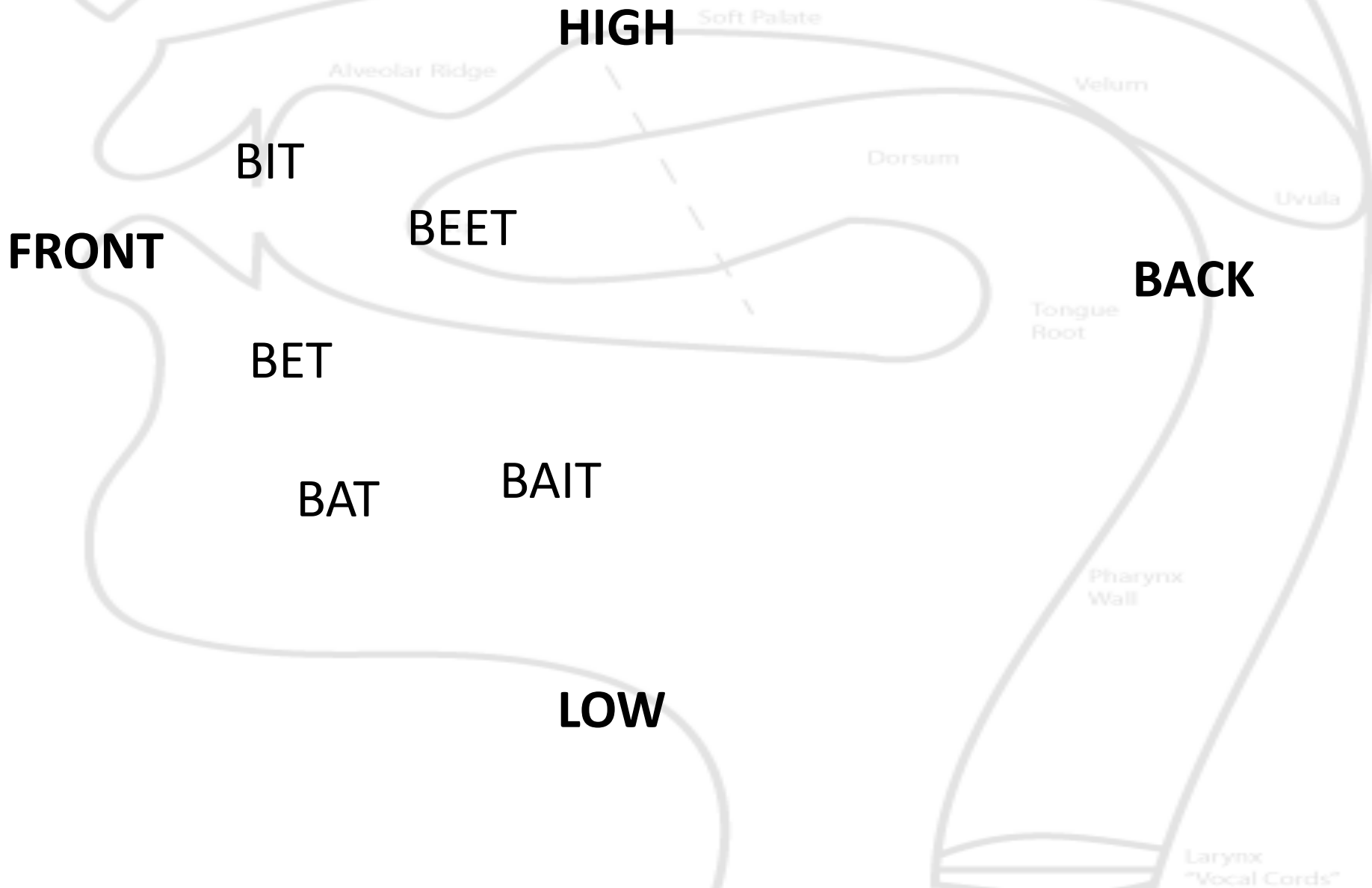
# Non-Southern System



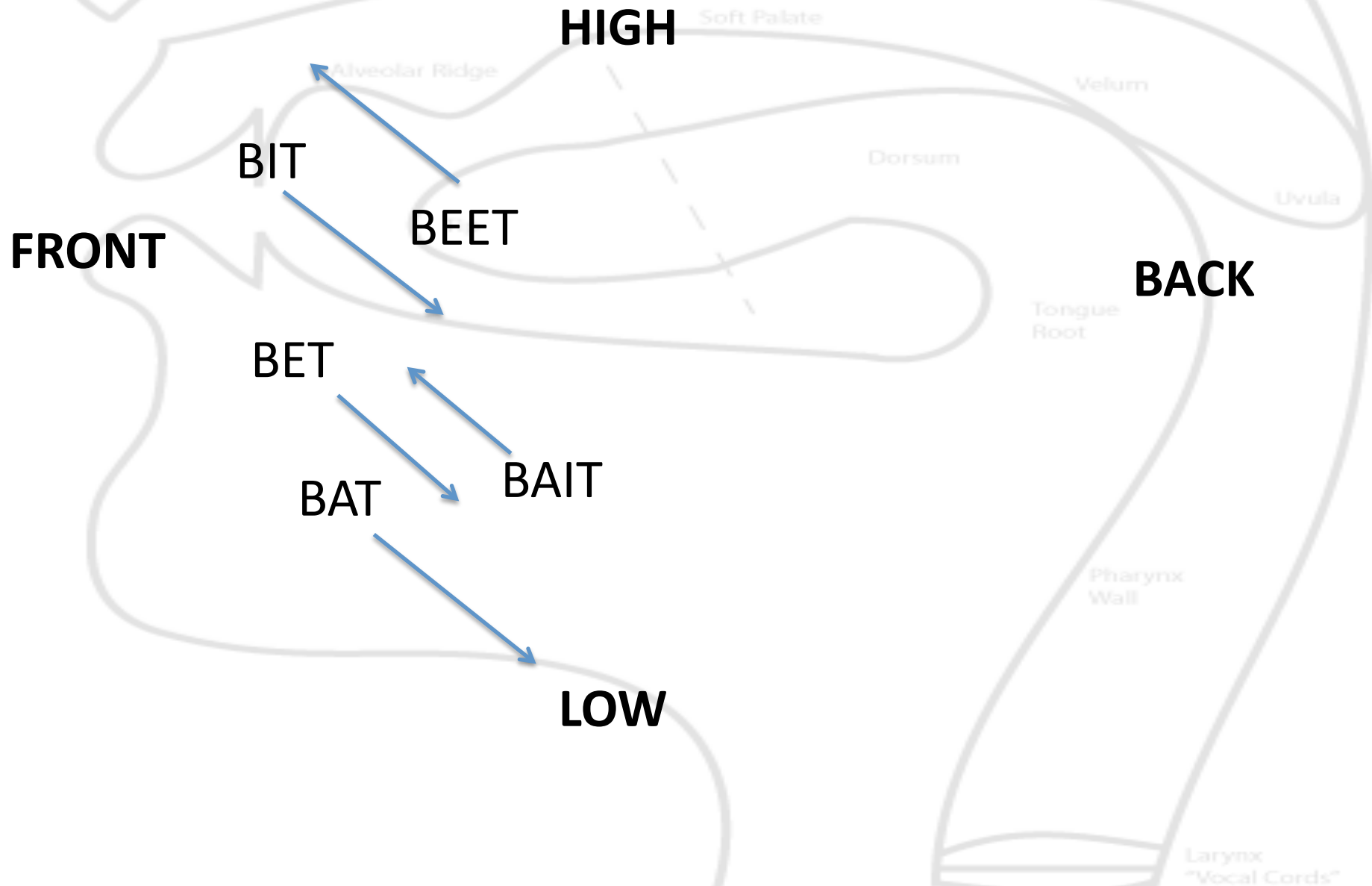
# Southern Vowel Shift

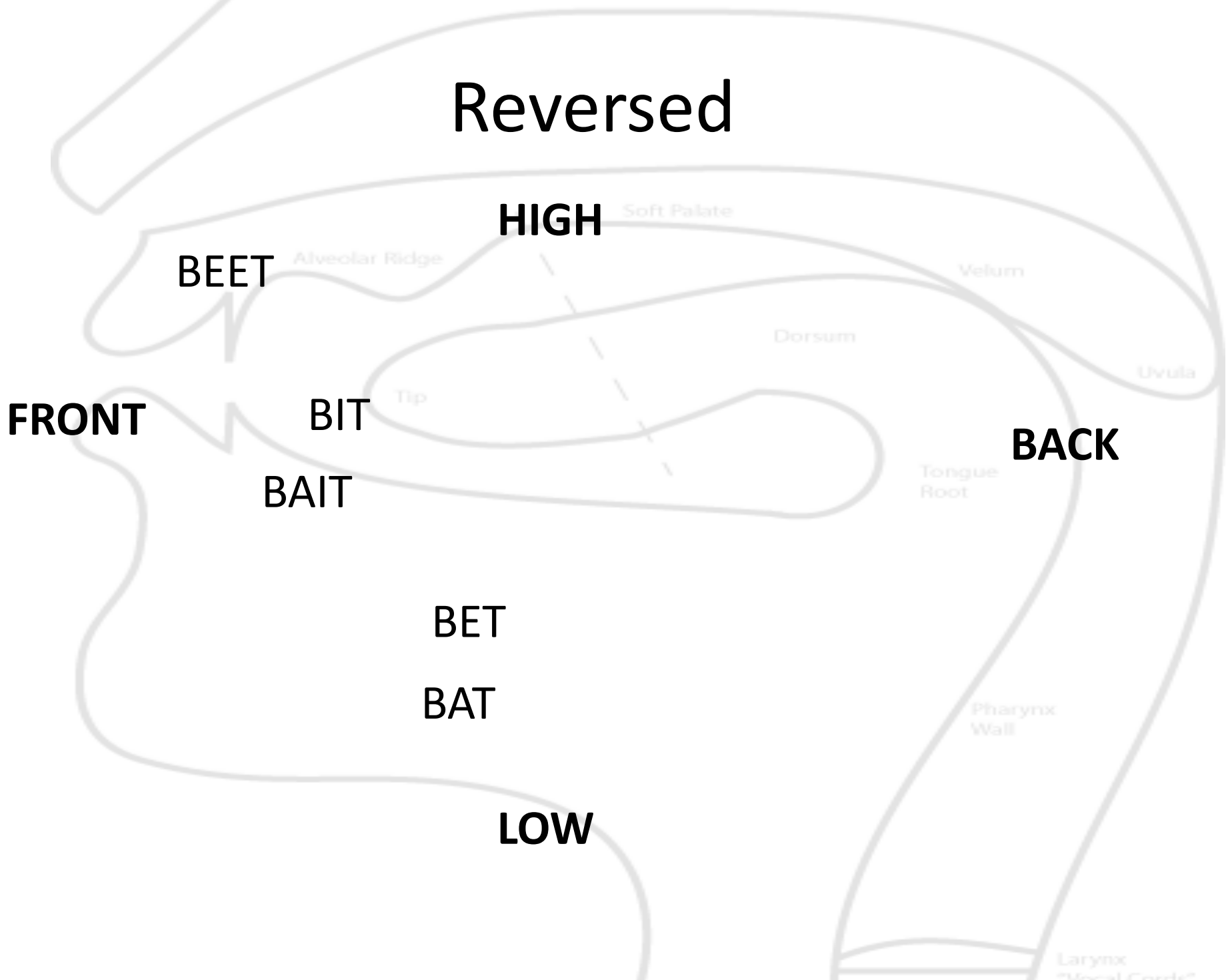


# Southern Vowel Shift Completed



# Southern Vowel Shift Reversing





Reversed

HIGH

BEET

BIT

BAIT

BET

BAT

LOW

FRONT

BACK

Soft Palate

Alveolar Ridge

Velum

Dorsum

Uvula

Tip

Tongue Root

Pharynx Wall

Larynx  
"Vocal Cords"

# Dodsworth & Kohn (2012)

- **Contact-induced Dialect Formation (Trudgill)**
