

Charalambos Themistocleous

[www.charalambosthemistocleous.com](http://www.charalambosthemistocleous.com)

[themistocleous@gmail.com](mailto:themistocleous@gmail.com)

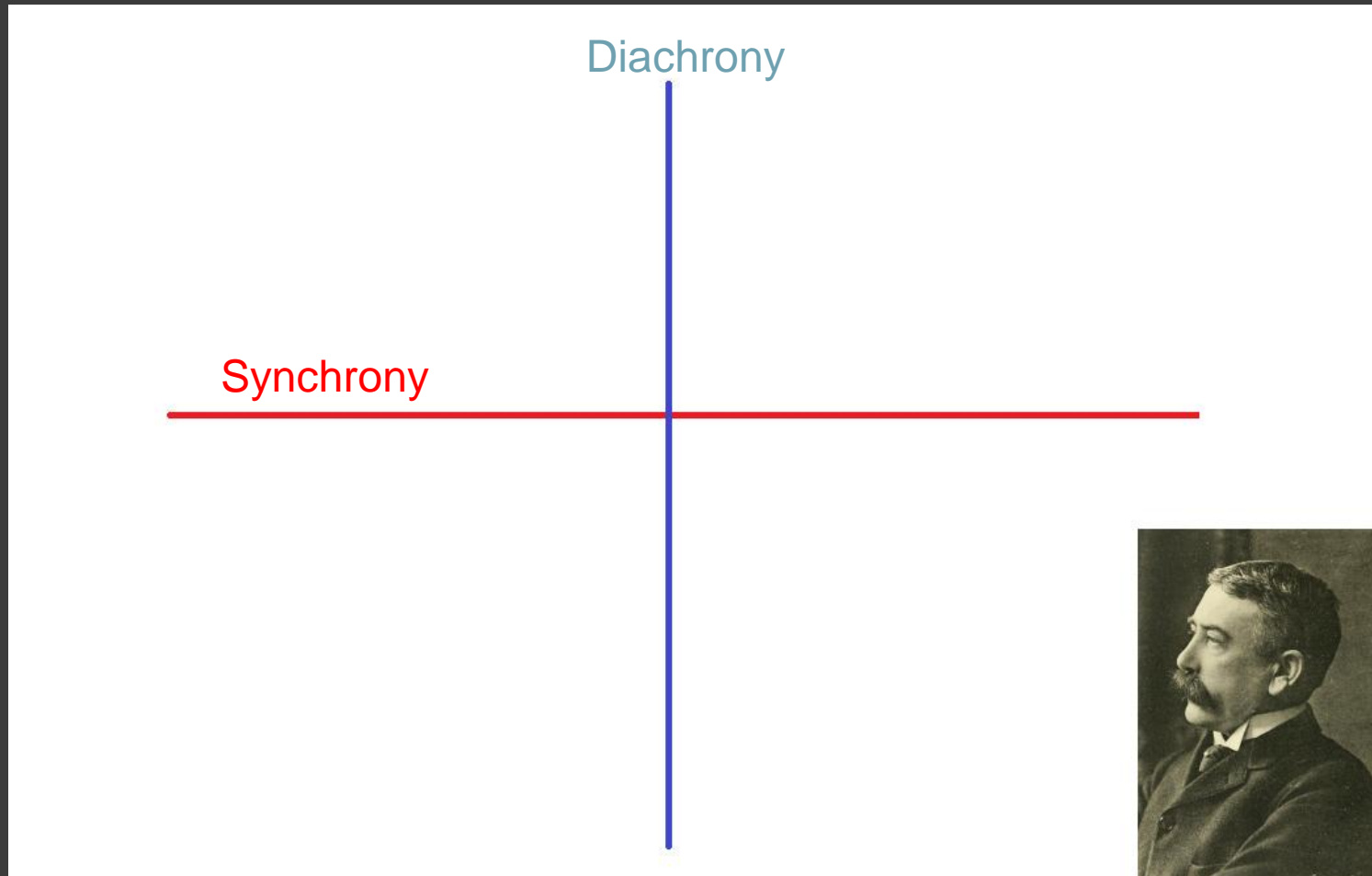
# AGE: LANGUAGE CHANGE

## ◎ We studied until now:

- Regional Variation: Space/Geography
- Social Variation: Speakers and Communities
- Social Domains and Diglossia
- Politeness: Speaker-Hearer Interaction
- Addressee effects and Accommodation
- Speaker's identity and Gender

Variation and language change.

# Language Change



*Ferdinand de Saussure*

- *Factors such as age, social class, gender play a role in language change.*

- ◎ **Real time studies:** study the way people talk at one point in time with the way they talk as time passes; the passing of years, hours, minutes.
- ◎ **Apparent time studies:** study the language change by abstracting from the way speakers of different ages talk at a single point in time.

- ◎ The apparent passage of time is measured by ***comparing speakers of different ages in a single-speech community at a single time.*** If younger speakers behave differently from older speakers, it is assumed that change has taken place within the community.
- ◎ The apparent time construct relies on the assumption that speakers only minimally change the way they speak after a critical period of adulthood.
- ◎ *A useful method where real time data is absent.*

## ● Doctor Who





- ⦿ How language was in the past.
- ⦿ How language will change in the future.

◎ *Our earliest sound recordings only go back in the middle of the nineteenth century.*

➤ There is an analysis of Greek Rembetika (beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) by Arvaniti and Joseph who study /b d g/ word initially and word-medially.

➤ *Written speech.*

# Real time studies

- Rickford and McNair-Knox's (1994) compared interviews done with Foxy while she was at high school with ones done after she had moved on to the university.

# Types of real time studies

- ***Panel studies***: Studies of variation across real time when participants are the same.
- People leave the study, move to another place, die etc.

