

1. Introduction and Methodology

For most individuals, language is fixed and remains stable throughout adulthood.

Longitudinal studies have, however, found evidence of lifespan change (eg. Sankoff 2013), most frequently in speakers undergoing social mobility or geographical relocation.

These investigations are still quite rare, due to difficulties in acquiring real-time data across a significant time span, making this study particularly interesting.

Morrissey has enjoyed a musical career spanning three decades, and was born in Manchester to Irish parents. He spent his childhood years in Hulme and Stretford, before later moving to Los Angeles in the 1990s.

My analysis:

- 2 hours of data
- 13 TV and radio interviews
- Time period from 1983 to 2013

Three time periods under study:

- 1980s: rise to fame as frontman of The Smiths
- 1990s: self-imposed reclusion in Los Angeles
- 2000s: re-emergence as recording artist

Four phonological variables:

- BATH-TRAP split
- FOOT-STRUT split
- Velar nasal plus: [ɪŋ] ~ [ɪn] ~ [ɪŋg]
- *any/Annie* homophony

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3. Conclusion

Only one variable, the BATH-TRAP split, exhibited lifespan change.

However, this study still revealed the irregularity of Morrissey's speech in comparison to working class Manchester norms.

His distinction between BATH-TRAP and FOOT-STRUT, and the absence of velar nasal plus, would suggest that Morrissey in the 1980s was anything but a typical Mancunian; despite this, he still went on to become one of the city's most iconic and revered exports.

Because the scope of this study also covered internal linguistic factors, even those variables that remained stable through Morrissey's life still showed interesting conditioning factors:

- BATH-TRAP: Nouns favour a more fronted BATH vowel, closer to TRAP
- Velar nasal plus: [ɪŋg] surfaces most often in nouns/pronouns, in pre-vocalic position
- *any/Annie*: A lower, more Irish *any* vowel is typically found in post-pausal contexts

Future studies could collect data from a wider range of interviews, ensuring a more equal distribution of interviewer demographics and facilitating an investigation into potential effects of accommodation theory.

References

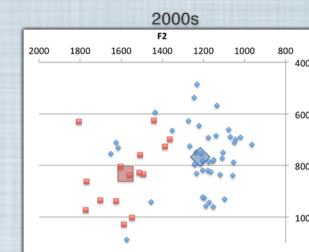
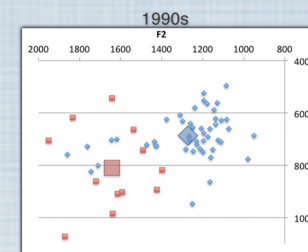
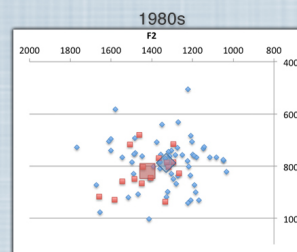
- Sankoff, Gillian. 2013. Longitudinal studies. In R. Bayley, R. Cameron & C. Lucas (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, 329-419. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wells, John C. 1982. *Accents of English: the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2. Results and Discussion

The BATH vowel is subject to regional variation throughout England (Wells 1982: 353):

- North: front vowel, like /æ/ in TRAP

- South: back vowel, like /ɑ/ in PALM

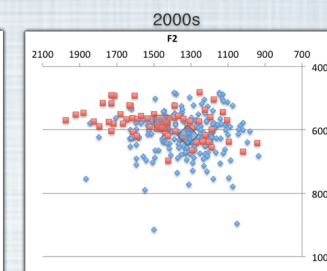
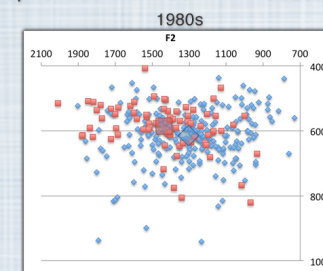


Figures (1)-(3): Morrissey's BATH and PALM vowels

During the '80s, Morrissey's BATH and PALM vowels are fairly contiguous; this contrasts with working class norms of Manchester (Wells 1982: 354) and is strikingly unusual. He exhibits lifespan change, but the direction of change, from a southern form to a more northern realisation, is somewhat unexpected.

The realisation of the STRUT vowel is also regionally stratified (Wells 1982: 354):

-North: homophonous with FOOT /ʊ/ -South: distinction between FOOT /ʊ/ and STRUT /ʌ/



Figures (4)-(5): Morrissey's FOOT and STRUT vowels

Although there's no significant lifespan change, a phonemic distinction is made between FOOT and STRUT that remains throughout Morrissey's life. Like the earlier BATH-TRAP distribution, this is unexpected and contrasts with the original hypothesis.

'Velar nasal plus' is the realisation of (ing) as [ɪŋg], in addition to the usual variation between apical [ɪn] and velar [ɪŋ]; it is said to be widespread in the North (Wells 1982: 365). Figure (6) shows Morrissey's use:

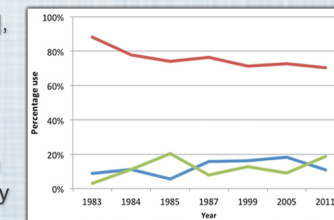
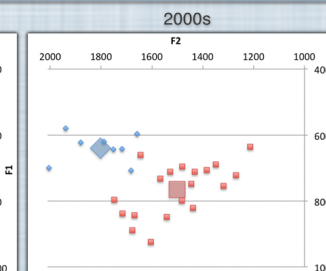
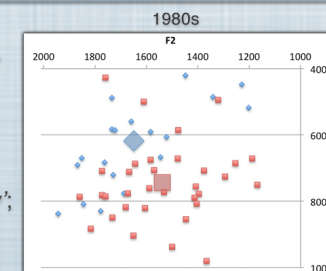


Figure (6): Morrissey's [ɪn] ~ [ɪŋ] ~ [ɪŋg]

It shows a life-long preference for velar [ɪŋ], though this drops slightly in later life, with an increase of the other two forms. This wasn't statistically significant, though, and so is unlikely to be evidence of lifespan change.

The influence of Morrissey's Irish heritage was also investigated; 'any' ~ 'Annie' homophony is a typical feature of Dublin accents (Wells 1982: 423).

There is a clear phonemic contrast between his vowels in 'many' and 'any'; this remains even into the '00s, indicating a lack of lifespan change, but a 'linguistic loyalty' to his Irish roots.



Figures (7)-(8): Morrissey's any- and many- vowels