  - Stage 1: Adult migrants → contact → “rudimentary” leveling
  - Stage 2: Absence of single, stable dialect, speakers born in this stage show much variability
  - Stage 3: Leveling continues, focused dialect may merge
- **Interspeaker versus intraspeaker variation**



# Dodsworth & Kohn (2012)

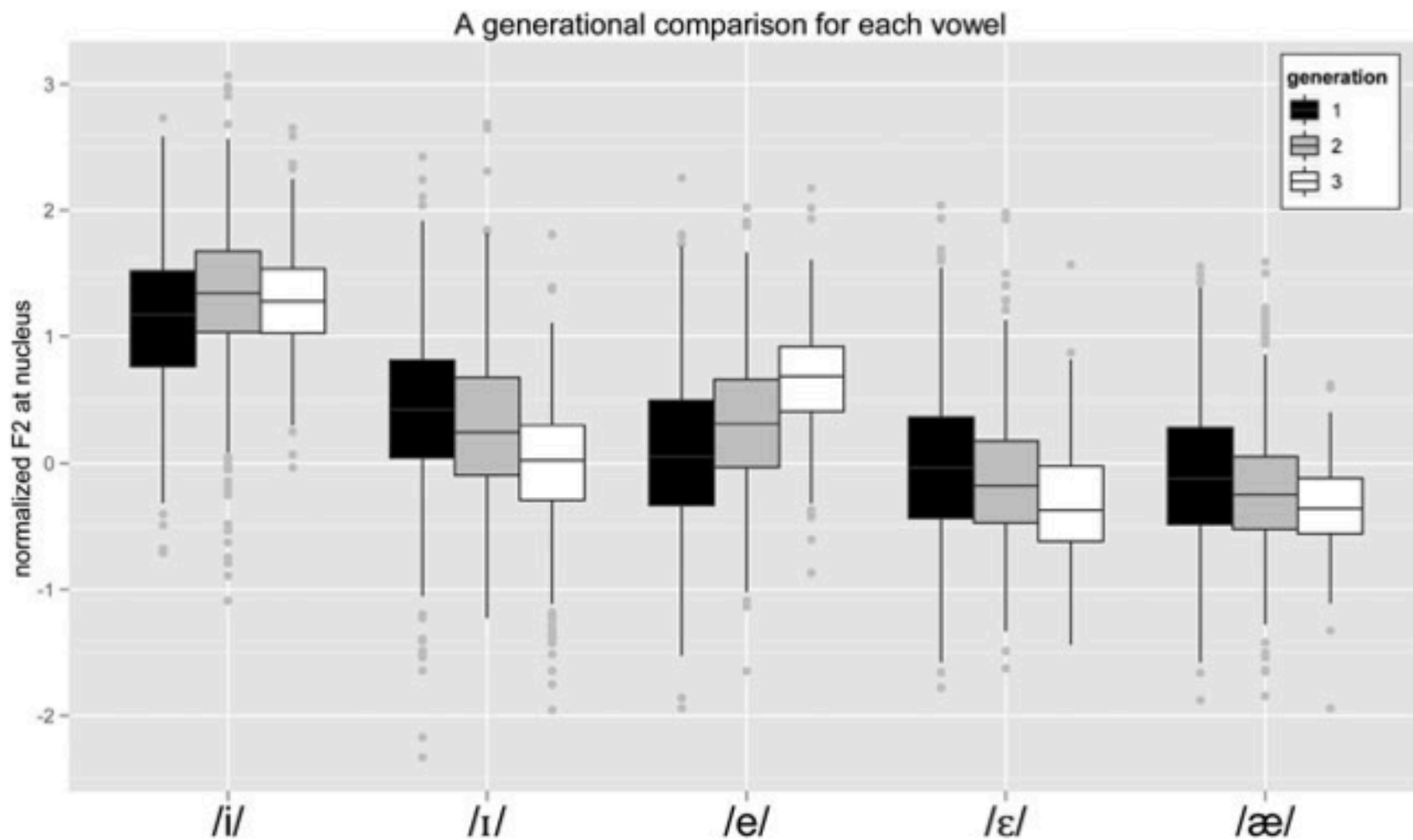


FIGURE 10. Normalized F2 distributions for each vowel at each generation.