- ◎ ***Trend studies:*** these studies involve comparing speech from members of the same community at different points in time.

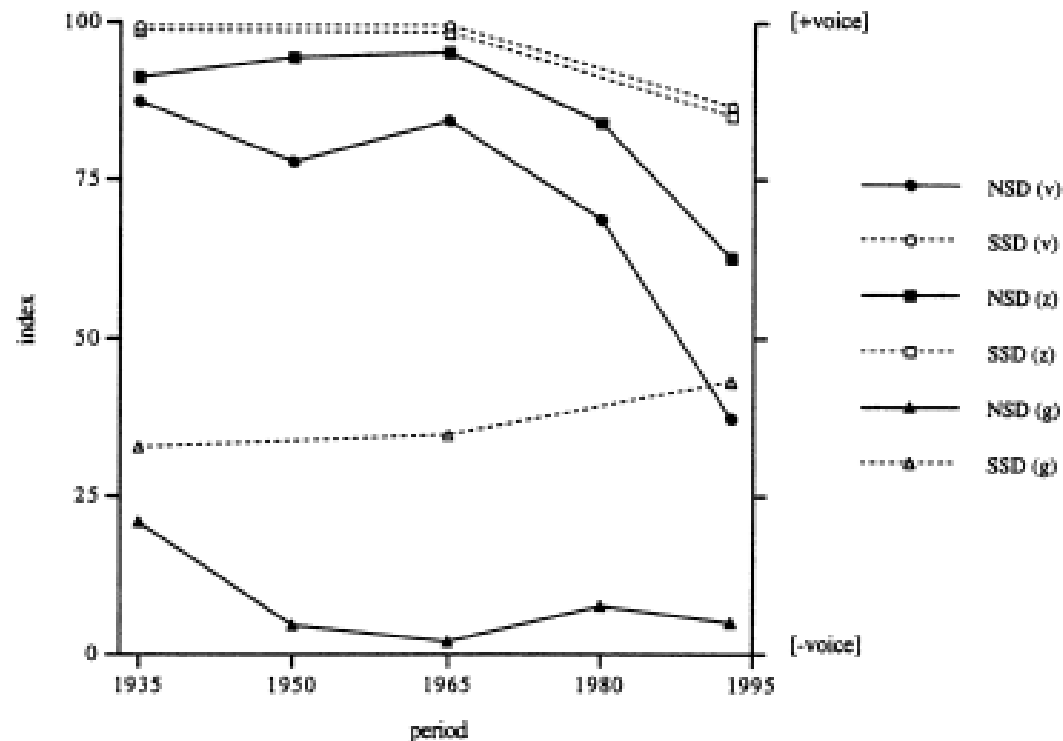


FIGURE 1. Devoicing of the fricatives (v), (z), and (g) in Standard Dutch, split up by period and region.

# Apparent time studies

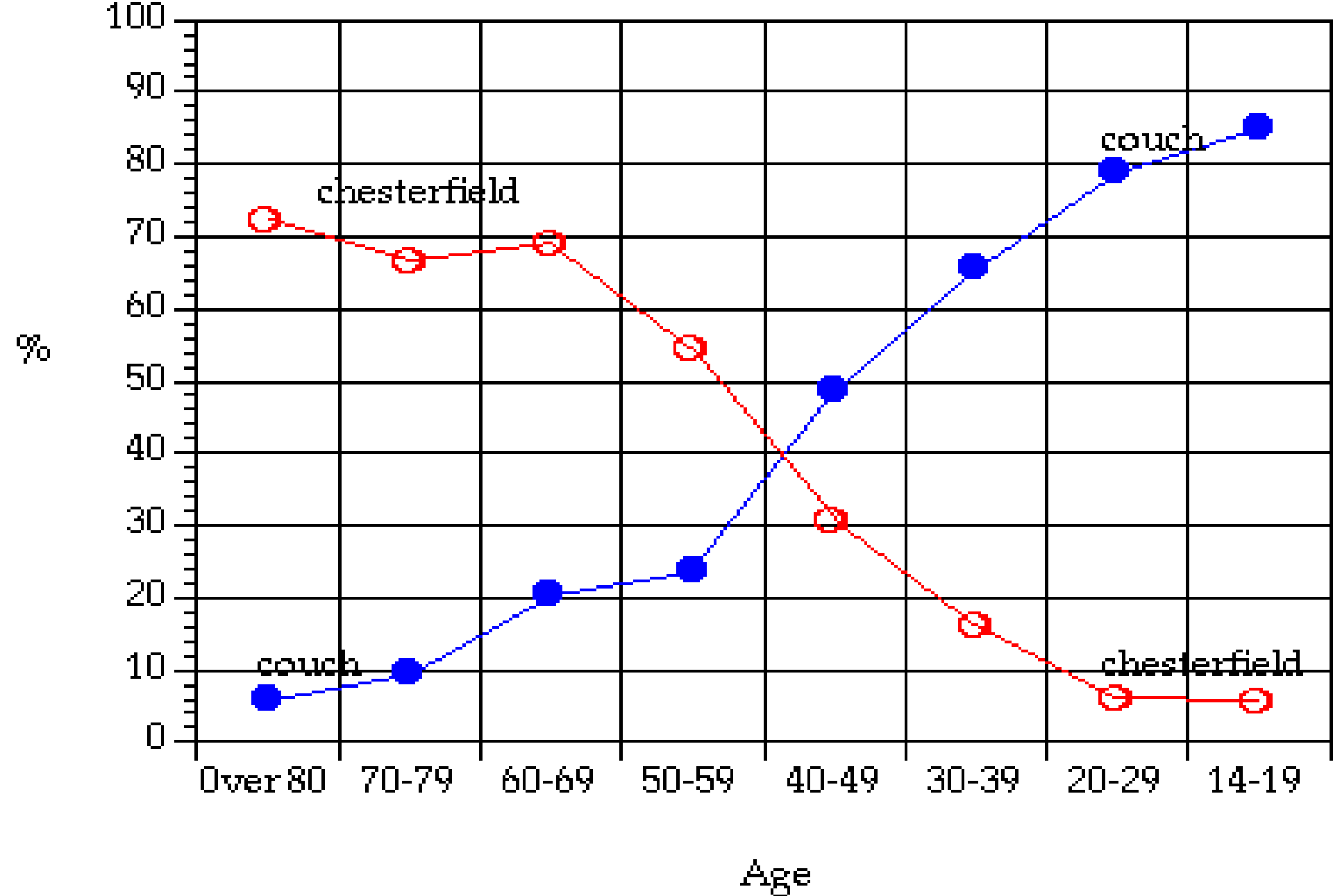
- ⦿ They involve sampling speakers of different ages and comparing the frequency of a variant in the speech of successive generations.
- ⦿ Apparent time is a way of simulating and modelling real time change using synchronic data, when the diachronic data are not available or when the researches do not have the resources to construct their own real time corpus.

