Overshooting Americanisation. Accent Stylisation in Pop Singing − Acoustic Properties of the BATH and TRAP Vowels in Focus

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Abstract
The paper addresses the problem of overshoot involved in singing accent stylisation. Selected phonetic features indexed as "American" and "Cockney" are analysed in the singing and speaking styles of a British vocalist, Adele. Overshoot, understood as a greater frequency or an exaggerated quality of a given feature, is characteristic of staged performance (Bell and Gibson 2011; Coupland 2007). PRAAT is used to establish the acoustic properties (F1 and F2) of the BATH and TRAP vowels, as well as the presence or absence of the BATH-TRAP split. The results show that Americanisation regarding the BATH-TRAP split in singing is present and the Americanised vowel tokens are "overshot", having higher F2 frequency compared with the regular British TRAP vowel.

Keywords: overshoot, singing accent, staged performance, stylisation, the BATH-TRAP split

1. Introduction

1.1. Accent stylisation in pop-singing

The style of speech may reflect speakers' origin, social status, as well as some personality traits; it may also be used purposefully in the process of constructing a public image. Among contextual determinants and influencing factors affecting the selection of specific style patterns one may list fundamental functional dimensions of a communicative event, such as field (the purpose and subject matter), tenor (the relationship between the participants) and mode (the medium of communication) (Halliday 1978), or the factors such as the setting, scene, participants or genre (Hymes 1974). From the phonetic perspective, accent style-shifting may also be used for image-creation purposes. The stylistic potential of English accents is employed not only in music, but also in film industry, where specific accents and the associations they bring are part of the character-building process.

As singing and speaking represent distinct modes, they are subject to different parameters. Due to the phonation demands involved of the former mode, the factors such as sonority, singability and euphony become significant and a number

of phonetic features may vanish, in particular – vowel length or intonation and rhythm patterns (Crystal 2014: loc. 2312–2316). Yet, this *technical* perspective does not explain all the peculiarities of accent choice in the context of popular music. The phenomenon was first described in a quantitative detail by Trudgill (1983), who in his seminal paper observed that some British pop vocalists, since the 1950s, had been using six characteristic phonetic features of the American variety in their singing style: flapping, rhoticity in non-prevocalic contexts, the lack of the BATH-TRAP split, STRUT vowel closing, LOT vowel unrounding, PRICE diphthong monophthongisation (the last feature is to be associated with the southern variety of American English).

The very phenomenon of style-shifting in pop-music was also noticed by Sackett (1979), who – focusing in his qualitative account predominantly on the American context – observed that some vocalists from the West or North of the USA (Creedence Clearwater Revival, Grand Funk Railroad, Bob Dylan) or Canada (Blood, Sweat and Tears) adopt certain southern American pronunciation features. He interprets this fact from the sociolinguistic perspective, bringing to light associations of the abovementioned accent with counter-culture and anti-establishment stance. Adopting the accent is seen as the way of showing solidarity with the underprivileged, although Sackett mentions other possible interpretations, as in the case of Mick Jagger's Nashville accent, perceived rather as indexing masculine power and chauvinism.

In order to explain accent stylisation involved in singing, other researchers have emphasised the significance of the text or overall context of a given song, as well as the musical genre it represents (Simpson 1999; Morrissey 2008). Both Beal (2009) and Gibson and Bell (2012) point to the American/transatlantic pronunciation model as a default accent in mainstream style. According to this view, it is the use of one's local accent in singing that indexes anticommercialism and greater authenticity. What seems to remain stable, though, is the dynamics of accent stylisation, an ongoing conflict of identities caused by the interplay of influencing factors.

1.2. Acts of identity: emulation constraints and overshoot

The theoretical principle adopted by Trudgill (1983) – the theory of linguistic modification/acts of identity (Le Page 1969, Le Page 1980, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), turns out to be particularly enlightening, while trying to account for style-shifting in pop-singing. According to its tenets, speakers modify their linguistic behaviour, as they want to "resemble as closely as possible those of the group or groups with which from time to time [they] wish to identify" (Trudgill 1983: 144). As most genres of the 20th century popular music have their origin in the USA (the South in particular), it is not surprising that British singers emulate the American accent.