# Dodsworth & Kohn (2012)

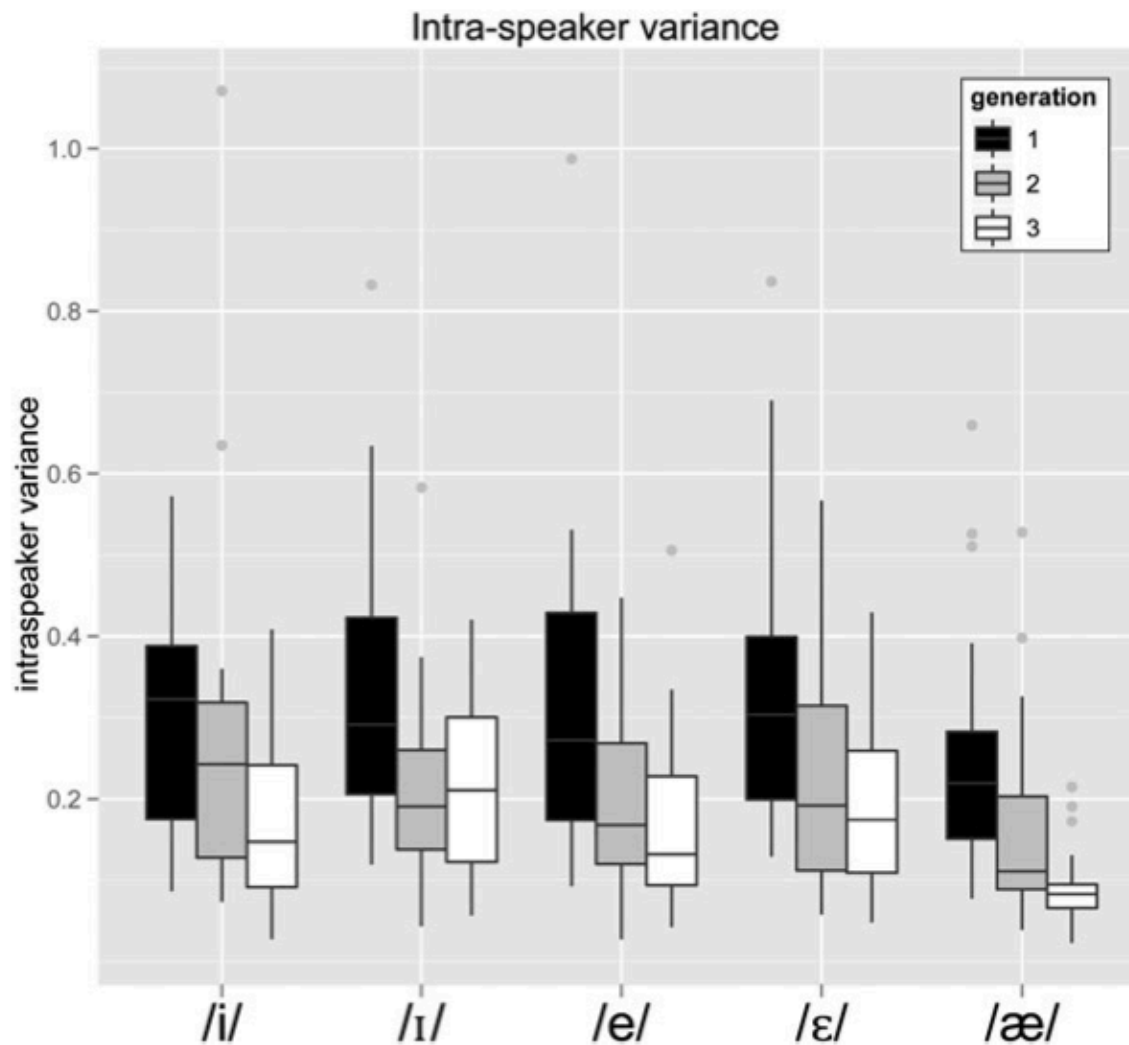
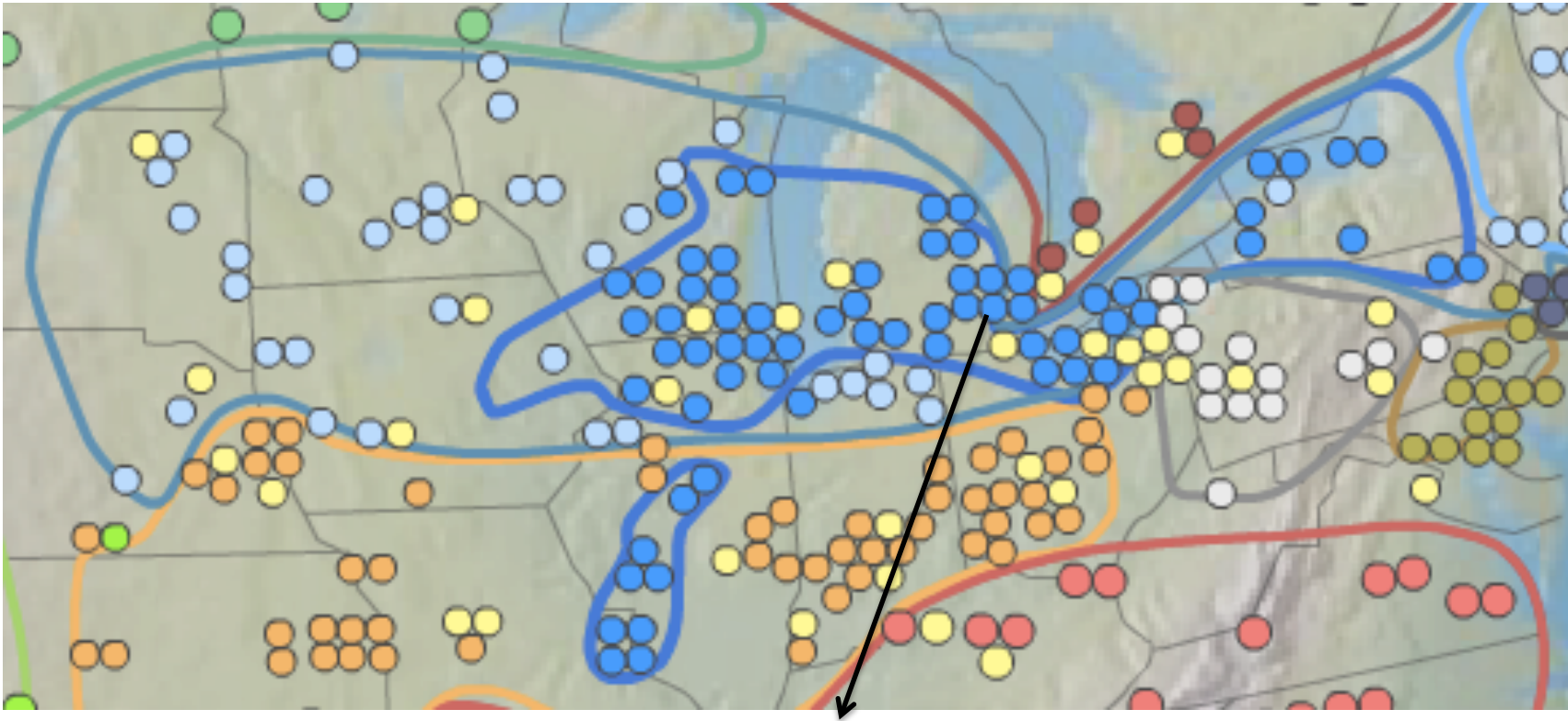