# Apparent Time Studies

- There is an ***assumption*** (called it also *working hypothesis*) behind these studies:

“The basics of a speakers’ phonological system have been laid down in their youth (remember the critical period hypothesis (Lenneberg 1967)” and our talk is related to that time”.





Chambers (1995) *couch* is replacing *chesterfield*

# Apparent Time Studies

- For sociolinguists it is very interesting to see how people accommodate (=attune or adapt their linguistic behaviour in light of their interlocutors' behaviour and their attitudes towards their interlocutors, this maybe conscious or unconscious), new variants into their vernacular.

# Apparent Time Studies

In Britain there is a competition between:

- ⦿ ***Supra-local, non standard variants (like the glottal and th-fronting),***
- ⦿ ***Local vernacular variants***
- ⦿ ***The supra-local prestige forms of Standard English.***

- There are methods for understanding how these tensions/combinations get worked out within a particular variety.
- A. To examine closely the speech of a small group of speakers and interpret intraspeaker, as well as interspeaker, variation in light of the individuals' life histories and their current goals and activities.

- Tagliamonte 1998 the use of Yorkshire English “was” in existential sentences.

### *The data*

“The result of our fieldwork is a corpus of 132 hours of audiotaped conversations, ranging in length from 1 to 3 hours. The interviews are similar to those obtained in many other sociolinguistic projects of this kind. Each one contains some or all of the elements of informal discourse—personal reminiscences, narratives of personal experience, group interactions, folk stories, and many vibrant characterizations of York today and in the past.”

(Tagliamonte 1998:159)

- ⦿ (1) a. *She were a good worker. She was a helluva good worker.* (092/568)2
- ⦿ b. *There was a lot of us that were sort of seventeen.* (004/180,27)
- ⦿ **(2) First person singular: I**
- ⦿ a. *I got the job when I was younger.* (009/8)
- ⦿ b. *I were broke on a Monday.* (003/306)
- ⦿ **Second person singular: You**
- ⦿ c. *You were mentioning windscreen wipers . . .* (040/518)
- ⦿ d. *You was only away a bit.* (008/645)
- ⦿ **Third person singular: Pronoun**
- ⦿ e. *That was the rock and roll era.* (005/36)
- ⦿ f. *That were a game we invented.* (087/163)
- ⦿ **Third person singular: Full NP**
- ⦿ g. *But the war was over then.* (017/133)
- ⦿ h. *My Dad were up there.* (087/468)
- ⦿ **Third person singular: Existential there**
- ⦿ i. *There was only one bus load.* (001/419)
- ⦿ j. *They said there were nothing wrong.* (003/521)
- ⦿ **Third person singular: It**
- ⦿ k. *It was cold on a morning.* (044/221)
- ⦿ l. *It weren't very satisfactory.* (005/100)
  