However, for the linguistic modification to be effective, a number of requirements should be fulfilled: proper identification of the target accent is

essential, as well as sufficient access to the target group and the analytical ability to work out phonological rules and use them in a consistent way. Last but not least, the modification may be affected by the potential influence of other motivations.

As a result, this sort of imitation is typically imperfect, inconsistent and – crucially from the perspective of this paper – it may contain instances of under- or overshoot. Overshoot is understood as either a greater frequency or an exaggerated quality of a given feature of the target variety (Bell and Gibson 2011: 568), which is more likely if a performer does not use a given variety on an everyday basis. Gibson (2010: 121) mentions an instance of qualitative overshoot in the singing style of a New Zealand vocalist, Dylan Storey, though acoustic details of this phenomenon are not presented. The sung quality of the singer's DANCE vowel is more retracted compared with spoken New Zealand English, which Gibson interprets as "a definitive move away from an AmE style." In his auditory analysis, Coupland (2011: 586) points to exaggerated aspiration of [t] (in the word "hit") in Chuck Berry's spoken introduction to his live version of "Maybellene". Gibson (2011) provides an acoustic description of stylisation in the performance by Flight of the Conchords, a New Zealand comedy duo. In their song entitled "Inner City Pressure", a parody of Pet Shop Boys, KIT and DRESS vowels are hyperperformed, in particular at the very beginning of the piece, being, respectively, more raised and open. Gibson (2011: 618-619) interprets this exaggeration as an indicator of the shift from New Zealand English of the previous dialogue to the parodied sung English variety.

The phenomenon of overshoot is typical of staged performance (Bell and Gibson 2011) or high performance (Coupland 2007), due to its self-aware, stagey and sometimes hyperbolic nature. Staged/high performance is scheduled, pre-planned, and often characterised with heightened intensity, form-focusing and reflexivity (Coupland 2007: 146–154; Bell and Gibson: 2011: 562–563). In staged performance salient phonetic features, typically the ones that emphasise specific social meanings, are on display "for delight and critique" (Bell 2014: loc. 8836).

With regard to the singing context, the examples of quantitative overshoot of rhoticity are given by Trudgill (1983: 149) (see (1)). It turns out that some British singers inserted [r] simply after the vowels such as [ə] or [ɑ], without considering orthography:

(1)   a. Cliff Richard, "Bachelor Boy" (1961): You'll be *a bachelor boy…* [ər bætʃələr bɔɪ]
        b. Kinks, "Sunny Afternoon" (1966): … *Ma* and *Pa* [ma:r ən pa:r]
        c. Paul McCartney, "Till there was you" (1963): I never *saw them* at all [sɔːr ðem]

In the present paper, I address the phenomenon of qualitative overshoot on the basis of Adele's singing accent, with the focus on the (lack of) the BATH-TRAP split.

2. The analysis – aims and methodology

Adele Laurie Blue Adkins was born in Tottenham, north London, in 1988, and raised in West Norwood, south London. Her working-class spoken accent is quite distinct, especially compared with the Americanisation tendency present in her singing style. For American listeners, this clash may be sometimes surprising or even baffling, as Allen (2012) notices: "On Twitter one fan wrote: "Wow. I never realised that before. Adele has a really, really British accent hasn't she! But it's so lovely."[1] In 2016, Los Angeles TV station, KTLA, even used subtitles to help the audience understand the artist's spoken accent.[2]

The abovementioned contrast makes Adele's singing vs. spoken accent an interesting field for analysis. The aim of this study is twofold: (1) to describe the acoustic properties of the BATH and TRAP vowels, in particular in their Americanised sung versions, and, additionally, (2) to provide the general characteristics of Adele's spoken and singing accent with respect to selected features characteristic of American English and Cockney (considering both her adherence to mainstream pop and her London background).[3] The following features are taken into account, with the focus on (2aii).