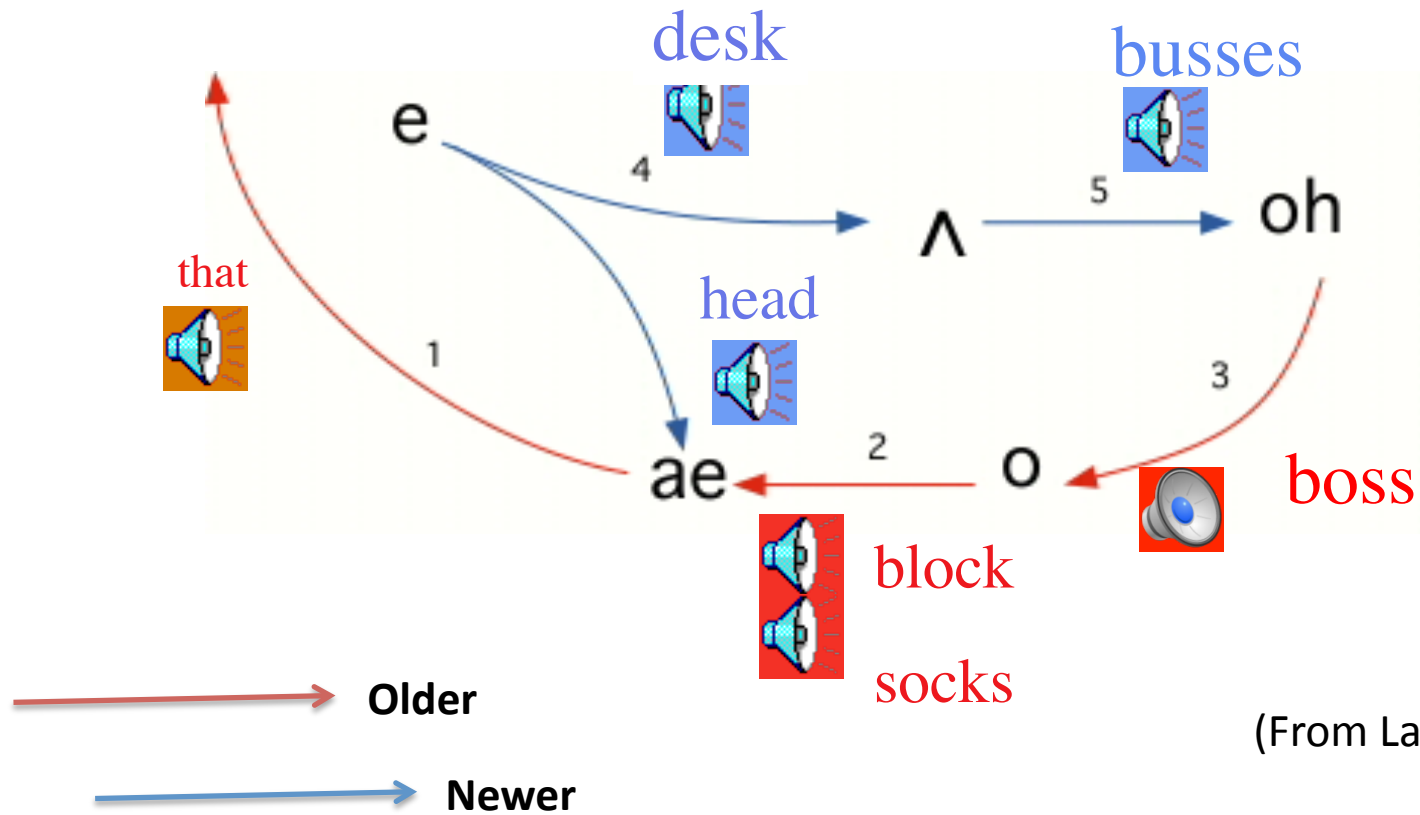
FIGURE 13. Intraspeaker variance.

# The Inland North



**Detroit Suburbs**  
(Eckert 1989)

# The Inland North



# Eckert (1989) Jock girl v. Burnout girl

Melody



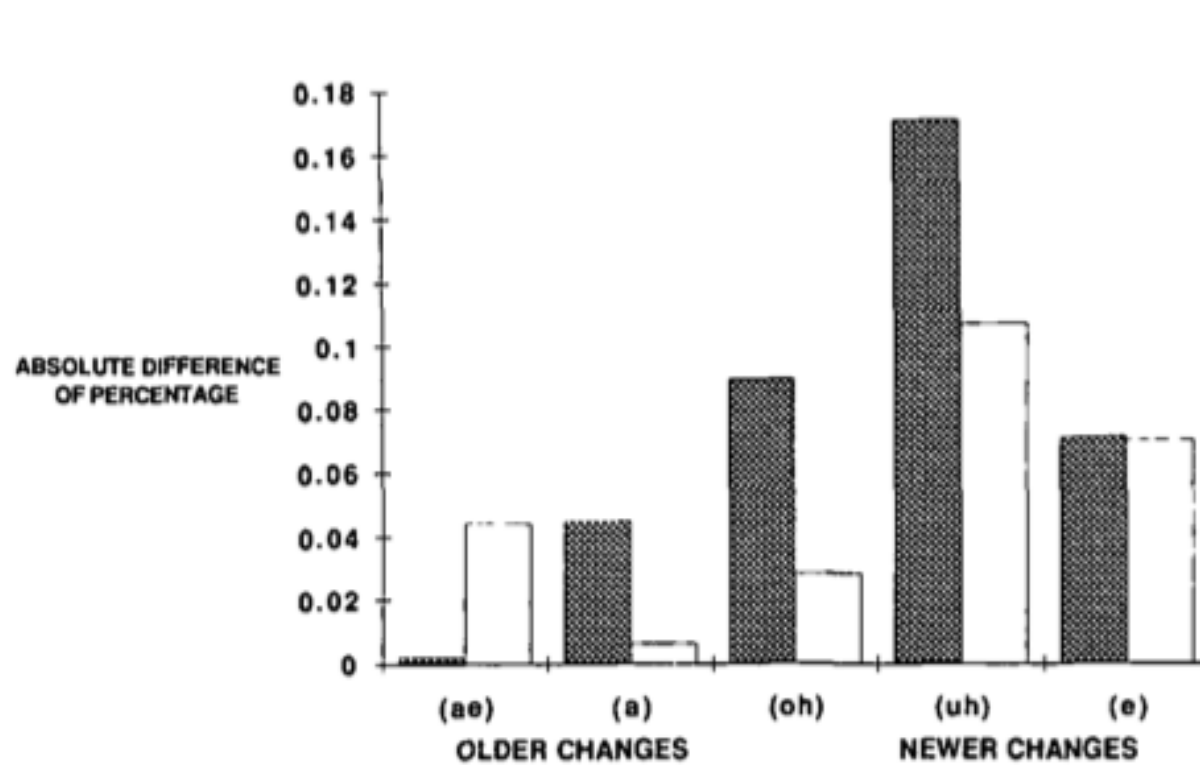
- “But I -- I think Denise is **probably** the only--Denise and Debbie--both of them are **probably** the only two people I could just tell everything to.”