- ⦿ *From Tagliamonte (1998:155).*

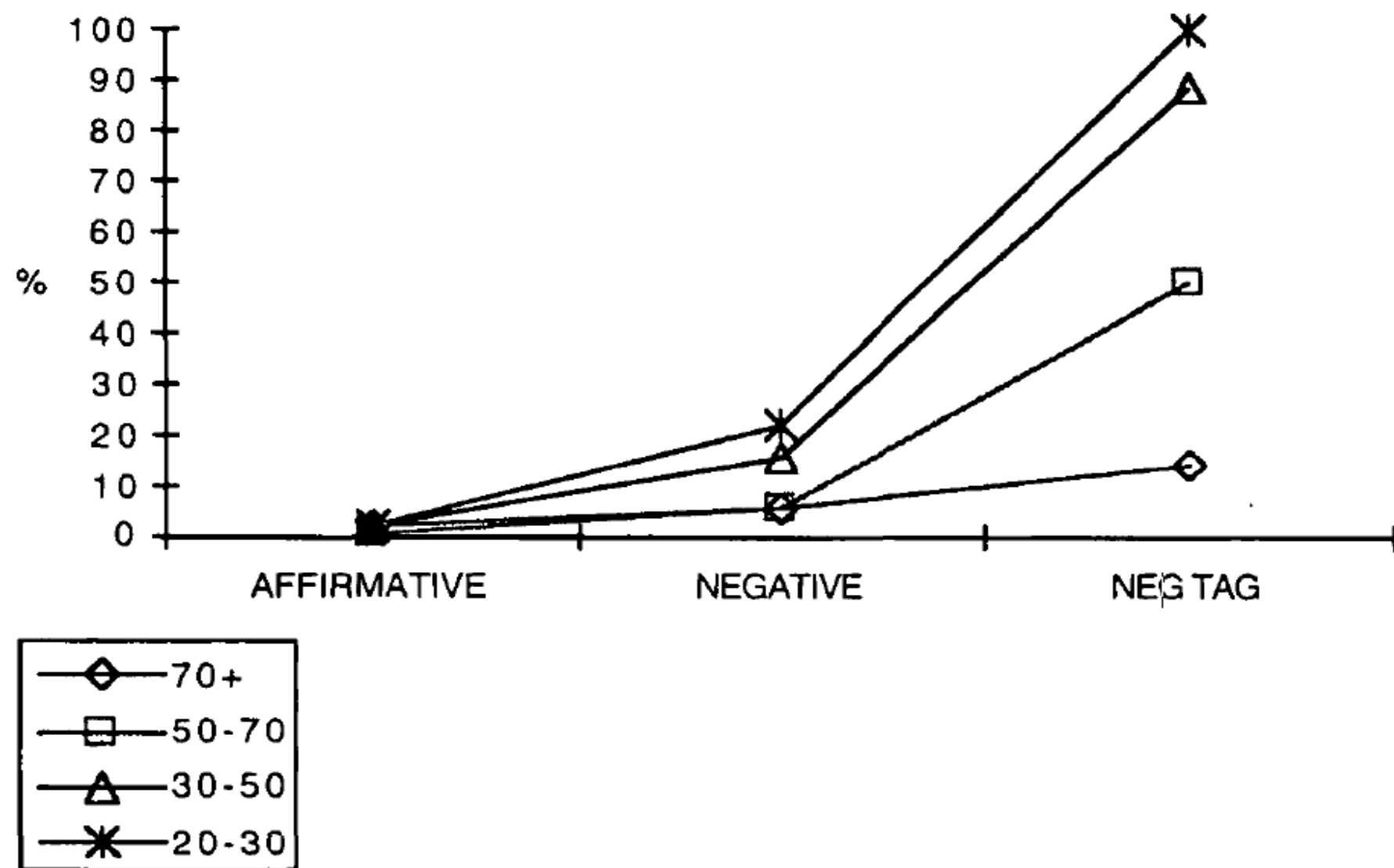


FIGURE 6. Distribution of *were* in standard *was* contexts by polarity and generation in female speakers.

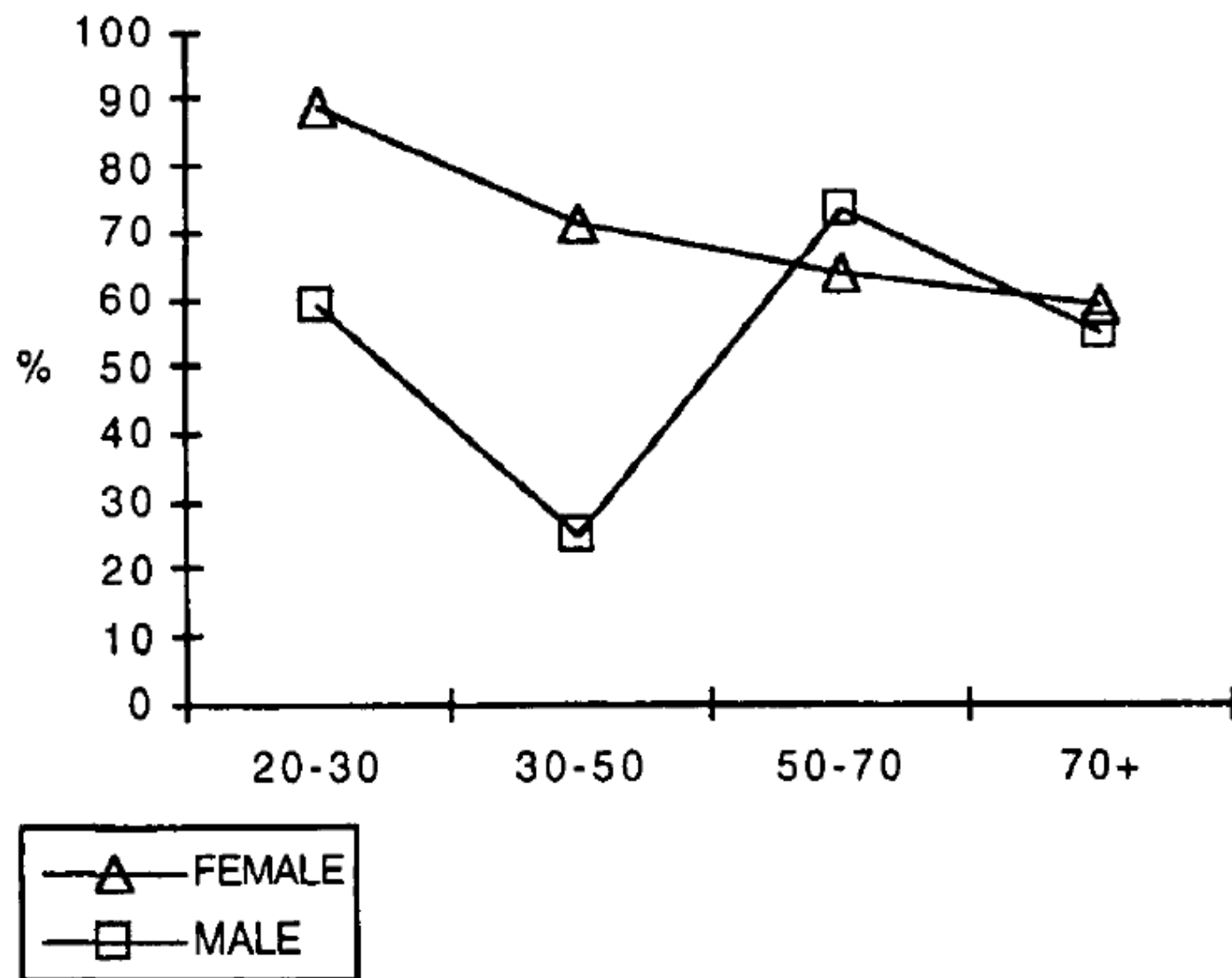


FIGURE 7. Distribution of nonstandard *was* in existential constructions by sex and generation.

