New Directions

Language Diversity research and resource pack

Amanda Cole and Dan Clayton

EMC Publications

University of Essex

acknowledgements

Written by Dan Clayton and Amanda Cole

Cover: Rebecca Scambler using photo by Nate Bell on Unsplash

The project

This activity was funded by the University of Essex internal A&H Impact Accelerator programme. The programme is a strategic University of Essex initiative to support Impact generated from underpinning research conducted in the Arts and Humanities disciplinary remit at the University of Essex. The fund will support the development of high-scoring REF2028 impact case studies.

The authors would like to thank the following people for their help and support along the way:

The linguists who have contributed Q&As and tolerated our badgering; everyone at the EMC (but especially Lucy Webster), Rebecca Scambler and Sam Sullivan; all the teachers and students who helped trial materials and who offered helpful feedback: Plume Academy, Maldon; The Sixth Form College, Colchester; Sigma Sixth, Tendring; St Thomas More, Leigh-on-Sea; Neil Hutchinson, Lisa Casey and Jacky Glancey. We would also like to thank Phoebe Price who was a Research Support Assistant on this project in Spring 2023 and provided invaluable support and insights.

Please note

Any errors in the research summaries are entirely our own and not those of the linguists who carried out the research. If you do happen to notice something that you would like to query, please contact dan@englishandmedia.co.uk

Some of the themes in a few of the research summaries might require a degree of teacher discretion as they touch on issues of misogyny and prejudice.

Download licence

Contents

contents

introduction

The authors

Amanda Cole

Amanda Cole is a lecturer in linguistics in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex. She teaches, researches, supervises student projects and has published widely in the field of sociolinguistics. She is interested in how people speak and how they or others feel about it. In particular, being born into a family of East Londoners in Essex, she has always been fascinated by Essex and London dialects and the way people speak across South East England. Amanda appears regularly in the media discussing issues and topics related to linguistics, and she hopes to share linguistic knowledge and research as widely as possible. Along with Rob Drummond of Manchester Metropolitan University she runs the Accentism Project, a project which explores and shares stories of language-based discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping.

Dan Clayton

Dan Clayton is an education consultant at the EMC and specialises in English Language work at A Level and language education across the secondary curriculum. He has been a teacher of A Level English for over 20 years, senior examiner and moderator for different awarding bodies and is author/editor of many books for A Level English Language, including ones for Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press & Routledge, as well as publications for the EMC and NATE. Dan has worked closely with many universities to help develop links between A Level and HE, worked as a research fellow at UCL and runs the EngLangBlog site and @EngLangBlog Twitter account, as well as being part of the Lexis Podcast team. He has also taught Media and Film Studies and is Associate Editor of *emagazine* and *MediaMagazine*.

introduction

New Directions: Language Diversity research and resource pack started life as an idea for a fairly small-scale free download that would pick up some examples of recent research into linguistic variation and present them clearly and in context for an AQA A Level English Language audience. Linguists are always very busy exploring the ways in which language is changing and studying the linguistic diversity that is all around us, and over the ten years or so since the new specifications were introduced, a lot has happened. We thought that we could give students and teachers a taste of that.

The more we worked on the initial idea, the more we realised that there was quite a lot that we wanted to cover! So, what you have here is a much bigger set of resources than we originally planned and one that we hope will help you develop a more up-to-date and interconnected understanding of the kind of work that is relevant to the A Level. While it has been designed with the AQA specification in mind, it should also be more widely useful for other A Level specifications and potentially beyond.

What we have included here is not designed to take the place of what is in the textbooks or other specification resources but as a complement to that material. The material here often builds on existing waves of sociolinguistic research or offers a new way of thinking about it, so should be viewed in that context.

The resource pack is divided into three main sections with a detailed glossary at the end.

research summaries and Q&As

Section 1 is made up of research summaries and Q&As. These are divided into different colour-coded areas. You will see that there is a degree of overlap between these areas and we have flagged up many of the connections with references throughout to relevant summaries. Each summary takes a piece of research from a published paper or chapter and offers an accessible overview of what it was about, how it was done and what was discovered. Most of these are then followed by Q&As with the linguists involved. The Q&As are designed to give you a sense of the people behind the work, what motivated them and how it relates to other work they have done. These areas are broken down into the following sub-sections.

regional variation

Regional variation is a type of linguistic variation which refers to differences in the linguistic features used - or how frequently they are used - between people from different geographic places. The UK is a rich tapestry of different dialects, but the way people speak never stands still. In this section we summarise research on the dialects spoken across the UK, seeing the differences between them and how they have changed (or not), shifted boundaries and influenced each other. We see that language change isn't happening evenly or in the same way or at the same rate across the country. In this section we present a range of different findings from across the UK: new dialects are forming, some regional dialect features are flourishing while others are waning, linguistic features or whole dialects have spread or moved from one place to another, dialect levelling is happening with people adopting standard or geographically widespread linguistic features, and the way people speak reflects not just where they are from but also who they are and their sense of identity.

social groups

A very longstanding finding is that, in the UK, the lower a person's class position, the fewer standard linguistic features and the more regional dialect features they tend to use. In this section we summarise research on linguistic variation between people of different classes from the same place as well as between people of the same class from different places. We see that there is still a very close relationship between a person's class and how they speak in the UK. However, the research we summarise shows that there is much more to class than a person's job or economic position. A person's class – and the way they speak - can change throughout their lifetime and is closely linked to their lifestyle and hobbies, who they mix with, their sense of identity and even the type of school they attended. We also see that the way working-class people speak is often devalued and seen as incorrect, inferior and ungrammatical, but despite this, regional dialect features are valuable in other ways as they can reflect a person's identity and their roots and sense of belonging in their local community. We also see evidence that despite

being devalued in some ways, these regional dialect features can be viewed quite positively for other qualities.

race & ethnicity

Multicultural London English (MLE) is a relatively recent linguistic variety that was first spoken in East London, and Multicultural British English (MBE) is a related linguistic variety spoken in different parts of Britain. In this section we present alternative viewpoints on whether MLE is a multiethnolect meaning that it is not spoken exclusively by any ethnic group. We observe linguistic variation in a group of young Londoners with different ethnic identities, but we also see that people from many different ethnic backgrounds speak MBE in Manchester or consider themselves to speak MLE in London. The research we summarise also explores the associations of MLE, showing that it is thought by many to be a dialect spoken by Black people and that it is associated with grime music, a genre which emerged out of Black cultures in East London. We see evidence of prejudice, biases and anti-Black and anti-working-class stereotypes about MLE and its speakers reflected in the opinions of Londoners, the media and on social media. Beyond MLE, we also observe how, across the country, the speech of people who are not white is problematised and stigmatised in schools and in popular discourse which incorrectly considers their way of speaking as 'broken English'.

gender & sexuality

It has long been known that men and women from the same place and background often speak in subtly different ways. Women tend to use more standard linguistic features and less regional dialect features than men. In this section we see that linguistic variation between men and women often exists because of gender stereotypes and expectations in society. We also see that linguistic research has greatly evolved in its treatment of gender over recent decades, with increased focus on diverse gender identities. As well as gender, this section explores the links between how a person speaks – or even writes – and their sexuality, and how this interacts with gender as well as other elements of a person's background and identity such as their class, ethnicity and where they are from. Linguists are not only interested in the linguistic features that a person uses, but also the content and the meaning of what people say. The research we summarise shows that gender and sexuality are closely related to how people speak as well as how they are spoken about and the assumptions made about them. We also see how language is used to construct and reflect identity and to resist misogyny, homophobia and transphobia.

world englishes

English is a global language - it is extremely widely spoken, written and understood around the world for many different purposes and by many different groups of people. In this section we look at how English is spoken, learnt, taught and felt about in different parts of the world. Some of the research we summarise looks at the role of English in countries where it is a colonial language that was previously imposed or introduced by the British Empire. We see the continuation of policies and ideologies from the colonial period which promote English as the medium of education and unduly value it as a prestigious language, often above and beyond local languages. We also see that not all dialects of English are seen as equal, with so-called Inner Circle varieties such as British English, US English and Australian English often afforded the most status, respect and prestige around the world. The research in this section promotes an equal stance for all languages and varieties of English. We learn that multilingualism and translanguaging are the norm in much of the world, meaning that many people use English as part of a wider repertoire of languages and cannot always easily or accurately be defined as either native or non-native speakers of English.

attitudes and representation

People often form judgements, ideas or opinions about others based on the way they speak. In this section we summarise research which shows that some linguistic features or linguistic varieties are devalued in society, potentially leading to unfair treatment and discrimination against the people who speak them. We see that the hierarchy of how different linguistic varieties in the UK are evaluated has changed little over several decades

and disproportionately disadvantages those from less privileged backgrounds with some very real-life consequences in the workplace, at school and in the assumptions made about a person and their abilities. The research also shows that, based on how they speak, a person might be judged to have some positive traits but not others, for example, some linguistic varieties have high social status while others have high social attractiveness. We also see differences in how a single linguistic variety or linguistic feature is judged. We see that, firstly, different groups of people may be evaluated in different ways when using the same linguistic feature, reflecting societal stereotypes and expectations. Secondly, people from different demographic groups or backgrounds or with different experiences and values may differ in their attitudes towards a linguistic variety.

language & technology

For many of us, technology is integral to our lives, shaping how we spend our time, learn and study, build and maintain relationships, and share our ideas and feelings with others. As a result, there is an ever-growing and important body of research into the links between technology and language, exploring how people use technology to communicate and interact with others. In this section we see the ways that people use mobile messaging to carry out business transactions, maintain relationships and express themselves in their working, social and home lives, and use emojis to express emotion and to support and supplement the language used in written communication. We also see research which challenges previous assumptions and theory by showing that both language change and accent acquisition are possible when people encounter different ways of speaking through technology such as via television or video calls. This section also demonstrates the role of technology in carrying out linguistic research, enabling linguists to easily collect large amounts of data from a wide range of participants to address important questions in linguistics.

activities

Section 2 provides a series of activities for students based on the research summaries and Q&As. Some of these involve a generic approach, where any research summary could be used for the task, while others ask for a more specific focus. Teacher notes provide some guidance about how these can be used and where they might be integrated into an existing scheme of work. Some of the tasks here are directly linked to AQA exam components such as previous Language Diversity essay questions; others are more suited to section B of Paper 2.

media texts

Section 3 consists of a set of activities based on media representations of the language issues that have been introduced through the research summaries. When linguistic research comes into contact with the media, the results can be interesting! Some coverage is informed – or in some cases, even written - by the linguists who did the research and some of it is written by journalists who have a genuine insight and understanding. In many other instances, that is not the case. The activities in this section, offer a range of different tasks based on different kinds of media text. Some are about analysing and evaluating how different publications have presented research and language ideas, while others are about transforming the material or responding to it in different ways.

We hope that you find this pack useful and interesting.

introduction

regional variation

Apps for Maps

Creating a crowdsourced dialect app

Researchers: Adrian Leemann, University of Bern | Marie-José Kolly, Journalist at *Republik Magazin* | David Britain, University of Bern

Background

A major dialect corpus which documented the different ways of speaking in England was the Survey of English Dialects (SED). The SED collected data on the different dialects in England from NORMs (Non-mobile, Older, Rural, Male speakers) between 1950 and 1961. As the SED is now well over 50 years old, Adrian Leemann, Marie-José Kolly and David Britain created an updated dialect corpus of England.

Advances in digital technology have made data collection on dialect variation more accessible and potentially more representative of the general population. Leemann, Kolly and Britain devised a free app called the English Dialects App which asked smartphone users a series of questions about words, phrases and pronunciations they use and, in some cases, to record an extract of speech. The researchers wanted to gather data that could be used by themselves and other researchers to explore changes in dialects in England over time, for example, by comparing the older SED corpus and the data collected by the app.

Methods

The English Dialects App was widely advertised and covered in the national media, attracting 99,000 downloads by May 2017, including quiz data from 50,700 participants and recordings of 4,300 participants. The app asked users 26 questions about the phonology (73% of the questions), lexis (12%) and syntax (15%) they used. For example, participants were asked, 'A small piece of wood stuck under the skin is a...' and then given potential answers including: 'spool', 'spile', 'speel', 'spell', 'spelk', 'shiver', 'spill', 'sliver', 'splinter' or 'splint'. They were also asked if they pronounce or drop the 't' at the end of the word *bit*, and whether *scone* rhymes with 'gone' or 'cone'.

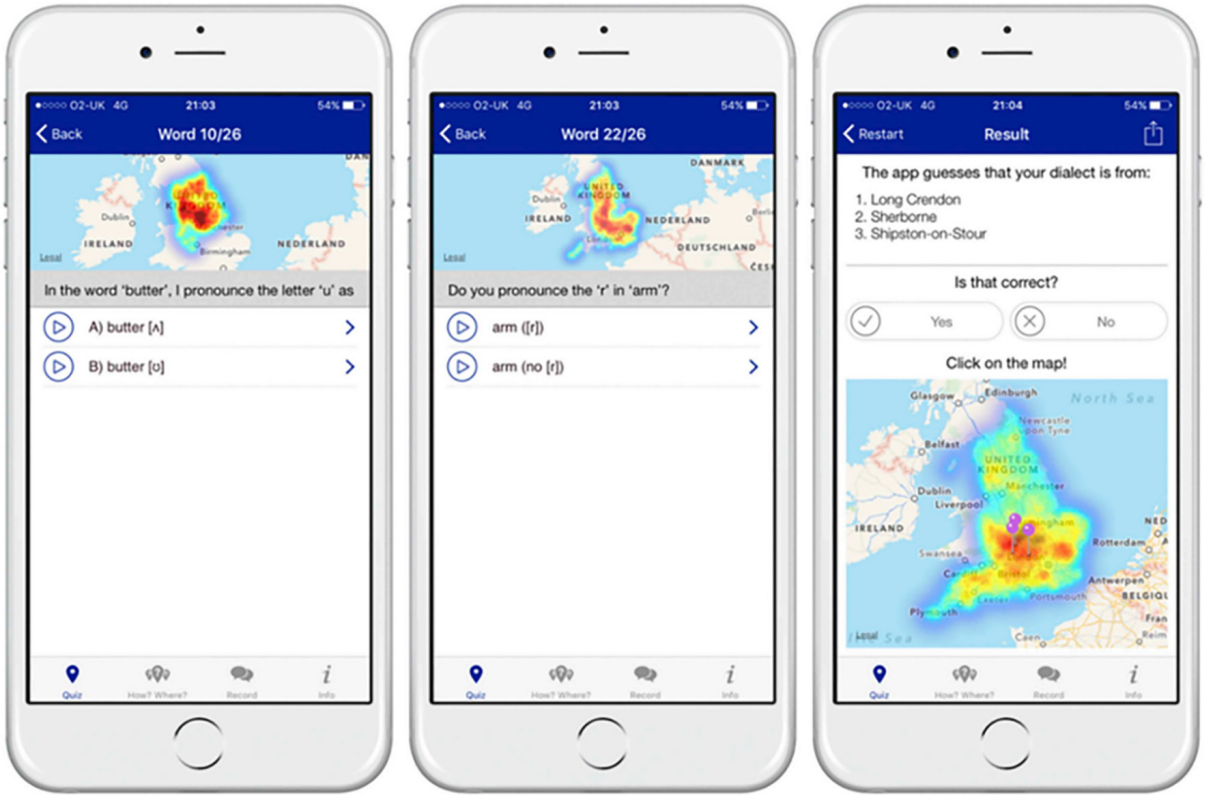
The app then matched each person's responses to three locations in England where they were most likely to be from by cross-referencing their responses to data from the SED. If the participant's dialect was correctly identified, they were then asked if they wanted to contribute to further research by providing additional data on themselves (such as age, gender and ethnicity). If the prediction about where they were from was wrong, they were asked to move a pin around on a map to identify where they were actually from.

The app users were then asked to record themselves reading aloud from 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf', a passage that contained many opportunities to elicit different regional pronunciations (such as the trap-bath split). Again, participants were asked to move a pin on a map to identify where they were from.

What were the results?

As mentioned earlier, the SED collected dialect data from NORMs, but the app reached a different demographic. The responses to the dialect quiz tended to be from young, white adults, and the sample tended to be more educated than the general population. As smartphone users tend to be younger, it was no surprise to find that the participants skewed to this demographic. Although the app was aimed at people in England, there were also responses from other parts of the UK and from Ireland. The geographic spread of participants tended to match the population density of England, with high concentrations of participants from the South East and the Northwestern Midlands.

regional variation



The English Dialects App. Image reproduced from the research paper referenced at the end of this summary.

Comparing the results from the app and the SED shows that language change has happened in many parts of England. For example, there has been a substantial decline in rhoticity (pronouncing the 'r' in words like *arm*) in England and that various dialect terms for a small piece of wood stuck under the skin are in decline with 'splinter' becoming increasingly dominant.

Comparing the results from the app and the SED shows that language change has happened in many parts of England

The researchers noted that their data could be used to explore these changes and many others, and subsequent research has done exactly that (See Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods summary). Another dimension to the research is that there are two datasets – actual recordings and quiz responses in which people identify what they say they say – allowing researchers to explore the accuracy of people's perceptions about their own language use. Lots of important and interesting research has used the English Dialects App data to analyse linguistic variation and language change in England.

Reference

Article title: The English Dialects App: The creation of a crowdsourced dialect corpus
Authors: Adrian Leemann, Marie-José Kolly, David Britain
Journal: Ampersand, Volume 5, pages 1-17
Year of publication: 2018
Link to article: click here

Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?

Dialect levelling in England

Researchers: David Britain, University of Bern | Tamsin Blaxter, University of Oxford | Adrian Leemann, University of Bern

Background

Dialect levelling is when linguistic varieties gradually become more similar, or levelled out, across a region or geographic area. Dialect levelling happens because of the movement of people and resultant dialect contact, the growth of universal education and literacy, and people buying into the idea that there is a correct or standard way of speaking.

As far back as the nineteenth century, people have noted the disappearance of some regional dialect features in England, but there has not been much empirical research testing if dialect levelling is taking place. David Britain, Tamsin Blaxter and Adrian Leemann address this problem by comparing two different dialect corpora – the English Dialects App (EDA) data (from 2017) (see Apps for Maps summary) with that from the Survey of English Dialects (SED) (data from the 1950s) to pinpoint if, where and when dialect levelling has taken place in England.

Methods

The researchers compared eight regional dialect features (three lexical, two phonological and three syntactic) from the EDA data with the older SED data to see if language change had taken place and whether this constituted dialect levelling. They looked for two types of dialect levelling:

- Geographical shrinkage: the area where people previously used one or more linguistic features is now smaller.
- Quantitative shrinkage: the area where people previously used one or more linguistic features has remained the same but fewer people say these features.

Comparing SED and EDA data is a real time approach to analysing language change because the data was collected at different time points. As well as this, the researchers also used an apparent time approach to analysing if language change had occurred by comparing EDA data from younger and older participants. If they found differences in dialect use between the different age groups, this would suggest that language change might have taken place.

The researchers compared eight regional dialect features (three lexical, two phonological and three syntactic) from the EDA data with the older SED data to see if language change had taken place and whether this constituted dialect levelling

What were the results?

There was clear evidence of dialect levelling in lexis. Dialect words for *snails* such as 'hodmedods' and 'dodmans' were already geographically restricted to eastern England in the SED but this had become even more the case in the EDA data. 'Snail' had become the dominant form for all age groups but especially for younger people, suggesting that 'hodmedods' and 'dodmans' are becoming increasingly unused.

Words for *autumn*, including 'fall' and 'backend' were also examined. 'Fall' – the dominant form in North America now – was widespread in the

nineteenth century in England, but at the time of the SED was mainly found in Lincolnshire in the East of England, the South Midlands and the South West. The EDA data shows that 'fall' has shrunk geographically and quantitatively, with the highest density of use being only 2% in South West England. Interestingly, 'fall' has started to appear for the first time in some urban areas such as London and Sheffield, but also in West Suffolk, home to large US airbases. 'Backend' in the SED was still widely used in the North and the Midlands but the EDA data showed it to have shrunk geographically and quantitatively, used rarely in its old strongholds and appearing only a little more than this in the far North West and the east coast of Yorkshire.

Another lexical linguistic variable – the many words for a shard of wood stuck under the skin such as 'spool', 'spelk', 'shiver' and 'splint' – showed considerable decline with 'splinter' now being widely used. However, 'spell' was a little different. 'Spell' was quite common in parts of the North in the SED and this remained the picture for older EDA participants, but among younger people its use was much lower. This suggests that the decline in 'spell' is perhaps a more recent development.

The results for the phonological variables also suggested that dialect levelling was taking place. For example, in many varieties of English, including in Received Pronunciation (RP), an 'l' at the beginning of word such as in *lip* and *like* is pronounced as what's called a clear 'l', but when at the end of a word such as in *pill* or *bolt* you would hear a different sound, what's called a dark 'l'. According to the SED, people in parts of the North of England and in East Anglia differed from this pattern as they pronounced clear 'l' in all positions, including at the end of words. The EDA data showed that clear 'l' has shrunk geographically in the North East with the exception of the Newcastle area where it has remained strong.

The results for the syntactic variables also suggested that dialect levelling was taking place. The possessive pronoun 'hern' (for example, 'that book is mine and that one is hern') was recorded in the SED across the south and centre of England, while the EDA data showed its use had geographically shrunk to around Mansfield and a small cluster in Wolverhampton. The people who said 'hern' were predominantly those whose parents did not have a university education.

Similarly, in the SED data, non-standard forms of the reflexive pronoun *himself* were very widespread and varied – 'hissen', 'hisself', 'hissel' – but the EDA data showed a clear decline in these forms. Many were still used in the North East and some in parts of the South, but the picture was one of decline with levelling to 'himself', particularly in the most affluent areas.

dialect levelling is happening in England but not at the same rate or in the same way for all linguistic variables and not evenly in all geographic areas

Zero 's' (the absence of third person singular 's', for example, 'she walk the dog' or 'he feed the ducks') also showed a quantitative shrinkage in the areas where it was once more widespread such as East Anglia and the South West, suggesting that dialect levelling had taken place. There was, however, perhaps surprisingly, some use (although still low) of zero 's' among younger people in other hotspots in the North and the Midlands.

Overall, it was clear from the research that dialect levelling is happening in England but not at the same rate or in the same way for all linguistic variables and not evenly in all geographic areas.

Reference

Chapter title: Dialect levelling in England: evidence from the English Dialects App
Authors: David Britain, Tamsin Blaxter and Adrian Leemann
Book title: Nouveaux regards sur la variation dialectale/New ways of analysing dialectal variation
Book editors: André Thibault, Mathieu Avanzi, Nicolas Lo Vecchio and Alice Millour
Year of publication: 2021

Q&A


David Britain


Tamsin Blaxter


Adrian Leeman

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

A colleague had very successfully used a smartphone application to examine dialect variation in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, and he persuaded me that we should do one together for England. I took some persuading, because I was sceptical about it as a method, but I soon came to see both the power and limitations of it.

2. What were your main research questions?

Given that there had been no nationwide dialect surveys of England since the 1950s' Survey of English Dialects (SED), where data had been collected only from old rural men, we wanted to try to provide a contemporary snapshot of dialect variation around the country, firstly, by using much easier, quicker data collection and analysis techniques, but also, secondly, by incorporating social variation through the gathering of data from a wide section of the population. Our research aims with the English Dialects App (EDA) were partly methodological, therefore – can we use this technique to collect good and reliable dialect data from a broad cross-section of the country? – and partly descriptive – what can we learn about how English dialects have changed across the country since the older Survey? What are the regional and geographical distributions of different dialect forms?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

1. We found a considerable amount of dialect levelling – the often dramatic loss of traditional dialect forms that were well entrenched at the time of the SED. This loss was more dramatic in the South than the North, and the dialect forms of the North-East saw least levelling. Perhaps not surprisingly, the levelling was most common among the young, the educated and the more mobile.
2. Despite this, many of the traditional forms are still used in the EDA, just at much lower levels than they once were. Because we had collected data from speakers of different ages, we could compare different age groups and show the loss was more advanced among the young than the old, and that the areas where the traditional forms were used had shrunk in comparison with SED times.
3. We were able to also show, for the first time, geographical distributions both of currently diffusing innovations, such as th-fronting, and of features on which no previous research (even in the SED) had been carried out – such as the pronunciation of *scone*.
4. The EDA triggered a lot of public, media and educational interest, which helped its success in finding users, and, given that we collected social background information from those users, it proved to be a very good, quick, efficient way of collecting a lot of dialect data about some kinds of linguistic variables (lexis, grammar and consonants better than vowels and diphthongs).

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

I have long been interested in dialect levelling, and the kinds of changes going on in Britain (and elsewhere) today, in light of geographical mobility. Levelling seems more advanced in those areas which experience lifestyle mobility on the one hand, but also those areas most affected by shifts from primary and secondary to tertiary economic labour. Geographical variation has also always been central to my research, and I was excited to be able to explore contemporary regional distributions of dialect variants using these new techniques.

Q&A responses provided by David Britain

Strutting up North

Creating an updated dialect atlas

Researchers: Laurel MacKenzie, New York University | George Bailey, University of York | Danielle Turton, Lancaster University

Background

In the 1950s, the Survey of English Dialects (SED) was carried out under the direction of Harold Orton. The survey aimed to document the different ways of speaking in England. Fieldworkers interviewed NORMs (Non-mobile, Older, Rural, Male speakers) in 313 localities across England. Participants were asked which word they would use to refer to a certain concept such as a shard of wood under the skin or how they would pronounce a specific word such as *five*, *house* or *cross*.

Many decades later, Laurel MacKenzie, George Bailey and Danielle Turton have created an updated dialect corpus. They didn't restrict their participants to being of a certain age or gender, and they collected data from across the UK and not just England. Their research reveals the patterns of regional variation in the UK today. The researchers compared their dialect corpus to the findings of the SED to see analyse if, how and where language change has occurred in the UK since the 1950s.

Methods

A survey was completed by 14,438 participants from across the UK. The survey was distributed by undergraduate students who were taught by the researchers between 2013 and 2019. In the early years of the project, the students shared the survey by hand with their personal networks but by 2015 the survey was moved online and was shared on social media.

Participants were asked to reflect on how they, or people from the same place as them, speak. The researchers wanted to understand the patterns of linguistic variation in the UK at various different linguistic levels. Participants were asked questions relating to phonology (pronunciation), for example, 'do foot and cut rhyme for you?', syntax (grammar), for example, 'would people from your area use the sentence, "you was outside when it happened"?' (see was/were variation) and lexis (vocabulary), for example, 'what do you call the evening meal?'.

The researchers wanted to understand the patterns of linguistic variation in the UK at various different linguistic levels

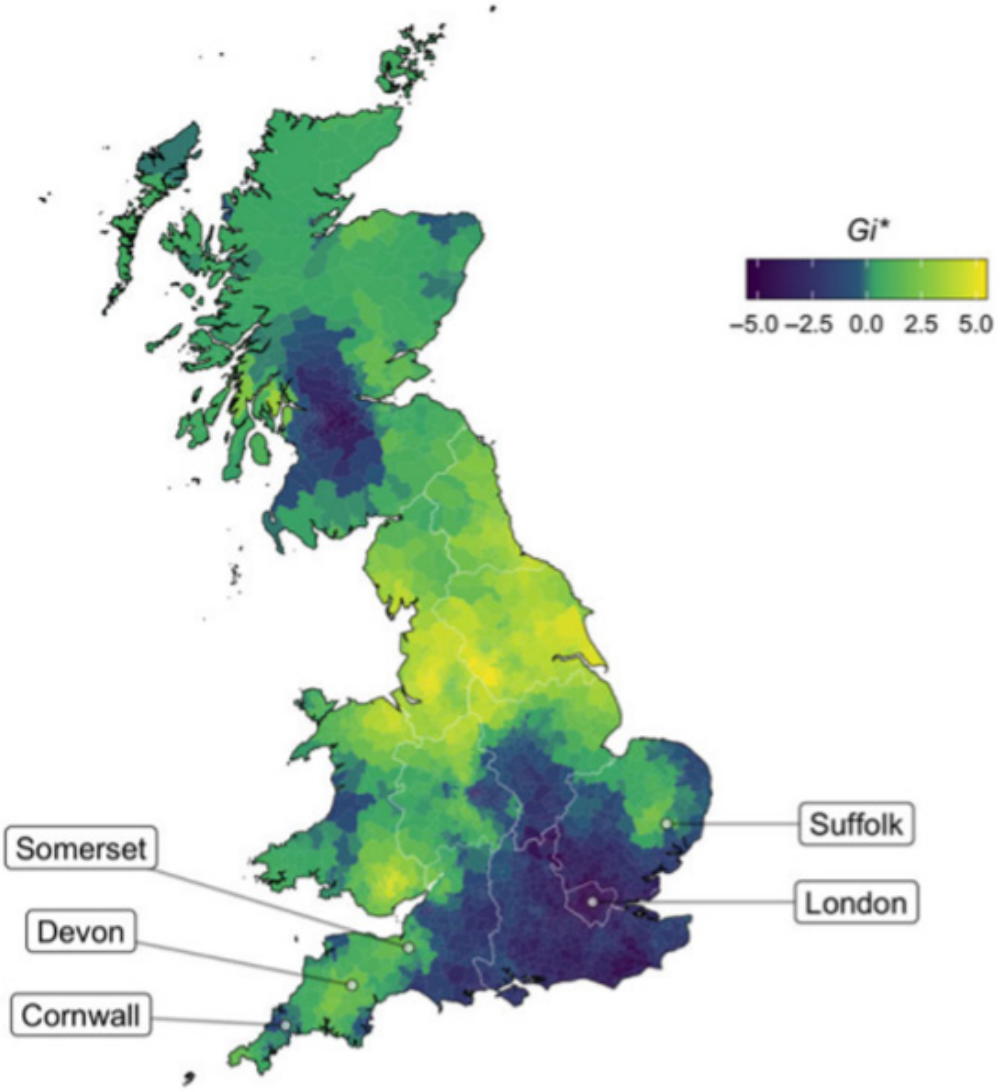
The researchers present the results for twelve linguistic variables comprising responses from over 14,000 participants. They compared their data to older data from the SED (see real time approach) to assess if language change had occurred.

What were the results?

The researchers found that there have been several changes since the SED. Let's take the example of what is called the foot-strut split. Around the middle of the seventeenth century a change occurred in the English language. The short 'u' vowel in Middle English split into two in southern England. As a result, in present times, people in southern England tend to say words such as *foot* and *strut* with different vowels.

In contrast, the words *foot* and *strut* tend to be said with the same vowel meaning that they rhyme for people in northern England.

regional variation



Map showing participants' responses for 'What is your word for the evening meal?' Light yellow areas represent respondents who selected the term 'tea'. Image reproduced from the research paper referenced at the end of this summary.

Based on the results of the SED, we can imagine a line running across England that cuts through the Midlands with people south of that line speaking with a foot-strut split while people north of that line do not. MacKenzie, Bailey and Turton found that this line has shifted upwards, meaning that people in the Midlands now tend to say *foot* and *strut* with different vowels much like people in the South. They also found that people in the South were very consistent in having the foot-strut split (only 5% of southerners didn't). In contrast, there was more variability in the North with 79% of people reporting that they didn't have the split.

The researchers also investigated if there has been a change in what people call their evening meal. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the wealthy upper classes ate their largest meal in the evening and called it 'dinner' while the working classes ate what they called 'dinner' during the day. Socioeconomic class was closely linked to how a person referred to as their evening meal but so too was region. It has long been known that referring to the day-time meal as 'dinner' and the evening meal as 'tea' is most common in northern England.

regional variation

The researchers found that calling the evening meal ‘tea’ is still more common in northern England. However, they also found that around half the people surveyed in the South West and in East Anglia also referred to their evening meal as ‘tea’. Nearly all participants in the South East and, in particular, in London called their evening meal ‘dinner’. Much like the foot-strut split, there was more variability in the North. A substantial minority of northerners did refer to their evening meal as ‘dinner’ like the southerners.

