

# Ezra Koenig: Identity and the Phonology of an Indie Rocker

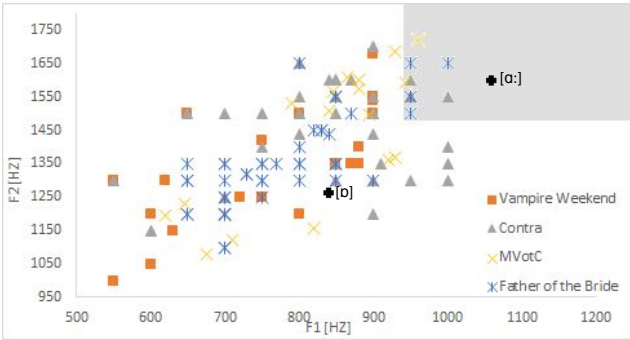
Dylan Flaks, Ben Groot & Leonie Muller

Introduction	Research questions	Methodology	Hypotheses
<p>British mainstream singers use prototypical American features during performance (Simpson 1999).</p> <p>British indie singers do not use those prototypical features when singing.</p> <p>American indie singer Ezra Koenig (Vampire Weekend) seems not to use prototypical American features.</p>	<p>To what extent does Ezra Koenig, singer of the American band Vampire Weekend, use prototypical British features to associate with the mid-2000s British indie-pop/rock genre?</p> <p>To what extent does he maintain the use of the prototypical American features associated with mainstream rock and pop music?</p> <p>To what extent do these features change over time, as the band's genre and popularity change?</p>	<p>1) Tokens of three phonological features to measure Britishization vs Americanization of pronunciation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Non-prevocalic [r] (as in girl or father)</li><li>- LOT vowel of British and American English (as in cross)</li><li>- Intervocalic [t] (as in little)</li></ul> <p>2) Extracted sounds from isolated vocals</p> <p>3) Analyzed place of articulation, duration and intensity of phonological features, adjusted for singing performance</p>	<p>1) Intervocalic /t<sup>h</sup>/ and /ʔ/ will occur infrequently, with the USA-5 predicted /d/ maintaining. This is in part due to singing technique.</p> <p>2) Hybridization of features, in which rounding is more rounded than the USA-5 model, but not matching British prototypes.</p> <p>3) Use of British features will decline in the fourth album.</p>

## Results

- Koenig's singing style remains non-rhotic throughout his career
- LOT vowel usage a midpoint between American and British pronunciation. No change over time.
- Prototypical American usage of intervocalic [t] as /d/

Album	non-prevocalic /r/		LOT		intervocalic /t/		# of Tokens
	USA-5	Non	USA-5	Non	USA-5	Non	
Vampire Weekend	0	28	0	21	15	0	64
Contra Modern	0	31	3	23	13	2	72
Vampires of the City	0	20	3	14	16	1	54
Father of the Bride	0	33	4	39	18	2	96
Total	0	112	10	97	62	5	286



**Note:** Grey area marks USA-5 threshold.

## Discussion

- 1) Intervocalic [t] fell entirely within USA-5 threshold, but could be influenced by singing techniques.
- 2) LOT vowel roundedness fell majority outside the USA-5 threshold, overshooting the roundedness.
- 3) Non-prevocalic [r] fell outside the USA-5 threshold, another overshoot. (Trudgill, 1997; Konert-Panek, 2018)
- 4) Use of USA-5 features did *not* decline on the fourth album, marking a consistent performance identity

## References

Konert-Panek, M. (2018). Singing Accent Americanisation on the Light of Frequency Effects: LOT Unrounding and PRICE monophthongisation in Focus. *Research in Language 2: 155-168*

Simpson, P. (1999). Language, culture and identity: With (another) look at accents in pop and rock singing. *Multilingua, 18*(4), 343-368

Trudgill, P. (1997). Acts of Conflicting Identity: The Sociolinguistic of British Pop-song Pronunciation. In: Coupland, N., Jaworski, A. (eds) *Sociolinguistics. Modern Linguistics Series*. Palgrave, London.