

## High Rising Terminals in London: Gender, ethnicity and interactional meaning

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High Rising Terminals (HRT), or utterance-final rising pitch movements on declarative statements, have for some years been recognised as an incipient feature of London English. Cruttenden (1995, 1997) traces the emergence of HRT in London to the early 1990s, when it was typical in the speech of what he terms “New Yuppies”. Since this time, the feature has generated a large amount of popular discussion (see Foulkes & Docherty 2007) despite scholarly reports that average rates of HRT in London do not exceed five percent (Grabe 2003; Fletcher, Grabe & Warren 2005; Barry 2007). In this paper, we provide an updated overview of the prevalence of HRT in London English, as well as an initial exploration of the feature’s current social distribution in the region. In contrast to prior studies, we find frequencies of HRT in London that are comparable to those identified in North American and Australasian English varieties (Guy et al. 1986; Britain 1992; Barry 2007). Moreover, our analyses reveal previously unreported patterns of social differentiation by speaker ethnicity and speech context (single- vs. mixed-sex).

Data are drawn from 26 small-group interviews with 71 speakers of London English (50 women and 21 men), resulting in a corpus of just over 15 hours of recorded speech. Interviewees are all between 18-25 years old and were born and still live in the Greater London area. Within the corpus, approximately 9500 tokens of declarative intonational phrases were identified, and each of these was auditorily coded for whether it contained HRT or not. Tokens were additionally coded for a range of potential conditioning factors, including text type (i.e., Fact, Opinion, Explanation, Description, Narrative; Guy et al. 1986), speaker sex, speaker ethnicity (South Asian, Black, White) and speech context (single- or mixed-sex). These data were then subjected to mixed-model regression analyses in R in an effort to determine which factors, if any, constrain the appearance of HRT in the sample.

Results indicate an overall frequency of HRT in the corpus of 10.4%, with the men using marginally more HRT (11.3%) than the women (9.8%). Subsequent tests, however, reveal that different factors condition the occurrence of HRT in the women’s versus the men’s speech. Among women, for example, ethnicity emerges as highly significant, with South Asian women using proportionally more HRT (16.2%) than either the Black (4.6%) or the White women (9.2%) do. For men, in contrast, there is no ethnicity effect. Instead, all men use significantly more HRT in mixed-sex contexts (15.4%) than in single-sex ones (6.4%). And while text type is also shown to have a significant effect on the appearance of HRT for both women and men, it does so in meaningfully different ways for different sub-groups in the sample. In this paper, we discuss the ramifications of these findings for current understandings of HRT, a variable which we argue has become firmly entrenched in London English.