The researchers found that calling the evening meal ‘tea’ is still more common in northern England.

The same northerners who had a foot-strut split also called their evening meal ‘dinner’. The researchers suggested that people from the North from higher socioeconomic status were those who had more linguistic similarities with southerners. Thanks to the work of MacKenzie, Bailey and Turton we now have much better understanding of the structure of regional variation in the UK and how dialects have changed since the 1950s.

Reference

Article title: Towards an updated dialect atlas of British English: A survey investigating phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic variation in British English
Authors: Laurel MacKenzie, George Bailey and Danielle Turton
Journal: Journal of Linguistic Geography, Volume 10, pages 46-66
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A


Laurel MacKenzie


George Bailey


Danielle Turton

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this area?

I've always been interested in dialectal variation and language change, even from a young age when I would listen to my Grandad's stories about the local accent spoken by factory workers in industrial Lancashire. On top of that, I've always been fascinated by maps in general so this project mapping UK dialect variation is right up my street! The project team were also keen to produce something public facing, since this is a topic that everyone can relate to on a personal level, so it's been great to share our maps and see the interest generated in the research through our website (www.ourdialects.uk).

2. What were your main research questions?

We're interested in uncovering the contemporary status of UK dialects: what kind of dialectal diversity do we still find, and how has this changed when we compare our results to surveys from 70–100 years ago? Studying this on a large-scale also allows us to spot patterns in how linguistic variants spread geographically, and investigate how this correlates with things like population movement and **dialect contact**.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

That dialectal variation is still alive and well! There *is* evidence of long-term levelling processes, with some southern standard forms creeping northwards and a more general decrease in the diversity in local dialects. However, we also find that many features are actually quite stable and some are even spreading at the expense of more 'standard' variants.

We also find lots of examples of dialect regions that don't line up with national or political borders, e.g. places like Flintshire in North Wales that is linguistically aligned with the North West of England, or Berwick-upon-Tweed which, despite being in the North East of England, is very much aligned with Scotland in terms of dialect features. Border locations like these can show the important role of identity, attitudes and patterns of contact in shaping how we speak.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

All of my research is guided by similar over-arching questions about language variation and change, but I often use experimental methods such as ultrasound tongue imaging to study specific dialect features in fine detail. This work is much broader, taking a 'zoomed out' approach to studying dialect variation on a larger scale.

Q&A responses provided by George Bailey

Sofa, Couch or Settee?

Mapping dialect variation using Twitter

Researchers: Jack Grieve, University of Birmingham | Chris Montgomery, University of Sheffield | Andrea Nini, University of Manchester | Akira Murakami, University of Birmingham | Diansheng Guo, University of South Carolina

Background

Before the twenty-first century, most research on regional variation in the UK was carried out by linguists interviewing and recording people in face-to-face settings. In more recent years, the growth of social media has opened up the possibility for linguists to carry out large-scale dialect research without having to even leave their desks. For example, on Twitter, many tweets are geocoded (indicating where they are tweeted from) meaning that linguists can compare the regional dialect features posted on Twitter by people in different places (see Writing How You Speak summary).

the growth of social media has opened up the possibility for linguists to carry out large-scale dialect research without having to even leave their desks

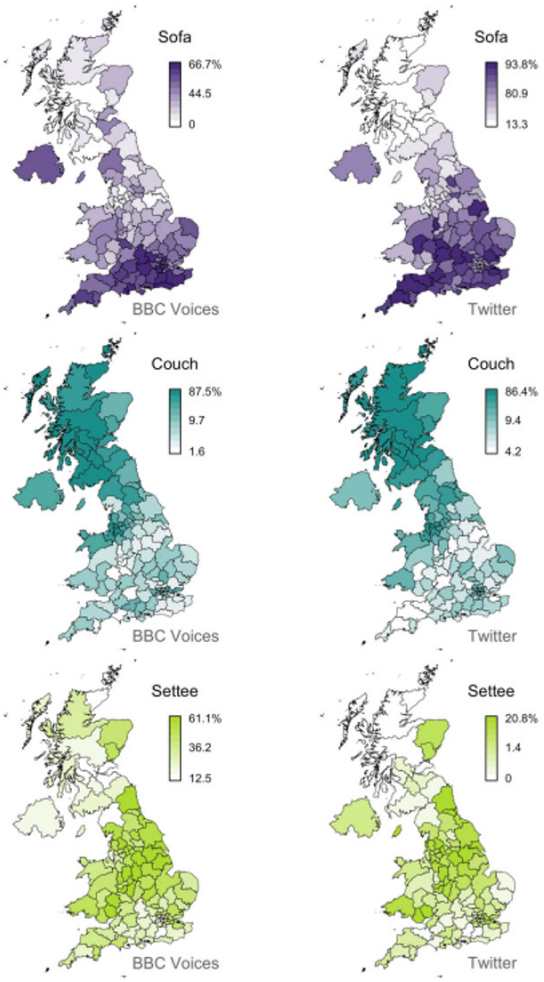
Social media is a fantastic resource for carrying out large-scale research on linguistic variation, but it is not known whether this data is a true reflection of how people from different geographic areas actually speak. Although research carried out by linguists in the US and UK in the mid-2010s indicated that there was often a close correspondence between Twitter data and existing dialect maps, these were often quite small-scale studies. Jack Grieve, Chris Montgomery, Andrea Nini, Akira Murakami and Diansheng Guo wanted to find out if data on regional variation collected on Twitter corresponds to existing dialect survey maps. Their research tested if the two approaches are comparable and if people's use of regional dialect features is consistent across different communicative contexts (in this case, online writing and in their actual speech).

Methods

The researchers compared spoken data that was collected by the BBC Voices project between 2004 and 2007 with data from Twitter from 2014. The BBC Voices project included around 734,000 responses from 84,000 people who were asked the word that they would use for several different concepts. The Twitter data consisted of 180 million geocoded tweets containing 1.8 billion words from 1.9 million unique accounts. The researchers compared the lexis (words) used across the UK in both types of data, focusing on 36 linguistic variables with 139 linguistic variants and 291 distinct orthographic forms (ways of spelling a word or phrase).

For example, the linguistic variable *lacking money* had the linguistic variants 'skint', 'broke', 'poor' and 'brassic', and the linguistic variable *rich* had the linguistic variants 'loaded', 'minted', 'well off', 'rolling in it' and 'rich'. Some variants had more than one orthographic form, for example, the linguistic variable *left-handed* had the variants 'cack-handed' and 'cag-handed', and the former variant had two orthographic forms ('cack handed' and 'cack-handed'). The researchers compared the two types of data (from Twitter and BBC Voices) to see if they aligned on the words used in different locations of the UK.

regional variation



The graphic shows where people were found to say *sofa*, *couch* or *settee* in both the BBC Voices and the Twitter data. Image reproduced from the research paper referenced at the end of this summary.

What were the results?

The Twitter and BBC Voices data broadly corresponded. For example, there was very clear regional variation in the UK in how people referred to a long soft seat in the main room and there was close alignment between the two types of data. Both identified that 'sofa' is relatively more common in the South of England, 'couch' in Scotland, and 'settee' in the Midlands and the North of England. Both sources of data were also in agreement about who used the different words for *friend*, for example, 'mate' (rather than 'pal', 'friend' or 'buddy') was more common in England, especially in the Midlands, than other parts of the UK.

Both types of data also identified that 'granny' for *grandmother* (instead of 'nanny' or 'grandma') was most common in Scotland, Northern Ireland and South West England. However, although both the Twitter and BBC Voices data agreed that 'grandpa' was most frequently used in Scotland and the Home Counties, they did not align for the words used for *grandfather* in Northern Ireland and Wales.

There were some other relatively small inconsistencies between the two types of data. For example, 'chuck' as a word for *throw* (in contrast to 'lob') was used most outside of England in both the Twitter and BBC Voices data, but the former did not identify that South West England is also a hotspot for this variant. Similarly, 'sick' as a word for *unwell* (in contrast to 'poorly' or 'ill') was shown to be used in Northern Ireland and South East England by both data types, but the Twitter data missed that this variant is also heard in Scotland.

Overall, there was a close correspondence between the BBC Voices and the Twitter data. The study validated the researchers' suggestion that Twitter can be used to analyse patterns of regional lexical variation. The researchers noted that the advantages of collecting data in this way rather than using surveys include being able to access naturally occurring data – rather than a survey which gathers people's opinions on how they speak in a potentially artificial setting – and the potential to gather large amounts of data.

Reference

Article title: Mapping Lexical Dialect Variation in British English Using Twitter
Authors: Jack Grieve, Chris Montgomery, Andrea Nini, Akira Murakami and Diansheng Guo
Journal: Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence, Volume 2, Article 11
Year of publication: 2019
Link to article: click here

Q&A

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

Jack had done a lot of work looking at lexical variation using Twitter in the US; he also had a lot of data from the UK that he'd not examined as closely. I've got interests in dialectal variation in the UK, and knew that we could get access to a large dataset of crowdsourced lexical data from the 'BBC Voices' survey. 'BBC Voices' was a big initiative in the early 2000s looking at language diversity in the UK. Knowing that the BBC Voices data was pretty good in terms of its representation of dialect variation, it seemed that we could compare that data with the Twitter data in order to test out how useful Twitter could be at explaining variation in the UK.

this work relates to the wide range of research that has looked at dialectal variation in the UK

2. What were your main research questions?

- How useful is Twitter for studying contemporary lexical variation in British English?
- How does Twitter data compare to the BBC Voices data?
- What are the patterns of lexical variation present in British English Twitter data?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- Twitter can be used to study contemporary lexical variation in British English
- We can explore the patterns of regional variation for specific terms with a degree of confidence
- We introduced a new method for comparing maps derived from different datasets
- Large collections of naturally-occurring words have some advantages over survey-collected information about words

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

This work most directly relates to other pieces of research that Jack has done, such as his exploring lexical variation in the US. I have not done much more research on dialectal variation like this, as I'm mostly looking now at how people react to speakers from different dialect areas. However, this work relates to the wide range of research that has looked at dialectal variation in the UK, from the Survey of English Dialects in the 1950s-60s, to the large amount of lexical data collected in the recent English Dialects App project.

Q&A responses provided by Chris Montgomery

Manchester Voices

Listening to Greater Manchester

Researchers : Rob Drummond, Manchester Metropolitan University | Erin Carrie | Holly Dann | Sarah Tasker | Sadie Ryan, University of Glasgow

Background

When you think of the Manchester dialect, a certain way of speaking probably comes to mind. Perhaps you think of the way England footballer Marcus Rashford speaks or perhaps Labour MP Angela Rayner or the members of the band Oasis, Liam and Noel Gallagher. But there are actually lots of different ways of speaking in Manchester. People within Greater Manchester speak differently to each other depending on factors such as which area of Manchester they are from (regional variation), their identity, ethnicity, age and gender (social variation). Even within one city there can be lots of linguistic variation.

In a large research project called 'Manchester Voices' which was coordinated by Rob Drummond and carried out by Erin Carrie, Holly Dann, Rob Drummond, Sadie Ryan and Sarah Tasker, the researchers explored and documented the rich tapestry of accents, dialects and identities that make up Greater Manchester. They used a very innovative method to collect the data and to engage members of the public with the results.

Often sociolinguists carry out sociolinguistic interviews to collect data on how people speak in a given location. Typically, a linguist will audio record members of the public individually while reading aloud minimal pairs, a word list or a passage and having a casual conversation with the linguist. In the conversation, the linguist will often ask the participant to talk about things such as their childhood memories or their experiences of living in the local area. Often the linguist won't talk to the participant about their dialect as it is thought that this will make them conscious of how they speak and they may style shift (see Corn(ish)? summary), meaning that they begin to speak differently (see observer's paradox).

The researchers were not just interested in how people speak but also in their opinions, knowledge and experiences of the different dialects spoken in Greater Manchester

The Manchester Voices researchers took a very different approach – they actually asked people to talk about their dialect. The researchers were not just interested in how people speak but also in their opinions, knowledge and experiences of the different dialects spoken in Greater Manchester. They set out to collect data from a diverse range of people, including those who might not otherwise have taken part in a traditional sociolinguistic interview. To achieve this, they travelled around many different parts of Greater Manchester in a van (which they called the Accent Van) which had been converted into a mobile recording booth where members of the public could take part in the research.

Methods

Participants could either sit in the Accent Van and take part in the research or they could take part from anywhere in an online version called the Virtual Van where they could contribute their opinions and audio recordings through their device microphone. The interviews consisted

of 14 questions and an optional elicitation task which prompted participants to say aloud certain words or phrases which the researchers knew to be variable in the Greater Manchester area. The interviews touched on topics relating to language, place and identity.

Participants could either sit in the Accent Van and take part in the research or they could take part from anywhere in an online version called the Virtual Van where they could contribute their opinions and audio recordings through their device microphone

The researchers also created online maps of Greater Manchester where participants could draw divisions between places where they thought people spoke differently to each other. In addition to the data they collected, the team also analysed historical recordings from Greater Manchester. Using a real time approach they can compare these older recordings to their more recent data to get a full and detailed understanding of how dialects have changed in the area (language change).

The Manchester Voices accent van

What were the results?

395 participants were interviewed, comprising 200 participants who were interviewed in the Accent Van and 195 in the Virtual Van. All participants were from the Greater Manchester area and 177 were male, 217 were female and one was non-binary.

The mobile recording booth in the Accent Van which even includes complimentary chocolate!

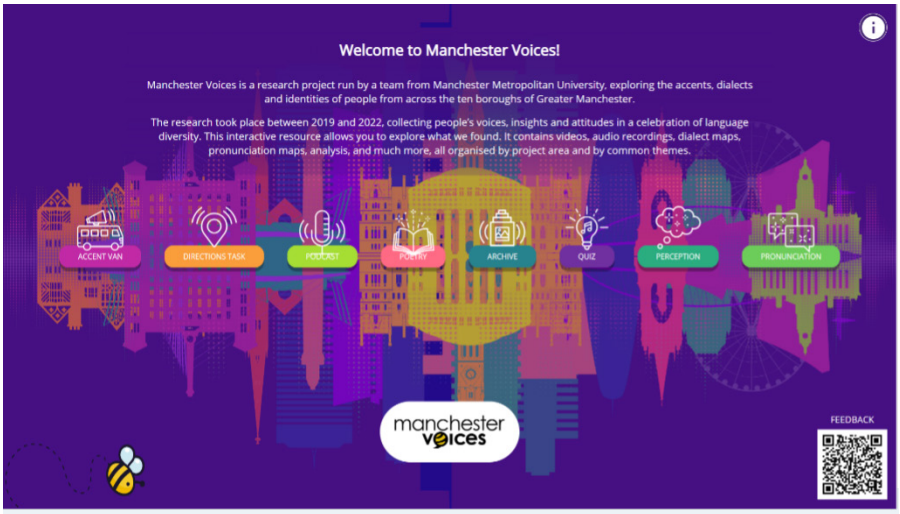
The team are still working with the reams of data that they have collected – watch this space to find out about their fantastic insights into the dialects of Greater Manchester! There is much that they will be able to analyse from the data they have collected. They can analyse the linguistic features that the participants used, enabling them to explore patterns of regional variation and social variation in Greater Manchester. The researchers will also analyse the participants' responses to the questions about language, place and identity in Greater Manchester and their responses on the map task, providing them with insights into how

people feel about the dialects spoken in Greater Manchester.

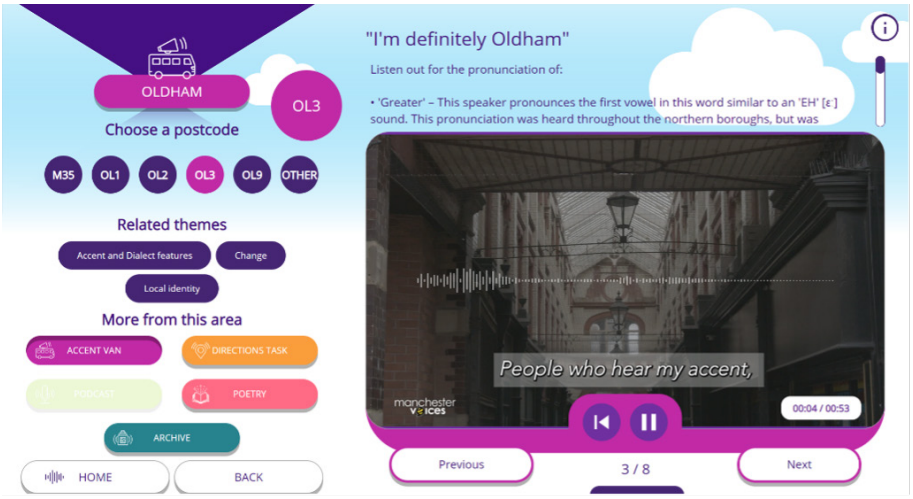
Can't wait to know more about the dialects of Greater Manchester? The research team have made a website where you can explore the results for yourself. You can listen to what participants had to say in the Accent Van and the Virtual Van. You can also choose a borough of Greater Manchester and listen to the way that the people from that place speak. The website describes some of the interesting pronunciations that you can listen out for.

Reference

Article title: The Manchester Voices Accent Van: taking sociolinguistic data collection on the road
Authors: Rob Drummond, Holly Dann, Sarah Tasker and Sadie Ryan
Journal: Linguistics Vanguard, Volume 8, pages 263–277
Year of publication: 2022



The Manchester Voices website where you can explore their fascinating research and findings.



On the Manchester Voices website you can listen to recordings of people from different places in greater Manchester and listen out for distinctive linguistic features.

Q&A


Rob Drummond


Erin Carrie


Holly Dann


Sarah Tasker


Sadie Ryan

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

I'm fascinated by accents and dialects, and how the way we speak relates to who we are, both in terms of how others perceive us, and how we perceive ourselves. And having spent a lot of time talking publicly on the subject, I'm aware that lots of people who don't have any particular awareness of linguistics are also fascinated by accents and dialects. Almost everybody has something to say about the way they, or the people around them, speak. So the Manchester Voices project set out to explore some of those stories, and the linguistic varieties that inform them, across the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester.

> Almost everybody has something to say about the way they, or the people around them, speak

2. What were your main research questions?

- To investigate language use, language attitudes, and regional and social identities across the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester.
- To locate and embed current Greater Manchester identities within the wider cultural and historical contexts of the region.
- To fully involve all social groups in the co-creation of region-specific social and linguistic knowledge.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- That although they are always changing, different accents and dialects are still well and truly alive in the region.
- That many people are extremely proud of the way they speak – it creates a strong sense of identity and belonging to particular places and social groupings.
- That people often have quite strong feelings about the different ways people speak across Greater Manchester.
- That people's perceptions of the way they and other people speak don't always match the reality.
- That having an Accent Van is one of the most fun and engaging ways to conduct sociolinguistic research!

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Manchester Voices has helped to modernise sociolinguistic methods. We used novel, and at times unique, ways to engage with the community and delve into their language use and attitudes. It builds on existing studies of language variation to describe linguistic diversity, but it has taken the kind of community-oriented approach that straight away makes it a whole lot more relevant to the people of Greater Manchester themselves. Personally, I like the kind of research that places the participants as the experts, and the researchers as the learners. And we learned a lot!

Q&A responses provided by Rob Drummond

Levelling up?

Exploring northern accents with machine learning

Researchers: Patrycja Strycharczuk, University of Manchester | Manuel López-Ibáñez, University of Manchester | Georgina Brown, Lancaster University | Adrian Leemann, University of Bern

Background

Dialect levelling refers to a reduction in regional variation, meaning that people from different places start to use fewer regional dialect features and to sound more similar to each other than previous generations. Dialect levelling happens partly because of dialect contact (people who speak differently coming into contact) and people avoiding linguistic features which are non-standard, stigmatised or very geographically localised.

Previous research has shown that dialect levelling is happening in the North of England. It's not the case that northerners have started to speak with southern accents such as Standard Southern British English (SSBE) even though they are often considered more standard and have more status than northern accents. Instead, some linguists have used the term General Northern English (GNE) to refer to a linguistic variety spoken across the North which has come about due to dialect levelling. Even though GNE might include some southern features, it also includes many typically northern features such as not having a trap-bath split or a foot-strut split which are not from any specific place in the North.

Dialect levelling happens partly because of dialect contact (people who speak differently coming into contact) and people avoiding linguistic features which are non-standard, stigmatised or very geographically localised

Patrycja Strycharczuk, Manuel López-Ibáñez, Georgina Brown and Adrian Leemann tested if there are people in the North who speak GNE, meaning that their accents cannot be pinpointed to a specific northern location.

Methods

The researchers analysed data from 105 participants collected through the English Dialects App (see Apps for Maps summary for information on this App). The data consisted of audio recordings of participants reading aloud the passage 'The boy who cried wolf' which was recorded through participants' phone microphones. The average age of the participants was 31 years, they were mostly highly educated, and 59% were female and 41% were male. The participants were from five cities in northern England: Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne and Sheffield.

The researchers trained a computer model to 'listen' (of course, the model couldn't listen in the same way as a human because computers don't have ears!) to the way a sample of the participants from each of the five cities pronounced the vowels in various words. The computer model was then shown audio recordings of participants that it hadn't previously encountered and had to decide for each of the five cities if the participants were from there.

The researchers assessed how often the model came up with the correct answer and whether the model did better at identifying participants from some cities compared to others. If the model struggled to identify where

the participants were from, this would suggest that dialect levelling has happened and that the participants speak GNE.

What were the results?

The model could often tell if a person was from Liverpool (82% accuracy) or Newcastle (71% accuracy). This finding suggests that the accents spoken in these cities are distinctive and are not the same as those spoken in the other northern cities. The model performed less well for Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester. The model tended to confuse people from Sheffield and Leeds and also struggled to distinguish between people from Manchester and Leeds, performing only slightly better than chance.

The participants from Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield had many linguistic features in common such as happy-tensing, meaning that they said the final sound in words like *happy* with a tense vowel so that it sounded like 'hap-iy' (as in the South of England) and not like 'hap-eh' or 'happ-ih' as we would expect in some northern dialects (happy-laxing). In fact, the participants from these three cities used several linguistic features that were quite similar to how a person from southern England might speak.

Some young, educated, middle-class people in the North speak GNE which includes some general, northern linguistic features and has influences from southern accents, but does not have features linked to any single place in the North of England

The results seem to show that dialect levelling has occurred in northern England. Some young, educated, middle-class people in the North speak GNE which includes some general, northern linguistic features and has influences from southern accents, but does not have features linked to any single place in the North of England. This isn't to say that everyone in the North speaks GNE or that there is no linguistic variation in the North. In fact, the researchers found several linguistic features that were only used in one of the northern cities. For example, the way people said the vowel in words like *near* was different in Manchester to the other five cities. However, Strycharczuk, López-Ibáñez, Brown and Leemann have shown that dialect levelling has happened to some degree in the North and that GNE is now spoken by some people in different parts of northern England.

Reference

Article title: General Northern English. Exploring Regional Variation in the North of England With Machine Learning
Authors: Patrycja Strycharczuk, Manuel López-Ibáñez, Georgina Brown and Adrian Leemann
Journal: Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence, Volume 3, Article 48
Year of publication: 2020
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Patrycja Strycharczuk

Manuel López-Ibáñez

Georgina Brown

Adrian Leemann

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

I live in the North of England, and many of my friends, colleagues and students have accents that I'd describe as General Northern English – identifiably northern, but otherwise not very localisable. This type of accent has been noted in linguistic literature for quite some time, but it's only been described in broadest terms, and not much research has been done about it. I couldn't find many studies that show who speaks GNE, what are its characteristic features, or how it's evaluated.

> Highly educated speakers tend to avoid very regional features in their speech

2. What were your main research questions?

The two main questions were:

- What are the vowel sounds in the speech of young educated urban speakers from the North of England?
- Can these vowel sounds allow us to distinguish which northern city they are from?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- Highly educated speakers tend to avoid very regional features in their speech, for example, a middle-class speaker from Manchester is unlikely to have a broad Mancunian accent.
- The opposite of a regional accent is a standard accent – the type of pronunciation perceived as neutral across a wider geographical area.
- There isn't a single standard accent in the UK, or even in England: speakers in the North typically align with a northern version of standard English.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Our research confirms and quantifies some previous descriptions of General Northern English, and it also shows that GNE is a coherent variety: GNE speakers from different places sound very much alike. We have shown that machine algorithms struggle to distinguish GNE speakers from different cities. Another team of researchers has recently found a similar result in a study with human listeners.

Q&A responses provided by Patrycja Strycharczuk

Corn(ish)?

Speech style, identity and dialect lexis in Cornwall

Researcher: Rhys Sandow, Queen Mary, University of London

Background

The term style shifting refers to linguistic variation in the speech of a single person. Put simply, style shifting is when a person speaks differently in different contexts. A person may style shift depending on who they are talking to, the topic of conversation and their emotional state as well as many other factors. Style shifting is also closely related to how much attention a person is paying to their speech, and this has been the focus of much sociolinguistic research.

People normally use more standard features when reading because it is a more careful speech style and they are paying more attention to their speech compared to how they speak in a conversation which is a more casual speech style

Linguists can test if style shifting is linked to the attention a person pays to their speech by comparing how they speak in a casual conversation compared to when they are reading aloud. People normally use more standard features when reading because it is a more careful speech style and they are paying more attention to their speech compared to how they speak in a conversation which is a more casual speech style. People often use more standard linguistic features when they pay attention to their speech because they want to speak in a way that is seen as prestigious and correct. Rhys Sandow's research is fascinating because he finds quite the opposite! He shows that some Cornish people use fewer standard linguistic features when paying attention to their speech because they want to reflect their Cornish identity and links to the local area.

Methods

Linguistic variation can occur at many different linguistic levels such as phonology, syntax or lexis. Sandow tested if he found lexical variation (linguistic variation in vocabulary) within the speech of individual people (style shifting) and if this was linked to how much attention they were paying to their speech.

There were 80 participants who were all White British and self-identified as Cornish. Participants lived and/or worked in the Cornish towns of Camborne or Redruth. There are some words used in Cornwall that you would be unlikely to hear in other places. In Cornwall a person might call a *lunch box* a 'crib box' or a 'croust tin', where 'crib' or 'croust' would be the break that (traditionally) the miners would take. They might call a *woman* a 'maid'. Instead of a *walk* a person might go on a 'stank', and a *tourist* could instead be called an 'emmet'. These words are part of Anglo-Cornish which is a dialect of English spoken in Cornwall.

some Cornish people use fewer standard linguistic features when paying attention to their speech because they want to reflect their Cornish identity and links to the local area

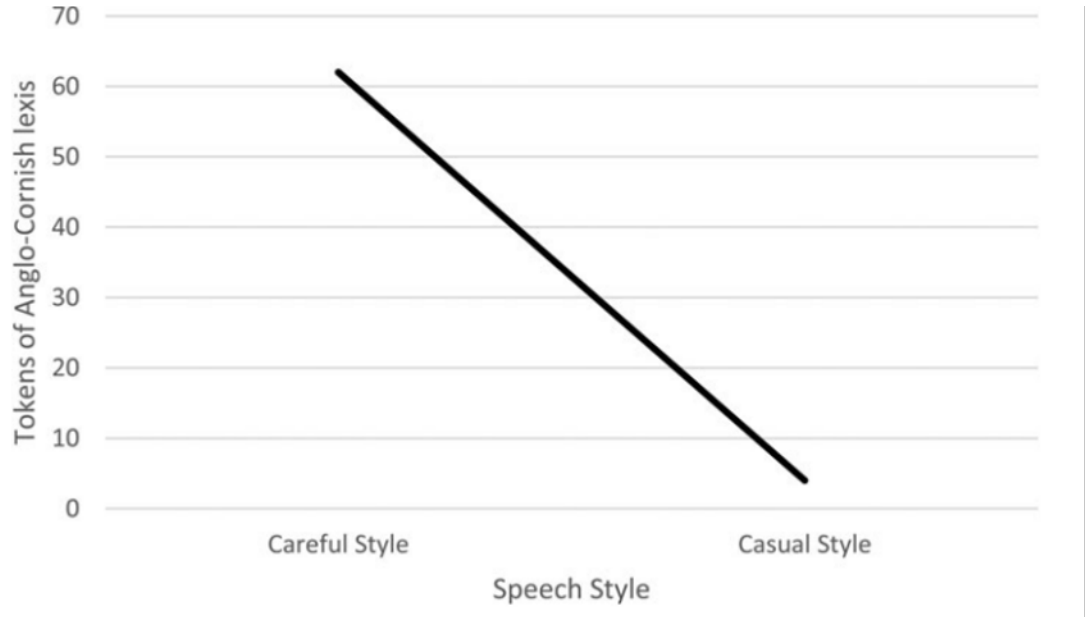
The participants completed a sociolinguistic interview with the researcher which included several elicitation tasks. Elicitation tasks are designed so that a person will say aloud a particular word, phrase or concept. Participants were presented with five spot-the-difference tasks. They were given two slightly different versions of the same picture showing a street, beach, bathroom or table and they had to describe the differences between the two pictures. For example, one difference between the two pictures was that the lunch box was facing in a different direction. The participants were hopefully focused on solving the puzzle and not on how they spoke, meaning that they would speak in a casual speech style (see observer's paradox).

Participants also completed a picture naming task. This task was simple – they were shown a picture, for example of a lunch box, and they had to name the item they saw. Participants would speak in a careful speech style in this task because they were paying attention to their speech. Sandow could then compare whether the participants used different words in the casual and careful speech styles. For example, did they say 'lunch box' in one task but 'crib box' or 'croust tin' in the other?

Sandow also interviewed the participants about their dialect, identity and attitudes towards Cornwall, and participants completed a questionnaire which measured how strongly they identified with the local area.

What were the results?

The participants said more Anglo-Cornish words (such as 'maid') and fewer widespread words (such as 'woman') in the picture naming task than in the spot-the-difference task. This means that participants were more likely to use Anglo-Cornish words in the careful speech style than the casual speech style. This is the opposite of what we would expect – the more attention they paid to their speech, the more likely they were to use Anglo-Cornish words. For example, in the careful speech style, 10% of participants used the Anglo-Cornish word 'maid' and 90% of participants said 'woman', but in the casual speech style, nobody said the word 'maid' and everybody said 'woman'.



Graph showing that participants used more Anglo-Cornish words in the careful speech style when paying attention to their speech than in the casual speech style. Image reproduced from the first research paper referenced on page 33.

Sandow also found that the words the participants said were related to their age and class but not their gender. Participants aged over 40 were more likely to use Anglo-Cornish words than younger people. As well as this, working-class people were more likely to use some Anglo-Cornish words, such as 'crib box', 'croust tin' and 'emmet', than middle-class people. These findings are broadly as expected – much previous research has shown that regional dialect features are more common among older and working-class people.

some Cornish people use fewer standard linguistic features when paying attention to their speech because they want to reflect their Cornish identity and links to the local area

We would expect to find linguistic variation by age and class (see social variation), but why did Sandow find that participants used more Anglo-Cornish words in the careful speech style than the casual speech style? Sandow found that participants often wanted to mark out that they were from Cornwall and so were more likely to use Anglo-Cornish words when paying attention to their speech.