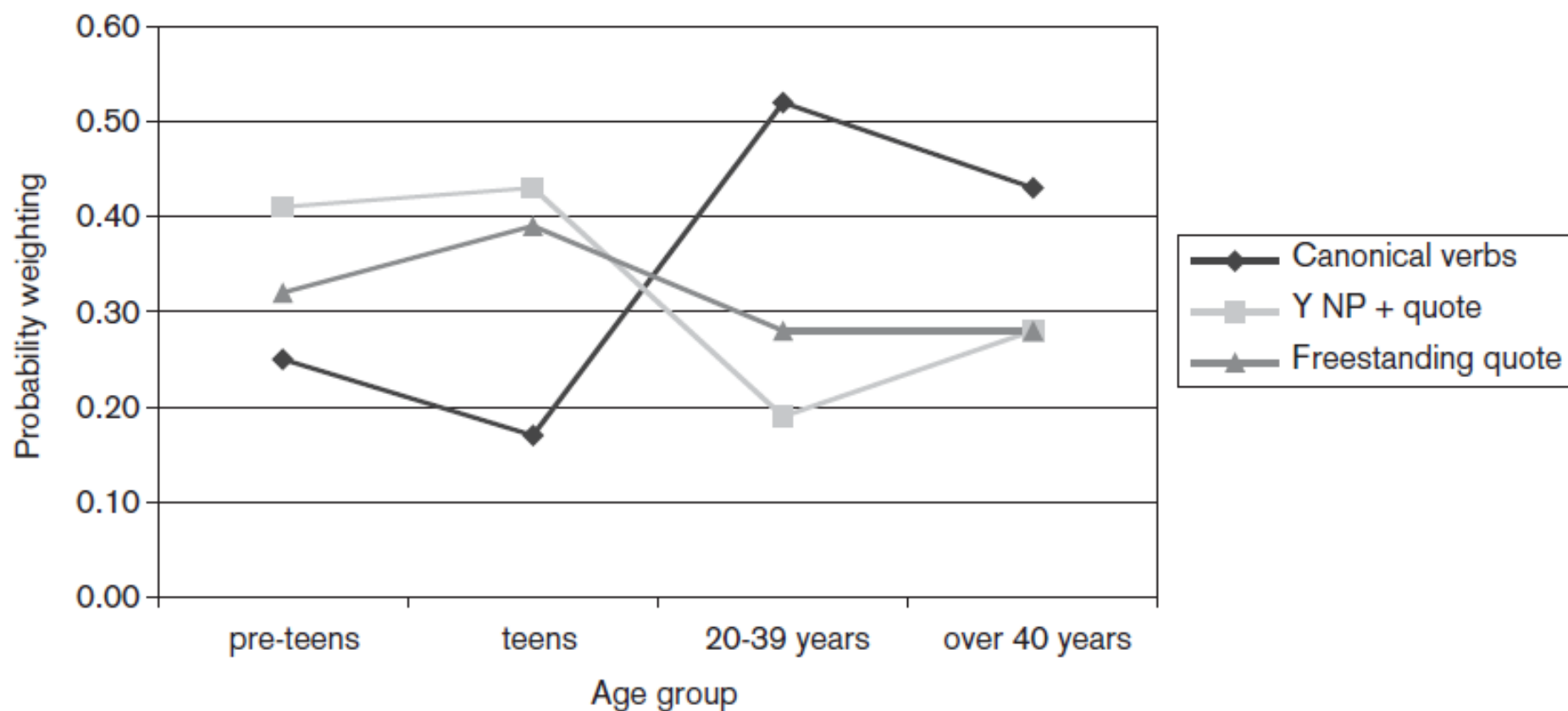


Richard Cameron (1998) used apparent time data to explore variable use of verbs of quotation in Puerto Rican Spanish. These verbs introduce reported speech (so she says..., and she's like... etc.)

- *verbs of direct report,*
- *a bare noun phrase (Y yo, "¡¿Ay qué hago?!" 'And I, "Oh, what should I do?'),*
- *freestanding quotation with no frame.*

- Social constraints reveal complicated, yet familiar influences of age, sex, and class, with teenagers showing parallels to Eckert's work on gender and variation.
- Evidence also emerges for both age grading and a change in progress.

- The previous studies we examined study the presence or the absence of let say (r). Cameron's study examines the frequency or the likelihood with which we will find one or other variant in a particular style.
- Because Cameron studies 3 variants so a probability below 0.33 indicates that the variant is not favoured among speakers!