Judy



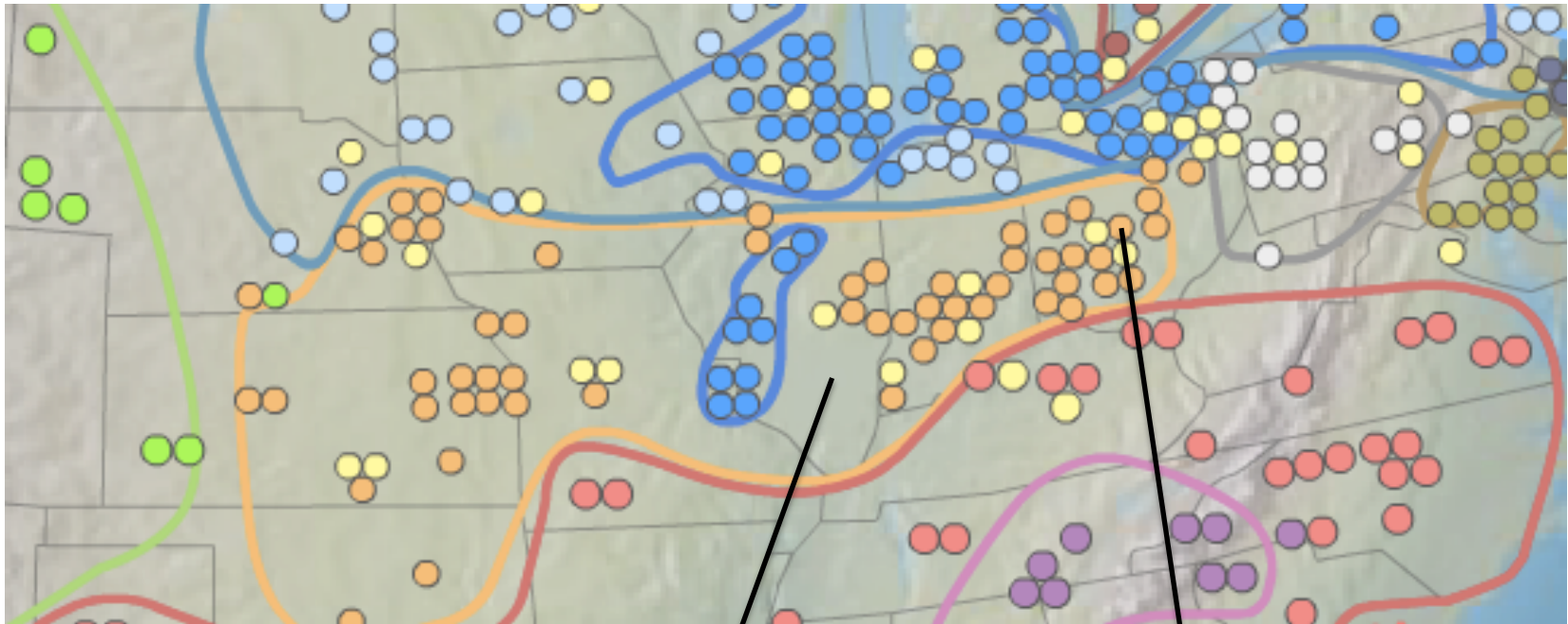
- “I guess it just kind of led **on**. **Seventh** grade I had my first cigarette. I **thought** that was cool.”