Grabbing a pasty in between sociolinguistic interviews

Photo taken after a sociolinguistic interview in Porthtowan, Cornwall

As a result, the participants who had a stronger Cornish identity, as determined through the identity questionnaire, were more likely to use the Anglo-Cornish words. Several participants even commented on the link between identity and dialect. For example, a participant said that using the term 'maid' and not 'woman' 'accentuates your Cornishness'. Sandow's study shows that a person's identity can affect how they speak, and that people don't always use more standard features when they pay attention to their speech.

Reference

Article title: Attention, identity and linguistic capital: inverted style-shifting in Anglo-Cornish dialect lexis
Authors: Rhys Sandow
Journal: English Language & Linguistics, Volume 26, Issue 4, pages 677-695
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Article title: Maid in Cornwall: Social, stylistic, and cognitive factors in lexical levelling
Authors: Rhys Sandow
Journal: English World-Wide, Volume 44, Issue 2, pages 157-183
Year of publication: 2023
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Rhys Sandow

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

I began my interest in conducting sociolinguistic research into words as an undergraduate student. I became fascinated by developing methods to explore the social life of words. At the same time, being from Cornwall, I noticed that little sociolinguistic research had been conducted there. This sparked a dual interest in sociolinguistic variation in words and sociolinguistic variation in Cornwall. This enabled me to study under-researched content, lexical variation, in an under-researched context, Cornwall.

2. What were your main research questions?

1. What sorts of patterns of variation and change can be observed in vocabulary?
2. To what extent is socio-cultural variation and change visible in vocabulary?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

My key finding is that lexical variation is highly structured in terms of the variation between speakers, in relation to strength of local identity and age, as well as between individuals in different contexts, such as in careful and casual styles of speech. I have also highlighted how vocabulary is a tool through which speakers do a lot of social identity work, that is, they use words to create identities for themselves that they deem desirable. I have also highlighted the role of local identity in sociolinguistic variation and change in quantitative terms, by conducting statistical tests on the relationship between strength of local identity and language variation, and in qualitative terms, by exploring discourses of identity and language attitudes.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

I'm particularly interested in developing our understanding of lexical variation as I feel that, while under-studied, this can be enable us to better understand language variation more broadly and to tell new stories about the relationship between language and society. The research outlined here is a major part of this broader research interest of mine that I am continuing to develop through a number of ongoing projects.

Cockneys in Essex

Dialect, gender and identity

Researcher: Amanda Cole, University of Essex

Background

Cockney is often defined as a working-class dialect of English which is spoken in East London. Around a decade ago, the linguists Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen found that many young people in East London spoke a different sort of dialect which they called Multicultural London English (MLE).

The finding that many young East Londoners didn't speak Cockney led to speculation, especially in the media, that the Cockney dialect was disappearing

The finding that many young East Londoners didn't speak Cockney led to speculation, especially in the media, that the Cockney dialect was disappearing. Amanda Cole instead proposed that the Cockney dialect might be found in the county of Essex which borders East London. Cole thought this might be the case because hundreds of thousands of Londoners moved to the surrounding areas, particularly Essex, throughout the twentieth century. Some of the reasons for this mass movement of people include overcrowding, high rates of poverty, deindustrialisation and the resultant loss of work in East London, as well as a series of government-led programmes which relocated people to purpose-built towns and estates. Cole's research tested if the Cockney dialect moved to Essex along with the people who relocated and whether younger generations still spoke this way.

Methods

Cole carried out her research on the Debden Estate (now often known as just 'Debden') which was a council estate built in Essex by local government in the late 1940s and early 1950s to house East Londoners. Cole tested if the Cockney dialect had moved to Essex, specifically Debden, by analysing the speech of the first generation to grow up there. She interviewed 15 people born between 1944 and 1969 who had lived in Debden since birth or before the age of five after their parents were moved there from East London in the late 1940s or 1950s. Cole compiled a long list of Cockney or London dialect features that were mentioned in previous research. She then compared if these features were present in the speech of the 15 participants.

Cole was not only interested in whether the Cockney dialect had moved to Essex, but also if it had changed over time on Essex soil. To analyse this, she carried out a sociolinguistic interview with 54 people whose ages ranged from 14 to 91 in Debden. The participants were audio recorded while reading aloud a word list and a passage and having casual conversation with the researcher. She used an apparent time approach to assess if language change had happened in Debden, meaning that she compared the accents of people of different ages. She compared the way different age groups said the vowels in several different words such as *board*, *bead*, *bid*, *bed*, *bad* and *bud*.

Cole also wanted to understand if there had been a change in identity in Debden over time. She asked participants to rate on a scale of one to seven how much they considered themselves to be Cockney and whether they felt their accent was a Cockney or an Essex one.

What were the results?

Debden Broadway

The dialect spoken by the first generation of people to grow up in Debden was almost identical to previous descriptions of Cockney. The participants used a wide range of Cockney linguistic features including phonological ones such as th-fronting (*three* as 'free'), h-dropping (not pronouncing the 'h' in *home*), l-vocalisation (*milk* as 'miwk'), g-dropping (*dancing* as 'dancin'), and saying the final syllable in words like *something* as 'ink'. The participants also used Cockney syntactic features such as non-standard-was (saying 'you was', 'they was' and 'we was' – see was/were variation), and saying 'come' as the past tense form such as 'he come round last Tuesday'. Cole concluded that the Cockney dialect did indeed move to Essex, or at least to some parts of Essex, along with the people who relocated.

Cole has shown that what many people now think of as an 'Essex' accent is actually very close to Cockney

Cole has shown that Cockney moved to Essex, but do young people still speak the dialect? In different pieces of research with Patrycja Strycharczuk and Bronwen Evans she found that even young people in Debden spoke in a way that was very similar to Cockney but there had been some language change. The accent of young people was becoming more standard and more similar to other accents in the South East, perhaps moving closer to Estuary English. Dialect levelling is happening in several different parts of South East England and Debden is no exception. There are, however, also some interesting and new dialect features found in different parts of Essex that weren't present in previous generations such as saying 'yous' to refer to more than one person and having a different intonation pattern. The accent spoken by many young people in Essex is built on the foundations of Cockney but has changed subtly over time. Cole has shown that what many people now think of as an 'Essex' accent is actually very close to Cockney.

the more Cockney features a young person used, the more they tended to think they had an 'Essex' accent

Though the accent spoken in Debden has not changed dramatically over the generations, there was a very notable change in identity. Those born in Essex, particularly younger generations, tended to consider their accent to be an 'Essex' one rather than 'Cockney'. In fact, the more Cockney features a young person used, the more they tended to think they had an 'Essex' accent. By contrast, those born in East London, who also tended to be the older generations, were much more likely to consider their accent to be 'Cockney'. This result shows that the geographic boundaries within which a person lives impacts how they define their accent.

Cole found, however, that some young women in Debden considered themselves to be Cockney as they felt they had inherited the identity from their mums and nans by having close family ties and the transmission of Cockney culture. In contrast, no young men felt they were Cockney because they associated

regional variation

Cockney with East London, a working-class lifestyle and working in blue-collar professions. A person's gender is related to not only how they speak but also their identity and how they define their accent.

Reference

Article title: Cockney moved East: the dialect of the first generation of East Londoners raised in Essex
Authors: Amanda Cole
Journal: Dialectologia et Geolinguistica, Volume 30, Issue 1, pages 91-114
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Article title: Phonetic variation and change in the Cockney Diaspora: The role of place, gender, and identity.
Authors: Amanda Cole and Bronwen Evans
Journal: Language in Society, Volume 50, Issue 5, pages 641-665
Year of publication: 2021
Link to article: click here

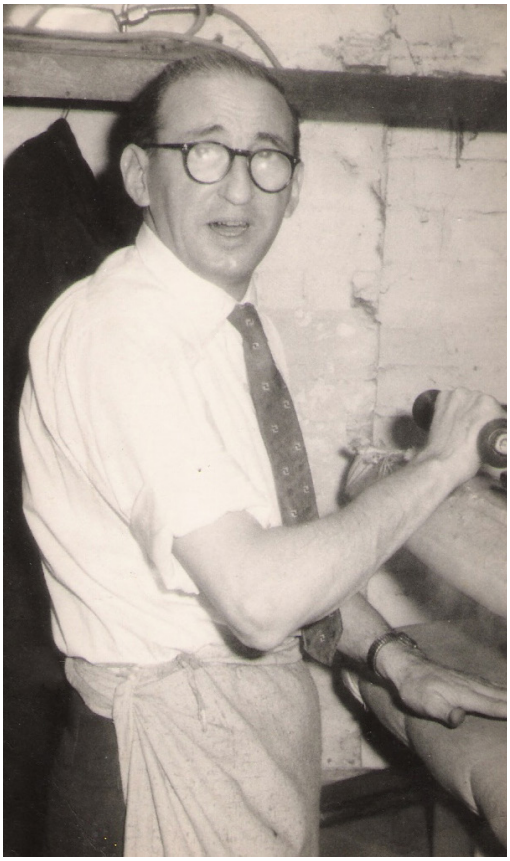
Article title: Dialect levelling and Cockney diphthong shift reversal in South East England: the case of the Debden Estate
Authors: Amanda Cole & Patrycja Strycharczuk
Journal: English Language & Linguistics, Volume 26, Issue 4, pages 621-643
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Amanda Cole

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

My research on Cockney and Essex dialects has a personal element. My grandparents were all East Londoners who lived in substantial amounts of poverty. They recount many tales of hardship: eating their pet rabbits in desperation; relying on food donated by the church; my grandad pawning his only nice suit at the start of each month for food money and buying it back again after pay day. My parents were the first generation in my family to not have their teeth pulled out at the age of 21 (often with pliers at the butchers) to avoid the cost of future dental treatment.



Amanda Cole's Uncle Fred working in Whitechapel, East London

Both sets of my grandparents were part of the government-led programmes which relocated families out of East London to purpose-built council estates in the latter half of the twentieth century. The rest of their lives were more comfortable; they lived in modernised, semi-detached houses in council estates in southern Essex. I was brought up, like my dad before me, in Debden. We knew we lived in Essex, but Cockney always felt close; my grandad spoke in rhyming slang, there was a thriving local pie and mash shop, and we danced the knees up at weddings. From a linguistic perspective, I wanted to test whether the Cockney dialect had also been transported from East London to Debden.

Both sets of my grandparents were part of the government-led programmes which relocated families out of East London to purpose-built council estates in the latter half of the twentieth century

2. What were your main research questions?

- Has the Cockney dialect moved to Essex along with the people – like my grandparents – who relocated in the latter half of the twentieth century?
- Do young people in these communities still speak Cockney?
- Has there been a change in identity over the generations and, in particular, do young people consider themselves and their accent to be Cockney?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- The first generation who, like my dad, grew up in Debden after their parents were relocated from East London in the late 1940s and 1950s speak indistinguishably from Cockney. This shows that the Cockney dialect did move to Essex (though is also still spoken in parts of East London by some groups).
- Within two generations, there has been a dramatic decrease in those who consider themselves and their accents to be Cockney in Debden. Instead, young people believe they have an 'Essex' accent, even though their accent still has much in common with the accent of their Cockney parents or grandparents.
- Although not a perfect replica, a modern-day accent spoken in parts of Essex is notably a descendent of Cockney.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

I am interested in the accents spoken in South East England. My research with Patrycja Strycharczuk (see From Cockney to the King summary) set out to identify the different accents spoken in the region by young people. We found that Estuary English, Standard Southern British English and Multicultural London English are the dominant accents in the South East (at least in our sample!), but we didn't find that Cockney or Received Pronuniciation (RP) were among the main accents spoken. Estuary English has much in common with Cockney but is closer to Standard Southern British English.

young people believe they have an 'Essex' accent, even though their accent still has much in common with the accent of their Cockney parents or grandparents

The accent spoken by young people in parts of Essex, including Debden, could be defined as Estuary English but on the Cockney end of the Estuary English spectrum. It is certainly a very close relative of Cockney but has changed in some ways and has experienced dialect levelling in line with general trends in the South East. In other work I have looked at patterns of accent bias in the South East which has found that Essex accents are very stigmatised and people with Essex accents are disadvantaged (see Class Judgements summary).

From Cockney to the King

What accents are spoken in South East England?

Researchers: Amanda Cole, University of Essex | Patrycja Strycharczuk, University of Manchester

Background

There are many different accents which are thought to be spoken in South East England and London. You may have heard of Estuary English (EE), Standard Southern British English (SSBE), Received Pronunciation (RP), Cockney and Multicultural London English (MLE).

RP is sometimes referred to as 'Queen's English', or more recently 'King's English', and has high social status, meaning that many people think of it as a very standard and prestigious accent. RP is not just spoken in southern England but is spoken across the country by people who tend to be of a higher class (see Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths summary). Another major linguistic influence in the South East is Cockney, an accent from East London mostly spoken by working-class people. Typically, linguists consider that both SSBE and EE are on a continuum that runs between Cockney and RP, with EE falling closer to Cockney than SSBE which is closer to RP.

Although there are many different accents thought to be spoken in the South East, linguists don't always agree on the differences between these accents and whether young people in the region still speak them

Another accent spoken in the South East is MLE which linguists first documented in recent decades in East London. MLE has many linguistic features in common with both Cockney and RP but has also been influenced by other dialects of English and languages from around the world. MLE is often described by linguists as a multiethnolect (a non-standard dialect that is not spoken exclusively by any ethnic group), but some research has suggested that young Londoners, particularly girls, who are White British may be less likely to use MLE features than people from other ethnic backgrounds (see From Cockney to the King summary).

Although there are many different accents thought to be spoken in the South East, linguists don't always agree on the differences between these accents and whether young people in the region still speak them – this is what Cole and Strycharczuk set out to test.

Methods

There were 193 participants from across South East England and London who were all aged between 18 and 33 years. The participants were recorded reading aloud a passage and a word list. Cole and Strycharczuk then built a computer model which divided the participants into groups depending on how similarly they pronounced the vowels in many different words. People who tended to speak similarly to each other when they said multiple words such as *bout*, *bite* and *booed* were grouped together. The model was not based on consonants or grammatical structures because it is thought that the accents of South East England differ most in how people pronounce vowels.

What were the results?

The model determined that there were three groups of speakers, each with a different accent. Cole and Strycharczuk labelled the

three accents as Standard Southern British English (SSBE), Multicultural London English (MLE) and Estuary English (EE). They labelled the accents in this way because the social characteristics of the speakers and the way that different vowels were pronounced was very similar to how SSBE, MLE and EE have previously been described by linguists.

Cole and Strycharczuk found that the young people who were classified as speaking EE said words like *bout* with the tongue quite far forward in the mouth so that it sounded a little like 'baht'. They also said words like *bite* with the tongue further back in the mouth than the speakers of the other accents so that it sounded a little bit more like 'boyt'. These pronunciations are similar to Cockney but not as extreme. In contrast, the SSBE speakers spoke in a way that many would consider as a standard, southern accent. SSBE was not identical to RP but could be considered a modern, updated version that includes more regional dialect features from southern England.

Cockney and RP might not be spoken by young people in South East England or, at least, these accents are not commonly spoken and might not be among the main accents spoken in the region

The model did not identify a Cockney or an RP accent among the speakers. This suggests that Cockney and RP might not be spoken by young people in South East England or, at least, these accents are not commonly spoken and might not be among the main accents spoken in the region. There may have been some young people in the sample who spoke these accents, but if so, they were too few and far between for the algorithm to identify. Instead, SSBE and EE were widely spoken, but they were not as different from each other as Cockney and RP. This could be evidence of dialect levelling in South East England – when people from different parts of the region speak more similarly to each other than their parents or grandparents did.

This is not to say that there are no new or innovative ways of speaking – MLE is an example of a recent accent in the South East. The young people with an MLE accent in the researchers' sample said the vowels in words like *bate* and *boat* with the tongue starting at a point higher up in the mouth compared to the other groups so that they sounded a little bit more like 'beht' and 'boht'. Many of the MLE speakers were Asian British or Black British and were from London.

In contrast, the speakers of both EE and SSBE tended to be White British, and women were more likely to speak SSBE than men. However, it is important to note that the link between the speakers' social characteristics and the accent they were classified as was only a trend. For example, there were many speakers in the SSBE group who were not White British women, and there were White British women who the model classified as speaking either EE or MLE. There were also young people who used MLE features from across the region, including many White British speakers.

Cole and Strycharczuk used a scientific method to determine the different accents spoken in South East England and have shown that there seem to be three dominant accents spoken by young people in South East England: SSBE, MLE and EE.

Reference

Article title: The search for linguistically coherent accents: Unsupervised clustering of diphthong variation in Southeast England
Authors: Amanda Cole and Patrycja Strycharczuk
Journal: English World-Wide, Online First
Year of publication: 2023
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Amanda Cole

Patrycja Strycharczuk

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

We have worked together on various different pieces of research over several years. Patrycja is an expert in phonetics, meaning that she focusses on understanding how speech is produced, as well as computational and statistical methods for analysing language. Amanda is a sociolinguist who is interested in how language is used, spoken about and evaluated in society. Together we have used computational and statistical methods to contribute towards sociolinguistic theory. We both noticed that, for both linguists and members of the public, there is often an inconsistency and lack of agreement on what the linguistic features of the accents of South East England are and who speaks them. We decided to apply a scientific, computational method to tackle this problem.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What are the different accents spoken by young people in South East England and which groups of people speak them?
- Are Estuary English (EE), Standard Southern British English (SSBE), Received Pronunciation (RP), Cockney and Multicultural London English (MLE) all accents which are currently spoken by young people in South East England?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- There are three dominant accents spoken by young people in South East England: Standard Southern British English, Multicultural London English and Estuary English.
- Cockney and RP don't seem to be spoken by young people in South East England or, at least, these accents are not commonly spoken and are not among the main accents spoken in the region.
- People who speak the same accent share linguistic features and there are also some trends in the social characteristics of speakers.

We both noticed that, for both linguists and members of the public, there is often an inconsistency and lack of agreement on what the linguistic features of the accents of South East England are and who speaks them

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Amanda's research has mainly focused on the accents of South East England. She is interested in understanding what the different ways of speaking in the region are and how people feel about them. For instance, in her work – including research that she has done together with Patrycja – she has shown that the accent spoken in parts of Essex is very close to Cockney (see From Cockney to the King summary). In other work she has shown that in South East England, people who are working class, from an ethnic minority background and/or from London are judged more harshly than others based on their speech, for instance as less intelligent (see Class Judgements summary). The research with Patrycja is another component in the puzzle to understanding how people speak and evaluate speech in South East England.

social groups

A Dutch Chav from The Hague?

The enregisterment of two similar social personas

Researchers: Amanda Cole, University of Essex | Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Leiden University

Background

A dialect, an accent or a single linguistic feature can have social meaning which means that it is associated with certain social characteristics or behaviours. Sometimes when we hear another person speaking in a certain way we might make assumptions about them such as whether they sound kind, honest or confident, or even form ideas about their lifestyle and hobbies. Sometimes a way of speaking can even be associated with a stereotyped social persona such as a roadman, an Essex girl or a Sloane Ranger – this is called enregisterment (see Speaking Roadman summary on the enregisterment of MLE as roadman).

Haagse Harry statue in The Hague

Amanda Cole and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade noticed that there were two very similar social personas in England and The Netherlands: chavs and *Haagse* Harry (Harry from the Hague) respectively. *Haagse* Harry is not a real person; he is a character in popular Dutch comic books. In contrast, though we also encounter fictional chavs on TV shows and in books, the term is also used to describe real people. It is remarkable how many of the associated characteristics and behaviours of supposed chavs fit Harry like a glove such as wearing bling and tracksuits, supposed antisocial behaviour, laziness, and prolific swearing.

It is remarkable how many of the associated characteristics and behaviours of supposed chavs fit Harry like a glove such as wearing bling and tracksuits, supposed antisocial behaviour, laziness, and prolific swearing

The researchers set out to understand the linguistic features that are enregistered with chavs and *Haagse* Harry, and they examined what this tells us about the attitudes towards different dialects and the people who speak them in England and The Netherlands.

Methods

Cole and Tieken-Boon van Ostade noted how the two social personas speak and how they are portrayed in TV shows, books and on social media like TikTok. They identified chavs

in books and TV shows such as Little Britain's Vicky Pollard as those who fulfill the common stereotypes of chavs. They also looked at TikTok content with the hashtag #chav or similar in which video creators parodied supposed chavs. They compared the findings for chavs to how *Haagse* Harry and his dialect is portrayed in the media in The Netherlands.

What were the results?

The researchers found there isn't one single way of speaking associated with chavs. Instead, fictional chavs consistently use the dialect of the place they are supposed to be from, whether that is London, Yorkshire, Bristol, Manchester or wherever else. However, regardless of where they are from, fictional chavs consistently speak with the dialect of working-class people from that place. There is not one single dialect that is enregistered with chavs but instead working-class linguistic features from across England are associated with chavs.

The portrayal of chavs thus not only reveals prejudice against working-class people in England but also, within that, prejudice and contempt for working-class dialects

Cole and Tieken-Boon van Ostade then examined the lifestyle, behaviours and appearance of chavs in the media. They found that chavs are persistently mocked and shown in recurrently similar but negative ways. Chavs are often portrayed as lazy, argumentative, ignorant, unintelligent, with high levels of drug and alcohol use (and abuse), links to petty criminality and sexually promiscuous (though typically this is only presented as a problem for female chavs and not male chavs). The way chavs speak is also mocked and they are depicted as not speaking coherently or articulately. The portrayal of chavs thus not only reveals prejudice against working-class people in England but also, within that, prejudice and contempt for working-class dialects.

The results for *Haagse* Harry were somewhat different. The researchers showed that linguistic features of Broad Haags are enregistered with *Haagse* Harry. Broad Haags – the dialect spoken by *Haagse* Harry – is most commonly spoken by working-class people from The Hague and has positive connotations, even for people who are not working class and are unlikely to speak with the dialect. Broad Haags has actually been codified, meaning that it has its own spelling system which is used in local adverts, songs and publications such as comic books. There are even spelling bees for Broad Haags!

Like Broad Haags, *Haagse* Harry is also a source of pride in The Hague. Harry appears in comic strips and has his own merchandise such as puzzles, key rings and mugs. There is even a statue of Harry (with a raised middle finger behind his back) in a popular square in the city centre of The Hague. Upon seeing the statue, English tourists would most likely identify Harry as a chav, though it is very hard to imagine a similar statue celebrating "chavviness" in England. Harry, and his dialect, is afforded greater respect and prestige than chavs, perhaps because there is not such ingrained bias and prejudice against working-class people and their dialects in The Netherlands compared to England.

Cole and Tieken-Boon van Ostade's research shows that *Haagse* Harry and chavs are very similar social personas, but their dialects are evaluated in very different ways. The way a dialect is judged or evaluated in a society is strongly dependent on the stereotypes, ideas and attitudes about the groups of people that speak it.

Reference

Article title: *Haagse* Harry, a Dutch chav from The Hague?: The enregisterment of similar social personas in different speech communities
Authors: Amanda Cole and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade
Journal: International Journal of Language and Culture, Volume 9, Issue 1, pages 72-96
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Amanda Cole

Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

We met at an academic conference in which Ingrid was presenting research on The Hague and she discussed *Haagse* Harry. For Amanda, Harry immediately brought to mind the concept of chavs in England. We began discussing the similarities and differences between *Haagse* Harry and chavs, and Amanda even took a trip to The Hague to visit the *Haagse* Harry statue but unfortunately found a van parked directly in front of him and he was hard to see. Our enthusiasm was sparked and we soon began writing up our paper!

2. What were your main research questions?

- What are the key differences between chavs and *Haagse* Harry and how they are portrayed in their respective countries?
- Can you describe *Haagse* Harry as a chav when speaking about him to an English-language audience?
- Which accents are chavs and *Haagse* Harry depicted as having and are their accents from similar populations in their respective countries?
- Are there differences in the social status and prestige that the two figures, and their accent, have in their respective countries?
- What can the findings tell us more broadly about class prejudice and accent bias in England and The Netherlands?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- Though chavs and *Haagse* Harry would appear to be very similar figures, in actual reality they reveal different patterns of accent and class prejudice in England and The Netherlands.
- The accents of "chavs" are mocked and ridiculed in England, which reflects prejudice towards the accents spoken by working-class people.
- We found that, though you might think that the concept of "chav" had its heyday in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it has made a resurgence in recent years, particularly on social media such as TikTok, making our results even more relevant today.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Amanda's research has found that in southern England, working-class people are consistently judged as less intelligent based only on their accent. When reading aloud the same sentence, lower-working-class people are judged on average 14% less intelligent than upper-middle class people (see Class Judgements summary). This fits with our findings that depictions of "chavs" are representative of a derisive and contemptuous commentary on the working class and their accents in England.

Ingrid has worked extensively on the different languages that are spoken in The Hague, which is becoming increasingly multilingual. She interviewed speakers of these languages for her book *Languages of The Hague*, published in 2019, and a speaker of *Haags* was included as well. *Haags* is also represented in a "sayings walk" which she designed together with a group of students. It has a website on which you can take the walk and hear the sayings in their original language, including *Haags*.

‘Give us my shoe back!’

Challenging dialect and class prejudice in education

Researcher: Julia Snell, University of Leeds

Background

Much research has found that people from the same place but from different classes might speak in subtly different ways. Linguistic variation between people from different classes is a form of social variation (when people from different social groups, such as those relating to gender, class, age or ethnicity, use language differently).

A typical finding in the UK is that the lower a person’s class, the fewer standard linguistic features and the more regional dialect features they tend to use. For example, across the UK, compared to middle-class people, you would be more likely to hear working-class people use adjectives in adverbial positions (sometimes referred to as flat adverbs) such as saying, ‘I speak quick’ (rather than, ‘I speak quickly’). Flat adverbs as well as other regional dialect features are often labelled by linguists and laypeople alike as ‘non-standard’ because they have low social status, you wouldn’t find them in an English grammar book, and many people don’t consider them appropriate for written English (see Standard Language Ideology).

In this study, Julia Snell demonstrates that regional dialect features should not be seen as wrong or even as necessarily disadvantageous for those who use them because there is more to a linguistic feature than just how “grammatically correct” it is judged to be

Although linguists might refer to a linguistic feature as ‘non-standard’, they don’t believe that any dialect is wrong or lesser than any other (see attitudes and representation sub-section). However, many other people feel that regional dialect features are incorrect and that people should be dissuaded from using them. In particular, children are often discouraged from using non-standard features because it is believed that speaking in this way will hold them back and limit their opportunities.

In this study, Julia Snell demonstrates that regional dialect features should not be seen as wrong or even as necessarily disadvantageous for those who use them because there is more to a linguistic feature than just how “grammatically correct” it is judged to be. She shows that children continue to use non-standard linguistic features even when instructed not to do so by their teachers because the features and important and valuable in the local community.

Methods

Snell analysed the ways that children of different classes in Teesside in the North of England speak and the meanings behind these ways of speaking. In this piece of research, she focused on the non-standard, regional dialect feature singular ‘us’. Singular ‘us’ is when a person uses the word ‘us’ in place of the first-person singular pronoun ‘me’ when referring only to themselves and not a group of people such as, ‘give us my shoe back’.

For seven months, Snell made weekly visits to two schools as a classroom helper. Both schools were in Teesside but one was in a lower-working-class area and the other was in a lower-

middle-class area. Snell determined the class of the areas based on UK Census data, including housing information, levels of employment and government measures of deprivation.

She recorded 50 hours of speech produced by Year 4 children (aged eight and nine years) as they played and interacted with each other and the teacher, recording 10 children from each school. She then counted how frequently the children used singular 'us' and compared if there were differences between the two schools. However, she was not just interested in whether working-class children spoke differently to middle-class children – she wanted to understand why this might be the case. She used a linguistic ethnography approach, meaning that she carried out in-depth participant observation and really immersed herself into the dynamics of the schools and the children's interactions in order to get a very detailed understanding of how the children spoke and why.

What were the results?

Snell found differences in how frequently the children from the two schools used singular 'us'. As we would expect, the children in the working-class school had higher rates of singular 'us'. In 16.9% of instances, the children in the working-class school used the word 'us' and not 'me' when referring to themselves which compared to only 3.8% in the middle-class school. An interesting finding was that singular 'us' only occurred in the imperative mood (as a command) for example when requesting that someone do something (such as, 'give us my shoe back').

Snell then examined the contexts and the types of interactions in which the children used singular 'us'. She found that there was no single context in which the children would use singular 'us' but that most often the children used it to show inclusion, solidarity and in-group membership. When a person in Teesside uses singular 'us' it shows that they are from the local community and that they understand the local dialect and how it is used. Snell suggests that this could explain why children continue to use singular 'us' as well as other non-standard features even when their teachers pressure them not to do so.

She found that there was no single context in which the children would use singular 'us' but that most often the children used it to show inclusion, solidarity and in-group membership

Many people believe that children should be discouraged from using regional dialects because it will disadvantage them in later life. However, Snell shows that regional dialects are very valuable and play an important role in how people interact and express a shared identity in communities where they are spoken. Attempts to eradicate regional dialect features will not work as they play a part in the child's sense of self and may discourage their active participation in class.

Reference

Chapter title: Linguistic ethnographic perspectives on working-class children's speech: challenging discourses of deficit
Authors: Julia Snell
Book title: Linguistic Ethnography: Interdisciplinary Explorations
Book Editors: Fiona Copland, Sara Shaw and Julia Snell
Year of publication: 2015
Publishers: Palgrave Macmillan UK

Q&A

Julia Snell

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

Some schools have instigated dialect bans and other measures designed to ensure pupils adhere to spoken 'Standard English'. I was particularly interested in a letter sent home to parents from a primary school in Teesside which banned eleven so-called 'incorrect' words, phrases, and pronunciations from pupils' speech. The stated reason was the need to give their working-class pupils the best chance of educational and (later) career success. As a native of Teesside and someone who has conducted research on children's language in this area, I was frustrated by the inaccuracies and flawed assumptions evident in this letter and the media reporting of it.

2. What were your main research questions?

- Why do children persist in using non-standardised dialects despite teacher corrections and wider social prejudice?
- How can we challenge dialect prejudice in education?

As a native of Teesside and someone who has conducted research on children's language in this area, I was frustrated by the inaccuracies and flawed assumptions evident in this letter and the media reporting of it.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

Standard English and prestige accents (such as Received Pronunciation (RP)) are dominant or 'legitimate' ways of speaking in UK society. To use the language of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, they have 'symbolic capital' because of their association with the economic and cultural power of those who use them. Symbolic capital translates into real, material advantages. Speakers can 'exchange' their prestigious language for formal educational qualifications and occupations, and thus for economic capital. Teachers are aware of this fact and thus encourage children to replace non-standardised forms with prestigious alternatives. However, attempts to ban local dialect reduce everything to *exchange value*. They ignore the fact that non-standardised forms have *use-value*, a particular worth to the speaker and to others in the community.

For example, one of the forms banned by the Teesside school was 'Gizit'. 'Gizit' is a condensed form of 'give us it' (when speech speeds up, some sounds get left out). This is considered non-standard because 'us' is used for the first-person objective singular pronoun, where Standard English would have 'me'. I found that the children only used singular 'us' in commands or requests made during peer-group negotiations that involved status, hierarchy and inclusion/exclusion, such as when one child made an appeal to ingroup solidarity because another child had stolen her shoe ('Give us my shoe back'). Like other features of the local dialect, singular 'us' has social and pragmatic meanings consequential to peer group interaction, and thus it is unlikely that children will stop using it just because their teachers tell

them to. This is a key reason why attempts to eradicate local dialect will not work.

One way to challenge dialect prejudice might be to share with educators and policy makers evidence of the local use-value of non-standardised dialect forms, making clear that trying to ban these forms won't work, and showcasing children's linguistic dexterity.

