**Ethnolects & Sound Change**
Back vowel monophthongization and fricative fortition are two phonetic characteristics of Korean L1 speakers of English (adult learners). However, US-born Korean Americans (KAs), who are often natively bilingual, vary in their use of these characteristics. Asian Americans tend to eschew sociophonetic variables that index regional identity (e.g., cot-caught merger), though sometimes lead ongoing sound changes (e.g., California Vowel Shift, or CVS). This study asks three questions of a specific group, Korean Americans who grew up in Korean-majority communities in California:

1. Do they participate in or resist CVS?
2. Does Korean phonology influence their English vowel system?
3. Are their vowel spaces consistent throughout their speech?

**Methods**
- 13 US-born Korean Americans living in California sat for a bilingual interview about childhood and present-day language use.
- Interviews transcribed and force-aligned; F1 and F2 normalized by speaker and averaged over duration of vowel.

**Vowels**
Speakers’ pooled vowel spaces reveal fronted /u/ (“UW”) and fronted /ou/ (“OW”) for males only.

**Supplementary Materials**
Sound files accompany this poster! Scan this QR code to access electronic version of poster and additional figures.

**Back Vowel Fronting**
Back vowel fronting was determined by difference in normalized F2 of /i/ and /u/ or /ou/. Lower scores indicate more fronting. All subjects fronted; a selection of 6 consultants’ /u/ is shown in Fig. 1 to demonstrate individual variation.

**Influence of Korean**
No correlation between fronting scores and English dominance, Korean use, or age of English acquisition. The only significant factor was gender (F1,14)=35.843, p<0.001, indicating that female /ou/ that resists fronting is not related to the speakers’ bilingualism. Potential counter to traditional “female-led sound change” hypothesis, as female speakers demonstrated less fronting.

**Table 1:** /u/ tokens >1sd above and <1sd below mean. In addition, there is one very fronted /u/ token given in a hypothetical on the topic of understanding Korean versus American cultures: “I can just, like, talk to someone about [American traditions]... like, dude you know what this is for?” (189sec)

**Conclusion**
- Korean American speakers of English participate in the California Vowel Shift, but unevenly.
- Evidence that gender, not language proficiency, plays a role in /ou/-fronting.
- Preliminary evidence that fronting depends on topic and stance as well as phonological context.
- One of several phonetic traits of KAs with ties to Korean communities (e.g., Koreatown); some KAs recognize this “K-town accent”
- Planned research: quantify “topic and stance”; examine fricatives, sibilants, and phrase-level intonation.

**References**