

Standard British English vowels have always drawn ample attention among phoneticians. It is certainly due to the fact that Standard British English served as a referential variety not only for educational purposes. However, few of the studies analysed data drawn from natural connected speech. Mostly artificial conditions created for measuring the acoustic properties of vowel formant frequencies resulted in vowels relatively neatly separated, whereas studies of connected speech usually reveal considerable overlaps between the regions of vowels in the vowel space. Earlier studies have reported on the effects of different immediate environment on vowels, yet these also derive from controlled speech recorded in laboratory conditions. Data collected in this manner are further used to describe vowel changes over certain time periods and they also serve in research of vowel perception.

In comparison to that, the aim of the present study was to analyse the formant field characteristics of Standard British English vowels in a representative sample of connected speech. The study is confined only to the low vowel region of Standard British English mainly because of the extent of analysis that would have to be conducted if all the vowels were included. Besides that, the region of the English low vowels has a special attraction to it. There have been many reports on shifts of some of the low vowels in various directions and mutual effects of the vowels in the low region of the English vowel space, some of them predicting a merger or 'death' of some of them. Nevertheless, the reports by various authors are rather inconsistent.

This study aimed to describe some acoustic characteristics of low vowels of a widely recognized English variety as it is spoken by its most genuine representatives, i.e., the BBC radio announcers.