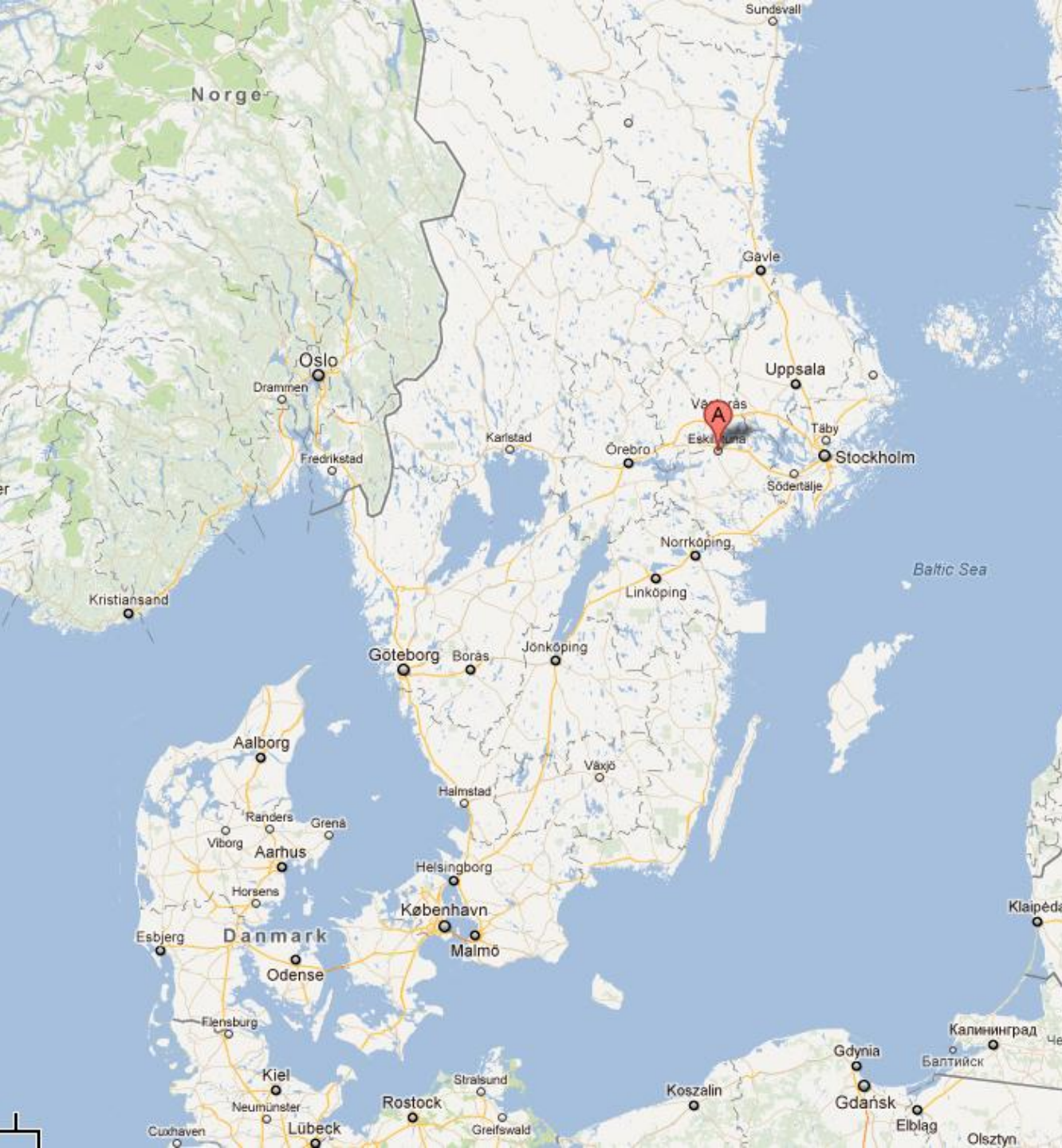
**Figure 7.4** Reported discourse strategies in Puerto Rican Spanish, broken down into four age groups. (Source, Cameron 1998: 70.)

# Testing Apparent Time Results

- ◉ Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard
  - ◉ He combined apparent time data with the patterns that had been noted in earlier dialect atlas surveys.
  - ◉ Since the earlier dialect surveys had not considered the **relative frequency** of different forms in individuals' speech, there were limits on the extent to which his apparent time data could be compared with the dialect survey's real time information.
- > Labov was able to use the apparent time information to infer that the general trends were for younger Vineyarders to centralise the onsets of (ay) and (aw) more, especially if they did not have negative feelings about the island.

# Panel studies

- ***Panel studies***: Studies of variation across real time when participants are the same.



