



Vowels in Cantonese and English of Heritage Cantonese speakers in Toronto

Introduction

The HLVC Project

investigates heritage languages spoken in Toronto. Its goal is to produce a corpus for research on language change and provide a framework for examining heritage languages in the GTA.

The ROP 299/LIN 495 Project in 2013-14 investigates Cantonese and English vowel variation across two generations and factors influencing pronunciation.

Cantonese

biggest non-English mother tongue in Toronto (3.1% of population, 2011 Census) <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca>

HLVC Participants

1st generation: born in Hong Kong, moved to GTA after age 18

2nd generation: born in GTA (or came before age 6), parents are 1st generation

Data

Sociolinguistic interviews conducted and recorded by community members.

❖ in Cantonese from the Heritage Language Database (Nagy 2011)

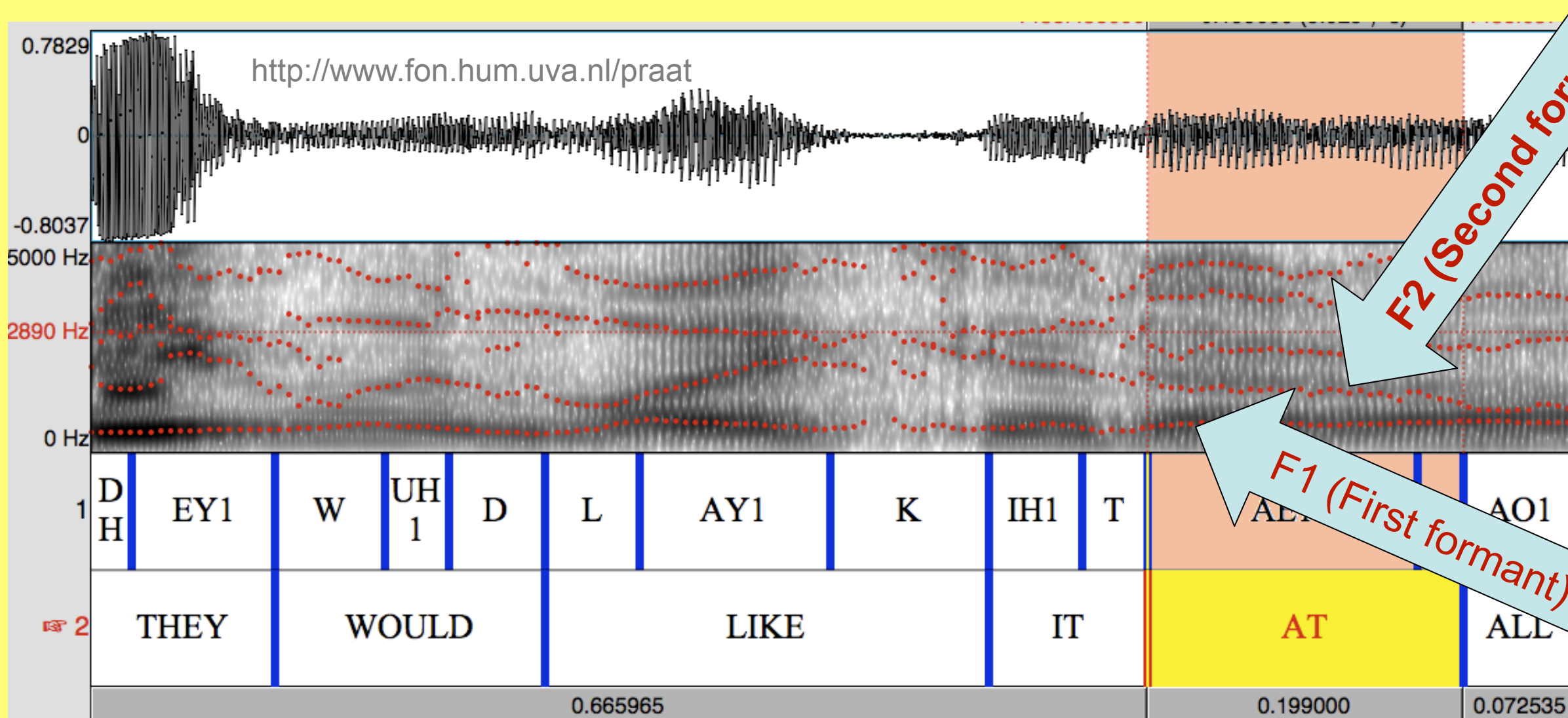
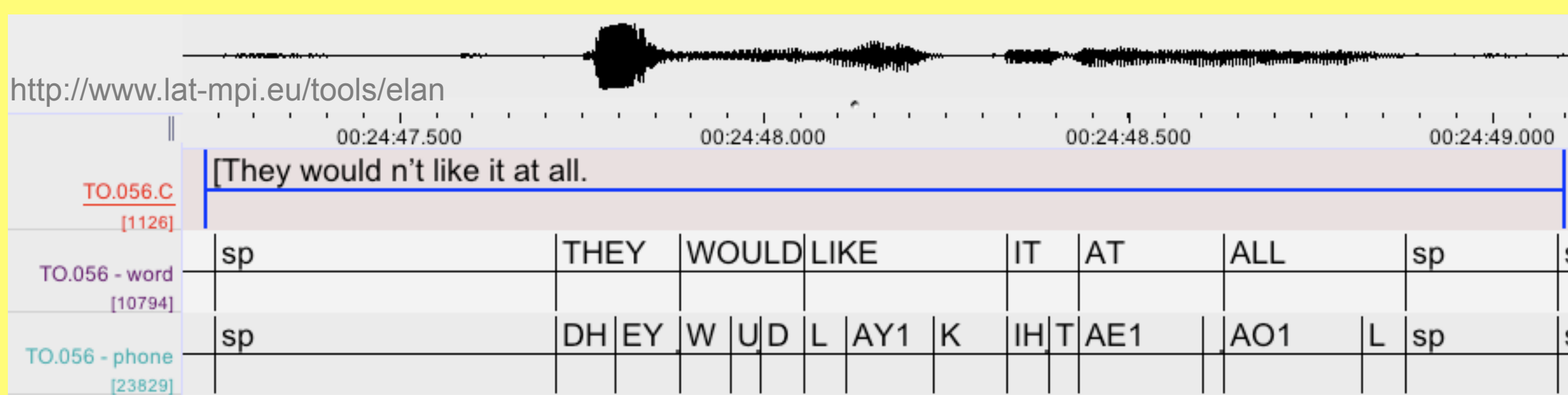
❖ in English from the Contact in the City corpus (Hoffman & Walker 2010)