One way to challenge dialect prejudice might be to share with educators and policy makers evidence of the local use-value of non-standardised dialect forms, making clear that trying to ban these forms won't work, and showcasing children's linguistic dexterity

Rather than attempt to erase local dialect, we should aim to extend children's linguistic repertoires. This involves understanding and valuing children's use of local dialect forms, but at the same time, explaining that in some arenas (e.g., job interviews) these forms will be judged against so-called 'standard' ways of speaking (valued as such solely through their association historically with powerful people in society) and may be stigmatised.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

This research relates to a wider body of work in which I've shown that working-class children command an extended repertoire of communicative resources, some considered 'standard' and others considered 'non-standard'. They strategically select resources according to interactional goals and are thus very far from the image of the impoverished language user presented in the media and some educational policy documents.

This research also relates to other work I have done to challenge dialect prejudice in education, such as investigating (with my colleague Ian Cushing) how the schools inspectorate, Ofsted, take up the role of institutional language police (see The (White) Ears of Ofsted summary).

Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls

Linguistic variation and school girls' social cliques

Researcher: Emma Moore, University of Sheffield

Background

We know that linguistic variation consists of both regional variation (differences in how people speak depending on where they are from) and social variation (differences in how people speak depending on factors such as gender, age, class and ethnicity). These groupings are very broad and often miss many nuances in a person's identity and who they mix with. As a result, linguists sometimes conduct research with much smaller groups of people.

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of people who come together and jointly engage in an activity or meeting for some purpose. A CoP could be members of the same book club, a work team, a youth group or a friendship group, among many other things. People in the same CoP can establish a shared set of beliefs, identity or language that they use and understand (such as specific words and meanings).

In most of the UK you would never hear non-standard-were, but it is very common in North West England where you might hear sentences such as, 'I were talking to him on Friday'

Emma Moore tested if there was linguistic variation in a group of girls from the same broad location who attended the same school but who belonged to different friendship groups. She identified four different social groups (or CoPs) who each had different hobbies, lifestyles and outlooks towards life and school. The linguistic variable in her study was was/were variation; she tested how frequently the girls used a non-standard linguistic feature called non-standard-were. Non-standard-were is when a person says, 'I were', 'she were', 'he were' or 'it were' (as opposed to standard-was). In most of the UK you would never hear non-standard-were, but it is very common in North West England where you might hear sentences such as, 'I were talking to him on Friday'.

Methods

Moore analysed the speech of 39 girls from either upper-working-class or lower-middle-class backgrounds who attended a school in Bolton, Greater Manchester. She collected over 50 hours of recordings of the girls speaking. The participants were aged between 12 and 13 years when the study began and between 14 and 15 years when it was completed. Moore counted how frequently the girls used non-standard-were, but she also wanted to understand why they spoke how they did and how this reflected their identities and memberships in different friendship groups – she investigated this with a linguistic ethnography approach.

In linguistic ethnography, linguists are not just interested in knowing which linguistic features a person uses and how frequently. Instead, they carry out detailed participant observation to observe and reflect on the ways that people use and speak about language and how this relates to the dynamics and interactions within socials groups and the broader social context. Linguistic ethnography also aims to collect naturalistic data, for example, the way people speak when they are going about their lives or

interacting with others as opposed to recording people's speech when reading aloud word lists or passages or talking one-on-one with the researcher in a sociolinguistic interview.

Moore wasn't just interested in how frequently the girls used non-standard-were, but she investigated if there were patterns between how they spoke and their behaviour, personal style, appearance, the people that they mixed with, and how they felt about their own social group and others in the school.

What were the results?

Moore identified four different social groups – or CoPs – within the school. The Populars had an anti-school attitude and took part in rebellious activities like drinking alcohol and smoking. When the Populars began engaging in this risky behaviour, the Townies broke off as a separate group. The Geeks participated actively in school activities such as the school orchestra and choir. The Eden Valley girls also actively engaged in school life but, unlike the Geeks, they had a trendy teen style and liked activities such as dancing and shopping.

Moore's study has shown that non-standard-were has social meaning in Bolton

Moore found a link between which CoP the participants were in and how often they said non-standard-were. The Eden Valley girls only ever used standard-was, and they tended to be from a higher social class than the girls in the other friendship groups. It is a very typical finding that people from a higher class use higher rates of a standard linguistic feature. In this case, it may be that the Eden Valley girls only used standard-was because they tended to live further away from the school. They were mostly only friends with people in their home village who also tended to be of a higher class so they wouldn't have heard non-standard-were very often.

There were girls from both social classes in all three of the other CoPs. The Geeks tended to also use standard-was rather than non-standard-were. This group cared about the school's expectations and rules which might have made them more likely to use standard linguistic features as these are often seen as correct and appropriate in school settings. Of the fourteen girls in the Geeks groups, four frequently said non-standard-were. These girls were from the lowest social class and all had at least one parent born in Bolton. It may be that they used non-standard-were more than the other girls in the Geeks group because they had strong local connections.

The Populars were more mixed in how frequently they said non-standard-were. The three girls in this group who used non-standard-were most frequently were all from the highest social class. The Townies, in contrast, tended to use non-standard-were very frequently. These girls all had at least one parent born in Bolton and they also tended to be friends with boys from working-class areas of Bolton where non-standard-were is most common.

Moore's study has shown that non-standard-were has social meaning in Bolton. If a linguistic feature has social meaning in a community, this means that people interpret it in a certain way and associate it with particular personality traits or behaviours. Non-standard-were does not just vary by class but it also reflects a person's identity, lifestyle, social connections and links to the local area. Moore suggests that because non-standard-were is socially meaningful and a marker of local identity in Bolton it is still commonly used despite not being found in other parts of the country.

Reference

Article title: Interaction between social category and social practice: explaining was/were variation
Authors: Emma Moore
Journal: Language Variation and Change, Volume 22, Issue 3, pages 347-371
Year of publication: 2010

Link to article: click here

Q&A

Emma Moore

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

I'm particularly interested in exploring how people use grammar in creative ways to express who they are. I'm motivated to try to provide realistic accounts of how people use language – by that, I mean I like to collect 'real' data that's as close to everyday spoken interactions as possible. Linguists often collect interview data to record how people speak, but interviews are a very specific genre and they don't always capture how adaptable people are with their language use.

I'm motivated to try to provide realistic accounts of how people use language – by that, I mean I like to collect 'real' data that's as close to everyday spoken interactions as possible

2. What were your main research questions?

I wanted to find out what explains why people use different linguistic variants of language. We know that people can say things like, 'It were good', even though this is not recognised as the standard way to speak. We know that people lower down the social class hierarchy tend to use constructions like 'It were good' more than other kinds of people, but I wanted to prove that your place in the social order doesn't entirely determine how you speak. Our use of language is also determined by our social practices: what we do and how we do it. Language is especially important to young people as they figure out who they are. There's a tendency sometimes to talk about 'youth culture' as if all young people are the same but, of course, young people are just as diverse as everyone else.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- Young people are really good at using local dialect features to express who they are. In doing so, they can help to maintain local dialect forms that might be lost otherwise.
- Use of local dialect forms is often best explained by the social practices that a person engages in. Rather than showing that we are, for instance, working class, or female, we are more likely to use language to express that we are a certain type of person (e.g. rebellious, strong-willed, or popular).
- Sometimes how we are brought up (or the class we are born into) can constrain the language that we use. If we only ever hear standard English, then it will be hard for us to acquire local dialect features. However, if we hear different varieties of a language, then we can use this variation in creative and interesting ways.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

It's really important to me to represent young people as they really speak and to demonstrate how they don't need to use standard English to be articulate. People who use local dialects tend to experience forms of societal prejudice and I'm particularly interested in how this prejudice can sometimes affect how language is presented or learnt in schools. I believe that the best way to combat linguistic prejudice is to better understand how language functions socially.

Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths

Regional variation in RP

Researchers: Caitlin Halfacre, Newcastle University | Ghada Khattab, Newcastle University

Background

Received Pronunciation (RP) (sometimes referred to as 'Queen's English', or more recently, 'King's English') has high social status and has long been considered a standard accent in Britain. There are many studies which show that people in Britain tend to perceive RP to be a prestigious and correct way of speaking. The idea that RP is standard, neutral or proper is an established belief in British society and culture but is not based on any scientific or logical evidence – all dialects are equally grammatically rich, expressive and complex (see Standard Language Ideology).

RP has roots in South East England and has many linguistic features in common with other accents from this region. However, many linguists have claimed that RP is regionless, meaning that it is spoken across the UK and particularly England (there are also other standard accents in different parts of the UK such as Standard Scottish English). Rather than region, RP is thought to be most closely linked to class – it is spoken by the higher classes and particularly those who attended private schools.

The idea that RP is standard, neutral or proper is an established belief in British society and culture but is not based on any scientific or logical evidence – all dialects are equally grammatically rich, expressive and complex.

Caitlin Halfacre and Ghada Khattab wanted to find out if RP is truly a regionless accent. They investigated if there were differences between the accents of upper-middle-class people who attended private school in either South East England or North East England.

The researchers were interested in whether the participants produced, firstly, words such as *foot* and *strut* with the same vowel, and secondly, words such as *trap* and *bath* with the same vowel

Methods

There were 10 upper-middle-class participants, comprising four people who were educated in the North East and six people who were educated in the South East. All participants were privately educated for the majority of their childhood. Only 7% of the total British population is privately educated, and this percentage is even lower in the North East as there is a larger number of private schools and relatively higher economic prosperity in the South. As a result, the researchers acknowledge that recruiting speakers was challenging and the study is based on a relatively small number of speakers.

The speakers were individually recorded by the researchers when reading aloud a word list and minimal pairs. Minimal pairs are sets of words that differ only in one sound, for example, *cat* and *bat*, *take* and *tape*, or *cart* and *heart* are

three examples of minimal pairs. The minimal pairs and the words read aloud by the speakers were chosen as they included certain vowels. The researchers were interested in whether the participants produced, firstly, words such as *foot* and *strut* with the same vowel, and secondly, words such as *trap* and *bath* with the same vowel. These two linguistic features were chosen because they are classic markers of the North-South accent divide in England. People from the South of England but not the North tend to say words like *foot* and *strut*, as well as *bath* and *trap*, with different vowels (foot-strut split and trap-bath split). As is found in southern England, the words are not said with the same vowels in RP.

The researchers suggest that the speakers educated in the North East might be moving towards the pronunciations used in the South East but this change is not complete

Where were the results?

The researchers did not find evidence of a difference between the speakers educated in the North East or the South East in how they said the word *strut*. This means that both the northern and southern speakers said *strut* and *foot* with different vowels, as we would expect in RP and across southern England. There doesn't seem to be regional variation within RP in whether people speak with a foot-strut split.

The results were somewhat different for the trap-bath split. The speakers educated in the North East tended to say words like *bath* with a similar vowel to how they said *trap*, as is common in northern England but not in southern England or in RP. However, this was not always the case and in certain words, the northerners were found to say words like *bath* with a lengthened vowel as we would expect in RP and southern England. There was less variation within the group of speakers educated in South East England who always pronounced words like *bath* and *trap* with different vowels. The researchers suggest that the speakers educated in the North East might be moving towards the pronunciations used in the South East but this change is not complete.

This study has found some evidence of a difference between privately-educated speakers in the South East and the North East in the pronunciation of words like *bath*. Halfacre and Khattab have shown that RP may not be exactly the same across the country and may include some regional variation.

Reference

Article title: North-south dividers in privately educated speakers: a sociolinguistic study of received pronunciation using the foot-strut and trap-bath distinctions in the North East and South East of England
Authors: Caitlin Halfacre and Ghada Khattab
Conference Proceedings: Proceedings of the 19th International Congress of Phonetic Science (ICPhS XIX), Melbourne, Australia, pages 2665-2669
Editors: Sasha Calhoun, Paola Escudero, Marija Tabain and Paul Warren
Year of publication: 2019
Publisher: Australasian Speech Science and Technology Association Inc.
Link to article: click here

Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh

Social mobility and linguistic variation

Researchers: Victoria Dickson | Lauren Hall-Lew, University of Edinburgh

Background

One of the groundbreaking, early findings in sociolinguistics was that a person's class corresponds with how they talk. In the UK, as you look up the social class scale, linguistic variation decreases. People who are of a lower class tend to use relatively high rates of non-standard and regional dialect features, meaning that they speak in a way that is rooted in a geographic area. In contrast, people who are of a higher class often speak relatively similarly to each other with more standard accents. Received Pronunciation (RP) is often thought of as a standard accent in the UK, but there are also other standard accents such as Standard Scottish English in Scotland which is most commonly spoken by people who are of a higher social class.

Though many studies have found that a person's class is closely linked to how they speak, there has been little research on social mobility (when a person's class position changes across their lifespan). Victoria Dickson and Lauren Hall-Lew set out to understand how people speak who have changed class throughout their lifetime and how their accent compares with people from the same place who have remained the same class.

Victoria Dickson and Lauren Hall-Lew set out to understand how people speak who have changed class throughout their lifetime and how their accent compares with people from the same place who have remained the same class

The Edinburgh skyline

Methods

The researchers analysed rates of rhoticity (when the 'r' sound is pronounced in words like *car*, *farm*, *park*) in Edinburgh. Rhoticity is a linguistic feature found in several different parts the UK and is a feature of Standard Scottish English. There were 16 participants who were all born, raised and currently living in Edinburgh and had parents from Scotland. Participants were split into three groups: the Working Class (WC), the Established Middle Class (EMC) and the New Middle Class (NMC). The EMC and WC groups were socioeconomically non-mobile, meaning that they had not changed class throughout their lifetime. The NMC group was formed of individuals born to working-class families but living middle-class lives at the time of data collection. The researchers determined that these individuals had changed class by comparing their educational and occupational attainment with that of their parents.

The researchers determined that these individuals had changed class by comparing their educational and occupational attainment with that of their parents

Participants were audio recorded while chatting in pairs or groups of three people of the same sex. The conversations were casual and lightly directed with participants prompted to discuss a written list of topics, including aspects of childhood, education, family, work, and life in Edinburgh. The researchers recorded six conversations in total, each lasting approximately one hour. They then counted how frequently the participants did or did not produce rhoticity.

Results

Different rates of rhoticity were found between the three groups. Those in the EMC group had higher rates of rhoticity than those in the WC group. Women also tended to have higher rates of rhoticity (see gender & sexuality sub-section). Women in the WC group tended to have similar rates of rhoticity to men in the EMC group. These findings are very much in line with previous research and what we expect for linguistic variation by gender and class.

The NMC group had the highest rates of rhoticity, higher even than the EMC group. As rhoticity is perceived as a standard linguistic feature in Scotland, the researchers suggest that the NMC group have used rhoticity to help them climb the social classes and to reflect their new class position by speaking in a prestigious way. Dickson and Hall-Lew have demonstrated that both class and social mobility play a role in linguistic variation. When sociolinguists analyse how language varies by class, we should consider that class is fluid and can change across a person's lifespan.

As rhoticity is perceived as a standard linguistic feature in Scotland, the researchers suggest that the NMC group have used rhoticity to help them climb the social classes and to reflect their new class position by speaking in a prestigious way.

Reference

Article title: Class, Gender, and Rhoticity: The Social Stratification of Non-Prevocalic /r/ in Edinburgh Speech
Authors: Victoria Dickson and Lauren Hall-Lew
Journal: Journal of English Linguistics, Volume 45, Issue 3, pages 229-259
Year of publication: 2017
Link to article: click here

Q&A

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

Victoria, the first author, was raised in Edinburgh, and personally knew a lot of people who didn't neatly fit into either category of 'working class' or 'middle class'. So much of the sociolinguistic literature is focused on speakers from those two groups, but what about all the speakers in the middle?

2. What were your main research questions?

We know that rhoticity, otherwise known as the pronunciation of 'r' at the ends of syllables, is highly variable in varieties of English and Scots spoken in Edinburgh. The first question was, would speakers of retirement age in Edinburgh produce their 'r' sounds in the same way that had been found for young people in Edinburgh, with the middle class using one form and the working class using another. The second question was, what rhotic linguistic variant would pensioners use if they were members of the New Middle Class: having been raised working class but living middle class lives in retirement?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

We found that these the social class differences in rhoticity among younger Edinburgh residents were also found in the speech of older Edinburgh residents. So, this class-based linguistic patterning was probably something that had been going on for quite some time. We also found that the New Middle Class were even more likely than the Established Middle Class (those who had been born middle class) to produce the 'middle-class' variant of 'r'. This was an interesting finding, because we might have just as well predicted that they would produce a pattern in the middle of the class divide, maybe using the middle-class variant half the time and the working-class variant the other half of the time.

Working-class women were using 'r' much more like the New Middle Class, leaving working-class men as the only ones really showing working-class rhoticity patterns

One reason we don't see that is because the Established Middle-Class speakers actually sometimes produce non-rhoticity, or r-lessness, which is the variant we typically associate with English varieties, not Scottish ones. Because of that, the 'middle class Scottish' variant of 'r' was used most often by the New Middle Class. The final result that we were not expecting was that there was a significant gender difference among the working-class speakers, and not within either of the other class groups. Working-class-women were using 'r' much more like the New Middle Class, leaving working-class men as the only ones really showing working-class rhoticity patterns.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

The findings build on the early work by William Labov in 1966 on rhoticity in New York City English which is one of the only other studies to look at socially mobile speakers – people born

into one social class and living in a different social class later in life. He also found that speakers like the New Middle-Class speakers in our study used more of the 'middle-class variant' than the Established Middle Class. There's still very little work, however, on language variants and social class mobility. My on-going work is considering the other direction, downward mobility, by examining linguistic variation among the homeless members of Edinburgh's community.

Q&A responses provided by Lauren Hall-Lew

social groups

race & ethnicity

Stereotypes and Street Talk

Attitudes towards MLE

Researchers: Ruth Kircher, European Centre for Minority Issues | Sue Fox, University of Bern

Background

Multicultural London English (MLE) is a dialect of English that can be traced back to the 1980s. MLE was first heard in ethnically and linguistically diverse areas of East London and is similar to Cockney but also has influences from other languages and dialects of English from around the world. MLE is often considered by academics to be a multiethnolect, meaning that it is a non-standard, linguistic variety which is not spoken exclusively by any ethnic group (see Why the Long Face? summary for an alternative perspective). Though MLE is spoken by people from many different ethnic backgrounds, research has shown that many people in England think of it as being a dialect spoken by Black people.

A common trend is that linguistic varieties from urban parts of the UK such as London tend to be judged as having low social status

There has been very little research on attitudes towards MLE, a gap that Ruth Kircher and Sue Fox wanted to fill. A common trend is that linguistic varieties from urban parts of the UK such as London tend to be judged as having low social status (a linguistic variety with high social status is judged as prestigious, standard and correct) but relatively higher social attractiveness (seen as easy to relate to, warm and likeable) (see attitudes and representation sub-section). Kircher and Fox set out to understand how multiethnolects, specifically MLE, are judged on measures of social status and social attractiveness and how this compares to other varieties spoken in the UK. They also tested if people who speak MLE are more positive about the dialect compared to people who live in London but speak a different dialect.

Methods

The researchers used an online survey to collect responses from 800 Londoners whose ages ranged from 18 to 86 years. Participants provided some information about themselves such as their age, gender, ethnicity and whether they considered themselves to speak MLE. Participants were then asked for their views and opinions on MLE. Because the researchers were aware that some people may be familiar with the dialect but may not use the term 'MLE', they provided the participants with the following definition:

'This term [MLE] is used to describe the speech of young people in multiethnic areas of London regardless of the speaker's own ethnic background and their gender. A lot of young Londoners now use MLE instead of the Cockney dialect that is traditionally associated with London.'

Participants were asked to respond to several different questions about MLE on a scale from one to five (ranging from not agreeing at all to agreeing completely). On this scale, participants gave their opinions about the intelligence, education, and ambition of people who speak MLE and their potential employment opportunities and possibilities of socio-economic advancement (measures of social status). They were also asked about the friendliness, sociability and likeability of

MLE speakers and made judgements about the perceived importance of MLE to a person's social identity as a Londoner (measures of social attractiveness).

Participants could also write their opinions in response to the statement, 'please explain in your own words what you think about MLE and its users. There are no right or wrong answers.' 735 participants wrote a response, including 115 participants who considered themselves to speak MLE and 620 who did not.

What were the results?

The people who considered themselves to speak MLE came from a wide range of different backgrounds including people well into their fifties, women and men alike, people whose occupations ranged from unskilled labour to higher managerial professions, and people in almost all London boroughs. The stereotype that MLE is just spoken by young, Black men from East London was not reflected in the data collected by Kircher and Fox.

The participants who spoke MLE seemed to feel some loyalty towards MLE and solidarity towards other people who spoke the dialect

On the scales from one to five, MLE received an average evaluation of 2.2, meaning that it was not judged very positively. Unlike several other urban varieties, MLE was evaluated unfavourably for both social status and social attractiveness (see Class Judgements summary for similar findings). The researchers suggest that this may be the case because MLE is a new linguistic variety and the way people feel about it has not yet settled.

Attitudes towards MLE were more positive among those who reported that they spoke the linguistic variety themselves, spoke a native language other than English, had higher levels of education or had frequent contact with multiethnolect speakers. The participants who spoke MLE seemed to feel some loyalty towards MLE and solidarity towards other people who spoke the dialect. Kircher and Fox also suggest that more educated individuals may be less prone to linguistic prejudice and stereotypes so were more positive about MLE. It is also likely that participants who spoke a native language other than English may be less familiar with the stereotypes associated with MLE. Attitudes towards a linguistic variety often reflect attitudes towards the people who speak it, so knowing people or being friends with MLE speakers also made people less biased towards the dialect.

When Kircher and Fox analysed the participants' written responses, they found big differences in the beliefs and opinions of Londoners who considered themselves to speak MLE and those who did not. People who did not speak MLE often described it as a form of 'broken language', 'language decay', 'secret language' and 'fake language'. MLE speakers were much less negative about the dialect but were concerned that it might be an 'obstacle to success and social mobility' and that they might be disadvantaged based on how they spoke.

Kircher and Fox's research has exposed bias and negative attitudes towards MLE, particularly by those who don't speak the dialect, reflecting broader trends in the UK to devalue urban varieties which may particularly be the case for multiethnolects.

Reference

Article title: Attitudes towards Multicultural London English: implications for attitude theory and language planning
Authors: Ruth Kircher and Sue Fox
Journal: Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, Volume 40, Issue 10, pages 847-864
Year of publication: 2019
Link to article: click here

Article title: Multicultural London English and its speakers: a corpus-informed discourse study of standard language ideology and social stereotypes
Authors: Ruth Kircher and Sue Fox
Journal: Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, Volume 42, Issue 9, pages 792-810
Year of publication: 2021
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Ruth Kircher

Sue Fox

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

We were motivated by the fact that although there had been a great deal of research on the emergence and development of Multicultural London English (MLE), there had been no investigation of attitudes towards the variety, particularly among Londoners themselves. Language is an important symbol of social identity and attitudes towards particular varieties mirror attitudes towards its speakers. Discrimination based on speakers' varieties is therefore effectively a proxy for discrimination based on their social class, regional origin, ethnicity, immigration background or other social group membership. Our investigation is thus not only a first empirical case study of attitudes towards MLE but it is also the first investigation of language ideologies and social stereotypes in Britain that takes account of a multiethnolect, namely MLE.

Language is an important symbol of social identity and attitudes towards particular varieties mirror attitudes towards its speakers

2. What were your main research questions?

- What are Londoners' attitudes and ideologies regarding MLE?
- What do these tell us about Londoners' social stereotypes regarding MLE speakers?
- What are the potential implications for the development of effective language planning measures to promote social equality for multiethnolect speakers?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

1. Overall, attitudes were fairly negative. Four independent variables correlated with attitudes in a statistically significant manner:
   a. respondent's own variety, with MLE speakers holding more positive attitudes than speakers of other varieties;
   b. respondent's mother tongue, with speakers of other mother tongues holding more
   c. positive attitudes than English mother tongue speakers;
   d. education, with increased levels of education leading to more positive attitudes;
   e. frequency of contact with MLE speakers, with increased frequency leading to more
   f. positive attitudes.
2. Our findings have implications for language planning. Based on (c): to improve attitudes towards MLE, anti-bias schemes could be built into the curriculum or professional training for new teachers at all levels. Furthermore, based on (d): schemes could be encouraged where multiethnolect speakers come into contact with educators and authority figures in conditions where there is support, cooperation, equal status, common goals, and friendship potential.
3. We also discovered several key differences between non-MLE-speakers and MLE speakers. Firstly, the former showed much stronger evidence of standard language ideologies than the latter. Secondly, the former held much stronger (and purely negative) stereotypes of MLE speakers; only the discourses of the latter contained representations pertaining to positive aspects of the multiethnolect and its users. Thus, while non-MLE speakers did not recognise the heterogeneity of multiethnolect users as a group,

and they viewed them as overwhelmingly negative, MLE speakers themselves were not complicit in the simplified and negative stereotyping of their own group.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

This piece of research brings together the work conducted on documenting the emergence and development of MLE by Sue Fox, and Ruth Kircher's work on language attitudes and ideologies in a range of multilingual societies.

The Media and MLE

The objectification of 'Jafaican' in the British media

Researcher: Paul Kerswill, University of York and Queen Mary, University of London

Background

As one of the linguists first involved in identifying and naming Multicultural London English (MLE) in 2006, Paul Kerswill was particularly interested in seeing how this multiethnolect was reported on and described in the media – what he calls its 'mediatization'. Many media outlets in the UK and beyond have shown a keen interest in how MLE has developed, who uses it and what it might tell us about the changing nature of UK society. MLE has often been referred to in media coverage as 'Jafaican' (suggesting that MLE is 'fake Jamaican'), and as kind of youth slang or street talk. Multiethnolects outside the UK such as in Germany and Sweden have been described similarly. Linguists often consider that such descriptions are problematic and not neutral.

Kerswill documented the terms that media outlets used to refer to MLE, which linguistic features they picked up on and the discourses (ways of talking or writing about a subject) around MLE and its speakers.

The media described MLE as a problem in various ways throughout time. In one article from 2006, MLE was described as 'pushing' out and 'replacing' a native dialect (Cockney)

Methods

Kerswill used a discourse analysis approach, meaning that he scrutinised the way MLE was written about, and the language used when describing the linguistic variety while taking into account the wider sociocultural context. He used Nexis UK, an online collection of British newspapers, to search for mentions of 'Multicultural London English' or other terms that have been used to refer to the dialect. He found 58 articles with at least one mention of 'Jafaican', four with 'Jafaikan' and 29 with 'Multicultural London English'. He then looked for collocates (words occurring next to or near the term) of 'Jafaican' to identify the kinds of discourse about MLE. To explore how these discourses developed over time, he scrutinised each text in roughly chronological order.

What were the results?

The collocates that came up in Kerswill's initial searches appeared to be fairly neutral, including words such as 'Multicultural', 'London', 'English', 'New', 'Dialect', 'Accent' and 'Patois', but terms associated with inauthenticity ('fake' and 'Jafaican') and words suggesting doubt about how the linguistic variety should be labelled ('dubbed', 'called' and 'named') were not far behind.

Kerswill's analysis of the content of the articles revealed negative themes, discourses and metaphors about MLE. The media described MLE as a problem in various ways throughout time. In one article from 2006, MLE was described as 'pushing' out and 'replacing' a native dialect (Cockney). In another article from the same time period, MLE was represented as 'a problem to be solved' in relation to

schooling and education. In one case, it was seen as embodying 'foreign' (Jamaican) influences, a discourse that was picked up in much more extreme discourses by far-right political organisations in other texts that Kerswill identified.

Jafaican was also linked in 2011 to criminal and anti-social behaviour in the London riots/uprisings, to poor educational performance and restricted speech, and to a passing fad or fashion in speech. In another case, it was seen from a more liberal perspective as embodying reactionary and sexist attitudes to women, demeaning them with terms such as *wifey* and *sket*. However, not all discourses were quite so negative and a more neutral representation of MLE as a 'natural progression' of language could be seen in other pieces.

Kerswill noted that it was quite common for the articles to decode or translate MLE for newspaper readers, for example, having a glossary of MLE terms. This finding shows that MLE linguistic features are enregistered, meaning they are recognised and identified as linked to a particular dialect or social persona.

Kerswill noted that it was quite common for the articles to decode or translate MLE for newspaper readers, for example, having a glossary of MLE terms

Kerswill noted a clear evolution over a period of about four to five years in the discourses around MLE. The dialect went from being described as something new and exotic to being seen as immediately recognisable and common place and as a threat to various cultural and social values. At the same time, discourses seemed to be developing around MLE's 'cool' and anti-establishment associations.

Kerswill's research is important as he has catalogued the various ways that MLE is described in the media, revealing several negative stereotypes and discourses which he has challenged and dispelled.

Reference

Chapter title: The objectification of 'Jafaican'. The discoursal embedding of Multicultural London English in the British media
Authors: Paul Kerswill
Book title: Mediatization and Sociolinguistic Change, Volume 36 in the series linguae & litterae
Book editors: Jannis Androutsopoulos
Year of publication: 2014
Publishers: De Gruyter

Q&A

Paul Kerswill

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

Towards the end of our work on changes in London English, we began to be invited to do radio and newspaper interviews. We were surprised by the way in which the Journalists would put their own 'spin' on the stories. For example, in 2006 the Evening Standard claimed that teachers had 'dubbed' the new way of speaking 'Jafaican', while academics had named it 'Multicultural London English'. Only the latter is true! Jafaican is a label we have never used because it implies that the language is both fake and Jamaican – both false claims.

Jafaican is a label we have never used because it implies that the language is both fake and Jamaican – both false claims

The label remained widespread up to about 2016, since when the academic term, abbreviated to MLE, has gradually become dominant – doubtless because of its air of objectivity. But none of the speakers use either label, and few if any have even come across them. Up to 2022, some 510 mainly UK articles mentioning Jafaican/MLE had been published. What particularly interested me were the very varied discourses (ways of talking about a subject) surrounding Jafaican/MLE that were expressed in these articles.

2. What were your main research questions?

The main question of the chapter is: 'What discourses surround Jafaican/MLE in newspaper articles, explicitly or implicitly?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

Many of the findings relate to the metaphors that illustrate the discourses. For instance, MLE is seen as a kind of 'cuckoo in the nest', pushing out Cockney, which becomes a 'museum piece'; it is seen as a 'threat' to liberal values and to society more generally through its supposed 'foreignness'; MLE's stereotyped but false association with bad behaviour is often mentioned; and MLE is seen by some as a 'fashion statement'.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

The article fed into the Accent Bias Britain project, which investigates attitudes to MLE and other accents in the workplace (see Legal Judgements summary). MLE's profound role in grime music and its association with Black British identities are discussed in this 2023 paper by Christian Ilbury and myself. Work on MLE is being continued as a component of our new project, Generations of London English, based at Queen Mary University of London.

Speaking Roadman

The enregisterment of MLE

Researcher: Christian Ilbury, University of Edinburgh

Background

Enregisterment is a when one or more linguistic features are associated with a specific dialect or a stereotyped social persona. When a person thinks of a social persona – such as a chav, a Cockney, a Scouser or a Valley Girl – linguistic features as well as factors such as a person's lifestyle, hobbies, attitudes and attire probably come to mind.

In this study, Christian Ilbury shows that linguistic features of Multicultural London English (MLE) have been enregistered as a 'roadman' persona. MLE is a dialect that linguists first observed in multilingual communities in East and North London. MLE has several linguistic features in common with Cockney but has also been influenced by other languages and dialects of English from around the world. Although MLE is often considered by linguists to be a multiethnolect (a non-standard dialect which is not spoken exclusively by any ethnic group), many people perceive it as 'sounding Black'.

