The Accent of John Lennon 2: 
the distribution of the variants of /ʌ/ in speech 

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1.1 Introduction
In my last study (Sato 2013) the accent of John Lennon was examined, using both songs and speech (i.e. interviews) for the materials for analysis. This research is its successor. The aim is to examine the distribution of the two variants of /ʌ/ (the keyword used by Wells [1982] for this vowel is STRUT), i.e. northern [o] and southern [ʌ], as it displayed mixed results in my former analysis mentioned above. This paper also tries to suggest the factors for the distribution, such as geographical changes (the movement from Liverpool to London, then to the US), the degrees of (perceived) formality, the interlocutor, etc. His speech, (in most cases interviews), alone is examined this time. The analysis of songs, and the comparison of speech and songs is hopefully due to follow. Auditory analysis is employed.

1.2 list of the interviews
The following interviews are used for the materials for analysis. The details are found in section 2.

(1) BBC *The Mersey Sound* (1963)
(2) Various interviews in 1964 (details are found below)
   (2)-1. an interview before departing to the first US tour
(2)−2. the first US press conference in New York
(2)−3. *Ed Sullivan Show*
(2)−4. an interview after returning from the US
(2)−5. BBC *Ready Steady Go* (interview about *In His Own Write*)

(3) an interview in Australia (1964)
(5) Larry Kane interview about ‘Apple’ (1968)
(6) *Rolling Stone* interview (1970)
(7) *The Dick Cavett Show* (1971) (first appearance)
(8) *The Dick Cavett Show* (1972) (second appearance)
(9) Elliot Mints interview (1973)
(10) *Today Show* (1974)
(11) *The Old Grey Whistle Test* interview (1975)
(12) *The Tomorrow Show* (1975)
(13) *Playboy* interview (1980)
(14) *Rolling Stone* interview (1980)
(15) BBC Radio One interview (1980)
(16) RKO interview (1980)

2 Analysis
After the brief explanation of each interview, the nationality of the interviewer, and the presence or non-presence of the people interviewed together (co-interviewees) are shown, as they may be relevant to the use of the variants. The number of each variant used and comments follow.

Generally, the analysis of the interview is carried out until the point where the total of twenty tokens appear, but this rule is not strictly followed. Sometimes more tokens are analysed and sometimes much less
when the length of the interview is limited.

(1) BBC The Mersey Sound (1963): The interview of the Beatles is included in a BBC television documentary entitled The Mersey Sound. John Lennon talks rather seriously about their career. Interviewer: not certain, most likely British Co-interviewee(s): not certain, probably the other members of the Beatles Distribution of variants: [o] 5 - [A] 1 Comment: almost consistent use of [o]

(2) Various interviews in 1964
Total distribution: [o] 10 - [A] 7 Comment: rather high proportion of [A] for the early Beatle years

(2)–1. an interview before departing to their first US tour
Interviewer: British Co-interviewee(s): other members of the Beatles Distribution of variants: [o] 0 - [A] 1 Comment: just one use of [A]

(2)–2. their first US press conference at Kennedy International airport:
The press often burst into laughter by the Beatles’ answers. Interviewer: American press Co-interviewee(s): other members of the Beatles Distribution of variants: [o] 3 - [A] 1 Comment: a single use of [A], followed by three uses of [o]

(2)–3. Ed Sullivan Show: John Lennon humourously shouts at the hysteric
audience. ‘Shut up while he [Paul McCartney] is talking.’
Interviewer: none.
Co-interviewee(s): other members of the Beatles
Distribution of variants: [ʊ] 2 - [ʌ] 0
Comment: [ʊ] is used for both words.

(2)–4. an interview after returning from the US: The members of the Beatles talk about their American tour. They seem relaxed.
Interviewer: British
Co-interviewee(s): other members of the Beatles
Distribution of variants: [ʊ] 0 - [ʌ] 2
Comment: [ʌ] alone is used

(2)–5. BBC *Ready Steady Go*: An interview about John Lennon’s book *In His Own Write* is included in the programme. John Lennon answers not too seriously.
Interviewer: British
Co-interviewee(s): none
Distribution of variants: [ʊ] 5 - [ʌ] 3
Comment: the mixture of both variants

(3) Interview in Australia (1964): An Australian reporter interviews John Lennon. The other members are not present.
Interviewer: Australian
Co-interviewee(s): none
Distribution of variants: [ʊ] 17 - [ʌ] 9
Comment: the use of [ʊ] is about 65.3 % against that of [ʌ] with approximately 34.6 %
(4) Chicago Press Conference (1966): John Lennon answers the questions about his so called ‘Jesus statement.’
Interviewer: American press
Co-interviewee(s): other members of the Beatles
Distribution of variants: [u] 9 - [ʌ] 0
Comment: 100 % use of [u]

Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Paul McCartney
Distribution of variants: [u] 10 - [ʌ] 1
Comment: a very high proportion of [u] (about 90.9 %)

(6) *Rolling Stone* interview (1970): This is a massive interview by the magazine’s founding editor Jann S. Wenner.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [u] 17 - [ʌ] 3
Comment: 85 % use of [u] concerning the part taken for analysis

(7) *The Dick Cavett Show* (1971) (first appearance): John Lennon and Yoko Ono talk about a variety of subjects in a relaxed manner. They moved to the United States shortly before this appearance.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [u] 19 - [ʌ] 1
Comment: 95 % of [o]

(8) *The Dick Cavett Show* (1972) (second appearance): A serious topic about their court case is included this time.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [o] 20 - [ʌ] 14
Comment: The proportion of [ʌ] is much higher, compared to the first appearance about eight months before.