Sample	Cantonese		English	
	Speakers	Done?	Speakers	Done?
1st generation	10	0	4	2
2nd generation	10	0	4	2
TOTAL	20	0	8	4

Methods

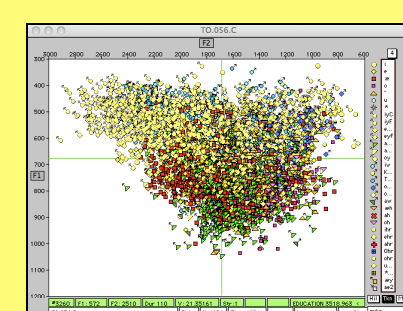
1. Transcription & time-alignment with ELAN

2. **Forced Alignment & Vowel Extraction (FAVE)** <http://fave.ling.upenn.edu>
 3. An online suite for automatic vowel analysis

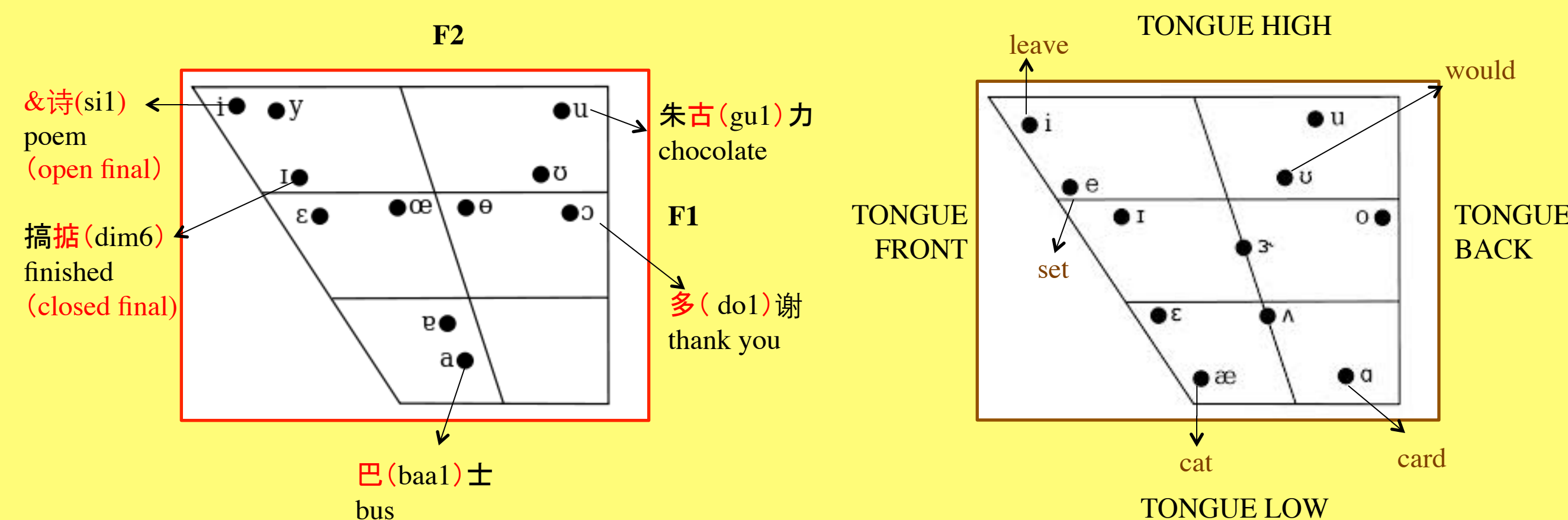