(2) a. features indexed as "American":

  i. coda-r: ø (Br) → [r] (Am) in non-prevocalic contexts (*girl*, *far*)
  ii. the (lack of) BATH-TRAP split: [ɑː] (Br) → [æ] (Am) before some fricative and nasal consonants (a non-systematic process)[4] (*can't*, *pass*)
  iii. the LOT vowel unrounding: [ɒ] → [ɑ] (*hot*)
  iv. monophthongisation of the diphthong [aɪ]: [aɪ] →[ɑː] (*my*)
  v. flapping: [t] → [ɾ] intervocalically before an unstressed vowel (*better*)

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1 Allen, Nick. 2012. Grammy Awards: Americans baffled by Adele's accent. The Telegraph. [Online] 13th February. Available from: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/rockandpopmusic/9079988/Grammy-Awards-Americans-baffled-by-Adeles-accent.html . [Accessed: 12th February 2017].
2 Bagwell, Mat. 2016. Adele Gets Subtitled After American Audiences Struggle To Understand Her London Accent. Huffpost Entertainment. [Online] 4th March. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2016/03/04/adele-subtitled_n_9381700.html. [Accessed: 12th February 2017]; Westbrook, Caroline. 2016. US TV shows subtitles over Adele interview in case viewers can't understand her accent. Metro.[Online] 4th March. Available from: http://metro.co.uk/2016/03/04/us-tv-shows-subtitles-over-adele-interview-in-case-viewers-cant-understand-her-accent-5733198/ .[Accessed: 12th February 2017]; Powell, Emma. 2016. Adele leaves US audiences needing subtitles over London accent. Evening Standard. [Online]. Availabe from: http://www.standard.co.uk/showbiz/celebrity-news/adele-leaves-us-audiences-needing-subtitles-over-london-accent-a3195936.html 4th March. [Accessed: 12th February 2017].
3 A more comprehensive analysis of Adele's singing accent would require further research, which is outside the scope of the present paper.
4 For details, see Wells (1982: 134–135).

b. features indexed as "Cockney":

i. dark l-vocalisation: [ɫ] → [ʊ] in non-prevocalic contexts (*milk*)
ii. intervocalic t-glottalisation: [t] → [ʔ]/V_V (*better*)
iii. h-dropping: [h] → ø prevocalically in stressed syllables (*home*)
iv. HAPPY vowel alteration: [i] → [əɪ] (*coffee*)

Adele's singing accent is compared with her speech in order to evaluate the extent to which the observed differences show the stylisation effect used in singing only, and not belonging to her regular speech repertoire. The analysis is quantitative or qualitative and acoustic or auditory, depending on the feature. PRAAT software (Boersma and Weenink, 2015) was used for the acoustic analysis of selected instances of the BATH and TRAP vowels (on the basis of isolated vocal tracks and the interviews); while the remaining vowels and all consonants were coded auditorily. The quantitative information is provided with regard to the main aim of the study, i.e. the BATH-TRAP split, while the remaining features are analysed qualitatively. For the purpose of acoustic analysis, isolated vocal tracks were used, so that musical instrumentation did not distort the acoustic image of speech sounds. Sound excerpts were annotated in PRAAT *Textgrid* files and the values of F1 and F2 formants were measured at midpoints. The tokens that were excluded from the analysis as the formants could not be robustly established were: unstressed vowels with a schwa-like quality and layered vocal parts (unless the backing vocals were quiet enough for the lead vocal formants to remain clear).

The analysis of Adele's singing accent is based on the three studio albums she released:

(3) a. *19* (2008), comprising 12 songs, 3157 words, represented genres: pop, soul, blue-eyed soul
b. *21* (2011), comprising 11 songs, 3637 words, represented genres: soul, pop, r'n'b
c. *25* (2015), comprising 11 songs, 3593 words, represented genres: soul, pop, r'n'b

The acoustic analysis of selected instances was conducted on the basis of three isolated vocal tracks: "Someone Like You", "Skyfall" and "Rolling in the Deep." The auditory and acoustic analysis of Adele's spoken accent was conducted on the basis of the following interviews:

(4) a. Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
b. Youtube. 2015. Adele Best Interview – 'Hello' Success, Social Media and Breaking Records, [Online] 23rd December. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdFIvptxlUA [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
c. Degeneres, Ellen. 2016. Adele Gets Candid with Ellen, [Online] 18th February. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0A41LlIOTc [Accessed: 12th February 2017]

The overall description of Adele's singing vs. speaking style is given in Section (3), while the acoustic and quantitative information regarding the BATH-TRAP split is presented in Section (4) of this paper.