Although MLE is often considered by linguists to be a multiethnolect (a non-standard dialect which is not spoken exclusively by any ethnic group), many people perceive it as 'sounding Black'

Ilbury documented the linguistic features and the characteristics, habits and appearance that video creators draw on when parodying a roadman on TikTok. He shows that video creators use MLE linguistic features in these videos, demonstrating that these features are enregistered as a roadman.

Methods

Ilbury analysed 373 TikTok videos tagged #roadman which were uploaded within the past three years (at the point of data collection in March 2022). The videos were transcribed, totalling 23,711 words. The videos mostly consisted of parodies of a roadman persona in which the video creator acted out a stereotyped roadman for apparently humorous effect. Ilbury observed the attire, behaviour, personality traits, and, of course, the linguistic features, that the video creators used to depict a roadman.

The researcher used a linguistic ethnography method to interpret the content of the videos. He interpreted the findings by drawing on the wider social and cultural context as well as his own knowledge about MLE and the term 'roadman' based on his experiences as a Londoner and from participant observations at an East London youth group. Ilbury's approach also included digital ethnography meaning that his conclusions were informed by detailed observations and engagement with relevant online communities. His involvement in online communities included two years observing relevant content on TikTok, writing field notes, extracting relevant videos that contained tags and discussions relevant to 'youth language in London', following accounts with relevant hashtags (such as #London and #MLE) and engaging with related discussion threads in other forums.

What were the results?

Ilbury found that a roadman was always depicted as male and was associated with certain characteristics, habits and tastes such as enjoying grime music, being tough or aggressive, wearing streetwear, and conveying overt masculinity and heterosexuality. In the majority of the roadman parody videos, the character was shown to be involved in some form of criminal activity or violent lifestyle.

When performing a roadman identity, the video creators used many MLE linguistic features such as phrases and lexis like 'dusty' for *ugly* and 'leng' for *nice*. Much of the non-standard lexis used in the videos referred to violent or criminal activities such as 'cheff' for *stab* or *cut*, 'shank', 'rambo', 'nank' and 'skeng' for *knife* and 'ops' for *opposites/rivals*.

a roadman was always depicted as male and was associated with certain characteristics, habits and tastes such as enjoying grime music, being tough or aggressive, wearing streetwear, and conveying overt masculinity and heterosexuality

The parodies also used MLE phonological features such as th-stopping (saying *thing* as 'ting'), dh-stopping (*that* as 'dat'), and pronouncing vowels in a typically MLE way such as goose-fronting (saying words like *goose* with the tongue far forward in the mouth), and price-monophthongisation (saying words like *price* as 'prahs' so that the vowel is quite flat and sounds like a longer version of the vowel in *cat*).

The video creators also used syntactic features of MLE when acting out a roadman including the pronoun 'man' as a first-person singular pronoun (instead of *I* or *me*) or second-person singular pronoun (instead of *you*). The 'man' pronoun is a very salient feature of MLE (meaning that people are very aware of it), and there were 862 tokens of this pronoun in just 373 videos. The parodies also used other MLE features like the tag 'innit' and forms of address normally used when men are talking to other men such as 'blud', 'bro', and 'my guy'.

The anti-Black and anti-working-class representations of roadman probably also reflect the prejudice, biases and stereotypes in British society about MLE and its speakers more generally

Ilbury's research shows that MLE linguistic features are enregistered as the roadman social persona. The way a roadman is depicted often plays on negative and racist stereotypes of Black, working-class, young men. The anti-Black and anti-working-class representations of roadman probably also reflect the prejudice, biases and stereotypes in British society about MLE and its speakers more generally (see Stereotypes and Street Talk summary).

Reference

Article title: The recontextualisation of Multicultural London English: Stylising the 'roadman'
Authors: Christian Ilbury
Journal: Language in Society, First View
Year of publication: 2023
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Christian Ilbury

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

Having grown up in London, I was familiar with the new variety of English spoken in the city 'Multicultural London English' (MLE) because lots of my friends used it. But I only became familiar the label MLE when I started studying linguistics. Before this, people at school and elsewhere would refer to this way of speaking as 'roadman' language. More recently, I noticed that this label was being used very frequently on TikTok and users would often perform parodic videos of the roadman. As an avid TikTok user, I wanted to know more about what the circulation of the roadman persona could tell us about MLE.

Having grown up in London, I was familiar with the new variety of English spoken in the city 'Multicultural London English' (MLE) because lots of my friends used it

2. What were your main research questions?

- Has MLE become reinterpreted as 'roadman' language?
- What features of MLE are associated with the roadman persona?
- What can the roadman tell us about MLE?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- There is a roadman linguistic style that comprises features typically found in MLE, e.g. man pronoun, use of lexis like 'bare', 'leng', and 'skeng', and so on

MLE speakers are often erroneously identified as a roadman even though this is not an identity they have claimed for themselves

- The roadman persona is associated with hyper-masculinity, crime, and aggression
- On TikTok, people create parodies of this persona which contribute to the association of the roadman identity with MLE
- Qualities of the roadman become reinterpreted as qualities of MLE speakers more generally
- MLE speakers are often erroneously identified as a roadman even though this is not an identity they have claimed for themselves. MLE is reinterpreted as 'roadman language'.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Lots of my work looks at MLE. I am interested in what people think about MLE and what types of ideologies they associate with this variety. My most recent work tries to understand how a variety that was originally defined as 'ethnically neutral' has become associated with particular racial groups, such as Black British speakers.

Maybe it's a Grime Ting

Th-stopping in Manchester

Researcher: Rob Drummond, Manchester Metropolitan University

Background

An ethnolect is a dialect spoken by one ethnic group. The concept is over-simplistic because the links between how people speak and their ethnicity are complex. However, there are certain linguistic features which are predominantly used by some ethnic communities around the world. For example, th-stopping (such as pronouncing *thing* as 'ting') is found in many different dialects of English, but it is particularly common in dialects mostly spoken by Black speakers such as Caribbean Englishes and African American English (AAE).

Th-stopping is also a feature of Multicultural London English (MLE), a dialect that first emerged in ethnically diverse areas of London due to the mixing of many different languages and dialects of English from around the world. In previous research, Rob Drummond has shown that th-stopping is also used by some young people in inner-city Manchester. The young Mancunians in Drummond's study used several features that are found in MLE but not in traditional Manchester dialects such as dh-stopping, goose-fronting, price-monophthongisation and lexis with Jamaican heritage such as 'bare', 'rass' and 'mandem'. Based on these findings, Drummond coined the term Multicultural British English (MBE) to describe a linguistic variety of English which is related to MLE (and may have come from MLE) and has many similar linguistic features across different areas in Britain.

In this newer study, Drummond set out to understand which young people use MLE/MBE features outside of London and whether they might do so to present themselves as having a 'street identity' and a participation in 'grime culture'. We might expect th-stopping to be associated with grime music because of similar findings in the US where th-stopping is associated with the musical genre hip hop. Hip hop is seen as being the story of the street and has a focus on the African American experience, and thus linguistic features of African American English are part of this message. Hip hop is also popular in the UK, but there also exists a uniquely British style of rap in the form of grime. Developed in the early 2000s, grime music emerged out of Black cultures in East London and typically includes many linguistic features of MLE, but it also popular with many people from different ethnic backgrounds and from different parts of the country.

Drummond set out to understand which young people use MLE/MBE features outside of London and whether they might do so to present themselves as having a 'street identity' and a participation in 'grime culture'

Much like the links between AAE and hip hop, Drummond tested whether MBE/MLE features are used by young people outside of London who wish to show that they are aligned with grime music and culture.

Methods

The 25 participants in this study were all aged between 14 and 16 years and were attending two learning centres (Pupil Referral Units) in inner city Manchester for pupils who had

been excluded from mainstream education. Drummond used a linguistic ethnography approach to observe the interactions, dynamics and lifestyle of the teenagers which helped him understand why they used certain linguistic features.

Developed in the early 2000s, grime music emerged out of Black cultures in East London and typically includes many linguistic features of MLE, but it also popular with many people from different ethnic backgrounds and from different parts of the country

Two researchers spent time involved in the day-to-day practices of the centres, writing field notes and collecting recordings of the young people speaking among themselves or speaking individually or in small groups with one of the researchers. This work resulted in 413,000 words of fieldnotes and seventy hours of audio recordings.

Drummond then noted down every time the participants said a word where th-stopping could occur such as *three*, *thanks*, *nothing*, totalling 886 instances across the 25 participants with an average of 34 tokens per participant. He then calculated the percentage of the time the participants used th-stopping.

What were the results?

One of the most striking findings was that th-fronting (such as saying *thing* as 'fing') was by far the most common linguistic variant. On average, participants produced th-fronting 85% of the time and five participants did so 100% of the time. Th-stopping was much less common with participants doing so, on average, only 5% of the time and 17 of the speakers never using th-stopping.

Drummond did not find that participants of any particular ethnicity used th-stopping more than any other which may support the idea that MBE is a multiethnolect. He did however find that participants were less likely to use th-stopping if they were in formal settings such as in interviews. This finding is not surprising as much previous research has found that people tend to use standard linguistic features in formal settings (see style shifting and Corn(ish)? summary to know more). Participants who liked to rap were also more likely to use th-stopping, although only two tokens occurred *during* rapping.

Drummond then reflected on whether the way participants spoke was related to the context and the topic of the conversation. In a weekly art lesson, the young people tended to chat casually, sometimes talking about fights, trouble with the police, and involvement in/knowledge of gang-related behaviour. Drummond observed that in a conversation about criminal behaviour, the word *thief* was produced with th-stopping (so it sounded the same as 'teeth'). In a different conversation, one of the young people said the word *thing* as 'fing' but then self-corrected to 'ting' shortly after a conversation about grime music.

Drummond believes that th-stopping might have acquired a social meaning of toughness because it is commonly used in grime music which has gritty, street-focused lyrics. In this research, th-stopping was not linked to a person's ethnicity, but instead, some young people seemed to speak in this way to reflect a stance of toughness, links to grime music and lifestyle, and a street identity. Akin to the links between AAE and hip hop, MLE/MBE features seem to be used by some young people outside of London who wish to show that they are aligned with grime music and culture.

Reference

Article title: Maybe it's a grime [t]ing: TH-stopping among urban British youth
Authors: Rob Drummond
Journal: Language in Society, Volume 47, Issue 2, pages 171 - 196
Year of publication: 2018
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Rob Drummond

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

This was part of a larger study exploring the language of young people who had been excluded from school. It wasn't the plan from the beginning to look at this particular group, I simply wanted to find young people in Manchester, but, as is often the case with research, one thing leads to another and things don't always end up where you think they will. The reason for looking at youth language in the first places was because I was interested in the development of what I was calling Multicultural British English, or MLE (Multicultural London English) but with a Manchester accent, and it was something I had heard young people in Manchester using.

as is often the case with research, one thing leads to another and things don't always end up where you think they will

As it turned out, the young people I worked with were the perfect group, as their involvement also gave me some ammunition with which to challenge some of the prejudice which they and others routinely face due to the way they speak. The focus on TH-stopping simply came out of the data - it was feature that emerged as one that was possibly doing some interesting things.

2. What were your main research questions?

How is TH-stopping being used to enact particular identities within this group of young people?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

That TH-stopping was being used, in this particular context, not as a marker of ethnicity, but as a way of enacting or representing a particular identity associated with a particular way of life (that of grime culture). I am not suggesting that the feature of TH-stopping does not relate to racial and ethnic identity more generally, simply that in this study, its use appeared to align more strongly with a way of life that transcended ethnic groups.

That people are able to strategically use specific features to enact particular identities.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

This relates to my own work on Multicultural British English, to work on MLE by Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill and Sue Fox (see The Media and MLE summary), and by work on London youth language by Christian Ilbury (see Speaking Roadman summary) and Shivonne Gates (see Why the Long Face? summary). I think all of this work comes from slightly different angles, but combined, it all helps to build up a clearer picture.

Why the Long Face?

Ethnicity and linguistic variation in MLE

Researcher: Shivonne Gates

Background

Language change is inevitable - all dialects change over time and London English is no exception. In recent decades, the linguists Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen have noted the rise of what they called Multicultural London English (MLE). It was found that young, working-class Londoners from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, were tending not to speak Cockney but instead speaking this new linguistic variety, which had some noticeably different lexis, syntax and phonology. MLE was often described as 'ethnically neutral', meaning that it was thought to be a multiethnolect (not spoken exclusively by any ethnic group). However, the research headed by Paul Kerswill did note that there were some possible ethnic and gender differences, with White British girls using fewer of the more recent MLE features and Afro-Caribbean boys using more.

Shivonne Gates built on this research by testing the idea that MLE is 'ethnically neutral'. She suspected that ethnicity would probably have a role to play in who used some MLE features. If MLE is genuinely 'ethnically-neutral', we would expect that working-class teenagers in London from a range of ethnic backgrounds would speak fairly similarly – this is what Gates set out to test.

Methods

Gates spent several days a week for 12 months in an East London secondary school in the ethnically diverse borough of Newham in East London. The participants were 27 Year 10 students aged 14 and 15, comprising 19 girls and 8 boys. Gates used a linguistic ethnography method which involved spending lots of time with the participants, getting to know them and gaining insights into their relationships and friendship networks. As well as this, Gates carried out one-to-one sociolinguistic interviews in which the participants read aloud passages and word lists, and she used questionnaires to collect data on the participants' social backgrounds.

If MLE is genuinely 'ethnically-neutral', we would expect that working-class, teenagers in London from a range of ethnic backgrounds would speak fairly similarly – this is what Gates set out to test

The linguistic variables that Gates analysed were informed by previous work such as that carried out by Sue Fox. Fox had found that the vowels in words such as *price* and *face* had changed particularly rapidly in London and differed between Cockney and MLE. Previous research has also found that dh-stopping (*that* as 'dat'), th-stopping (*thing* as 'ting') and non-standard-was (saying 'you was', 'we was' or 'they was') were features of MLE and were variable in London. Gates analysed if there were differences in the way her participants spoke depending on several factors including their ethnicity, their friendship groups, and the diversity of these groups.

What were the results?

Gates found that ethnic identity had a part to play in how the participants spoke. There was evidence of linguistic variation between the adolescents of different ethnic identities. Black British and Black African girls pronounced both the vowels (relating to words like *face* and *price*) differently to the other young Londoners, while South Asian boys also differed from the other groups in how they pronounced the vowel in words like *face*. Gates also noted that boys from ethnic minority backgrounds tended to have higher rates of dh-stopping and more non-standard patterns of was/were variation compared to their peers.

White British boys did not speak notably different to the students from other ethnic backgrounds, but White British girls had a very different way of speaking compared to their peers. Although White British boys did use MLE features to some degree, the White British girls' accents were closer to Cockney than MLE in several ways. For example, they tended to pronounce words like *face* and *price* in a way that was quite conservative, and compared to other groups they were more likely to use th-fronting but much less likely to use dh-stopping.

This finding was somewhat surprising as the White British girls were part of friendship groups outside of school that were ethnically diverse. However, unlike many of the other groups of participants, the White British girls did not have any input from languages other than English at home. This result shows that ethnic identity and having heritage languages at home may be more important than having diverse friendship networks in determining whether a person speaks MLE or not. A person's gender may also be related to how often they use MLE features. Gates's research suggests that ethnicity might have more of a role to play in the who speaks MLE than previously thought.

This result shows that ethnic identity and having heritage languages at home may be more important than having diverse friendship networks in determining whether a person speaks MLE or not

Reference

Article title: Why the Long FACE?: Ethnic Stratification and Variation in the London Diphthong System
Authors: Shivonne Gates
Journal: University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics, Volume 24, Issue 2 Selected Papers from New Ways of Analyzing Variation (NWAV 46)
Year of publication: 2018
Link to article: click here

PhD thesis title: Language variation and ethnicity in a multicultural East London secondary school
Authors: Shivonne Gates
Year of publication: 2019
University: Queen Mary, University of London

The (White) Ears of Ofsted

Race, class and language in school inspections

Researchers: Ian Cushing, Manchester Metropolitan University | Julia Snell, University of Leeds

Background

Since 1839, England has had a schools inspectorate which conducts inspections of state schools and produces reports about schools' performance and provision. In 1839, the schools inspectorate was Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) but since 1992 it has been the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

Ian Cushing and Julia Snell investigated the ways that schools inspectorates encourage, maintain and reinforce Standard Language Ideology. A language ideology is a belief or idea about language, and Standard Language Ideology is the belief that there is a standard, correct or neutral way of speaking a language (see language attitudes & representation sub-section).

They argued that the comments on language found in schools inspectorate reports disadvantage students who are working class and/or from minority ethnic backgrounds

Cushing and Snell examined the ways that school inspectors (92% of whom were white according to the last available data) have written about the language used by teachers and students. They showed that schools inspectorates promote and celebrate standard English in schools and unfairly problematise the speech of those who are not white. They argued that the comments on language found in schools inspectorate reports disadvantage students who are working class and/or from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Methods

Cushing and Snell analysed around 350 historical schools inspectorate reports (from 1850 to 1993) from the National Archives in London. They also scrutinised 3,000 randomly selected Ofsted primary and secondary school inspection reports produced since the year 2000.

The researchers read through the 350 historical reports and noted down sections that included reference to spoken language. For the contemporary reports, they identified sections in the reports on spoken language by searching for words or phrases such as 'non/Standard English', 'errors', 'accent', 'in/correct grammar', and 'full sentences', 'speak(ing) clearly', 'appropriate speech', 'accurate speech', and 'talk un/grammatically'. They could then explore which language ideologies were present in the inspectorate reports.

What were the results?

For the historical inspectorates reports, Cushing and Snell found many instances of the inspectors policing or making evaluative judgements about students' and teachers' speech. For example, inspectors praised schools for paying attention to 'impressive habits of pronunciation' (in a report from the year 1864) and 'appropriate articulation' (1910). The inspectors also criticised schools where they thought non-standard speech was not sufficiently corrected as demonstrated in the following extracts:

- ‘many of the children are illiterate in regard to patterns of speech’ (1867)
- ‘the less able children show particular weaknesses in speaking and proper articulation’ (1947)
- ‘the speech of many children is of insufficient worth’ (1949)
- ‘much remains to be done in the cultivation of pleasing intonation and clear speech’ (1950)
- ‘the children do not speak easily and quite a number are inarticulate but these deficiencies are recognised’ (1951)

Unfortunately, these language ideologies have not been left in the past. In the more contemporary school inspectorate reports, teachers who used non-standard English or who did not “correct” students’ use of correct non-standard English were seen as unprofessional and as failing to support their students’ educational progress. Students who used non-standard English were seen as failing to meet the schools’ academic standards, having low academic ability, speaking in a way that was of poor quality or having deprived or sometimes entirely absent language.

The language ideologies that Cushing and Snell unearthed in the reports unfairly disadvantaged students from a minority ethnic background

The language ideologies that Cushing and Snell unearthed in the reports unfairly disadvantaged students from a minority ethnic background. For example, a 2003 report for a school in Birmingham listed speech as a factor which ‘required improvement’ and indicated there was a ‘significant proportion of children who do not know or use Standard English’. In this school, 90% of pupils were from minority ethnic backgrounds and spoke English as an additional language. As a further example, a 2003 report of a London school criticised teachers for not ‘drawing attention’ to the fact that students said, ‘we done’ and ‘we was’ (see was/were variation). The school was in an area of high economic deprivation serving largely Black African and Black Caribbean students many of whom were recent immigrants.

Cushing and Snell have highlighted that schools inspectorates enforce Standard Language Ideology which wrongly considers some ways of speaking as standard and commendable and others as problematic and in need of correcting. These ideas unfairly disadvantage students from lower social classes and from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Reference

Article title: The (white) ears of Ofsted: A raciolinguistic perspective on the listening practices of the schools inspectorate
Authors: Ian Cushing and Julia Snell
Journal: Language in Society, Volume 52, Issue 3, pages 363-386
Year of publication: 2023
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Ian Cushing

Julia Snell

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

Our work began around 2020 when we noticed an increased number of references to spoken language in Ofsted school inspection reports, such as 'speak clearly', 'correct grammar', 'standard English'. We felt troubled by the use of these, as these are not objective categories of language but are ideological, subjective, and produced by how people choose to perceive other speakers. They have racial and class dimensions to them.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What kind of ideologies about language are found in Ofsted inspection reports?
- How do those ideologies relate to the racial and class demographics of individual schools?
- How far can we trace those ideologies back into the history of the school inspectorate?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

We analysed around 3500 school inspection reports and found that ideologies about 'correct' and 'standard' language are deeply embedded into Ofsted's work. They are systemic and institutional.

> prescriptive, hostile, and discriminatory ideologies about language have formed a major part of the inspectorate's work

These language ideologies are nothing new. We found compelling evidence that since 1839 (when the schools inspectorate first came into being), prescriptive, hostile, and discriminatory ideologies about language have formed a major part of the inspectorate's work, continuing right through to 2022.

These ideologies map onto other, non-linguistic factors. We found that where teachers/students were deemed to be using standard English, this was associated with high-quality teaching and a willingness to learn. When inspectors deemed teachers/students to be using non-standard English, this was indicative of poor teaching, unruly behaviour, and intellectual inferiority.

These language ideologies intersect with perceptions of race and class. We found that the most hostile comments about language were found in schools serving Black children from low-income communities.

These judgements were made by an Ofsted workforce of whom 92% are white and earn annual salaries of around £70,000.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Our research added to growing critiques of Ofsted and the power they have in schools and educational policy making. It built on a long history of work in linguistics which has shown how ideologies about language are central to racial and class-based discrimination.

race & ethnicity

gender & sexuality

‘STFU and start listening to how scared we are’

Resisting misogyny on Twitter via #NotAllMen

Researchers: Lucy Jones, University of Nottingham | Małgorzata Chałupnik, University of Nottingham | Jai Mackenzie, Birmingham Newman University | Louise Mullany, University of Nottingham

Background

Discourse is written or spoken communication, and discourse analysis is when a researcher analyses the type and structure of language used to write or speak about a subject and interprets this in the wider social and cultural context. Lucy Jones, Małgorzata Chałupnik, Jai Mackenzie and Louise Mullany used discourse analysis to study the discussions taking place on Twitter about male-to-female violence. They analysed tweets that included the hashtag #NotAllMen on Twitter in March 2021.

They showed how some people used the #NotAllMen hashtag to express misogynistic views and practices, but others discussed and pushed back against the hashtag in order to resist misogyny

At this time, #NotAllMen was trending following the rape and murder of Sarah Everard, a 33-year-old woman who was abducted from a street in London. The original intention of the hashtag was to point out that not all men are violent misogynists. But the researchers adopted a feminist stance to also explore tweets which questioned or critiqued the hashtag and positioned it as fundamentally misogynistic. They showed how some people used the #NotAllMen hashtag to express misogynistic views and practices, but others discussed and pushed back against the hashtag in order to resist misogyny.

Methods

The researchers analysed 18,701 tweets posted between 4th and 17th of March 2021 with the hashtag #NotAllMen. From the 462,164 total words used in these tweets, the researchers identified the 20 key words which most frequently occurred. Based on these key words, they identified a list of key themes. They analysed the key words and key themes, providing example tweets, from a feminist perspective to reveal the strategies used to resist misogyny.

What did they find?

Based on the 20 keywords, the researchers identified two prominent themes which were misogyny (based on the key words ‘misogyny’, ‘misogynistic’, ‘sexist’ and ‘sexism’) and harassment and violence (based on the key words ‘rapist’, ‘harass’, ‘catcall’, ‘rape’, ‘sexually’ and ‘assault’). The five most frequent keywords (omitting the word ‘Everard’) were ‘hashtag’, ‘rapist’, ‘harass’, ‘misogyny’ and ‘stfu’.

The researchers found that a small number of tweets used the hashtag with its original intention to express that not all men are a danger to women. However, the overwhelming majority of tweets using the hashtag #NotAllMen were critiquing the hashtag and aimed to bring the focus back to women’s and girls’ experiences. The word ‘hashtag’ appeared very frequently in the tweets collected by the researchers, demonstrating that many tweets were discussing the hashtag itself. We can see an example in the following tweet: ‘All I can conclude from the hashtag is that #NotAllMen are listening to women or willing to face up

to their role in the problem'. The hashtag had been taken over by those resisting the original message which they positioned as fundamentally misogynistic.

On all sides of the debate, tweets including #NotAllMen generally expressed anger for example through the use of expletives (presented in acronyms such as the key word 'stfu') and insults. In 65% of the tweets that included 'stfu', the people using #NotAllMen with its original message were being told to shut up. Of those tweets, 37% included the word 'listen' (in its various forms such as 'listening', 'listened'), as in the following example: 'I'm sure every single woman murdered at the hands of violent men, and every single one of us who have been sexually assaulted, takes absolutely zero solace in the fact that its #notallmen So stfu and start listening to how scared we are.' As in this example, 68% of tweets including 'stfu' used it in the imperative mood (when it is used as a command such as, 'stfu and start listening') rather than in the indicative mood (when it is used as a statement such as, '#Notallmen can stfu').

Such tweets acknowledged that most men would not attack women but that the original use of the hashtag ignored the fear experienced by all women and girls of being victims of gender-based violence, rape and murder

The original message of #NotAllMen seemed to be suggesting that misogyny is not a problem in the UK. However, the researchers' analysis of the discourse revealed the use of the hashtag in the majority of tweets resisted this message and framed the hashtag as a symptom of misogyny in UK society. Such tweets acknowledged that most men would not attack women but that the original use of the hashtag ignored the fear experienced by all women and girls of being victims of gender-based violence, rape and murder. The researchers aimed to raise awareness of violence against women and girls through the voices of those who took to social media to express their anger and frustration in their own words.

Reference

Article title: 'STFU and start listening to how scared we are': Resisting misogyny on Twitter via #NotAllMen
Authors: Lucy Jones, Małgorzata Chałupnik, Jai Mackenzie, Louise Mullany
Journal: Discourse, Context & Media, Volume 47
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Lucy Jones

Malgorzata Chalupnik

Jai Mackenzie

Louise Mullany

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

In 2021, a woman called Sarah Everard was abducted in London and murdered. It was widely reported in the media at the time, with a lot of focus on what women could do to make themselves safer. Many social media users responded to this angrily by pointing out that men also have a role to play in preventing these sorts of attacks. In turn, this position was then challenged, particularly on Twitter, by those wishing to point out that not all men engage in gender-based violence; we noticed the hashtag #NotAllMen being used to make this argument.

> the hashtag was being used strategically to challenge harmful rhetoric and create a feminist discourse

As the Everard case unfolded, we then saw this hashtag be taken over by those resisting this stance by positioning it as fundamentally misogynistic. We wanted to explore the language of these tweets to better understand how people were using Twitter as a space to cope with this tragedy.

2. What were your main research questions?

How do Twitter users employ the hashtag #NotAllMen to reframe the debate taking place at the time of Sarah Everard's abduction and murder? What does this tell us about feminist discourse, and about the role of hashtags on social media?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

We used a combination of corpus linguistics – looking at frequent patterns in thousands of tweets using this hashtag – and feminist critical discourse analysis to look at individual posts. We found that the hashtag was being used strategically to challenge harmful rhetoric and create a feminist discourse. Twitter users engaged in linguistic strategies including expletives, insults, and direct address to problematise those using the #NotAllMen hashtag to defend men. In doing so, they demonstrated that this position ultimately ignores women's fears of being victims of gender-based violence. This shows that hashtags can be used to form bonds through 'ambient affiliation': this is where users call on others to show their affiliation with a particular stance (in this case, against misogynistic values) and to construct a collaborative space through hashtags.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

The concept of ambient affiliation comes from research by Michele Zappavigna, who looked at the hashtag #Obama on Twitter when it was announced that Barack Obama had been elected the next President of the USA. There are a number of other studies looking at how Twitter is used to resist misogyny (such as a Palomino-Manjón's analysis of #WhyIDidntReport) and how online discourse serves to reproduce misogynistic ideology (such as KhosraviNik and Esposito's account of online hate).

Sassy Queens

Gay, white males using AAE to perform stereotypes of Black female identity online

Researcher: Christian Ilbury, University of Edinburgh

Background

The way we speak and write language reflects not only who we are but who we want others to think we are. We can also use language to project a desired version of our selves. Some dialects are associated with being cool and laid-back, others with being tough and street-smart, while others might bring to mind a person who is hard-working and intelligent. When a dialect is associated in people's mind with a set of social characteristics or behaviours it is said that the dialect has social meaning. The social meaning of a dialect means that sometimes a person might, knowingly or unknowingly, use features of that dialect when they wish to come across in a certain way for example as funny, gritty or knowledgeable.

In this study, Christian Ilbury shows that African American English (AAE) is used in tweets written by gay British men to project a persona that he refers to as 'Sassy Queen'. He finds that several linguistic features of AAE are enregistered as a 'Sassy Queen' social persona. Enregisterment is when a way of speaking has social meaning and is associated with a specific dialect or a stereotyped social persona.

African American English (AAE) is used in tweets written by gay British men to project a persona that he refers to as 'Sassy Queen'

Methods

Ilbury examined the language used on Twitter by 10 white, British men aged between 18 and 25. The men were all openly gay and followed on Twitter several well-known drag queens as well as LGBT lifestyle and culture pages.

Because Black women – and correspondingly AAE – are associated with the stereotype of sassiness, the dialect has become a linguistic vehicle for a person to reflect a sassy identity

Ilbury analysed 15,804 tweets (with no more than 3,000 tweets for each individual participant) that were posted by the men between May 2015 and April 2016. He analysed the orthography of the words used in the tweets, looking out for instances of non-standard spellings. When Ilbury observed non-standard spellings in a tweet he then determined whether the spelling was imitating AAE linguistic features. He worked out if the tweet included AAE features by comparing the spelling to previous research on the features produced by African American speakers and online memes that use AAE.

What were the results?

Of the 15,804 tweets, 307 (1.9%) contained at least one AAE feature and 29 contained more than one. All 10 participants used AAE features in their tweets. Here are some examples of the

AAE features that Ilbury observed:

Lexis:

- y'all
- yaas
- basic
- thirsty
- hunty
- ratchet
- bae
- squad
- momma

Phonology:

- g-dropping ('sippin')
- th-stopping ('dat' for *that*)
- price-monophthongisation ('ma' instead of *my*)
- no rhoticity ('lawd knows')
- consonant cluster reduction ('stan near me' for *stand near me*).

Syntax:

- copula absence (absence of *are* and *is*. For example, 'oh you nasty' instead of *oh you are nasty*, and 'where she at?' instead of *where is she at?*)
- invariant 'be' ('filters be a gay's best friend' instead of *filters are a gay's best friend*)
- demonstrative 'them' ('them boots' instead of *those boots*)
- **zero 's'** (the absence of third person singular 's')
- completive 'done' ('done bought me a candyfloss machine!')

When the participants wrote these features in Tweets, they didn't seem to be faithfully replicating the way that they actually spoke. Why then might they be using AAE features? To answer this question Ilbury explored the associations of AAE on Twitter and beyond, including in internet memes. He found that Black women are often depicted in stereotyped ways in memes as being angry, fierce and sassy (as an example he discussed the 'ain't nobody got time for that' meme). Because Black women – and correspondingly AAE – are associated with the stereotype of sassiness, the dialect has become a linguistic vehicle for a person to reflect a sassy identity.

Ilbury discussed that being fierce or sassy are two qualities which have become appreciated within the gay community. As a result, the 10 participants in this study used AAE linguistic features in order to present themselves as fierce or sassy, thus reflecting their identity as gay men.