4. Plotnik to visualize vowel space

<http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/Plotnik.html>

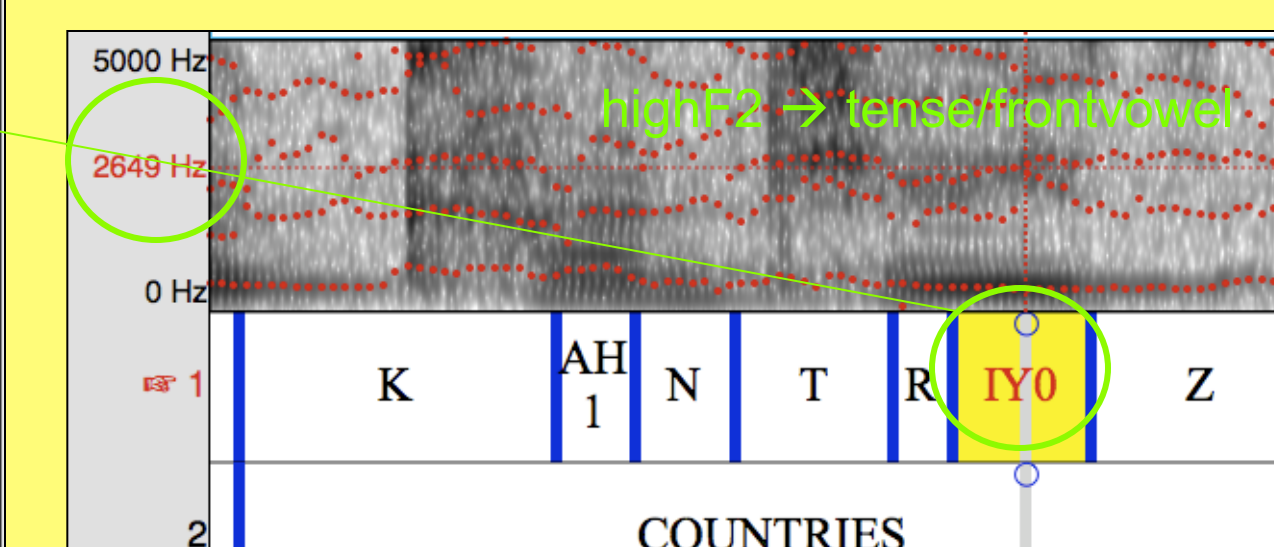
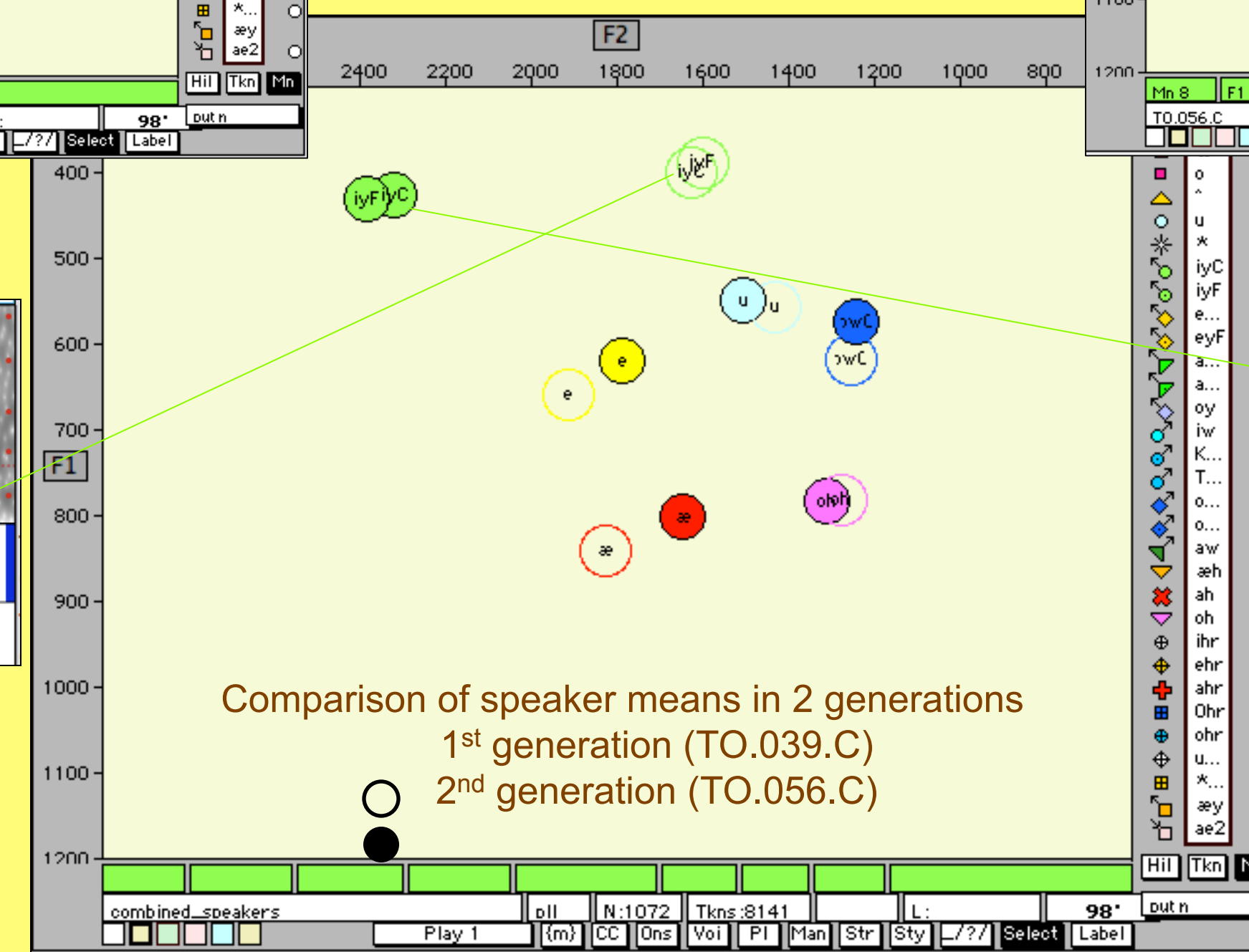
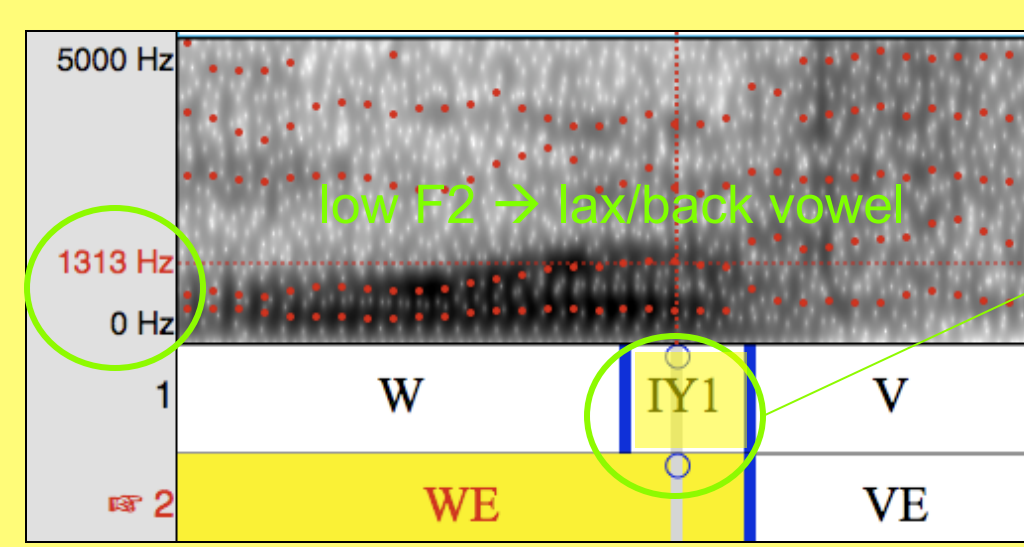