# Eckert (1989)



Higher bar =  
bigger  
difference  
between jocks  
& burnouts

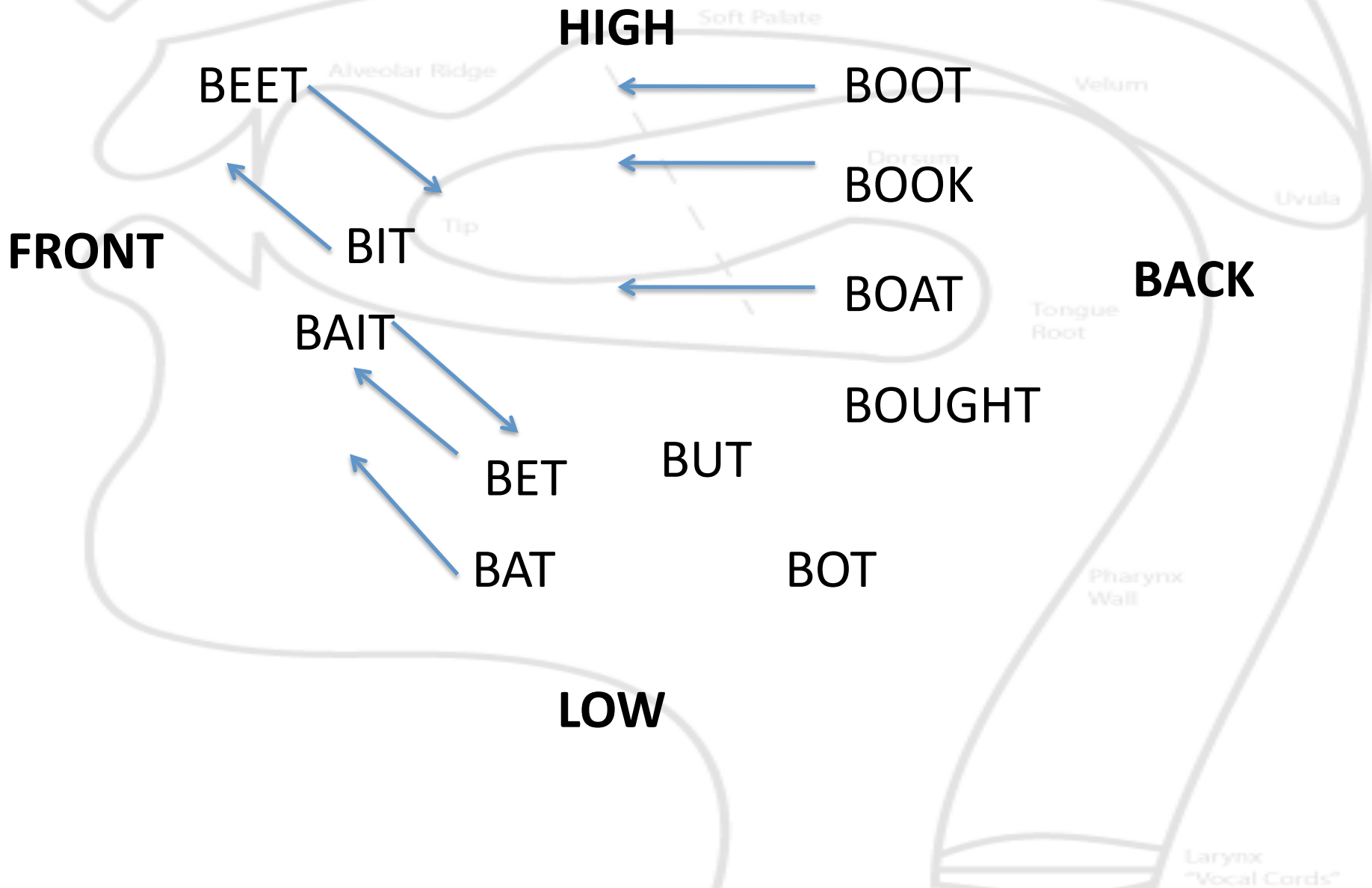
# Midlands



**Southern IL**  
(Bigham 2010)

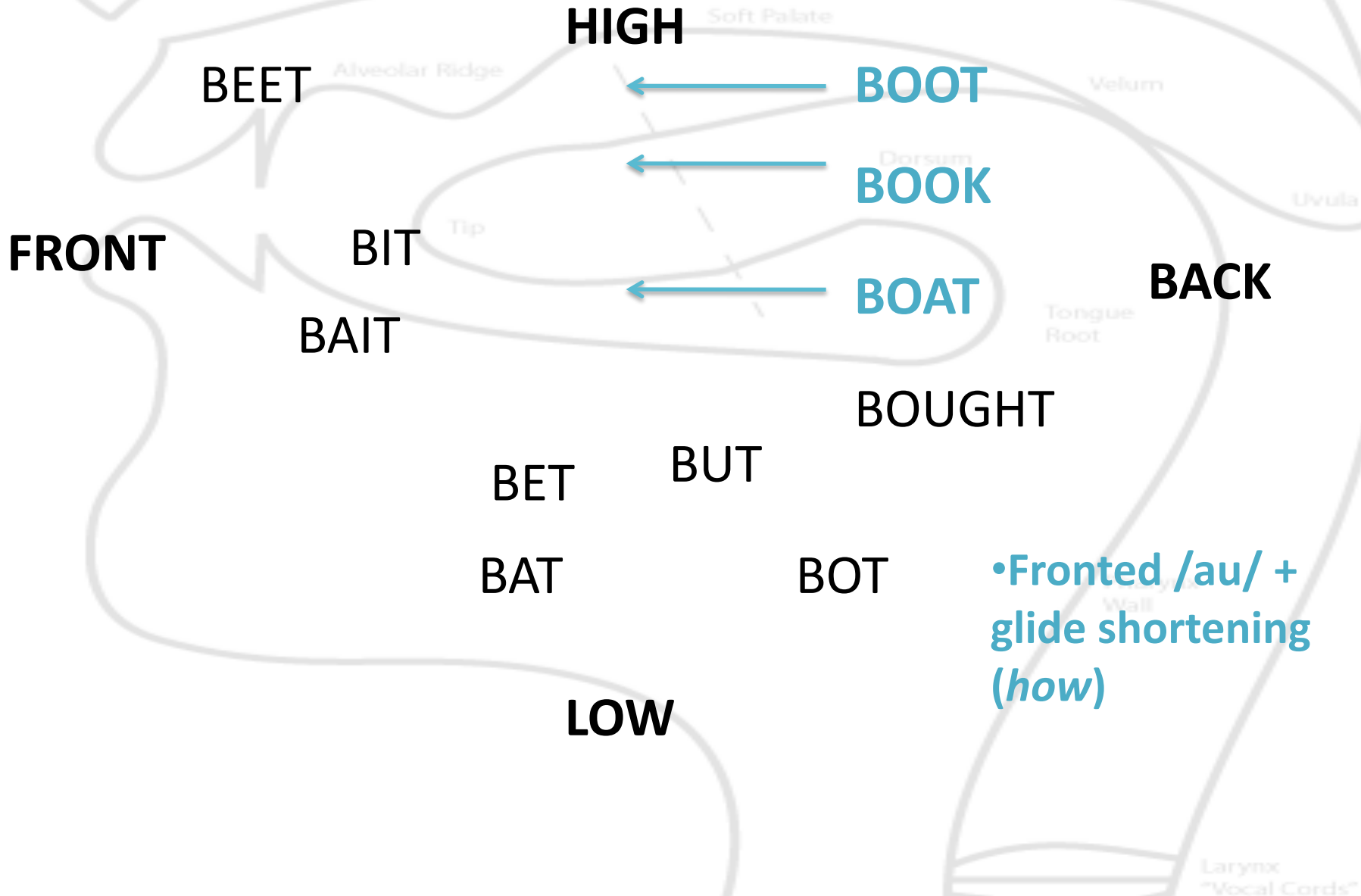
**Columbus, OH**  
(Thomas 1989)

# Thomas (1989)





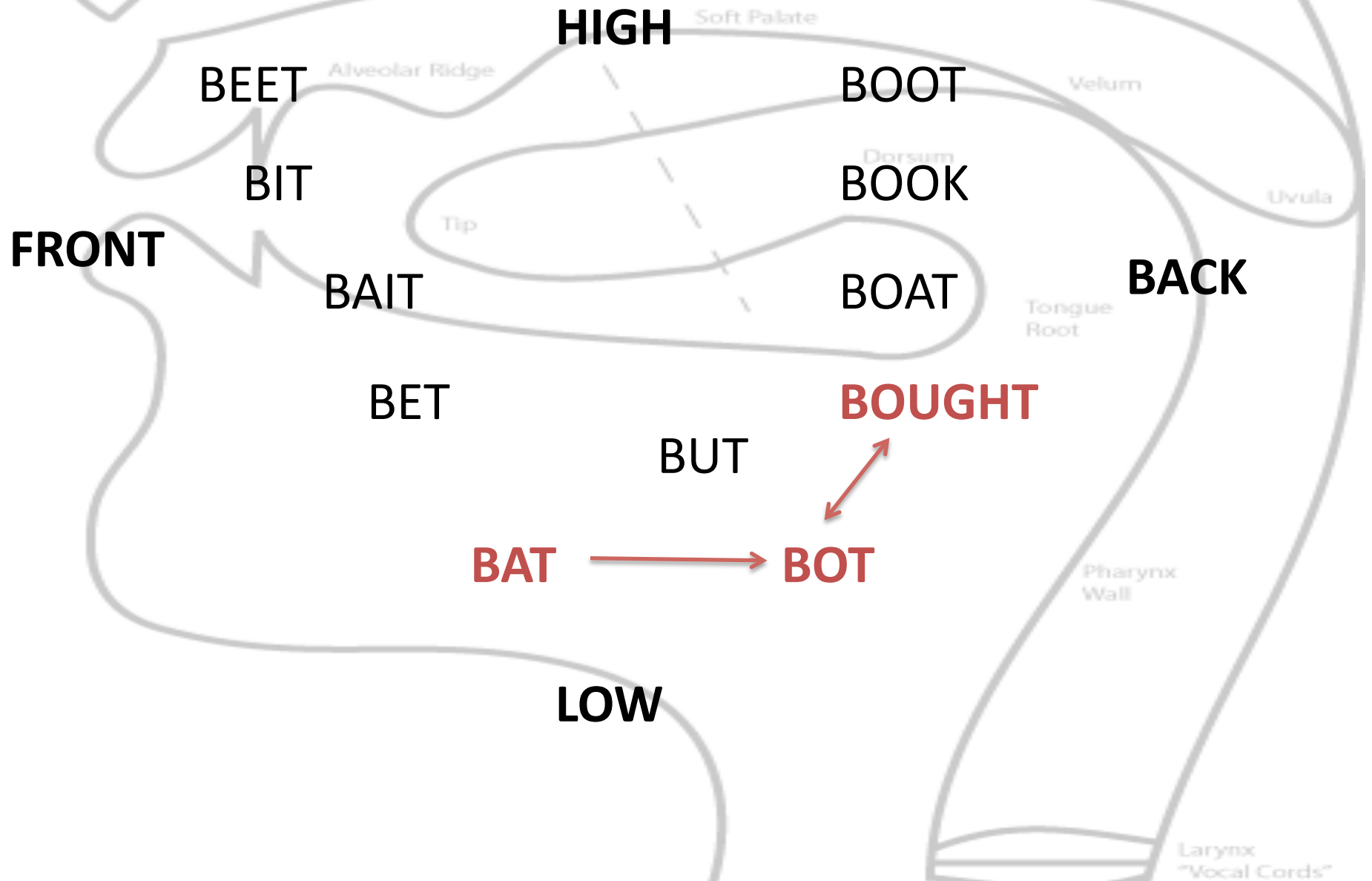
# Thomas (1989)



# Thomas (1989)

- /l/-controlled mergers
  - PULL-POOL
  - COLT-CULT
  - PULL-HULL
- /l/-vocalization

# Bigham (2010)



# Bigham (2010)

- **Community** versus **individual**
- Which are we typically using to talk about regional dialects?
- What differences emerge in comparing the two?

