

Place and Language: A Flexible Metric of Rootedness

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship of place to language has been recognized since Labov (1963), where speakers' feelings about Martha's Vineyard were crucial in understanding vowel centralization. Since then, many studies have incorporated place (e.g. Bailey et al. (1993); Johnstone et al. (2006); Dodsworth (2008); Johnstone and Kiesling (2008); Hall-Lew (2009)). However, the use of differing methodologies and measures makes comparison and contrast of the importance of place across different communities and social contexts prob-

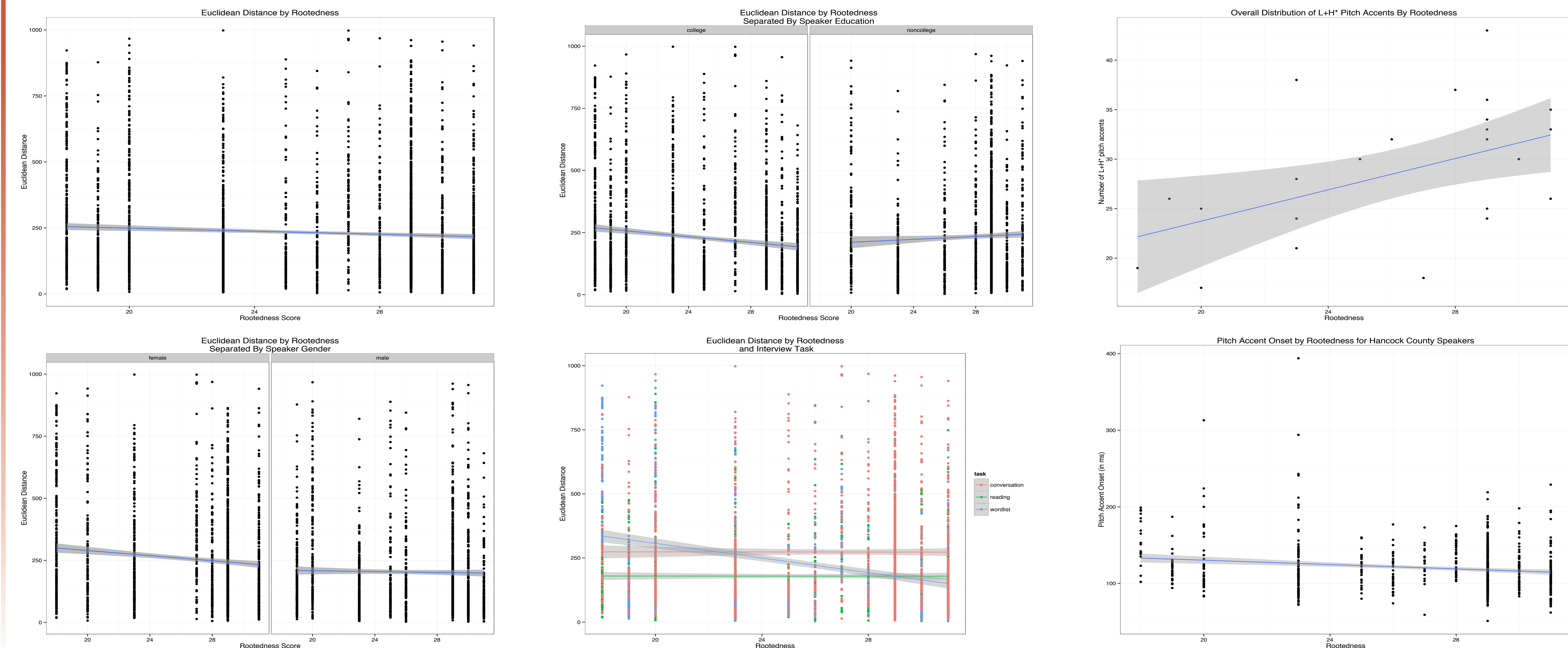
lematic. To resolve this, I present a way to quantitatively measure place-attachment using a Rootedness Metric (RM) that is both adaptable and comparable, permitting more nuanced understandings of place and language. My formulation of the RM was adapted from sociological place-attachment surveys (see e.g., Williams and Vaske, 2003; Williams, 2004) as a response to how certain variables, such as SES or social network, failed to capture the linguistic variation in rural Appalachian communities (cf. Hurst, 1992).

CURRENT STUDY

Using data from 24 (12 male, 12 female) speakers from a small rural community in northeast Tennessee, the present study presents a Rootedness Metric (RM) and how to incorporate its use in modeling linguistic variation. I analyze the realization of /ar/ monophthongization and both the rates and realization of rising pitch accents from sociolinguistic interview data. To arrive at a measure of local identity, I used the RM. I generated two mixed effect linear regression models, one with Euclidean Distance (EuD)

for monophthongization and another with Pitch Accent Onset (PA-ON) for rising pitch accents as dependent effects. I included relevant linguistic factors as well as social factors of age, gender, education, and rootedness in both models. For the frequency of rising pitch accents, I generated a mixed effect logistic regression model with frequency of L+H* as the dependent variable and the same social factors as above. In all models, logical two-way interactions were included.

RESULTS



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Within this community, speakers with higher rootedness scores and thus a more local orientation had shorter Euclidean distances, i.e., a more monophthongal realization of /ar/. Interview task, which I consider a proxy for attention, appears to be the primary driver of differences between more rooted and less rooted speakers. In this task, the more rooted a speaker was the shorter the Euclidean distance, while the less rooted a speaker was the longer the EuD. This suggests between a local and non-local orientation are most marked most when a speaker's attention to speech is at its height.

The L+H* accent was more frequent in the speech of more rooted speakers. Older speakers tended to be more rooted than younger speakers, (Pearson's correlation of .56). Thus, there was also an age × rootedness interaction. The Pitch accent onset (PA-On) was earlier more rooted speakers.

A researcher approaching this community with *a priori* categories that excluded place would be unable to account for this variation. Place is important for this community, and relationship to place is expressed linguistically. Hence, we must be sure to incorporate place and place attachment in our investigations.

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study shows that measures of identity, such as the RM, help explain some regional variation. Incorporating such measures into investigations of other regional features is ongoing.

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