3. Adele's singing vs. speaking style: general characteristics

3.1 Adele's singing style

Before turning to the main topic of the paper, i.e. Americanisation, it should be stated that a number of Cockney features appear in Adele's singing style. As Trudgill (1983) observes, "Cockneyisation" trend emerged in the 1970s, and at that time it was typical of punk rock and new wave. Obviously, Adele is not a representative of the above musical genres; yet, she projects her London identity by adhering to some working-class features, in particular the ones that add to the singability factor, as they are more sonorous compared with the standard forms.

(5)   a. h-dropping: [h] → ø
         i. You had my heart inside of your *(h)and*, "Rolling in the Deep" (*21*)

         b. dark l-vocalisation: [ɫ] → [ʊ]

         i. He is a *real* lover, "Daydreamer" (*19*)
         ii. With eyes that make you *melt*, "Daydreamer" (*19*)
         iii. I let it *fall*, my heart, "Set Fire to the Rain" (*21*)
         iv. Deep down I must have always known/That this would be *inevitable*, "Million Years Ago" (*25*)

         c. HAPPY vowel alteration: [i] → [əɪ]
         i. I try to think of things to say/ Like a joke or a *memory*, "Million Years Ago" (*25*)

Apart from the added sonority value, it may be noticed that in some cases the use of Cockney may be perceived as an interesting stylistic device that helps to create a rhyme (or a near-rhyme), as in examples (5biv) and (5ci). Moreover, apart from Cockney phonetic features in her performance, Adele also uses some grammatical phenomena associated with non-standard, working class speech, e.g. double negation, as exemplified in (6).

(6)   a. You *ain't* seen *nothing* like me yet, "Make You Feel My Love" (*19*)
         b. When I *don't* get *nothing* back, "Tired" (*19*)
         c. We both know we *ain't* kids *no* more, "Send My Love (To Your New Lover)" (*25*)
         d. It *ain't no* life to live like you're on the run, "Water Under The Bridge" (*25*)
         e. With your loving/There *ain't nothing*/That I *can't* adore, "Sweetest Devotion" (*25*)

Along with Cockneyisation, some Americanisation/transatlantic pronunciation instances may be observed in Adele's singing accent. The examples of selected features that may be indexed accordingly are given in (7).

(7)   a. coda-r: ø (Br) → [ɾ] (Am)

   i. *Turn* my sorrow into treasured gold, "Rolling In The Deep" (*21*)
   ii. Will I *ever* know how it feels to hold you close?, "One and Only" (*21*)
   iii. And I swear you moved *overseas*, "When We Were Young" (*25*)
   iv. And *learn* how to be young, "River Lea" (*25*)
   v. *Learning* to fly, *learning* to run, "Million Years Ago" (*25*)

   b. LOT vowel unrounding: [ɒ] (Br) → [ɑ] (Am)

   i. I love to see *everybody* in short skirts, shorts and shades, "Hometown Glory" (*19*)
   ii. *God* only knows what we're fighting for, "Turning Tables" (*21*)
   iii. You put your hands on, on my *body* and told me, "Send My Love (To Your New Lover)" (*25*)
   iv. You couldn't handle the *hot* heat rising, "Send My Love (To Your New Lover)" (*25*)
   v. Your *body* standing over me, "I Miss You" (*25*)

   c. monophthongisation of the diphthong [aɪ]: [aɪ] (Br) → [ɑ:] (Am)

   i. *My* heart on my sleeve, "Best for Last" (*19*)
   ii. *I'm* starting to find *myself* feeling that way too, "Cold Shoulder" (*19*)
   iii. I let it fall, *my* heart, "Set Fire to the Rain" (*21*)

   d. flapping: [t] (Br) → [ɾ] (Am)

   i. Yes, I swam *dirty waters*, "I'll Be Waiting" (*21*)
   ii. Who would have known how *bittersweet* this would taste?, "Someone Like You" (*21*)
   iii. Treat her *better*, "Send My Love (To Your New Lover)" (*25*)

Inherent inconsistency of pop-singing style, noticed by Trudgill (1983), is confirmed in the case under analysis, as the above variants coexist with standard British forms, as exemplified by the non-rhotic variants presented in (8).