Reference

Article title: "Sassy Queens": Stylistic orthographic variation in Twitter and the enregisterment of AAVE
Authors: Christian Ilbury
Journal: Journal of Sociolinguistisc, Volume 24, Issue 2, pages 245-264
Year of publication: 2020
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Christian Ilbury

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

A lot of work has examined the use of variant spellings in social media (e.g., <lawd> for lord). More recently, a lot of research has focussed on the use of African American English (AAE) in social media (e.g., slay, yaas, <dat> for that, <hurr> for hair). These accounts tended to understand the use of AAE as an authentic representation of the individuals' habitual dialect. In other words, if they used features of AAE in their social media posts they were assumed to be an authentic speaker of AAE.

In social media, people don't always write how they speak. They often use linguistic features of other varieties to perform different identities and communicate certain social meanings

However, I also noticed that many other individuals who were not Black used AAE in their online interactions. Anecdotally, I had noticed my gay White British male friends using AAE on Twitter. I wanted to understand why these gay men were using AAE features in their social media posts.

2. What were your main research questions?

- Do people write how they speak in social media?
- Why do people use features of AAE in their social media interactions?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- In social media, people don't always write how they speak. They often use linguistic features of other varieties to perform different identities and communicate certain social meanings.
- White British gay men (and now very many other people) frequently use features of AAE in their digital interactions.
- They do this not because they want to be Black. Rather they use features of AAE to appropriate social meanings that are ideologically associated with Black speakers (e.g., being sassy).

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Most of my work explores stylistic variation in social media. I am particularly interested in how people stylistically use variant spellings (e.g., <bbz> for babes) to perform different identities in social and digital media contexts. My other work looks at variant spellings that emulate the voice of a White British working-class woman – the 'Hun'.

The Only Way is E-ssss-ex

Gender, class and pronouncing 's' in southern England

Researchers: Sophie Holmes-Elliott, Queen Mary, University of London | Erez Levon, University of Bern

Background

Linguistic variation refers to differences in how people (or even the same person in cases of style shifting) speak or write. One form of linguistic variation is social variation – when people from different social groups use language differently to each other. Gender is one type of social variation and many studies have found differences in the speech of men and women. There are some anatomical reasons why men and women speak differently to each other such as, after puberty, men tend to speak on average with a lower pitch (deeper voices) than women.

there is more to the difference between how women and men say 's' than biology – previous research has found that the difference is often greater than can be accounted for by anatomical factors alone

Another example is how the sound 's' is pronounced. The further back a person's tongue is in the mouth when they say an 's' sound, the less hissy (or sibilant) it will sound (see s-fronting). Compared to women, men have larger mouths which means that their tongues are naturally further back in the mouth. However, there is more to the difference between how women and men say 's' than biology – previous research has found that the difference is often greater than can be accounted for by anatomical factors alone.

Sophie Holmes-Elliott and Erez Levon set out to understand why this might be the case.

Methods

Holmes-Elliott and Levon analysed how people pronounce 's' in two British reality TV programmes, *The Only Way is Essex* (*TOWIE*) and *Made in Chelsea* (*MIC*). *TOWIE* and *MIC* are both examples of what's often referred to as engineered reality shows. In engineered reality shows, the scenarios and topics of conversation are often decided in advance but the shows are not scripted, meaning that the conversations represent spontaneous speech. The two shows follow people aged in their twenties in their day-to-day lives, with *TOWIE* set in the southern county of Essex and *MIC* set in Chelsea in West London.

Holmes-Elliott and Levon analysed 88 scenes from the first two series of both programmes. The scenes added up to over six hours of recorded speech and involved 24 different speakers, comprising 9 men and 15 women. The researchers then compared if there were differences in how men and women on the two shows pronounced 's'.

the speakers were performing their gender and exaggerating feminine and masculine traits for social effect

They also thought there might be differences in how the *TOWIE* and *MIC* speakers pronounced 's' because they were from different classes. The researchers considered the *TOWIE* cast to be part of the traditional working class and the *MIC* speakers from the upper middle class. Both shows play on gender and class stereotypes in how they present the cast. For example, the *MIC* men are filmed shooting, rowing and playing polo, while the women ride horses, attend fashion premieres and shop in high-end boutiques. In contrast, the *TOWIE* men box, play football and manage nightclubs while the women run beauty salons and go clubbing.

What were the results?

As expected, the men in the study tended to produce 's' as less sibilant, meaning it was said further back in the mouth compared to the women. However, the difference was much greater than could be accounted for by anatomical differences between men and women. Saying 's' with the tongue further towards the front of the mouth has social meaning (associated personality traits and behaviours) related to sounding feminine. As a result, the speakers were performing their gender and exaggerating feminine and masculine traits for social effect.

Working-class women may be expected to perform their gender and speak in a way that is perceived as 'feminine' when they are speaking to other women

The *MIC* men and women both produced 's' further back in the mouth (in a more masculine way) when they were in single-sex interactions (either men talking to men or women talking to women). In contrast, the women on *TOWIE* produced 's' further forward in the mouth (in a more feminine way) when speaking to other women compared to when speaking to men. The difference between the *MIC* and *TOWIE* women may be related to class-based expectations of femininity. Working-class women may be expected to perform their gender and speak in a way that is perceived as feminine when they are speaking to other women.

Holmes-Elliott and Levon's study shows that the way a person speaks isn't just related to who they are, but also who they are talking to. The differences in how men and women speak reflect gendered power dynamics and stereotypes about femininity and masculinity.

Reference

Article title: The substance of style: Gender, social class and interactional stance in /s/-fronting in southeast England
Authors: Sophie Holmes-Elliott and Erez Levon
Journal: Linguistics, Volume 55, Issue 5, pages 1045–1072
Year of publication: 2017
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Sophie Holmes-Elliott

Erez Levon

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

While gender is a central factor within sociolinguistics, research has long shown that gendered language patterns are not uniform across and between different groups of speakers – different communities have different gendered expectations and norms. Right around the time we were working on this question the reality television shows *Made in Chelsea*, and *The Only Way Is Essex* were first aired.

> the Essex girls and boys construct and do gender in very different ways to the male and female "Sloane Rangers" we see in *Made in Chelsea*

These programmes neatly illustrate the intersection of class and gender as they manifest in stereotypes, or in sociolinguistic terms, the *enregistered personae* associated with the respective communities. Put simply, the Essex girls and boys construct and do gender in very different ways to the male and female "Sloane Rangers" we see in *Made in Chelsea*. Capitalising on the spontaneous speech in the programmes, and using the shows as a stand in for class, we wanted to see whether these patterns of gendered behaviour extended to linguistic variation.

2. What were your main research questions?

To address these aims, we looked at differences in how the reality stars articulated the /s/ phoneme. Previous work has shown that /s/ is what we can call a *gendered* form where there are different norms of use for men and women. These differences are incredibly subtle and hard to hear with the naked ear, which is why we employed an acoustic analysis using instrumental techniques. This gave us highly accurate and reliable measures.

We analysed the feature in light of the following research questions:

Gender and class:

- How does the /s/ patterning of men and women compare across the different shows?
- To take our analysis further, we wanted to look at the interactional patterning of the form. For instance, is a fronter /s/ used more when talking to women, or when talking to men? Is it associated with fighting, gossiping, or commiserating? Through examining the patterns across speech contexts, we can start to understand what the different iterations of the form mean socially.

Interactional context:

- Do speakers vary their /s/ measures according to the gender of their interlocutor?
- Do speakers show different /s/ measures when engaging in different speech contexts?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- The variation of /s/ shows a gendered pattern: women on average show higher /s/ measures, and men on average show lower /s/ measures – as predicted.
- However, while we observe a broad gender pattern across both programmes, the degree of the difference is affected by the speech community where the magnitude of the gender difference is much bigger in the working class community of *TOWIE*. Crucially, we observe that it is the *TOWIE* women driving this effect and that they

use the most extreme measures when talking to other women.

- It appears that *TOWIE* women make greater use of the symbolic value of this form as it relates to gender. This behaviour chimes with the broader manifestations of gender in this community where we see the women projecting a hyper-feminine presentation (hair, make-up, clothes, body types) and performing hyper-feminine gender roles (work, relationships, social pursuits), compared to the women in Chelsea.
- The interactional analysis reveals that *TOWIE* women use fronter /s/ in less threatening speech contexts (e.g. relaxed chatting compared to confrontations). When we looked at the distributions of these types of speech contexts, we see that they more often engage in threatening speech contexts when talking to men, compared to women. This explains the finding that on average *TOWIE* women use the highest /s/ measures in same-sex contexts – it is because of the types of discourse they typically engage in with other women.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

There is a great deal of research looking at gender and language variation, Penelope Eckert's work on gender, including among adolescents in a US high school, is foundational. Subsequent work has examined gender, class and /s/ such as Jane Stuart-Smith's work on /s/ in Glaswegian. And many researchers continue to examine the relationship between language variation and gender identity.

Can You Sound Gay and Working Class?

Stereotypes, sexuality and speech

Researcher: Erez Levon, University of Bern

Background

The linguistic features a person uses may lead to them being viewed, perceived or judged in a certain way. For example, much research has found that th-fronting (saying words like *thing* as 'fing') is most common in the speech of working-class people. As a result, if a person hears another person using th-fronting, they may presume they are working class and may also associate them with social stereotypes and ideas about working-class people.

A person may also form ideas about another person's sexuality and how 'feminine' or 'masculine' they sound based on how they speak.

A person may also form ideas about another person's sexuality and how 'feminine' or 'masculine' they sound based on how they speak. Previous research has shown that if a man says 's' with high sibilance (sounding more hissy and produced further forward in the mouth – also known as s-fronting), listeners may presume that he is gay. A person may also make judgements about how 'effeminate' the man is thought to sound based on the pitch of his voice. Women tend to speak with a higher pitch than men, and men who speak with a higher pitch tend to be judged as more effeminate.

Erez Levon wanted to understand the ways in which a person may be perceived, categorised or evaluated based on how they speak. He explored the judgements made about speakers and whether this was affected by them using linguistic features that are known to be vary by gender, sexuality and class.

Methods

189 participants who were all speakers of British English and lived in the UK took part in the study. The participants heard a series of recordings of four white men from London speaking aloud. Levon used a mix of the Verbal Guise Technique and the Matched Guise Technique; the audio that the participants heard was produced by different speakers (or 'guises'), but there were also several versions of each of the audio clips which had been edited to include different linguistic features. The audio recordings were edited so that they varied in terms of the three linguistic features of interest: pitch, sibilance of 's' and th-fronting. The audio clips included all the possible combinations of the three linguistic variables**.** Pitch, sibilance of 's' and th-fronting have social meaning related to gender, sexuality and class respectively.

Pitch, sibilance of 's' and th-fronting have social meaning related to gender, sexuality and class respectively

Levon wanted to understand if a speaker is presumed, based on how they speak, to be a member of certain group. For example, he predicted that a male speaker would be presumed to be gay if he produced 's' with high sibilance. Levon also tested what would happen if the speaker used linguistic features in the

same utterance that are typically associated with different groups of people. For example, if a male speaker produces 's' with high sibilance in the same utterance as th-fronting, which is often associated with being working class, will this affect whether he is still presumed to be gay?

The participants rated each speaker on scales from one to six based on the recordings they heard. The participants rated the speakers on scales of perceived competence (intelligent/ not intelligent, educated/not educated) and likeability (dependable/not dependable, hardworking/ lazy, sincere/dishonest, friendly/ not friendly) as well as their perceived gender (masculine/not masculine) and sexuality (gay/not gay).

The men with a higher pitch were judged on average as less competent than those with a lower pitch. Men who had a high pitch and had a more sibilant 's' were more likely to be seen as not masculine and as gay

Levon was also interested in understanding whether the participants' beliefs and attitudes about gender would influence how they perceived the speakers. The participants completed a Male Role Attitudes Survey (MRAS). The survey assessed how much the participants believed that men should have high status, be dominant and tough, and whether women and men should have different roles in society. For example, participants marked how much they agreed with statements such as, 'A man is responsible for earning a good income and providing for his family' and, 'It bothers me if a man acts in a feminine manner', and 'I don't think men should have to do housework'.

What were the results?

The men with a higher pitch were judged on average as less competent than those with a lower pitch. Men who had a high pitch and had a more sibilant 's' were more likely to be seen as not masculine and as gay. The participants who had low MRAS scores – those who did not believe that men should be tough and dominant in society or fulfil different roles to women – did not judge the speakers who produced these features as less masculine or as gay.

The speakers who produced th-fronting were judged as more likeable which is in line with how working-class people's speech is often evaluated. Working-class varieties and linguistic features are often perceived as having relatively high social attractiveness but low social status (see Class Judgements summary and Stereotypes and Street Talk summary for alternative findings). Speakers of accents with high social attractiveness are typically perceived as dependable, sincere and friendly while speakers of accents with high social status are often judged as intelligent and educated.

However, Levon also found that when a man had th-fronting and high sibilance within the same utterance, he was not judged as more likeable than the other speakers. Levon interprets this finding as showing that when a speaker uses two different linguistic features which are incompatible in their social meaning – for example, th-fronting is interpreted as working class and sibilance is interpreted as gay – one of the meanings is inhibited (working class in this case). In addition, Levon's study has demonstrated that a person's beliefs and attitudes influence the way they perceive, categorise or evaluate a person based on their speech.

Reference

Article title: Categories, stereotypes, and the linguistic perception of sexuality
Authors: Erez Levon
Journal: Language in Society, Volume 43, Issue 5, pages 539-566
Year of publication: 2014
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Erez Levon

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

I remember a while back someone saying to me that all queer people are middle-class – that even if you come from a working-class background, once you come out you become middle-class. That got me thinking about the stereotypes people have about social categories, and how those stereotypes might influence the social meanings we perceive in language. So I designed a study to investigate how people perceive speech that has features that are stereotypically linked both to social class and to gayness in men to see how listeners handle these multiple cues.

I remember a while back someone saying to me that all queer people are middle-class – that even if you come from a working-class background, once you come out you become middle-class

2. What were your main research questions?

My primary research question was how people perceive language that is stereotypically "incompatible", by which I mean speech that contains cues to multiple categories that are stereotypically perceived as being in conflict (like being gay and being working-class). This question links to larger questions in the field of person perception in social psychology about how we process multiple cues, e.g., whether we hear these cues as additive (so taking a signal for gayness and adding it to a signal for working-class to generate an impression of a working-class gay man, for example) and whether we perceive people more holistically (selecting cues that we think are relevant and ignoring others). A second question was also whether listeners' backgrounds and attitudes would affect how they process this kind of information. Specifically, I investigated whether holding more stereotypical beliefs about gayness (and the characteristics it is associated with) would affect how a listener perceives speech with multiple cues for sexuality and social class in it.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

I found that listeners are attentive to cues to both gayness (e.g., /s/-fronting) and social class (e.g., TH-fronting) in speech. This replicates previous works on these features in isolation. But I also found that when cues to gayness and working-class were included in the same stretch of talk, listeners didn't respond to it in the same way as when TH-fronting was heard on its own. When TH-fronting was alone, it was heard as making a speaker sound "friendlier" (a trait that has commonly been shown to be associated with working-class speech). But when TH-fronting was combined with cues for gayness, the "friendly" meaning disappeared. I interpreted this pattern to mean that, when confronted with multiple cues that are stereotypically incompatible, speakers just select one of them. In other words, because of the stereotype that gay men aren't working-class, listeners don't hear a gay-sounding voice as "friendly" (or working-class), just as "gay".

Another very important finding of the study was that the results depended on listeners' own attitudes to gayness. A relationship between specific linguistic features (/s/-fronting and mean pitch) and gayness was only found for those listeners who reported having more traditional views about gender and

sexuality. Those with more progressive views did not show this correlation. I interpreted this finding to mean that people with more progressive views about sexuality are not as comfortable making judgments about people's identities based solely on their speech or relying on stereotypes to categorise people. While this may seem like common sense, the study was one of the first times that this was experimentally demonstrated in sociolinguistics.

people with more progressive views about sexuality are not as comfortable making judgments about people's identities based solely on their speech or relying on stereotypes to categorise people

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

I have been working on linguistic perceptions of gender and sexuality for close to 20 years. In this time, I have become increasingly attentive to the role that stereotypes play in how we perceive socially meaningful patterns in language. Since this study, I have also looked at how stereotypes about women affect perceptions of their speech in legal contexts (e.g., a courtroom), how stereotypes about region and social class affect perceptions of speech in employment interviews, and at the relationship between language, stereotypes, and perceptions of competence more generally (see Legal Judgements summary). In many ways, the key theoretical ideas explored in this study are central to all of the research I have done.

‘I’m a boy, can’t you see that?’

Mutual support and validation in a trans support group

Researcher: Lucy Jones, University of Nottingham

Background

Linguistic ethnography has become an increasingly important and common approach within sociolinguistic research. Linguistic ethnography combines theory and methods from linguistics (the scientific study of language) and ethnography (the study of cultural and social practices often observed through participant observation). Sociolinguistic research has traditionally used very structured methods, for example, analysing whether people from a social category – such as women, teenagers, people from a certain location, working-class people – use a linguistic feature more frequently than other groups. Instead, linguistic ethnography aims to understand language and society by using very flexible and open methods to observe and reflect on how language is used and spoken about within social groups and in social interactions.

linguistic ethnography aims to understand language and society by using very flexible and open methods to observe and reflect on how language is used and spoken about within social groups and in social interactions

Lucy Jones uses a linguistic ethnography approach to observe and reflect on the conversations of five members of a British support group for transgender young people. Transgender (or ‘trans’) identity is typically understood to mean an identification which differs from the sex category a person was assigned at birth. The young trans people’s discourse (written or spoken communication) demonstrates that they are marginalised and they experience direct aggression and ignorant questioning. However, their conversations and interactions are built around supporting and validating each other and building a shared understanding that these negative experiences reflect the ignorance of others.

Methods

The participants in this study were three trans men and two trans women ranging from age 15 to 20 years. These young people were members of a trans support group which provided advice and safeguarding in a working-class town in northern England. When a group of people come together and jointly engage in an activity, linguists call the group a Community of Practice (CoP). Jones observed, wrote notes and sought to understand the dynamics of this CoP between January and April 2015. Through detailed participant observation – a key component of linguistic ethnography – she gained insights into the young people’s everyday experiences, from the hurdles they faced to the joy they felt when they received acceptance from family and friends.

The data in this study comes from a one-hour focus group which took place within the trans support group. In this focus group, Jones printed out a short list of questions (approved by the lead youth worker in advance) which the young people read aloud and answered. This approach meant that the researcher was not actively involved in the session and the young people led the conversation. The questions related to the experiences of trans people such as, ‘what words have you heard used to talk

about trans people?' The conversation flowed freely and the group often strayed quite far from the original question, chatting spontaneously and leading the direction of the conversation. She then examined and interpreted the young people's discourse (the things they said) (see discourse analysis).

An important part of linguistic ethnography is to reflect on the role of the researcher in influencing the data that is collected and how it is interpreted. Jones makes clear that every aspect of the study was informed by her position and her experiences as someone who is cisgender and therefore has the privilege that comes with never questioning or having to justify one's gender identity.

as the young people discuss their experiences, they empathise with each other, express solidarity, take supportive stances and discuss how these moments impact them all

What were the results?

Jones highlights three extracts from the conversations that took place within the group. In the first, a young trans man is told that he is using the wrong bathroom. In the second, a trans man is told that he should wear a bra. In the third, the group discussed being subjected to invalid assumptions about their sexuality. The members of the group are told which toilet to use, clothes to wear, and people to sleep with. Jones makes clear that these experiences highlight the everyday transphobia endured by the young people. The impact on their emotional wellbeing of being forced to repeatedly navigate a world in which they are misgendered, ostracised, and endangered cannot be underestimated.

However, in each case, as the young people discuss their experiences, they empathise with each other, express solidarity, take supportive stances and discuss how these moments impact them all. For example, with the support of his friends, the young trans man who was told he was using the wrong bathroom blames the ignorance of the people who approached him. He highlights the essential fact of his maleness when he quotes himself as saying to the people who approached him, 'But I'm a boy, can you not see that?'.

In the second extract, two of the young men work together to recontextualise breasts as 'moobs'. 'Moobs' is a neologism formed of a blend between 'man' and 'boobs' (a colloquial British word for breasts). 'Moobs' is typically used to refer to cisgender men with excess fat on their chest, leading to some visual similarity with breasts. Through reshaping the dialogue as being about 'moobs' rather than 'breasts', the young men in the focus group reject the argument that they should wear a bra. In the third extract, the young people jointly describe the people who make invalid assumptions about their sexuality as being ignorant and at fault.

As shown in the three extracts, the young people have constructed a mutual identity as agentive and empowered rather than passive. Jones's work has shown how the group resist situations or language which seek to marginalise and constrain them by jointly framing it as ignorant. Jones calls for linguists to prioritise the perspective of trans people and to ensure that the discipline and the research has a positive impact on trans people's lives.

Reference

Article title: 'I'm a boy, can't you see that?': Dialogic embodiment and the construction of agency in trans youth discourse
Authors: Lucy Jones
Journal: Language in Society, Volume 52, Issue 4, pages 549-570
Year of publication: 2023
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Lucy Jones

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

I have been lucky enough to work with LGBTQ+ youth groups for some time and had the opportunity to do some research with a group for trans young people, specifically. I conducted a focus group with them, during which they shared stories of how they've been treated by others. This included being told by strangers and acquaintances that they don't belong in certain spaces, what clothes they should wear, or how they should use their bodies. Despite how upsetting this was for them, when talking to one another about this, they used language which was actually very empowering. I wanted to understand more about how that worked.

This study shows how important it is for researchers to problematise the sense of entitlement that many cisgender people feel that they have to question or judge trans people's bodies and what they do with them

2. What were your main research questions?

How is language used by trans young people to construct a shared sense of identity in the context of telling stories of being misgendered and marginalised?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

The young people's discourse reveals that embodiment is dialogic. This means that, through their talk together, they construct a version of their bodies which fits with their own sense of their identity – such as by referring to body parts that are usually seen as female (like breasts) with labels that index masculinity (calling them 'moobs', for example). In doing so, they also construct agency for themselves by positioning people who seek to 'other' them as ignorant. This study shows how important it is for researchers to problematise the sense of entitlement that many cisgender people feel that they have to question or judge trans people's bodies and what they do with them: it advocates a 'trans linguistics' approach which prioritises the perspectives of trans people themselves.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

I've published another study based on the same group, where I focus in more detail on how the young people use discursive tools such as humour and sarcasm to construct agentive identities by subverting the cisnormative expectations of others. My use of the trans linguistics approach here is based on the very important work of Lal Zimman, who has advocated for research into trans experience which has the political aim of making things better for trans people.

‘I’m not proud, I’m just gay’

Interpreting the discourse of lesbian and gay youths

Researcher: Lucy Jones, University of Nottingham

Background

Linguistic ethnography is an approach which uses in-depth participant observation to gather insights into the shared views, dynamics and language of a group of people. Often, linguistic ethnography goes hand in hand with discourse analysis – when researchers analyse the things that are said or written about a topic. Researchers often gather large reams of data through linguistic ethnography (for example, by observing participants, writing notes, making recordings), and then use discourse analysis to draw out the themes and interpret the language used. When using these approaches, linguists always interpret results within the wider sociocultural context.

Lucy Jones uses methods from linguistic ethnography and discourse analysis to explore how young people construct a shared identity in an LGBT support group. She specifically shows the strategies used by the young people to reject certain stereotypes of queer culture (such as Gay Pride or being “camp”) and to play down the relevance of their sexuality to their identity. She interprets this finding in the context of the othering and discrimination experienced by the members of the group.

Methods

The data comes from interviews with members of an LGBT youth group in a working-class town in the North of England. This group met for several hours a week at a local, state-funded youth centre. Using a linguistic ethnography approach, Jones spent four months between July and October 2012 carrying out participant observation by sitting in on sessions and recording interviews during the final month.

She then used discourse analysis to closely analyse the content and the meaning of what the young people said in the context of the conversations, practices and beliefs of the group and the wider sociocultural context. She discusses the findings for five group members who all identified as either lesbian or gay. These participants were two young women, Paige (aged 15) and Emma (16), and three young men, Ryan (16), Josh (22) and Tom (18). She analysed the ways the young people in this Community of Practice (CoP) (group of people who come together and jointly engage in an activity) constructed their identity and the language they used to do this.

Researchers often gather large reams of data through linguistic ethnography (for example, by observing participants, writing notes, making recordings), and then use discourse analysis to draw out the themes and interpret the language used

What were the results?

The young people in the group often rejected stereotypes associated with gay or lesbian culture. For example, Paige did not like to label herself as ‘lesbian’ and when asked how she would describe herself she replied ‘normal, like everybody else, ‘cause you are, you’re not different, it’s normal’. Paige’s use of ‘everybody else’ refers here to heterosexual people – those who are not marked as different for their

sexuality – and reveals her concern about being marked out as unusual or other.

Tom is keen to position himself as far from being 'a stereotypical gay camp gay man', and he rejected Gay Pride for this reason. Indeed, Tom is very negative about displays of camp identity, including his description of a man 'flaunting around the place'. The word *flaunting* suggests being showy, drawing attention to oneself and overt displays of behaviour associated with "effeminate" gay men. Emma also rejects Pride. Although she says she is 'happy' to have Pride as it highlights the presence of gay people, she also argues against it. She believes that by 'throwing it in people's face', homophobic incidents may in fact rise and she sees herself as vulnerable.

Josh argues that his experiences as a gay man have in some way shaped him, but he also makes the analogy of a person having the hobby of horse riding. He says that you wouldn't say, 'this is Sarah and she's a horse-rider'. In the same way he positions his sexuality as an activity which, in his words, 'doesn't have to be the thing that defines you'.

The data comes from interviews with members of an LGBT youth group in a working-class town in the North of England

Jones's findings for this group of young gay and lesbian people differs to research findings on previous generations. Research has shown that older gay and lesbian people are happy to draw on stereotypes from gay culture and to see themselves as distinct from mainstream heterosexual norms. Jones believes that the generational difference can be explained by the sociocultural context of Britain at the time that she conducted the research with the young people (the early 2010s). The young people in Jones's study do not wish to project their identities as gay or lesbian but would prefer for their sexuality to be backgrounded so that they do not stand out as different to their heterosexual peers. Jones suggests that they do this so that they are no longer the target of abuse. The young people recount stories of experiencing homophobia and abuse, and as a result, they may minimise their gay identity as a survival strategy.

The young people in Jones's study do not wish to project their identities as gay or lesbian but would prefer for their sexuality to be backgrounded so that they do not stand out as different to their heterosexual peers

Jones describes the young people as working class and living in a conservative town. She believes that because the young people recognised that others in their community would perceive them as different, they may have a sense of shame and internalised homophobia. They could not access the gay scenes of big cities and they lacked the cultural and economic privilege to create change in their own communities. Jones calls for more work to gather evidence on the causes of ongoing disadvantages and inequalities, to work in ways that create change and to ultimately aim to improve the situation for young LGBT people.

Reference

Article title: 'I'm not proud, I'm just gay': Lesbian and gay youths' discursive negotiation of otherness
Authors: Lucy Jones
Journal: Journal of Sociolinguistics, Volume 22, Issue 1, pages 55-76
Year of publication: 2018
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Lucy Jones

1. What sparked your interest in investigating each area?

I began working with this LGBTQ+ youth group because I wanted to understand more about young people's identity construction in relation to their gender and sexuality, and how this related to the broader sociocultural context of Britain at the time (the early 2010s). I had previously conducted a study with a community of practice of older lesbian women, who drew on a lot of discourse associated with second-wave feminism and gay culture from the 1980s onwards, and I was interested in how the shared identities that they produced together would differ to those of a much younger generation.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What shared linguistic practices do the young people engage in, and how does this enable the construction of a mutual identity within this community of practice?
- What do the young people's identity constructions tell us about broader ideologies and expectations around gender and sexuality in Britain today?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

I conducted ethnography with this group for several months and, through my participant observation, I began to notice things that the young people had in common when talking about being LGBTQ+. Something I found surprising at first was that the young people very often dismissed or rejected aspects of LGBTQ+ culture that I thought they would want to celebrate, such as Pride. Instead, their identity construction was focused on playing down their queerness by position themselves as 'normal' (using phrases such as "I'm just like everybody else"). I learnt that they were doing this to blend in with their peers, and that this was a consequence of their youth group being based in a conservative northern English town where being gay was stigmatised and where they experienced homophobic bullying and felt fearful every day. This shows that some LGBTQ+ identities can be realised through negativity and fear rather than pride and openness – something which is in contrast with the 'homonormative' cultural ideal of LGBTQ+ equality. A key finding here is that this ideal may be harder to find in working-class, rural towns like this one, where being LGBTQ+ might sometimes be more about survival (by not standing out) than celebration.

Something I found surprising at first was that the young people very often dismissed or rejected aspects of LGBTQ+ culture that I thought they would want to celebrate, such as Pride

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Helen Sauntson has also looked at LGBT youth identity in the UK, but in the specific context of schools and education. I've published other studies with this same youth group, looking in particular at their coming out stories (and what they tell us about homonormativity) and how this largely white group of young people construct their identities in comparison to their Asian peers

world englishes

Now You're Talking My Language

Multilingualism and translanguaging in classrooms in Ghana and Malawi

Researchers: Colin Reilly, University of Stirling | Elvis ResCue, University of Essex | Jean Chavula, University of Malawi

Background

Multilingualism is the norm across most of the world meaning that many people can speak, write or understand more than one language. The language a multilingual person uses at a given moment depends on many different factors such who they are talking to and where they are, for example, at home, in school, at work, in a shop or on the street.

Much research has demonstrated that children do best at school when they can speak and be taught in languages that are familiar to them

The languages that children speak and are taught in at school is an important issue. Much research has demonstrated that children do best at school when they can speak and be taught in languages that are familiar to them. Despite this, across the world around 40 per cent of people do not have access to education in a language they speak or understand. For example, in Africa, multilingualism is the norm but, in many countries, children may not be taught in a language that is familiar to them. In many African countries, English or other colonial languages are used to some degree as the medium of education, reflecting the continuation of policies from the colonial period and the favouring of colonial languages in education.

Colin Reilly, Elvis ResCue and Jean Chavula researched the languages used in classrooms in two African countries, Malawi and Ghana. They set out to understand if children were able to speak and be taught in languages that they understood, if the classrooms were multilingual environments, how the teachers managed this and how they felt about the different languages used in their classrooms.

Methods

Reilly, ResCue and Chavula collected data in several ways including through interviews with teachers, questionnaires completed by teachers, classroom observations and classroom recordings. In Malawi, the classroom observations were carried out in early 2019 in eight primary schools across two districts (Mangochi and Nsanje) by the Centre for Language Studies at the University of Malawi. In Ghana, classroom observations were conducted in 2012 and 2014 in four schools in Ho in the Volta Region.

In many African countries, English or other colonial languages are used to some degree as the medium of education, reflecting the continuation of policies from the colonial period and the favouring of colonial languages in education

The researchers interpreted their results by taking into account the differences in governmental policy between Malawi and Ghana. In Malawi, there has been a policy since 2013 stating that English should be the only language used in education. In Ghana, nine of the country's 79 indigenous languages were selected by the government to be used in parliament, during national events and in education. These nine languages are referred to as 'government-sponsored languages'. Ghana's governmental policy states that the nine government-sponsored languages and English can be used to teach younger children, but for older students only English should be used. Unlike in Malawi, children are taught in indigenous languages in Ghana, but these languages are only seen as suitable for younger children. Both Malawi and Ghana had previously been colonised by Britain, and English is a colonial language in these countries.

What were the results?