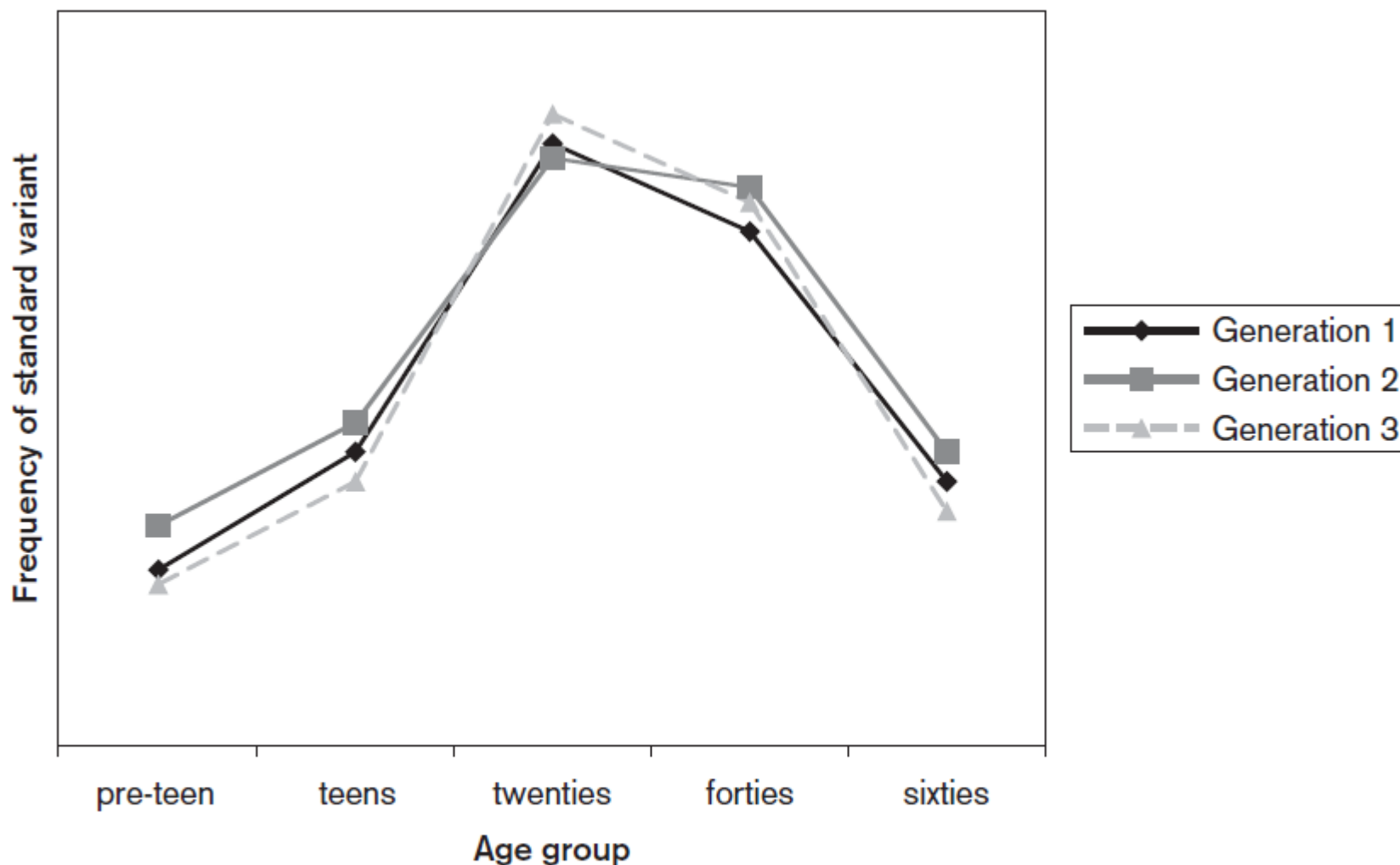
# Generational change

- Each generation in a community shows progressively more and more frequent use of a variant. A change that can be inferred to be taking place on the basis of apparent time evidence is a generational change.