(8).   a. Like the *meaner* you treat me more *eager* I am, "Best for Last" (*19*)
        b. They melt my *heart* to stone, "Melt My Heart To Stone" (*19*)
        c. Please *wear* the face, the one *where* you smile, "First Love" (*19*)
        d. Reaching a *fever* pitch, "Rolling In The Deep" (*21*)

3.2. Adele's speaking style

A number of Cockney features may be noticed in Adele's speaking accent, selected examples of which are given in (9).

(9)   a. dark l-vocalisation: [ɫ] →[ʊ]

         i. It was amazing, it was *incredible*[5]
         ii. When you become an *adult*… and I'm not *old*[6]
         iii. This is like *real* life[7]
         iv. I'm just *emotional*[8]
         v. The more *successful* I get, the more pressure there is[9]

         b. intervocalic t-glottalisation: [t] → [ʔ]/V_V)

         i. I was trying to check *Twitter*[10]
         ii. I'm gonna sing for you *later*[11]
         iii. And the songs I was *writing*…[12]
         iv. The fact that I was *frightened* by it[13]

On the basis of selected interviews it is clear that Adele's spoken accent is not Americanised. It contains salient standard British phonetic features, for example non-rhoticity (10) or the BATH-TRAP split (see Section (4) below).

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5   Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from:
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
6   Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from
     : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
7   Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from:
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
8   Degeneres, Ellen. 2016. Adele Gets Candid with Ellen, [Online] 18th February. Available from:
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0A41LlIOTc [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
9   Degeneres, Ellen. 2016. Adele Gets Candid with Ellen, [Online] 18th February. Available from:
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0A41LlIOTc [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
10 Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from:
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
11 Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from:
     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
12 Youtube. 2015. Adele Best Interview – 'Hello' Success, Social Media and Breaking Records, [Online] 23rd December. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdFIvptxlUA [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
13 Youtube. 2015. Adele Best Interview – 'Hello' Success, Social Media and Breaking Records, [Online] 23rd December. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdFIvptxlUA [Accessed: 12th February 2017]

(10)   non-rhoticity:

> a. And *afterwards* I was trying to check *Twitter*[14]
> b. *More* than *ever*[15]
> c. *For* the *first* time in my *entire* life I feel like I'm dealing with myself[16]

4. Adele's singing vs. speaking style: the BATH-TRAP split in focus

4.1. Adele's singing style

Selected examples of BATH-TRAP split contexts are presented in (11). Interestingly, a contrast between Adele's debut album and the succeeding ones may be observed (11a vs. 11b).

(11)   a. ɑ: (Br)

> i. But you'd save the best for *last* like I'm the one for you, "Best For Last" (*19*)
> ii. Lately with this state I'm in I *can't* help myself but spin, "Crazy For You" (*19*)
> iii. Making up the *past*, "Daydreamer" (*19*)
> iv. I'm taking these *chances*, "Best for Last" (19)

> b. ɑ: (Br) → æ (Am)

> i. But I won't go/I *can't* do it on my own, "He Won't Go" (*21*)
> ii. I *can't* help feeling we could have had it all, "Rolling In The Deep" (*21*)
> iii. I *can't* keep up with your turning tables/Under your thumb I *can't* breathe, "Turning Tables" (*21*)
> iv. I *can't* help myself from looking for you, "Set Fire to the Rain" (*21*)
> v. I *can't* go back, but the reeds are growing out of my fingertips/I *can't* go back to the river, "River Lea" (*25*)
> vi. They *can't* look me in the eye, "Million Years Ago" (*25*)

Somewhat surprisingly, considering Adele's image of an artist who Americanises her singing accent, the BATH-TRAP split turns out to be present on her first album, while on her succeeding two albums – it shifts to the American version. The quantitative analysis of the feature in focus is presented in Figure 1. The number of analysed tokens is, respectively on each album: 7 – 43 – 33. Admittedly, the set of available contexts is limited regarding Adele's debut album;

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14 Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]

15 Degeneres, Ellen. 2016. Adele Gets Candid with Ellen, [Online] 18th February. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0A41LlIOTc [Accessed: 12th February 2017]