The researchers found that in Malawi most teachers were not aware of the English-only policy and the classrooms were actually multilingual environments. The researchers observed that students and teachers were frequently translanguaging, meaning that they successfully used different languages, adapting to the situation and moving between languages from moment to moment as the situation required. In Ho in Ghana, both Ewe and English are spoken and, in line with governmental policy, both these languages were used in the primary school classrooms. Some of the pupils only spoke English and a few only spoke Ewe, but the classroom was a successful, multilingual environment where teachers and students used and moved between both languages and ensured that all students could participate in the class.

The researchers also wanted to understand how the teachers felt about the use of different languages in the classrooms. In Malawi, although the classrooms were successful multilingual environments, teachers tended to feel that using only English in classrooms would be beneficial for the students as it would increase their fluency in this language. They believed that English should be encouraged because it was the key to greater opportunities for the children later in life. However, many of the teachers did also acknowledge that using only English would be difficult to implement as it was not understood by many of the children. In Ghana, the situation was more mixed with some teachers agreeing that English should be favoured in schools while others supported a multilingual approach.

The researchers suggest that enforcing English as the medium of education and not recognising the multilingual realities of teachers and students does not support children's learning

Reilly, ResCue and Chavula have demonstrated that primary classrooms in both Malawi and Ghana are multilingual settings where translanguaging takes place. The reality observed by the researchers goes against the governmental policy in Malawi and would not be supported in Ghana if the students were older. The researchers suggest that enforcing English as the medium of education and not recognising the multilingual realities of teachers and students does not support children's learning. Instead, they suggest that policy makers could learn a valuable lesson by paying attention to the very successful, multilingual classrooms that already exist in both Malawi and Ghana.

Reference

Article title: Language policy in Ghana and Malawi: differing approaches to multilingualism in education
Authors: Colin Reilly, Elvis ResCue and Jean Chavula
Journal: Journal of the British Academy, Volume 10, Supplementary Issue 4, pages 69-95
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A


Colin Reilly


Elvis ResCue


Jean Chavula

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

Colin Reilly: When the Malawian Government announced they were changing their language-in-education policy to be English-only, I was interested in finding out why this approach would be taken in a multilingual country, and what people's attitudes towards it would be. We have all done research in educational contexts and we then wanted to look at what was similar/different in the situations in Ghana and Malawi.

Elvis ResCue: I became interested in exploring language-in-education in Ghana due to the multilingual nature of the country. Equally, there have been policy fluctuations over the years in terms of the medium of instruction (MOI), especially at lower primary school. The policy either prescribes the use of English only or indigenous language only and in some cases the use of both English and indigenous languages as media instruction.

Jean Chavula: Part of my work involves promoting Malawian languages. I am aware of some areas that are strictly monolingual (local language only) and some places where learners mostly come from homes where English is completely foreign. I was also surprised when the English-only MOI was announced especially because it came while a multilingual language-in-education policy was being developed. I also wanted to see how the English-only MOI worked in practice.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What multilingual practices are found in primary classrooms in Malawi and Ghana?
- What are the perceptions towards multilingual practices in primary classrooms in Malawi and Ghana?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- The language-in-education policies in both countries are very monolingual, and don't accurately reflect the multilingual reality of individuals and communities.
- The policies are also not actually implemented in practice. This is due to a lack of a clear implementation plan. In some cases, teachers aren't even aware of the policy, and there are no resources or training to help them with issues around the medium of instruction.
- As monolingual policies aren't realistic, teachers develop their own methods – such as translanguaging – for using multiple languages to help their students learn. Multilingual practices are often the norm in teaching and learning.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

There is a growing body of research which advocates for the use of more multilingual strategies in education systems in African countries, and across the globe. It also relates to research which explores multilingual realities for individuals in different contexts such as work in Ghana looking at language use in, for example, churches, music, radio and television talk shows, and social media.

English as a Global Language

New approaches to learning and teaching English

Researchers: Heath Rose, University of Oxford | Jim McKinley, University College London | Nicola Galloway, University of Glasgow

Background

English is a global language; it is used all over the world in many different ways and for many different reasons. English has gone from being the language spoken by a small minority of native English speakers to being used in different ways all over the world, including by many people who do not speak it natively.

Older ideas and models for classifying speakers of English and understanding the use of English around the world are increasingly unhelpful. In the mid-1980s, Kachru put forward a very influential model that there were three circles of English (see Kachru's three circles of English). The Inner Circle was countries where English was used as a native language such as the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the US.

English has gone from being the language spoken by a small minority of native English speakers to being used in different ways all over the world, including by many people who do not speak it natively

The Outer Circle included countries where English has historical importance or is commonly used in some settings, but often as a second language, including many countries that are former colonies of the British Empire such as India, Singapore, Kenya and Malaysia among others. The third circle is called The Expanding Circle and includes countries where English is learnt as a foreign language such as China, Egypt, Japan and Saudi Arabia among many others.

The global spread of English has changed the foundations of how English is taught and learnt.

The field has outgrown this model – the way people speak English isn't just dependent on which country they are from. Also, the model is partly based on whether people are native speakers of English but, in fact, many of those considered to be non-native speakers are extremely competent and proficient users of English and it is not straight forward to determine who is a native speaker of English or any language (see Who is a Native Speaker of English? summary). Older models for categorising speakers of English such as Kachru's are no longer very relevant because English is used in various and diverse ways by people all over the world.

The global spread of English has changed the foundations of how English is taught and learnt. Clearly the needs and aims of those learning English have changed. For example, many people around the world are taught a version of English based on Inner Circle varieties of English (such as learning British English or US English) which might not meet the learners' needs and often has roots in Standard Language Ideology (the misplaced idea that there is one or more correct or standard dialect of a language). Heath Rose, Jim McKinley and

Nicola Galloway set out to understand how the rise of English as a global language may have led to new approaches and ideas in the academic field of Global Englishes for how English can be taught, and what impact these advances in thinking may have had on actual classroom practice and curriculum design.

there was not clear evidence that the researchers' new ideas or approaches to teaching English had led to teachers becoming less fixated on teaching Inner Circle varieties of English

Methods

Rose, McKinley and Galloway's study takes the form of a systematic review, meaning that they looked at a large amount of relevant research and they summarised the overall findings. They looked at the innovations that have been trialled and reported in both Language Teacher Education (the training of teachers) and in language teaching classrooms. Their sample consisted of academic papers containing empirical research that had been carried out between 2010 and 2019 which they accessed by searching through digital databases. They shortlisted 58 pieces of research and 38 were then selected to be analysed in greater detail. The researchers categorised and compared the different types of research according to their methodologies and data sources before individually analysing in detail each piece of research.

What were the results?

The researchers examined a range of research on Language Teacher Education that trialled innovations in different settings, much of it innovative and potentially effective. However, the researchers noted that in many cases there was little evidence of identifiable impact on teachers over time. The research didn't show a change in teachers' attitudes, or at least, such a finding was anecdotal or unproven. For example, there was not clear evidence that the researchers' new ideas or approaches to teaching English had led to teachers becoming less fixated on teaching Inner Circle varieties of English. This finding may be due to the methods used in the different studies and more longitudinal research would have to be carried out to test the success of the approaches over time.

The studies focussing on language classrooms showed a similar picture, with many interventions and innovations being trialled but little evidence of long-term effects. While many studies reported on positive changes to students' attitudes about language and a better knowledge about World Englishes, the papers often didn't measure the potential impact on students, meaning it was hard to prove anything one way or the other. Much of the research also took part in language classrooms in universities and there were few studies based on the many other classroom settings in which people learn English.

The researchers concluded that the research they saw was varied and interesting, offering purposeful and exciting approaches to teaching and learning English from innovative research in the field of Global Englishes. However, they also highlighted some areas and methods for future research in order to support those learning and teaching English in the era of English as a global language.

Reference

Article title: Global Englishes and language teaching: A review of pedagogical research
Authors: Heath Rose, Jim McKinley and Nicola Galloway
Journal: Language Teaching , Volume 54 , Issue 2, pages 157-189
Year of publication: 2021
Link to article: click here

Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy?

Attitudes of Nigerian expatriates towards accents of English

Researchers: Kingsley Oluchi Ugwuanyi, SOAS University of London | Folajimi Oyebola, University of Bremen

Background

People have been moving and migrating throughout human history which can lead to language change. For people who relocate, their attitudes towards their own language or dialect and those of the communities they move to can also shift. In this study, Kingsley Ugwuanyi and Folajimi Oyebola investigated the attitudes of Nigerians living in Germany and England towards different accents of English.

Nigeria's history as a colony of Britain means that many Nigerians speak English even before moving to other English-speaking countries. Previous research has shown that Nigerians generally consider English to have high social status, valuing it for its official and educational functions, but consider indigenous languages in Nigeria to have high social attractiveness as markers of culture and heritage. They also don't evaluate all accents of English equally – Nigerians tend to judge "native" (such as British or American) accents more positively than local accents. This previous research has investigated the accent attitudes of Nigerians living in Nigeria, but Ugwuanyi and Oyebola set out to understand how Nigerians living outside the country viewed different accents of English.

Nigerians tend to judge "native" (such as British or American) accents more positively than local accents

Methods

Ugwuanyi and Oyebola tested Nigerians' attitudes towards four accents: British English, American (US) English, Ghanaian English and Nigerian English. They wanted to understand Nigerian expatriates' attitudes towards these accents as well as whether they could distinguish between them. The researchers also tested if the participants' sex, regional background and the length of time in Europe had any influence on the results.

Nigeria's history as a colony of Britain means that many Nigerians speak English even before moving to other English-speaking countries

The sample consisted of 72 Nigerian expatriates living in Germany and the UK. The participants' ages ranged from 16 to 50+ years, most were male, and over half of the sample had spent between one and nine years in Europe. An online survey tool was used as the participants were spread over quite a large geographical area and it wouldn't have been feasible to carry out the research in person.

The researchers asked participants to provide background information such as their sex, country of residence and duration of stay. The Verbal Guise Technique was then used to gauge the participants' attitudes towards the four different accents. The Verbal Guise Technique

is when participants hear audio recordings produced by different people (or 'guises').

British English was clearly the accent that participants evaluated most positively, with 60% of participants also identifying it as their target accent for speaking

The participants rated the four speakers on scales from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree) for how much they felt the speaker possessed 13 different traits, including traits relating to social status (competent, confident, a good linguistic role model for Nigerians) and social attractiveness (friendly, trustworthy, pleasant). The participants also completed an accent recognition test which tested if they could recognise the accent of the speakers. Finally, the participants answered a range of questions relating to their own accent such as their satisfaction with their own accent and their target accent in English.

What were the results?

Recognition rates for the different accents were quite high – unsurprisingly, participants were best at recognising Nigerian English, but also performed well for the other three accents. The participants were overall quite positive about all four accents, but they tended to evaluate Inner Circle Varieties most favourably. British English was the preferred accent (an average score of 4.86/6), American English next (4.62), followed by Nigerian English (4.55) and then Ghanaian English (4.01).

The researchers observed differences in how the accents were evaluated on measures of social status and social attractiveness. For social status evaluations, British English was evaluated the most positively followed by American English, Nigerian English and then Ghanaian English (the same order as before). Perhaps surprisingly, for social attractiveness, British English also came out highest (closely followed by Nigerian, and then by American and Ghanaian). British English was clearly the accent that participants evaluated most positively, with 60% of participants also identifying it as their target accent for speaking (with 25% saying Nigerian and nearly 14% saying American). The researchers did not find that participants' sex, country of residence or duration of stay had an effect on the results.

Ugwuanyi and Oyebola's study has shown that British English continues to be the preferred model of English for Nigerians and is held up as a kind of linguistic standard which may in part reflect the colonial ties between Nigeria and Britain, with British English viewed (wrongly) as superior to their own forms of English (see Standard Language Ideology). The researchers show that these ideas are also held by Nigerians who live in Germany or England which may reflect the participants' exposure to British English in both Nigeria but also in Europe where they now live.

Reference

Article title: Attitudes of Nigerian expatriates towards accents of English
Authors: Kingsley Oluchi Ugwuanyi and Folajimi Oyebola
Journal: Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics, Volume 58, Issue 3, pages 541–572
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Kingsley Oluchi Ugwuanyi

Folajimi Oyebola

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this area?

Our interest in investigating the attitudes of Nigerian expatriates in the UK and Germany towards various accents of English stemmed from our belief in the importance of comprehensively examining the language attitudes of Nigerians who have migrated to other parts of the world, following our investigation into the attitudes of Nigerians resident in Nigeria. Furthermore, the significant surge in the number of Nigerians living abroad, predominantly driven by employment and educational opportunities, heightened our interest in the influence of migration on language users' attitudes. Since the context of migration often leads to new forms of language practices, it was assumed that Nigerians in the UK and Germany would exhibit varying attitudes and degrees of motivation towards the English language, the official language of their country of origin, which they are also significantly exposed to in their respective countries of residence.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What are the attitudes of Nigerian expatriates in the UK and Germany towards various accents of English?
- Are Nigerian expatriates able to recognise and distinguish between various accents of English?
- Does the ability to recognise different varieties of English influence their attitudes towards these varieties?
- How do Nigerian expatriates perceive Nigerian English? Specifically, do they accept Nigerian English as a linguistic model for Nigerians?
- Do social variables such as gender, regional provenance and length of residence in Europe influence Nigerian expatriates' evaluation of accents of English?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

One of the most significant findings is the overwhelming preference for British English among Nigerian expatriates in Europe. This preference is attributed to the prominent role British English has played both in Nigeria and throughout Europe. Notably, British English continues to be the preferred model for English in Nigeria, particularly in educational contexts.

Another important finding is that a majority of the Nigerian participants accurately identified the national origins of the speakers, underscoring their high level of awareness of varieties of English. This observation suggests that the participants likely have encountered a range of English accents, particularly considering that over half of them identified as students. European universities, where many Nigerians pursue their studies, draw students from across the globe, creating opportunities for exposure to various English accents.

Furthermore, our research indicates a strong affiliation among Nigerians in Europe to Nigerian English, often viewing it as a variety that marks their cultural identity.

our research indicates a strong affiliation among Nigerians in Europe to Nigerian English, often viewing it as a variety that marks their cultural identity

Lastly, our findings reveal no significant variations in participants' evaluations of the various spoken varieties of English based on gender, country of residence and duration of stay in Europe.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

In fact, this study is an outgrowth of our prior research on language attitudes among Nigerians. For instance, the first author conducted a large-scale study into the attitudes of Nigerians towards Nigerian English from a language ownership standpoint, while the second author conducted a significant study on the attitudes of Nigerians towards different accents of English. While our individual studies focused on the attitudes of Nigerians who live in Nigeria, our joint study takes a step further by focusing on Nigerians living outside Nigeria, specifically in Europe. Our aim was to investigate whether the perceptions of English language varieties among Nigerians living abroad align with those of their compatriots in Nigeria.

Who is a Native Speaker of English?

Testing attitudes towards teachers who aren't 'native' English speakers

Researchers: Jean-Marc Dewaele, Birkbeck, University of London | Sarah Mercer, University of Graz | Kyle Talbot, University of Graz | Max von Blanckenburg, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München

Background

Linguists have long been wary of the terms native speaker and non-native speaker. A major problem with the concept of a native speaker is that it suggests that the first language a person learns when they are young is the language they speak best. However, a person may have learnt several languages from a young age, for example, they may speak a language at home with their family which is different to the language they use at school. As another example, if a child is adopted before the age of about 11 by a family in a different country to where they are born, they might forget the first language they learnt and switch over to the language of the new family and country. As adults they often won't remember the language they learnt first. Which language(s) should we consider these people to be native speakers of?

We cannot assume that a person's native language is the one they speak the best. A person's proficiency in the languages they speak can shift throughout their lifetime. If a person moves to a different country and stops using or uses less frequently a particular language – even if it is the first language they learnt and one that they were once dominant in – their proficiency in this language can lessen and they may begin to forget parts of this language.

Even if a person stays living in the same place throughout their life, the language they are most dominant in can shift for many reasons such as education, retirement, work, leisure and marriage. Those who learn a language in later life can also become extremely proficient in that language. It is simply not the case that there is a single language that we are dominant in throughout our lives or that the language or languages we are most proficient in are always the ones we learnt first – this poses a problem for the concept of a native speaker.

Some linguists now prefer to use the term 'L1' for the first language a person learns and then 'L2', 'L3', 'L4' and so forth for subsequent languages. For example, a person might be an L1 English user, an L2 Spanish user and an L3 French user. Some linguists suggest that we should use the term 'user' as it does not imply that the language is anyone's property. Unlike the concept of native or non-native speakers, referring to people as L1, L2 or L3 users is not dependent on how proficient they are in the language. For example, a person could be an L1 user of a certain language and not be very proficient in that language but an L3 user of that same language could be extremely proficient.

It is simply not the case that there is a single language that we are dominant in throughout our lives

This approach to labelling the languages that a person speaks may also be preferrable because the term 'native' could be discriminatory and imply that some speakers of the language are superior and own the language. There is no shortage of research that shows that people who are judged to be native speakers of a language may receive preferential treatment. For example, previous research has found that

teachers of a language who are not considered to be native speakers may be treated as inferior or as less capable teachers than those considered to speak the language natively. Jean-Marc Dewaele, Sarah Mercer, Kyle Talbot and Max von Blanckenburg tested this theory; they investigated if a teacher of English would be rated differently by participants if they were told she was an English non-native speaker rather than an English native speaker.

Methods

The 266 participants in the study were all aged between 18 and 42 years and were training in either Germany or Austria to teach English as a Foreign Language. Most hoped to teach English in secondary schools but some were also hoping to teach at primary schools, colleges or universities.

A video was recorded of a different teacher teaching English to a class in an Austrian secondary school. This teacher was selected as she was felt by the researchers to have an accent that was ambiguous, meaning that she could potentially be interpreted as either an L1 English or L1 German user. The participants all watched the same five-minute video of the teacher but half were told that she was an English 'native-speaker teacher' and half were told that she was an English 'non-native speaker teacher'. The participants rated the teacher on four dimensions (language, teaching, assessment, communication) on scales from one for strongly disagree to six for strongly agree. They also rated how much they would 'love to have this person as an English teacher' and were asked to write, in their own words, the reasons why.

What were the results?

The researchers did not find that the participants preferred teachers who they believed to be native speakers. The teacher was judged similarly regardless of whether the participants considered her to be a native or a non-native speaker of English. How much participants indicated that they loved the teacher was most closely related to how they rated her teaching ability.

The researchers were surprised but pleased that there was no evidence of accent bias. The students had not made judgements about the teacher based on whether she was presented as a native or a non-native speaker of English. It is worth reiterating that much previous research has found the opposite: that teachers may be discriminated against or rated more poorly if they are considered to be a non-native speaker of the language they teach. The researchers point out that the participants were themselves training to be English teachers so they may have more open opinions and less prejudice than others given their own position and identities.

they investigated if a teacher of English would be rated differently by participants if they were told she was an English non-native speaker rather than an English native speaker

The researchers were pleased with the findings of the study but also asserted that we should not become complacent. There is still much evidence that ideas around who is a native or non-native speaker can lead to unfair or discriminatory practices. They feel it is time to finally bury for good the idea of a native speaker.

Reference

Article title: Are EFL pre-service teachers' judgment of teaching competence swayed by the belief that the EFL teacher is a L1 or LX user of English?
Authors: Jean-Marc Dewaele, Sarah Mercer, Kyle Talbot, Max von Blanckenburg
Journal: European Journal of Applied Linguistics, Volume 9, Issue 2, pages 259-282
Year of publication: 2021
Link to article: click here

attitudes & representation

Class Judgements

Accent bias in South East England

Researcher: Amanda Cole, University of Essex

Background

The way we speak varies depending on where we are from (regional variation) as well as facts about us such as our class, gender, age, and ethnicity (social variation). Because the way we speak reflects who we are, people may be able to work out information about us from our accent. This means that, unfortunately, based only on our accent, we might be profiled, judged or discriminated against. Accent bias refers to any situation in which an individual has been unfairly judged, treated, or commented on because of their accent. Often these judgements happen unconsciously, and a person may not even be aware that they have treated someone unfairly.

Non-standard accents in Britain typically have low social status, meaning they are not seen as prestigious or correct, but they have relatively higher social attractiveness, meaning they sound warm, appealing and friendly

Amanda Cole investigated accent bias in South East England by testing if some people are judged as less intelligent, friendly or trustworthy than others based only on their accent and whether this is linked to where they are from, their class, gender or ethnicity. She was also interested in whether a person might be judged to have some positive traits but not others. Non-standard accents in Britain typically have low social status, meaning they are not seen as prestigious or correct, but they have relatively higher social attractiveness, meaning they sound warm, appealing and friendly. Based on these trends, Cole predicted that the groups who typically speak with non-standard accents – such as people who are working class, with London or Essex accents and/or from ethnic minority backgrounds – would be judged to sound friendly and trustworthy but not intelligent.

Methods

Participants heard audio clips of other people reading aloud the same sentence which lasted around 10 seconds. She tested their accent attitudes by asking participants to rate on scales from 1 to 100 how intelligent (measure of social status), friendly and trustworthy (measures of social attractiveness) they thought each speaker sounded. Because the speakers all read the same sentence, Cole knew it was their accent that was being judged and not the content of what they are saying. Participants were also asked to circle on a map of South East England the places that they thought each speaker was from.

There were 194 participants and 102 speakers, with each participant hearing about 27 different voices. This study uses the Verbal Guise Technique, meaning that participants heard the accents of several different speakers (or 'guises') rather than the same speaker imitating different accents.

All participants and all speakers were aged between 18 and 33 years and were from South East England including London and the surrounding counties.

What were the results?

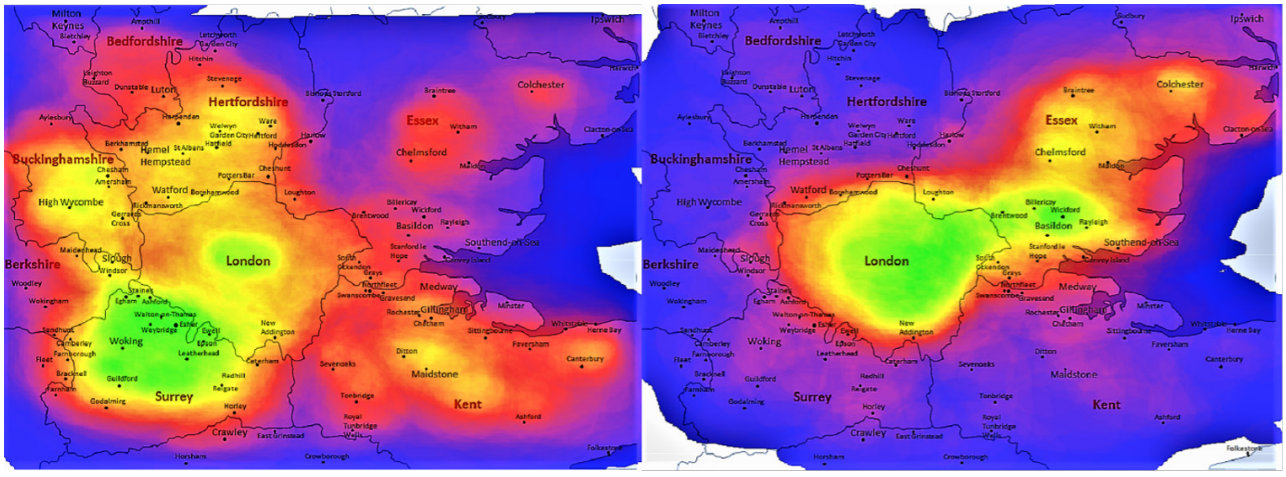
The way the speakers were judged was closely related to their background and where they were from. People from Essex and London were generally thought to sound less intelligent than people from other places, and also less trustworthy in the case of Essex. For example, people from Essex were judged on average as 11% less intelligent than people from South West London. The results also showed that when a person was thought to sound unintelligent, unfriendly or untrustworthy they were nearly always assumed to come from Essex or East London, regardless of where they were actually from. This means that Essex and East London, and the accents associated with these places, are very stigmatised.

Cole also found that the higher a person's class, the more likely they were to be judged favourably on all measures. Lower-working-class people were thought to sound, on average, 14% less intelligent, 5% less trustworthy and 4% less friendly than upper-middle-class people. A person's ethnicity also affected how they were perceived, with people from an ethnic minority background judged as sounding 5% less intelligent than White British people. The research also showed that women were deemed 5% more trustworthy and 5% more friendly than men but 2% less intelligent. There was a self-bias effect, meaning that even people who were disadvantaged by accent bias tended to make negative judgements about people who sounded like them. For example, working-class people thought that other working-class people sounded unintelligent. There was no evidence that the accents of some groups were judged to have high social attractiveness and low social status (or vice-versa). Instead, more privileged groups were judged as superior on all measures.

Cole's research makes clear that accent bias is a reality in South East England and people who are working class, from an ethnic minority background or from Essex or London are disadvantaged. The results highlight the importance of raising awareness and challenging accent bias.

Reference

Article title: Disambiguating language attitudes held towards sociodemographic groups and geographic areas in South East England
Authors: Amanda Cole
Journal: Journal of Linguistic Geography, Volume 9, Issue 1, pages 13-27
Year of publication: 2021
Link to article: click here



This graphic shows which areas of South East England were associated with sounding intelligent (left image) and unintelligent (right image). The accents of Essex and East London are the most stigmatised.

Q&A

Amanda Cole

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

I've got an Essex accent and I hail from a family of East Londoners. There have been many instances throughout my life that my accent has been commented on, "corrected", mimicked, or I've just felt that I wasn't taken seriously. Therefore, I was drawn to understanding the patterns of accent bias in South East England. My intuitions were correct and I found that people with Essex and East London accents were often judged harshly and this was even worse if the person was also working class or from an ethnic minority background. I even entered an extract of my own speech into the experiment to see how participants evaluated me. I found that I was judged as unintelligent based on my accent – confirming the ways I feel I have been judged based on my accent for many years!

2. What were your main research questions?

- Is there accent bias in South East England?
- Which groups of people are most advantaged or disadvantaged by how different accents are judged?
- To what degree might a person be disadvantaged by accent bias?
- Are some accents judged as unintelligent but as friendly and trustworthy (or vice-versa)?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- Accent bias reflects existing biases and prejudices in a society and therefore disadvantages people from less privileged backgrounds.
- The self-bias effect shows that accent bias is very ingrained in society and how we think, making it very difficult (but essential) to combat it.
- The factor that most affected how positively or negatively a person was judged was their social class.
- The accents of working-class people and those spoken in parts of London and Essex were judged harshly on all measures, including for social attractiveness, demonstrating substantial bias against these groups and their accents.

people with Essex and East London accents were often judged harshly and this was even worse if the person was also working class or from an ethnic minority background

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

My previous research has shown that many people relocated from East London to Essex throughout the twentieth century and they have taken their accent with them (see Cockneys in Essex summary). I found that what many of us now think of as an Essex accent is actually very similar to Cockney. Unsurprisingly then, the way Cockney is evaluated has been transplanted onto Essex. Stretching back through time, the Cockney accent has been stigmatised and associated with sounding unintelligent but now so too is the Essex accent. This is further indication that judgements made about accents actually reflect judgements made about people. I am dedicated to combatting accent prejudice, and Rob Drummond and I jointly run The Accentism Project which provides information and resources on accentism.

50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain

An overview of accent attitudes

Researchers: Devyani Sharma, Queen Mary, University of London | Erez Levon, University of Bern | Yang Ye, University of Greenwich

Background

Over 50 years ago, the academic Howard Giles examined how British people evaluated various accents. He asked 177 people how they felt about 16 different accents on three different measures: how 'aesthetic' and 'communicative' they felt the accents were and the 'status' of the accent. He found that on all measures, Received Pronunciation (RP) was evaluated positively while other accents, especially those from urban, industrialised areas such as London or Birmingham, were evaluated unfavourably, particularly as having low status.

This study was replicated around 15 years ago by Hywel Bishop, Nikolas Coupland, and Peter Garrett who evaluated responses to 34 accents from across the UK and beyond. They ran an online survey with over 5,000 participants from different parts of the UK. Their results were very similar to those of Giles, demonstrating that RP was evaluated positively but accents from urban, industrialised areas were judged unfavourably.

In 2019, Devyani Sharma, Erez Levon and Yang Ye replicated the study once again to understand if the same pattern of accent attitudes observed throughout the last half a century is still present in Britain.

Methods

In this study, as in the previous research that they were replicating, Sharma, Levon and Ye presented the accents to the participants using accent labels. This means that participants were asked what they thought of accents such as 'Belfast', 'Australian' or 'Newcastle' but were not asked to evaluate actual speakers (or 'guises').

The researchers kept the same accent labels as the previous studies with three minor changes. Firstly, the 'London' label was divided into 'Cockney', 'Essex', 'Estuary English' and 'Multicultural London English' to reflect how the dialects spoken in and around London have changed over recent decades. The accent spoken in parts of Essex has become an important and distinctive way of speaking with roots in London (see Cockneys in Essex summary), and both Estuary English and Multicultural London English are varieties of English which were first observed by linguists in recent decades. Secondly, the 'Asian' label was divided into 'Chinese' and 'Indian', and thirdly, 'a standard accent of English' was expanded to 'a standard accent of English (i.e. "Received Pronunciation")'.

The accents which were evaluated most harshly were 'working-class varieties' – accents from urban and often industrialised places such as 'Cockney' (London), 'Scouse' (Liverpool), and 'Brummie' (Birmingham) – and 'British ethnic minority varieties' such as 'Indian' and 'Afro-Caribbean'

The researchers surveyed 821 participants from a representative sample of the British population. Participants rated the 38 accents on scales ranging from one to seven in response to two questions: 'How much prestige do you think is associated with this accent?' and 'How

pleasant do you think this accent sounds?'. The first question captures how different accents are evaluated in terms of social status and the second question reflects evaluations of social attractiveness.

What were the results?

The way the accents were evaluated was extremely similar to the hierarchy observed over the past half a century. Results were very similar to those of Giles and those of Bishop, Coupland and Garrett. Sharma, Levon and Ye found that the accent evaluated most positively on both measures was RP.

over the last 50 years there has been very little change in how accents are evaluated in Britain. Those from less privileged groups continue to be disadvantaged by accent bias

The accents which were evaluated most harshly were 'working-class varieties' – accents from urban and often industrialised places such as 'Cockney' (London), 'Scouse' (Liverpool), and 'Brummie' (Birmingham) – and 'British ethnic minority varieties' such as 'Indian' and 'Afro-Caribbean'. The accent which was evaluated least favourably of all was the Essex accent. This accent came last for the measure of social attractiveness and second lowest on the measure of social status (only higher than Birmingham), demonstrating substantial bias against Essex and the accent associated with this county (see Class Judgements summary for similar findings). Sharma, Levon and Ye have shown that over the last 50 years there has been very little change in how accents are evaluated in Britain. Those from less privileged groups continue to be disadvantaged by accent bias.

Reference

Article title: 50 years of British accent bias: Stability and lifespan change in attitudes to accents
Authors: Devyani Sharma, Erez Levon and Yang Ye
Journal: English World-Wide, Volume 43, Issue 2, pages 135-166
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A


Devyani Sharma


Erez Levon


Yang Ye

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

As George Bernard Shaw famously said in the preface to his 1916 play *Pygmalion*, "the moment an Englishman opens his mouth, another Englishman despises him." This quote is a testament to the social power of accents in Britain and the role that they play in colouring our perceptions of individuals. Sociolinguistic research over the past 50 years has documented a rigid hierarchy of accent attitudes, with some accents (such as Received Pronunciation) judged as being more "worthy" and "prestigious" than others.