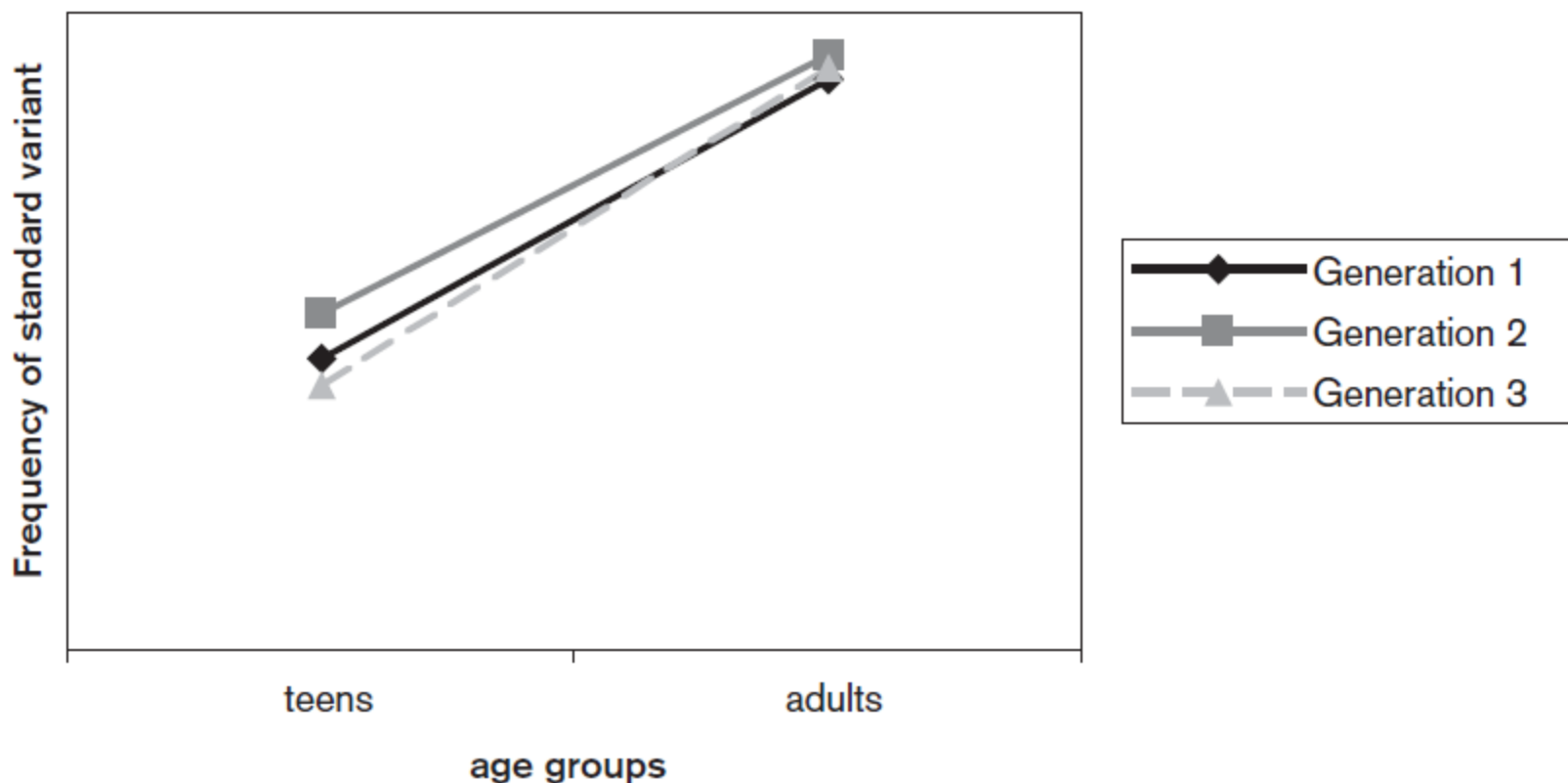


# Lifespan change

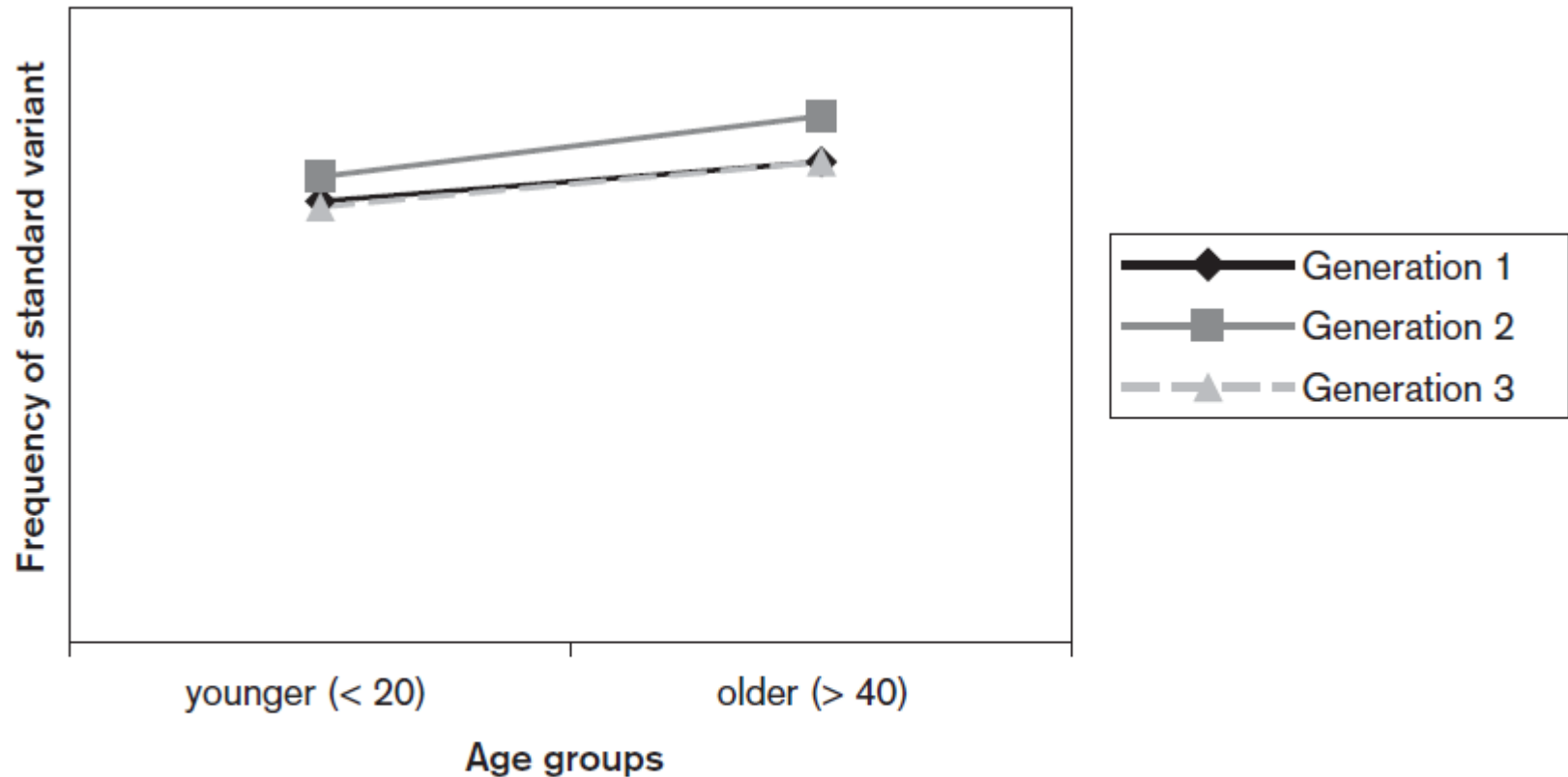
- A term introduced to the study of language variation and change by Gillian Sankoff. A change to a speaker's pronunciation or grammar that take place after the critical period can be described as a lifespan change. Lifespan changes in pronunciation appear to be severely restricted in their form: they generally only move in the direction of the community overall (see also generational change) and they may also be constrained to certain input or starting points for a speaker. On the other hand, lifespan change is well-attested for vocabulary.



**Figure 7.10** A hypothetical age-graded variable, showing pattern across four age groups and three generations in a speech community. Note increased use of the standard at about the same time in each generation and the subsequent retreat.



**Figure 7.11** An alternative schematic of an age-graded variable where only two age groups are shown. Note the apparently monotonic relationship between frequency of the standard and age of speaker; this would suggest communal change in progress.



**Figure 7.12** Another alternative schematic of an age-graded variable where only two age groups are shown. Note the apparently monotonic relationship between frequency of the standard and age of speaker here would suggest neither change in community nor individuals.

# Age-grading

- If, as a rule, all speakers of a community use more tokens of one variant at a certain age and more tokens of another variant at another age, the variable is said to be age-graded.

# Stable variable

- If there is no evidence (e.g., from generational change) that one variant is pushing out another variant, the variable can be considered stable.
- A classic example is the alternation between the alveolar and velar nasals in the wordfinal -ing which has existed for centuries and shows no signs of disappearing at present. Stable variables may exhibit age-grading (i.e., avoidance of a stigmatised variant in adulthood).

# Linguistic marketplace

- A way of talking about the extent to which an occupation or activity is associated with use of the standard language.

Thank you