16 Youtube. 2015. Adele Best Interview – 'Hello' Success, Social Media and Breaking Records, [Online] 23rd December. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdFIvptxlUA [Accessed: 12th February 2017]

more data would be necessary to draw firmer conclusions. Yet, in the general context of staged performance, and studio recordings in particular, every instance seems to acquire added significance: the artist had the possibility of re-recording a given fragment, and yet did not do this.
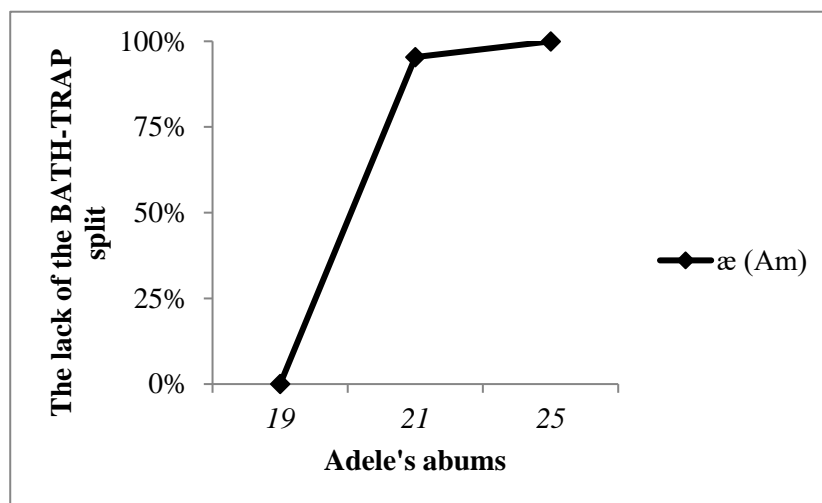

Figure 1. The lack of the BATH-TRAP split –
the comparison of Adele's three albums: *19*, *21* and *25*

The BATH-TRAP split style-shift is striking: on Adele's debut album the British version accounts for 100% of cases, while on the album *25* the split is 100% Americanised.

4.2. Adele's speaking style

As exemplified in (12), the BATH-TRAP split is observed in Adele's spoken accent, including the phrase that is very similar to the sung Americanised one (12b), namely, to the beginning of the song "Hello" (*25*), which features the Americanised version of the vowel: "I was wondering if after all these years you'd like to meet."

(12)   the presence of the BATH-TRAP split:
            a. I *can't* log in to look at stuff[17]
            b. I was wondering if *after* all these years you'd leave the message at the beep[18]

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17 Skavlan, Fredrik. 2015. Interview with Adele – The bigger your career gets, the smaller your life gets, [Online] 11th December. Available from:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16cH5a16Oig . [Accessed: 12th February 2017]
18 Degeneres, Ellen. 2016. Adele Gets Candid with Ellen, [Online] 18th February. Available from:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0A41LlIOTc [Accessed: 12th February 2017]

4.3. Spoken accent vs. singing accent – comparison

Acoustic analysis confirms the auditory impression: the BATH-TRAP split is not Americanised in Adele's speech. However, in her singing, Americanisation in this respect is present, with the BATH vowel very close to the TRAP vowel, both in the sung and spoken versions. The obtained mean formant F1 and F2 values are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. TRAP & BATH vowels: F1 and F2 mean values; acoustic analysis (Praat) based on selected interviews vs. the singing mode

mode	vowel	F1	F2	no. of tokens
speech	BATH	829	1235	15
speech	TRAP	891	1840	22
singing	BATH→TRAP	884	2158	7[19]
singing	TRAP	883	1900	19