# Bigham (2010)

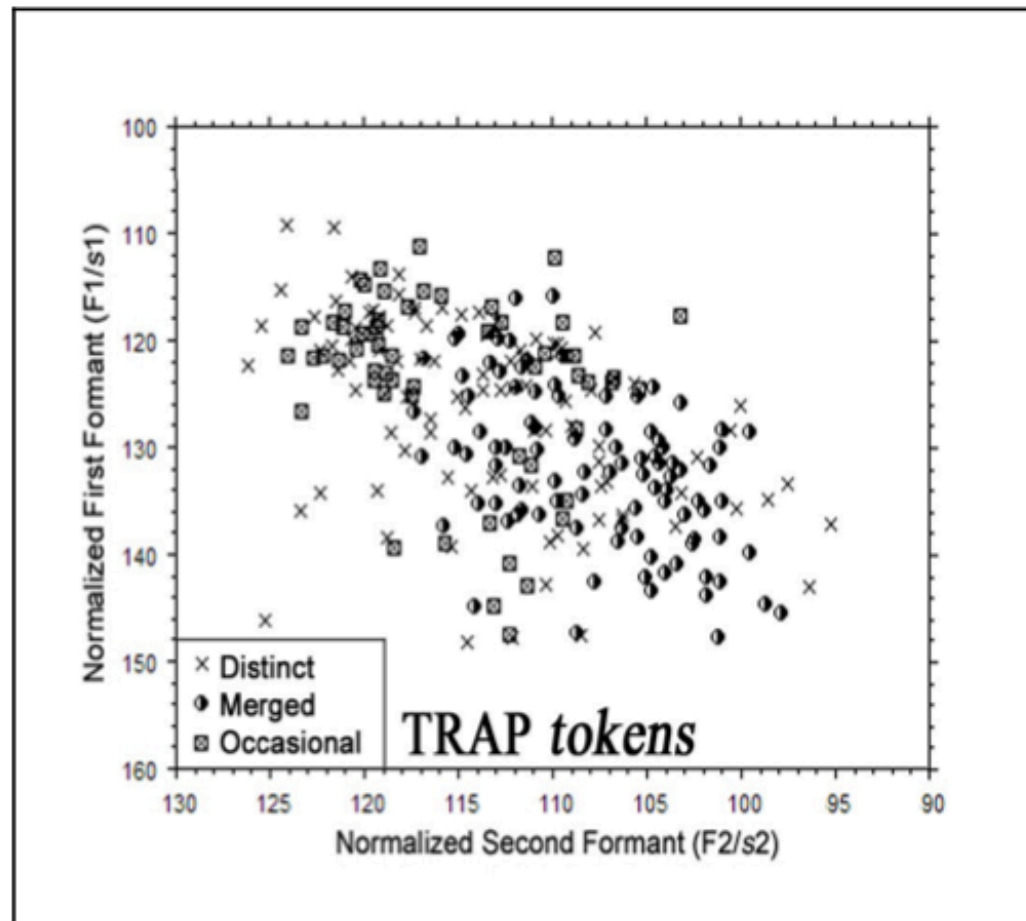


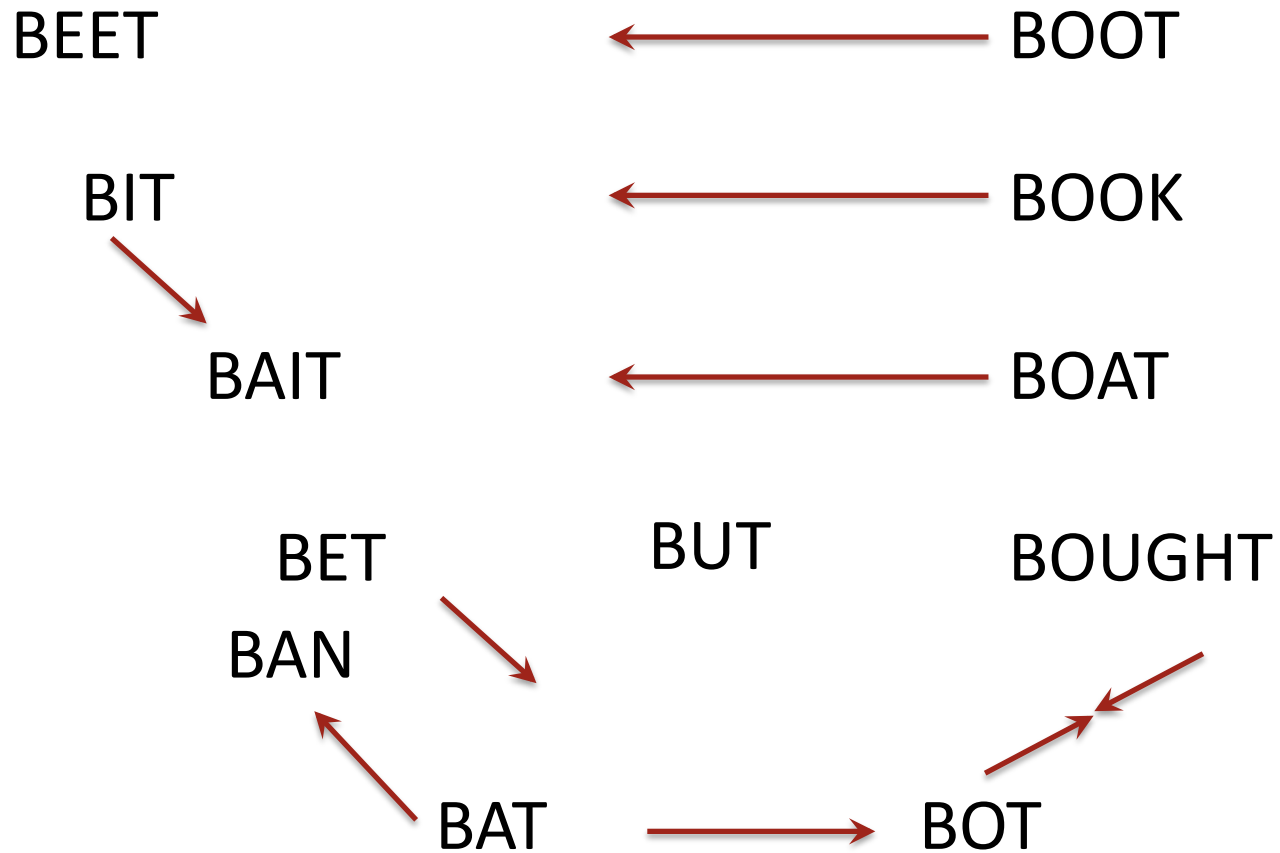
Figure 4: Productions of <sub>TRAP</sub> vowel tokens separated according to how a speaker produces the <sub>LOT</sub> and <sub>THOUGHT</sub> vowels.