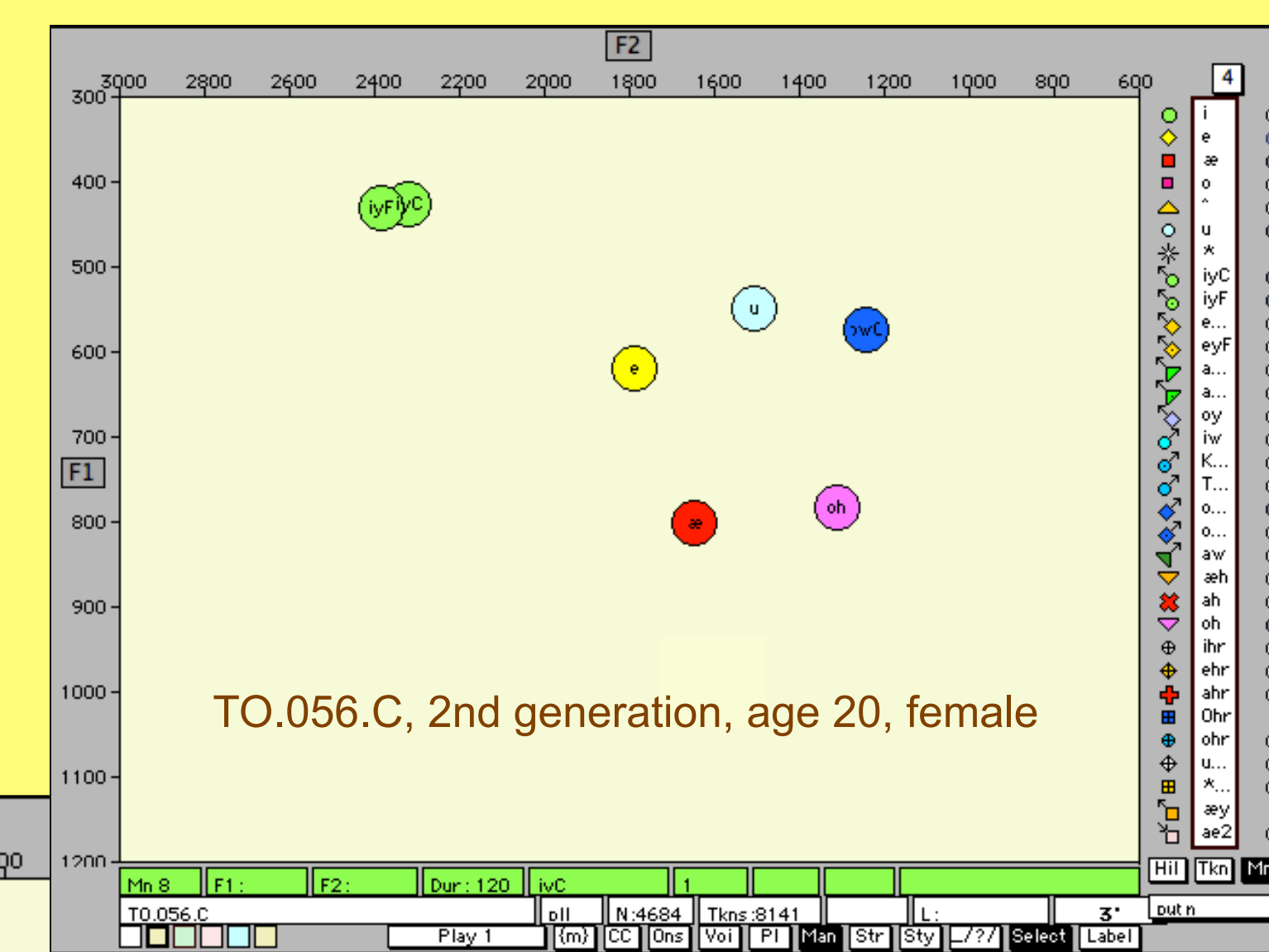
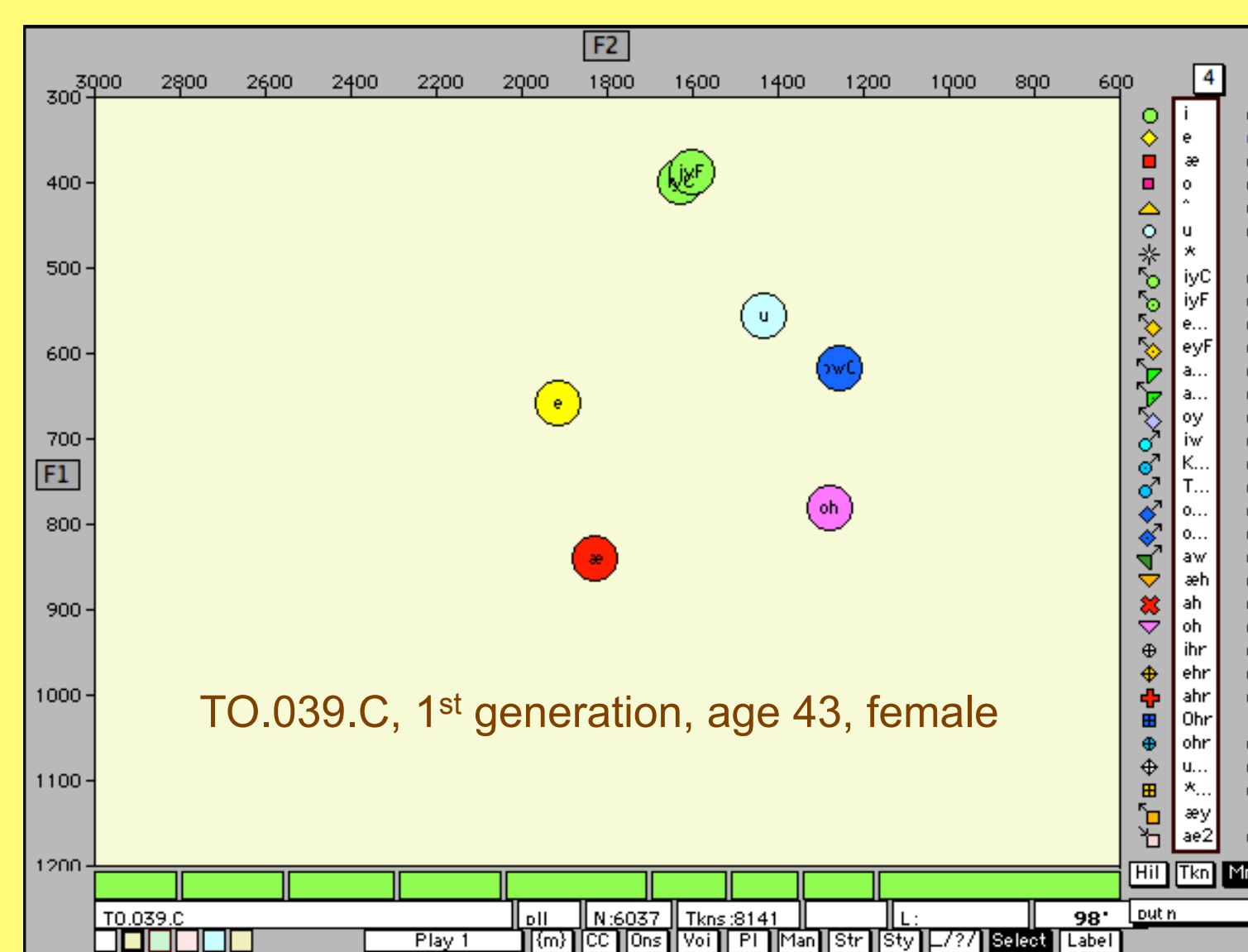
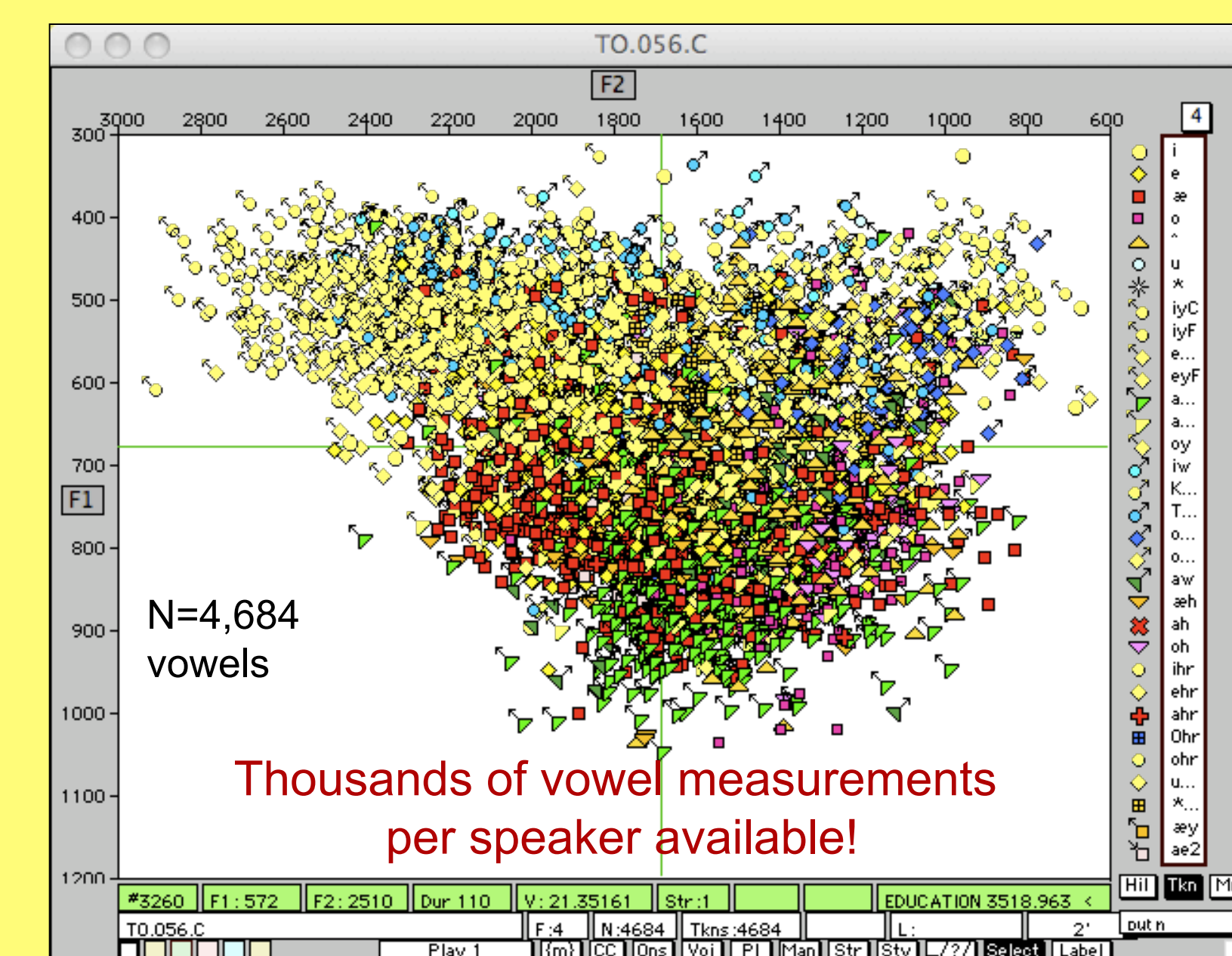