A comparative overview of the two modes with respect to the selected feature is presented in Figure 2. It can be seen that the sung TRAP vowel that is a product of Americanisation is overshot compared with the regular sung British TRAP: F2 has higher frequency.
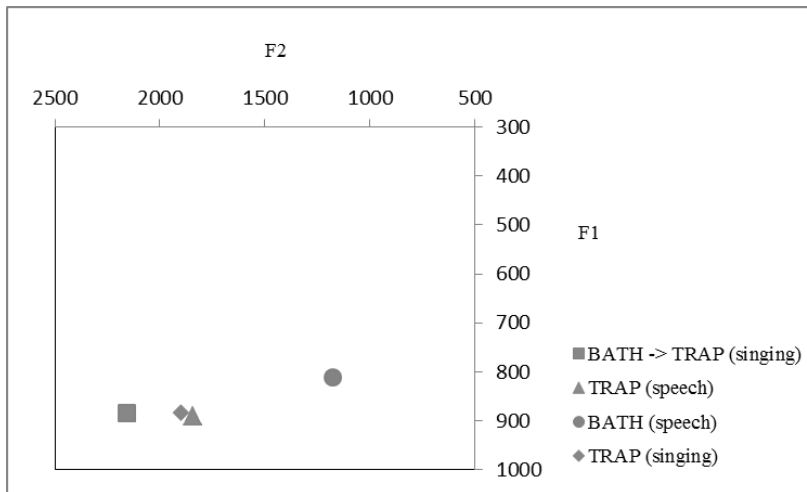

Figure 2. TRAP & BATH vowels: speech vs. singing

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19 All the instances of possible BATH words were realized as TRAP in analysed isolated vocal tracks.

5. Conclusions

With respect to the BATH-TRAP split, Adele's singing accent turns out to be closer to her speech on the artist's debut album (*19*). The gradual increase of Americanisation of the analysed feature on the two succeeding albums (*21* and *25*) coexists with increasing popularity and more global production context (her first album was released by an independent British XL label, while the succeeding ones – by Columbia, which is an American label owned by Sony Music Entertainment), with the represented musical genres remaining similar. Thus, the trend is opposite compared with Trudgill's (1983) account of decreasing rhoticity in the case of the Beatles, where rising popularity contributed to more *Britishness* in the singing accent. Trudgill also states that since 1964, British singers generally started "trying less hard to sound American." In the case of Adele's singing style in the analysed respect, "trying" seems to be noticeable as regards the quality of the BATH vowel: it becomes TRAP and is qualitatively overshot compared with the regular British TRAP vowel. F2 frequency value is more extreme, i.e. the vowel is more front. F1 is kept intact, possibly due to the sonority factor and openness preference in singing. The singer could have kept the regular TRAP quality, in this way retaining naturalness and consistency; yet, she manipulated the quality of the sound, possibly trying to emulate the target variety. Compared with the British variant, American English TRAP vowel may be more raised and tensed, especially in a pre-nasal position (Gordon 2004: 348; Boberg 2001: 17–19).[20] It should be stated that a pre-nasal context appears in both sets of analysed data: regular British TRAP (e.g. *hand*) and the Americanised TRAP (e.g. *can't*); therefore, the phonological context cannot be the explanation of the overshoot.

Thus, the inherent *conflict* involved in singing, as described by Trudgill, is still present. It is the sphere of multiple identities and voices: American and British, standard and substandard, remaining complex and dynamic. As regards the perspective for further study, the most adequate and productive theoretical framework that may account for this pattern of sociophonetic variation and style-shifting seems to be the usage-based paradigm (Bybee 2001), represented as an exemplar model (Johnson 1997; Pierrehumbert 2001). In this model, tokens are stored together with contextual information, including pragmatic and social indexation. Thus, in the BATH-TRAP split context, the "overshot" (fronted) TRAP vowel tokens are indexed to "Americanised/mainstream singing style" and become activated in the relevant socio-stylistic context. Foulkes and Docherty (2006: 426) describe the attractiveness of the exemplar model as follows:

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20 The phenomenon may also be perceived as an undershoot of Americanisation with regard to the original British TRAP vowel. However, given that the TRAP vowel is already present in the British phoneme inventory, I have taken this as a point of reference and adopted the overshoot perspective.

(…) it predicts that individuals store and can access those aspects of phonological patterning which are crucial in conveying indexical information. Associations are automatically created in memory between linguistic and indexical information conveyed by the speech signal, and, in any particular instance, listeners map phonological patterning not only against the meaning of the word in question but also against other dimensions of that particular token such as the identity of the speaker.

This statement brings to mind "the piece of knowledge as old as human speech itself, " as Tabouret-Keller (1998: 214) puts it, saying that "the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable." And in the context of staged performance, characterised with reflexivity and heightened intensity that may be reflected in fine-grained phonetic details, this approach may turn out to be particularly insightful.

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