(9) Elliot Mints interview (1973): Elliot Mints interviews mainly about the Beatles.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): none
Distribution of variants: [o] 10 - [ʌ] 2
Comment: The proportion of [o] is much higher compared to 1972, 1974 and 1975 interviews.

(10) *Today Show* (1974): The analyzed part of the interview mainly concerns the Beatles.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): none
Distribution of variants: [o] 11 - [ʌ] 11
Comment: The use of [ʌ] equals to that of [o] for the first time in this survey.

(11) *The Old Grey Whistle Test* interview (1975): The analyzed part of this interview by BBC concerns living in New York
Interviewer: British
Co-interviewee(s): none
Distribution of variants: [o] 14 - [ʌ] 13
Comment: Close to equal proportion of [ʌ] to [o] continues (about 47.8 %).

(12) *The Tomorrow Show* (1975): John Lennon talks about a variety of topics in an American TV show called *The Tomorrow Show*.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): none
Distribution of variants: [o] 12 - [ʌ] 11
Comment: nearly equal proportion of [ʌ] (about 48.1 %) to that of [o]

(13) *Playboy* interview (1980): This interview was conducted in September. The analyzed parts mainly concern cooking and song writing.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [o] 2 - [ʌ] 9
Comment: [ʌ] gains the majority for the first time in this survey, at least as to the parts used for this analysis.

Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [o] 16 - [ʌ] 4
Comment: The balance is reversed again, with [o] having a much higher percentage.
(15) BBC Radio One interview (1980): This interview was held on December 6th in the Hit Factory studio. The analyzed part concerns the meeting with Yoko Ono.
Interviewer: British
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [o] 13 - [ʌ] 7
Comment: 65 percentage use of [o]

(16) RKO interview (1980): This interview was given at his apartment on December 8th, the day he died. The analyzed part concerns raising their son Sean.
Interviewer: American
Co-interviewee(s): Yoko Ono
Distribution of variants: [o] 10 - [ʌ] 12
Comment: [ʌ] has the majority for the second time in this survey.

3. Summary
As many speakers whose native accent differs from the standard one do, John Lennon seems to be aware of the differences between the two, at least concerning the item analyzed in this study, and he uses both variants.
FIGURE 1

Distribution of [u] and [ʌ] for each interview
(number in the bar = number of tokens)

1963 MERSEY SOUND  |  [u]  |  [ʌ]  |
1964 VARIOUS       |  10  |   7  |
1964 AUSTRALIA     |  17  |   9  |
1966 CHICAGO       |  9   |  10  |
1968 LARRY KANE    |  10  |   1  |
1970 ROLLING STONE |  17  |   3  |
1971 DICK CAVETT 1ST|  19  |   1  |
1972 DICK CAVETT 2ND|  20  |  14  |
1973 ELLIOT MINTS  |  10  |   2  |
1974 TODAY SHOW    |  11  |  11  |
1975 OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST |  14  |  13  |
1975 TOMORROW SHOW |  12  |  11  |
1980 AUGUST PLAYBOY |   2  |   9  |
1980 DEC. 5TH ROLLING STONE |  16  |   4  |
1980 DEC. 6TH BBC    |  13  |   7  |
1980 DEC. 8TH RKO    |  10  |  12  |
3.1 UK period

3.1.1 Early Beatle years 1963-1964

For *The Mersey Sound* interview (1963), which is the earliest in this study, John Lennon uses mostly [ʊ], which seems reasonable considering the fact that he had been living in Liverpool until the summer of 1963, and the interview seems to have taken place at the end of August in Manchester. But for the interviews in 1964, the results are mixed. Touring abroad may have affected this result. Notwithstanding, the variant [ʊ] has the total majority.

3.1.2 Mid to late Beatle years 1966-1968

For the 1966 and 1968 interviews, the use of [ʊ] are overwhelming, with the proportion of 100 % and over 90 % respectively.

3.1.3 Early solo years 1970-71

Similar high proportional use of [ʊ] continues for the 1970 result, when he
was still living in Britain, and even for the 1971 interview which was carried out shortly after he moved to the US.

3.2 US period
Change happens for the 1972 result where the use of [ʌ] comes closer to that of [ʊ] with [ʌ] having some 41.1% and [ʊ] about 58.8%. With the exception of 1973, the proportion of [ʌ] becomes much higher throughout the 1970s results. [ʌ] has 50% for the 1974 result, and about 48.1% and 47.8% for the two 1975 interviews respectively.
For the four interviews in 1980, after the interval of about five years when John Lennon dedicated his time to his family, the results are again mixed, but what is significant here is that the variant [ʌ] finally gains the majority for the two of them. The conspicuous example is *Playboy* interview which has over 80% of this variant. Contrary to this, *Rolling Stone* interview in 1980 has barely 20% of [ʌ].

3.3 possible factors
Although John Lennon uses both variants, the following tendencies may be discerned. While living in the United Kingdom, the use of his native [ʊ] was dominant, which is unsurprising. After moving to the United States, the use of [ʌ] increased, which is again reasonable. Apart from this mainly geographical factor, the influence of other factors such as (felt) formality, owing to the kind of situation where the interviews took place, the kind of interviewers etc. have to be taken into consideration, as has been suggested by other studies, to examine the distribution of these variants fully. However, such considerations will have to be tested with larger data and much caution.
References


Wales, Katie. 2006. *Northern English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press.

**DVDs**

*Lennon Legend*. EMI. 2003