Vowels in Cantonese & English



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantonese_phonology; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vowel_diagram

Results



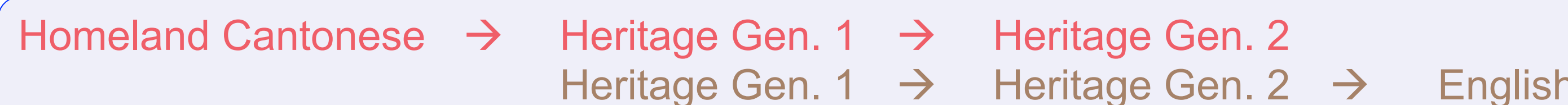
Preliminary Findings

More Cantonese influence on the Gen 1 speaker's English than on the Gen 2:

- /i/ in closed syllable is further back in Gen 1, as it would be in that context in Cantonese.
- /u/ shows a similar pattern: in Gen 1 the vowel is less fronted, as in Cantonese.
- For /æ/: the Gen 2 speaker may be participating in the Canadian Vowel Shift more.

Future plans

- We will soon have vowel measurements for Heritage Cantonese speech, and more English.
- We will compare ~247,000 vowel measurements from ~30 speakers.
- This will allow us to compare vowel spaces in both languages and between generations:



References

Hoffman, M. and J. Walker. 2010. Ethnolects and the city: Ethnic orientation and linguistic variation in Toronto English. *Language Variation and Change* 22:37-67.

Nagy, N. 2011. A Multilingual corpus to explore variation in language contact situations. *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* 43.1-2:65-84.

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