# The West

**Redding, CA**  
(Podesva et al.)



# California Vowel Shift



# California Vowel Shift

BEET

← **BOOT**

BIT

← **BOOK**



BAIT

← **BOAT**

BET

BUT

**BOUGHT**

**BAN**



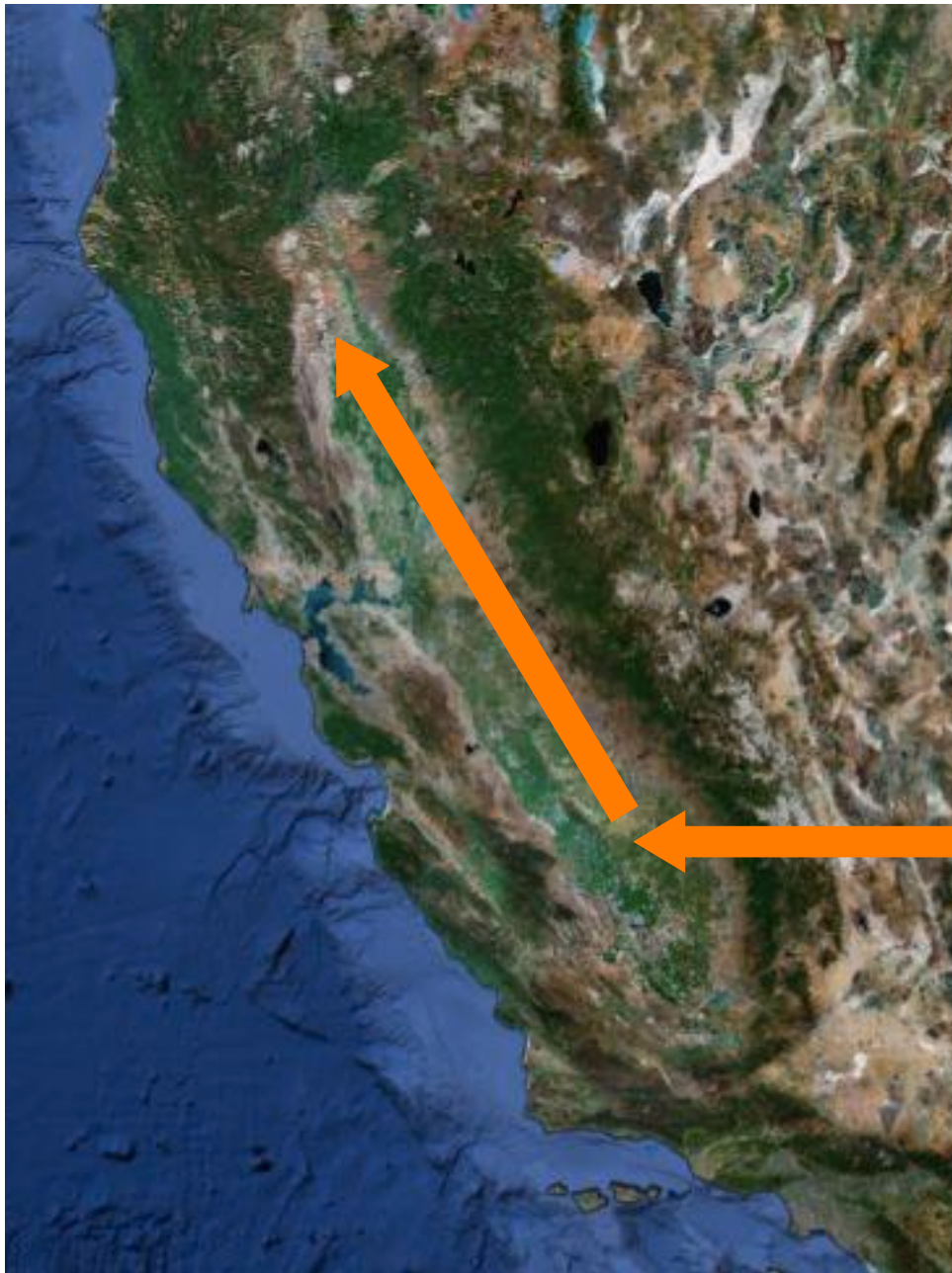
**BAT**



**BOT**







## Major Migration Patterns

1930s: 'Dust Bowl' migration

200,000 migrants from  
Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado,  
Kansas, New Mexico, Arkansas

# Podesva et al.

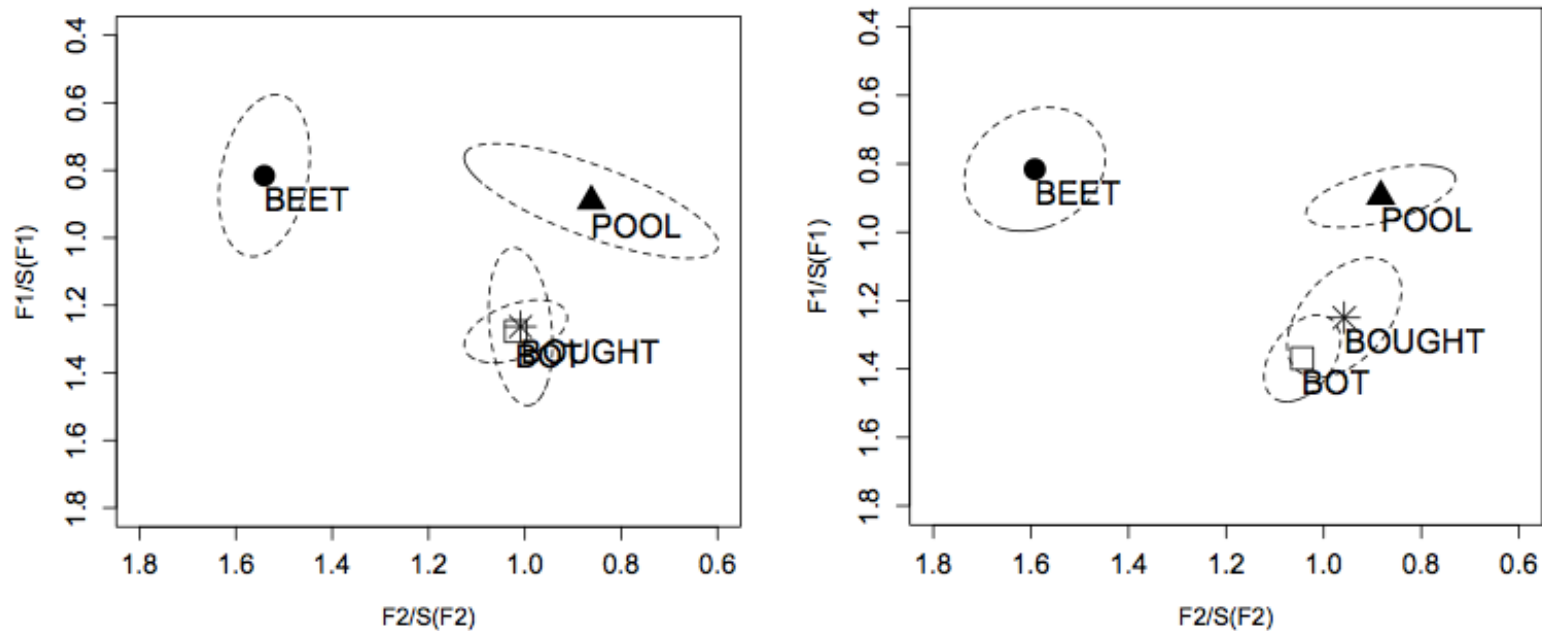
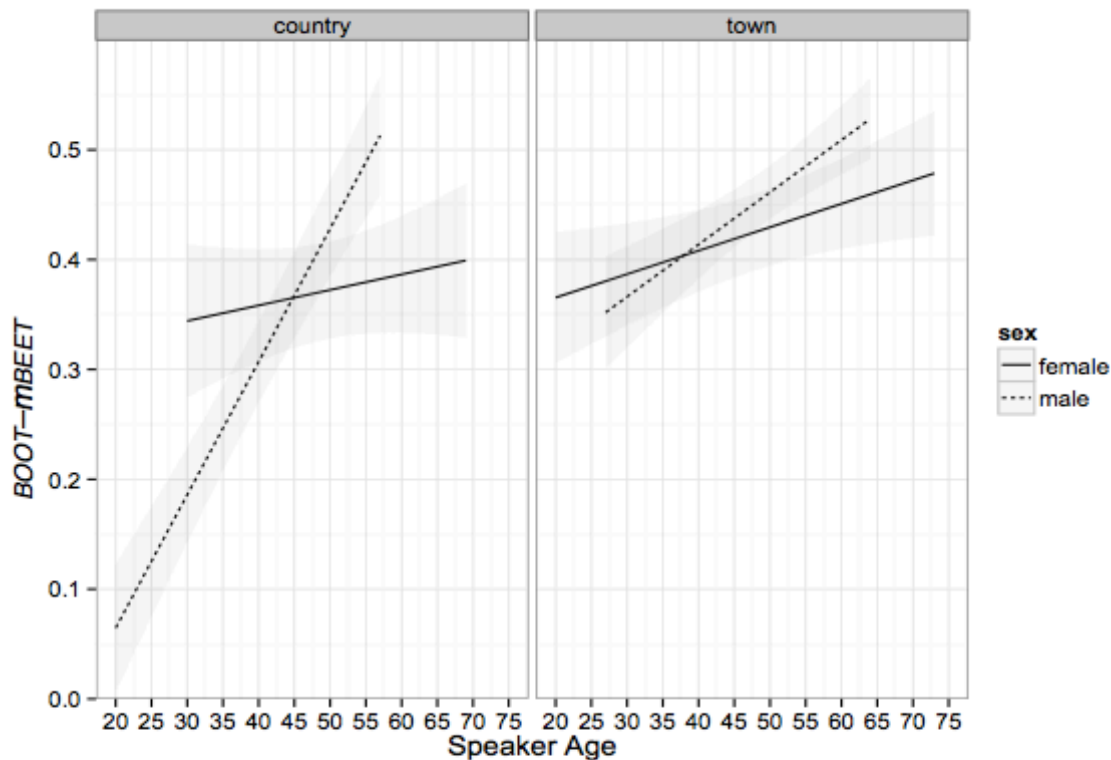


FIGURE 8. Vowel plots for two speakers who merge (left, 19-year-old town-oriented female) and maintain a distinction between (right, 86-year-old country-oriented male) BOT and BOUGHT

# Podesva et al.



**BOOT  
fronting –  
distance  
between  
BOOT and  
BEET (lower  
= more  
fronted)**

FIGURE 2. Normalized F2 distance between BOOT and BEET ( $BOOT-mBEET$ ) by age, gender, and orientation (lower values indicate greater BOOT fronting)