We replicated a language attitude judgment survey that was first conducted by Howard Giles in 1969 and then again by Hywel Bishop, Nikolas Coupland, and Peter Garrett in 2004. By replicating this survey in 2019, we were able to examine attitudes to British accents over a timespan of 50 years. In the survey, a representative sample of 827 members of the UK public rated 38 different accents of English (e.g., Scottish English, Birmingham English) for how "pleasant" they are and how "prestigious" they are.

2. What were your main research questions?

- Does the long-standing pattern of a rigid hierarchy of accent attitudes still holds today?
- Are certain regional and/or ethnic accents of British English perceived as sounding less prestigious than other "standard" accents?
- Or has social mobility and greater access to employment and education been accompanied by a shift in attitudes to language?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

Our results showed that accent attitudes have changed very little over the past 50 years. Just like Giles and Bishop and colleagues found, standard national varieties (RP, Scottish, American) were ranked highest for prestige, whereas ethnic and urban industrial accent (Indian, Liverpool, Birmingham) were ranked lowest.

While we did find an effect of respondent age (whereby younger respondents rated ethnic and urban industrial accents more highly), the results indicate that this age effect is not evidence of a change-in-progress. Instead, it appears that as people get older, they increasingly disfavour non-standard accents. We hypothesise that this is a result of socialization into workplace culture and a greater adherence to standard language norms in later life.

it appears that as people get older, they increasingly disfavour non-standard accents

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Overall, the study shows that a rigid hierarchy of accents is alive and well in the UK, and that it has changed very little over the past half-century. In other work, we consider how this ideological hierarchy may affect people's everyday experiences, especially as they relate to social mobility and accessing professional employment (see Legal Judgements summary).

Legal Judgements

Assessing accent bias in legal interviews in England

Researchers: Erez Levon, University of Bern | Devyani Sharma, Queen Mary, University of London | Dominic Watt, University of York | Amanda Cardoso, University of British Colombia | Yang Ye, University of Greenwich

Background

It is known that social mobility is very stagnant in England, meaning that there is little opportunity for people to move up the class scale. The people who work in elite professions such as law and medicine are mostly from socially and economically privileged backgrounds, and how much money a person makes, what they own and their level of education is very closely related to their class growing up. It is also known that people from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to be offered jobs that they apply for despite having the relevant qualifications and skills. A person's accent reflects their background such as their class, ethnicity and where they are from. It may be the case that judgements made about a person based on their accent are playing a part in maintaining unfair outcomes in hiring which disadvantage those from less privileged backgrounds.

judgements made about a person based on their accent are playing a part in maintaining unfair outcomes in hiring which disadvantage those from less privileged backgrounds

Much research has shown that some accents in England are judged less favourably than others. Researchers have tested this by asking participants to evaluate accents which are presented to them with accent labels such as 'London' or 'Birmingham' (see 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain summary) or by asking participants what they think of actual speakers (or 'guises') (see Class Judgements summary or Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? summary). But there has been much less research into how accent bias actually affects people's lives and experiences. Erez Levon, Devyani Sharma, Dominic Watt, Amanda Cardoso and Yang Ye set out to understand the real-life consequences of accent bias by investigating if a person's accent might impact their outcomes in a job interview and if people from less privileged backgrounds are disproportionately disadvantaged.

Methods

With the help of a professional market research firm, the researchers recruited around 1,000 people from across England to complete an online survey. The researchers ensured that the sample of participants was representative of the adult population in England for gender, region and ethnicity. The participants were aged between 18 and 84 years old.

This study used the Verbal Guise Technique, meaning that participants heard audio recordings produced by different people (as opposed to the Matched Guise Technique in which participants hear audio recordings produced by the same person who puts on a different accent each time). Participants heard ten young men reading aloud the same script. Because the speakers were all men, the researchers knew that results were not affected by differences in how women and men are judged.

There were two speakers for five different accents from across England: Received Pronunciation (RP), Estuary English (EE), Multicultural London English (MLE), General Northern English (GNE) and Urban West Yorkshire English (UWYE).

Participants heard mock responses to different sample interview questions and assessed the suitability of each "candidate" as a trainee solicitor for a corporate law firm. Participants were asked to evaluate the speakers on scales of 1 to 10 on the quality of each candidate's answers, their expert knowledge, how likely they are to succeed as a lawyer, whether they would personally like to work with them, and their overall evaluation of the candidate. They were told that all candidates had completed the same preliminary legal training and so were all equally qualified for the post.

What were the results?

The people who spoke RP received the highest rating across all five measures, and the people who spoke EE and MLE were judged as least suitable for the role. Both EE and MLE are southern accents but they differ slightly in who speaks them. The researchers consider EE to be a stereotypically white, working-class accent and MLE as a stereotypically multi-ethnic, working-class accent. Class seems to be a very important factor in how people are judged. Results show that working-class people in southern England may be judged based on their accent, meaning they face worse outcomes when applying for a job compared to other candidates even when they give the same interview answers.

The way the participants felt about the speakers was related to their age. Participants aged over 45 consistently judged those with MLE or EE accents as sounding less competent and less suitable for employment as a solicitor, but this was not the case for younger participants. The difference between older and younger people's accent attitudes does not necessarily mean that attitudes are changing over time, but may instead show that as people get older, they may become more biased towards some working-class accents.

Results showed that if a person did not want to be biased, they were much less likely to discriminate against candidates based on their accent. Awareness of accent bias is an important step in overcoming it

The researchers also found some positive results that provided hope that accent bias can be combatted. They asked participants to fill in a short questionnaire which tested how much they had a desire to not appear prejudiced. Results showed that if a person did not want to be biased, they were much less likely to discriminate against candidates based on their accent (see Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? summary for similar findings). Awareness of accent bias is an important step in overcoming it. The researchers also found that the way a candidate was judged was dependent on the question they were asked. Some questions required the candidate to demonstrate expert knowledge of the law such as 'Think about the 2008 recession. What effects do you think that had on us as a firm?' while other questions asked for more general professional skills such as 'Tell us of a time that you solved a problem.' When a candidate's answer included expert content on the law, the accent they spoke with had much less of an impact on how they were judged. Sometimes a person's expertise and knowledge can override how they are judged based on their accent.

Reference

Article title: Accent Bias and Perceptions of Professional Competence in England
Authors: Erez Levon, Devyani Sharma, Dominic Watt, Amanda Cardoso and Yang Ye
Journal: Journal of English Linguistisc, Volume 49, Issue 4, pages 355-388
Year of publication: 2021
Link to article: click here

Q&A


Erez Levon


Devyani Sharma


Dominic Watt


Amanda Cardoso


Yang Ye

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

There exist long-standing patterns of social inequality in hiring in the UK, and recent research has shown that these patterns persist. We know that accent serves as a key signal of an individual's social background, but there has been little research examining the specific effect of accent on hiring and social mobility.

To test this, we built an experiment in which over 1000 members of the UK public judged the quality of responses to interview questions provided by (mock) candidates for an entry-level solicitor position at a major UK law firm. The candidates each spoke one of 5 accents from England: Received Pronunciation, Estuary English, Multicultural London English, General Northern English, or Urban West Yorkshire (e.g. Leeds) English. The content of the responses was identical across candidates.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What effect does speaking with a non-standard accent have on judgments of a candidate's professional competence in a job interview?
- How do judgments of candidate/response quality vary as a function of accent?

We also found that listeners who reported that it was important to them not to seem prejudiced and to maintain principles of fairness in the workplace show lower levels of accent bias overall

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

We found that listener judgments of candidates' professional competence were significantly affected by age: younger listeners (< 45) did not show differences in ratings as a function of accent, whereas older listeners (> 45) did. Specifically, older listeners consistently judged candidates who spoke with an Estuary English or a Multicultural London English accent as sounding less competent and less suitable for employment as a solicitor, despite the identical content of their responses. This finding provides concrete evidence for the existence of accent bias in professional employment in Britain.

In addition to the bias effect, we also identified factors that mitigate bias. Some of the interview responses demonstrated expert knowledge of the law whereas others focused on more general professional skills. We found that bias was mitigated when responses included expert content. We also found that listeners who reported that it was important to them not to seem prejudiced and to maintain principles of fairness in the workplace show lower levels of accent bias overall.

On the whole, our results therefore show that accent bias does exist in the UK, confirming the results of our other surveys (see 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain summary). But they also show that this bias can be mitigated, and even overcome, by content and the promotional of equality and fair access.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

In other studies, we have examined these mitigating factors in more detail and developed training materials for companies to address accent bias in the workplace.

Implicitly Prejudiced?

Mapping linguistic prejudice

Researchers: Robert McKenzie, Northumbria University | Andrew McNeill, Northumbria University

Background

The social status of a linguistic variety refers to how prestigious or standard it is thought to be, and social attractiveness refers to how pleasant or friendly it is judged to be. Robert McKenzie and Andrew McNeill wanted to understand if a linguistic variety might be judged to have high social status but low social attractiveness (or vice-versa). They tested this by comparing how accents in the North and the South of England are evaluated.

Southern accents tend to be thought of as more standard or prestigious, for example Received Pronunciation (RP) is based on southern pronunciations, but previous research has also found that regional, northern accents are perceived as friendly and warm. McKenzie and McNeill predicted that southern accents would be judged to have high social status and that northern accents would be judged to be socially attractive, but they also expected to find differences in how northerners and southerners felt about these accents.

southern English was judged to have more social status but less social attractiveness than northern English

The researchers also tested if there was a difference in people's explicit and implicit attitudes. Most of the research on accent attitudes has measured explicit attitudes – what people say they think about an accent. There has been much less research on implicit attitudes – a person's attitudes that they are not normally aware of and cannot verbalise. A person might have a positive explicit attitude but a negative implicit attitude towards a linguistic variety.

Methods

Over 340 participants from England took part in the research. To measure explicit attitudes, participants were asked to mark on sliding scales how much they thought northern and southern accents of English sounded correct, high-status, clear, educated and confident (measures of social status), and pleasant, friendly, good, honest and sociable (measures of social attractiveness).

The researchers also measured the participants' implicit attitudes towards northern and southern accents using an Implicit Association Test (IAT). An IAT measures a person's reaction times for the speed of associations that they make which may show that a person has an implicit bias towards or against a specific group. For example, it has previously been shown that a rapid association is made between a person being young and 'competent' and being old and 'not competent', revealing a bias towards young people and against older people. McKenzie and McNeill measured the speed of associations formed between audio recordings of northern/southern speech and the same attributes relating to social status and social attractiveness mentioned above.

The audio recordings representing northern accents comprised a female speaker of General Northern English (GNE) saying the words *laugh*, *bath*, *path*, *dance* and *grass* with the same vowel as the word *trap*. The audio recordings representing southern accents comprised a female speaker of Standard Southern British

English (SSBE) saying these same words but with a long vowel that is different to the vowel in *trap*. The way these words are pronounced is one of the major differences between the accents of southern and northern England (trap-bath split).

Younger people were more positive about northern accents than older people were. Young women, especially those who had a strong northern identity, had particularly positive attitudes towards northern accents

What were the results?

In the test of explicit attitudes, as expected, southern English was judged to have more social status but less social attractiveness than northern English. On the whole, when asked explicitly for their opinions, northerners tended to be more favourable about their own accent compared to southerners.

In the tests of implicit attitudes, southern English was evaluated more positively for both social status and social attractiveness, demonstrating substantial accent bias against northern accents. This result shows that even northerners implicitly evaluate southern accents more favourably than northern accents – even though they don't want to feel this way and when asked explicitly for their opinions they state that northern accents are more socially attractive.

The fact that northerners had positive explicit attitudes towards northern accents but less favourable implicit attitudes may show that attitudes towards northern accents are changing and becoming more positive. This is because a person's explicit attitudes tend to change before their implicit attitudes. With time, northerners may begin to implicitly consider their accent more favourably than southern accents.

We can see further evidence that attitudes are changing if we compare the views of older and younger participants (using an apparent time approach). Younger people were more positive about northern accents than older people were. Young women, especially those who had a strong northern identity, had particularly positive attitudes towards northern accents.

Even though northerners implicitly thought that southern accents were more socially attractive than northern accents, they were still more favourable about northern accents than southerners were. Compared to southerners, northerners rated northern accents as more socially attractive on both explicit and implicit measures. Similarly, southern participants rated southern speech as having more social status than northern participants did. These result shows that southerners place particular value on the social status of their accent but northerners place more value on the social attractiveness of their accent.

northerners may begin to implicitly consider their accent more favourably than southern accents

Reference

Book title: Implicit and Explicit Language Attitudes: Mapping linguistic prejudice and attitude change in England
Authors: Robert McKenzie and Andrew McNeill
Year of publication: 2023
Publisher: Routledge

Q&A

Robert McKenzie

Andrew McNeill

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

My background in Psychology and then English teaching helped me to become aware of notions of correctness and prejudice surrounding English use, amongst some students as well as teachers, against particular English accents. Sociolinguistic study at MA and later PhD level led me to undertake research into language attitudes, and the social and educational implications of linguistic prejudice for stigmatised groups of speakers. My prior language attitude studies were conducted in Scotland, Japan, Thailand and Malaysia. Since moving to Newcastle in 2009, I became increasingly interested in the language attitudes of English nationals towards different varieties, and especially in relation to speakers of northern English and southern English. In 2020 received a major funding award from the British Academy to investigate language attitudes in England and set up the Speaking of Prejudice project.

2. What were your main research questions/aims?

I wanted to incorporate newer attitude measures developed by social psychologists into the study design: a particular aim was to tap into more deeply embedded implicit language attitudes held by the study participants i.e. those evaluations which they may not be aware of and/or were less likely to express explicitly during fieldwork.

Following the dual process theory of attitudes currently dominant in Social Psychology and Social Cognition, by comparing and contrasting the implicit and explicit evaluations elicited, and through the collection of social information, a further aim was to investigate any language attitude changes in progress and to identify particular groups who may be leading or resisting any evaluational change.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

The study results indicated that in explicit questions, northern English speakers were rated highly in terms of social attractiveness while southern English speakers were judged more positively in terms of status. By contrast, at implicit levels, the northern English speaker was judged much lower for both status and social attractiveness when compared to the southern English speakers, indicating more deeply embedded prejudicial attitudes.

a particular aim was to tap into more deeply embedded implicit language attitudes held by the study participants

The difference uncovered between more deliberative and deeply embedded evaluations, i.e. implicit-explicit attitudinal discrepancy (IED), also provided evidence of language attitude change in progress towards a greater tolerance for, if not outright favourability towards, the forms of English spoken in the North of England. Analysis also showed that the greater acceptance of northern English speech was led by younger female English nationals, with lower levels of hierarchical views (Social Dominance Orientation) and who affiliated most strongly with the North of England.

Nonetheless, the study findings demonstrated that many English nationals retain deeply embedded prejudices against northern English accents and their speakers. Levels of prejudice against northern English speech seems especially intense considering the sample of northern English speech was provided by a speaker of General Northern

English (GNE) (in opposition to Standard Southern British English) (SSBE), frequently perceived to represent the standard form of English spoken in the North of England.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

On a personal level, the research builds upon my previous work on language attitudes, for example a smaller-scale research study I did with Erin Carrie in 2018. It is conducted in contexts outside England and especially on a prior smaller-scale study investigating implicit and explicit attitudes towards northern English and southern English. It is also hoped that the research builds upon other language attitude and language use research conducted on English varieties as well as extends more recent implicit attitude research conducted in contexts outwith England.

Specifically, the monograph 'Implicit and Explicit Language Attitudes', to my knowledge constitutes the first book-length treatment of language attitudes at more verbalisable and deeply embedded levels and seems the first to attempt to measure implicit language attitudes in terms of specific social attractiveness as well as status, 2 non-overlapping dimensions uncovered by prior explicit language attitude studies but not investigated at implicit level. It also constitutes the first in-depth study to systematically measure language attitude change, which I hope offers a new methodological tool to help better examine the relationship between language attitude change and language change in progress.

the study findings demonstrated that many English nationals retain deeply embedded prejudices against northern English accents and their speakers

The use of specific speech stimuli for evaluation also indicates that the BATH-TRAP phoneme differentiation in southern English and lack of thereof in northern English speech forms remains both salient and socially meaningful for many English nationals.

Finally, since it remains the case that status-based, rather than social attractiveness-based, evaluations, are the stronger determinant of an individual's socio-economic advancement, the lower status ratings for northern English speech uncovered at both explicit and implicit level indicate that speakers of prestige forms of southern English speech are likely to benefit from greater opportunities, including better employment prospects and higher levels of educational attainment. It seems clear that language-based prejudice is alive and well in England.

Q&A responses provided by Robert McKenzie

‘A lot of them write how they speak’

Policy, pedagogy and the policing of non-standard English

Researchers: Julia Snell, University of Leeds | Ian Cushing, Manchester Metropolitan University

Background

There are many governmental policies in relation to education that are built on the idea that there is a correct way of speaking (Standard Language Ideology). Teachers are often encouraged to police the way that students speak and to discourage non-standard English. Children from marginalised or low-income backgrounds are less likely to speak standard English. As a result, these children are more likely to have the way they speak “corrected” by teachers and labelled as deficient. When children are singled out or have their speech corrected by teachers they are less likely to actively engage in classroom activities and interactions.

It is worth remembering that the teachers who police students’ speech are doing so because they think it is in the children’s best interest. Many teachers believe that if they correct students’ speech then this will lead to improvements in the children’s writing. The teacher may be concerned that if a student speaks non-standard English they will also write in non-standard English. In this study, Julia Snell and Ian Cushing explored whether children who use non-standard forms of English in their speech also use these features in their writing.

Methods

Snell and Cushing looked at Standard Language Ideology in pedagogy. They firstly wanted to understand the reasons why teachers correct students’ speech and the governmental policies that encourage this approach. They conducted interviews with teachers and students, analysed the interactions that took place in classrooms, and scrutinised governmental policies and over 100,000 Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) school reports that were written since the year 2000.

Ofsted suggest that the way a person speaks influences how they write even though there is no evidence to support this idea

The researchers then assessed whether students using non-standard forms in their speech actually used these forms in their writing. To answer this question, they collected written work comprising approximately 145,000 words which was produced by students in Years 5 and 6 (aged between 9 and 11 years) from two primary schools in London and Leeds. They noted down each time there was a non-standard feature of English in the children’s written work.

What were the results?

Snell and Cushing showed that Ofsted often treat speech and writing as the same thing in their reports. Ofsted suggest that the way a person speaks influences how they write even though there is no evidence to support this idea. The interviews with teachers revealed similar ideas. One teacher said, ‘If we don’t correct spoken forms then it does reflect into their writing, and they do end up writing it incorrectly’, and another teacher said, ‘A lot of them write how they speak’. Teachers also justified correcting children’s speech because they felt encouraged to do so by the demands of the curriculum and Ofsted. The researchers

found that students were also aware of the idea that speech might influence writing. Some students listed words that were banned in their classrooms such as *like* and *basically*. The students knew that they were discouraged from saying these colloquial words for fear that they would then use them in their writing.

Snell and Cushing didn't find any evidence that non-standard grammar is actually appearing in students' writing

Snell and Cushing didn't find any evidence that non-standard grammar is actually appearing in students' writing. As an example, governmental policy and teachers alike both expressed concerns that non-standard-was (saying 'you was', 'we was' or 'they was' rather than standard-were) is a common error produced by students in their writing. Snell and Cushing observed that teachers regularly corrected students who said non-standard-was when speaking aloud in the classroom. However, non-standard-was appeared less than one per 1,000 words in the students' written work that they analysed. This means that teachers and regulators do not need to be concerned about policing students' speech.

Snell and Cushing's study has demonstrated that regulating, policing and correcting students' speech will not improve their literacy. If children use non-standard grammar in their speech this does not mean that they will do so in their writing. The narrative shared by many teachers, Ofsted and policymakers is wrong – it is not a problem if children speak in regional dialects. Instead, when children's speech is policed, this is detrimental to their classroom participation and learning.

Reference

Article title: "A lot of them write how they speak": policy, pedagogy and the policing of 'non-standard' English
Authors: Julia Snell and Ian Cushing
Journal: Literacy, Volume 56, Issue 3, pages 199-211
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Julia Snell

Ian Cushing

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

School leaders and teachers often assume that non-standardised forms in children's speech (such as *ain't*, *yous*, *we was*) will transfer to their writing and have negative consequences for their educational attainment. This unevidenced notion is used to justify overt correction of children's speech and other kinds of "language policing" at school. We were troubled by the damage this might cause to young people.

oral language policing closes down classroom interactions and sends the message that pupils' home dialect (which has strong links to their identity) has no value at school.

2. What were your main research questions?

- How often does non-standardised grammar appear in children's writing?
- Does regulating children's spoken language help them to improve their writing?
- What consequences might language policing have for children's participation and learning at school?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

Teachers and schools can feel pressurised into policing pupils' spoken language, often with the assumption that "improving" talk will bear direct consequences on the "improvement" of writing. This pressure comes from educational policies (e.g. National Curriculum; the Teachers' Standards) and accountability measures (e.g. the schools inspectorate, Ofsted; standardised testing).

Teachers we interviewed suggested that pupils' writing is peppered with non-standardised grammar. However, we found no evidence of this when we examined pupil work. For example, while teachers and policy perceived non-standardised-was to be a common "error" in writing (e.g., 'We was there yesterday'), this appeared less than 1 per 1000 words in the pupil work we analysed. Some forms routinely corrected in pupils' speech did not occur at all in their writing (e.g., *ain't*, as in 'I ain't got any').

So: attempts to correct pupils' speech get justified on the grounds that non-standard "errors" transfer to writing, but this rarely actually happens. Instead, oral language policing closes down classroom interactions and sends the message that pupils' home dialect (which has strong links to their identity) has no value at school.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

This research relates to work I have done on dialogic teaching and learning. Studies have shown that pupils who participate in academically robust classroom discussion – what researchers call 'dialogic talk' or 'dialogue' – do better at school than pupils who have not had this experience. To facilitate this, pupils need a safe space within which to think out loud using the language in which they are most confident. For many, this will be their local dialect. Educational policies and prescriptions around 'standard English' undermine attempts to encourage dialogic talk, because pupils who are routinely corrected on their speech are less likely to contribute to classroom discussion.

Q&A responses provided by Julia Snell

Taps, Stops and Chavs

Perceptions of accent variation in southern England

Researcher: Roy Alderton, City, University of London

Background

There are several different ways that people say the 't' in words like *water*, *bottle* and *eating* in Britain. A 't' sound (specifically, an alveolar plosive) is considered the standard pronunciation, but across the country, many people say a glottal stop (t-glottalling), and this pronunciation is getting more and more common.

Glottal stops are often criticised and many people see them (wrongly) as a form of incorrect speech or as lazy. Sometimes people refer to t-glottalling as 'dropping' or 'not pronouncing' the 't', but this isn't the case. A glottal stop is actually the release of air from behind the vocal folds in the throat.

Glottal stops are often criticised and many people see them (wrongly) as a form of incorrect speech

T-glottalling was first heard in several different parts of Britain such as in Glasgow, London and East Anglia but has since spread widely. For example, t-glottalling has spread from London across the surrounding areas in South East England.

An alternative pronunciation of 't' is as a tap (t-tapping). T-tapping is when the tongue quickly taps the top of the mouth which may sound a little bit like a 'd' sound. This sound is very common in the US as well as in Australia and New Zealand among other places but is thought to be much less common in Britain.

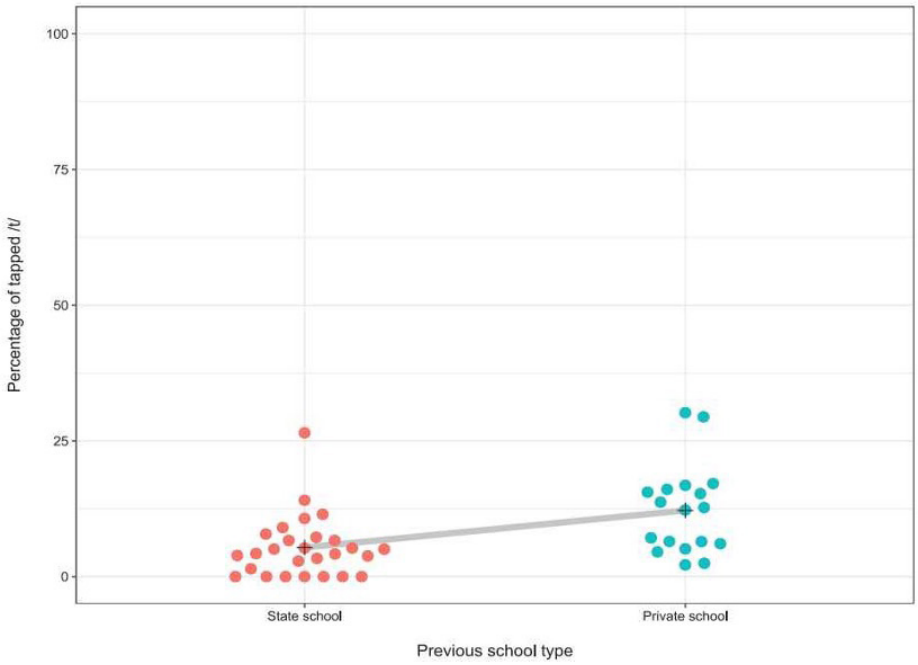
Roy Alderton investigated if adolescents in a part of South East England pronounce 't' as a standard alveolar stop or instead use t-tapping or t-glottalling, and whether this is related to the type of school they attended. He also tested how t-glottalling – and people who use this pronunciation – is judged by others.

Methods

45 speakers aged between 16 and 19 years took part in the study. The participants were all from Hampshire which Alderton describes as a prosperous part of South East England. 26 of the participants attended a state school and 19 attended a private day (not boarding) school in a neighbouring town. Speakers were recorded at school in small groups of between one and four by the researcher.

The participants read aloud a passage and Alderton then compared how frequently they said each of the three linguistic variants (alveolar stop, glottal stop or a tap). He then compared if there were differences between the adolescents attending the state school and the private school – which was also related to which class they were – and any differences between the girls and the boys.

Alderton also wanted to understand how the adolescents felt about t-glottalling. He used a Verbal Guise Technique in which the participants each heard four different teenagers read aloud a 30-second extract of a passage. The speakers (or 'guises') were two boys (Chris and Luke) and two girls (Ellie and Amy). Chris had low rates of t-glottalling in the extract heard by the participants, doing so on two out of ten instances (and producing an alveolar stop or a tap on the other instances). Ellie produced



How often participants produced t-tapping and the type of school they attended. Figure reproduced from the second academic article referenced at the end of this summary.

t-glottalling on five instances and Luke did so on seven instances. Amy had the highest rate of t-glottalling, doing so on nine instances.

After hearing each recording, the participants were given a list of 42 personality traits and were asked to select those which they felt applied to each speaker. They were also asked to select which of five stereotypical social groups they felt each speaker might belong to (the arty group, the chavs, the geeks, the popular group and the sporty group). The participants could select as many personality traits or social groups as they wished for each speaker. Following this, the researcher had conversations with the participants in small groups in which they discussed in more detail their impressions of the speakers they had heard. For the verbal guise experiment and follow-up interviews, Alderton presented results from 16 adolescents who attended the private school.

What were the results?

Alderton found that the adolescents said a tap sound on average about 9% of the time. Even though this isn't very often, it is an interesting and novel observation that young people in England are t-tapping even some of the time as it was previously thought to be extremely uncommon in Britain. The rest of the time the participants produced either a glottal stop or an alveolar stop. There was a relationship between which type of 't' the speakers said and where in the word the 't' sound fell. For example, the participants were more likely to say a glottal stop at the end of a word such as in *sort* than in the middle of a word like in *pretty*.

Alderton also found evidence of linguistic variation between the different groups of young people. For example, the boys were more likely to use taps than girls, and those who attended a private school were also more likely to use taps than those who attended a state school. Alderton suggests that t-tapping may be becoming a prestigious pronunciation that is used by the higher classes.

In the verbal guise experiment, Alderton found that the two speakers who produced t-glottalling the least (Chris and Ellie) were frequently described as 'educated', 'hardworking' and

'sensible'. There were some gender differences – while Ellie was also described as 'popular', 'confident', 'feminine' and 'attractive', Chris was often described as 'geeky' and 'weird'. Girls who frequently said the standard alveolar stop were judged positively but boys with high rates of this same pronunciation were seen as sounding too intellectual or unconventional for mainstream acceptance.

After hearing each recording, the participants were given a list of 42 personality traits and were asked to select those which they felt applied to each speaker

The speaker who produced t-glottalling the most (Amy) was described by the participants as 'annoying', 'uneducated' and 'chavvy'. Again, there was a gender difference. Luke also had high rates of t-glottalling and was seen as a 'chav' or a 'lad', but was judged overall more positively than Amy. Alderton's conversations with the participants provided more detail on why they judged the speakers in the ways they did. The participants said that because Amy 'didn't pronounce her Ts at all' she was interpreted as a loud, uneducated and disruptive student.

Alderton's study has shown that t-tapping is used in parts of South East England and may be particularly used by young people from the higher classes. Alderton has also shown that the same linguistic feature can be interpreted differently depending on who uses it. In this example, women are judged more harshly than men for using a non-standard feature (t-glottalling) but are judged more positively than men when using a standard feature (alveolar stop). Alderton interprets this finding as reflecting societal norms about the different behaviour that is seen as appropriate for boys and girls.

Reference

Article title: Perceptions of T-glottalling among adolescents in South East England
Authors: Roy Alderton
Journal: English Today, Volume 36, Special Issue 3: Special Issue: Language in the South of England, pages 40-47
Year of publication: 2020
Link to article: click here

Article title: T-tapping in Standard Southern British English: An 'elite' sociolinguistic variant?
Authors: Roy Alderton
Journal: Journal of Sociolinguistics, Volume 26, Issue 2, pages 287-298
Year of publication: 2022
Link to article: click here

Q&A

Roy Alderton

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

I grew up in a small town in South East England, where I noticed that some of my friends spoke with clearly different accent features from me even though we lived in the same neighbourhood, we were from similar backgrounds and we attended the same school. One of these features was the /t/ sound, which can be produced as a glottal stop (known as 'T-glottalling'; it sounds like the /t/ is 'dropped') or as an alveolar tap (known as 'T-tapping'; it sounds like a /d/ sound, and is very common in American English). T-glottalling is often criticised in the media and by authority figures like teachers and parents, yet research has shown that it has spread widely across the South East, and is even used by speakers who would traditionally be expected to speak very 'correctly', like politicians and young people from wealthy backgrounds. I therefore wanted to investigate the variation in how middle-class teenagers in South East England produced the /t/ sound, as well as what social characteristics they associated with different variants of /t/ in the speech of young people from their local area.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What is the sociolinguistic variation in the /t/ sound in the speech of teenagers attending state school and private school in South East England?
- How do individual teenage speakers use particular variants of /t/ to reinforce the way they would like to be seen (their identity) in specific moments of interaction?
- Are these young speakers aware of the sociolinguistic patterns of /t/ in their community?
- What social characteristics do they associate with different variants of /t/ in the speech of people like themselves?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

- T-glottalling was used most often by boys and by students who attended state school.
- T-glottalling was perceived by some speakers at the private school to sound 'chavvy', indicating a speaker's working-class background, yet other students were aware that it could be used stylistically by their male classmates to sound 'laddish' at school.
- T-tapping was used most often by boys and by students from private-school backgrounds. It was frequently used when male private-school speakers were trying to sound authoritative but casual at the same time.
- This may stem from the way that T-tapping is often produced in 'official but cool' contexts in media broadcasting, such as in pop songs and by radio DJs. It also allows elite speakers to sound informal whilst avoiding the negative stereotypes associated with T-glottalling described above.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

The findings were part of a wider project comparing the variation in /t/ with variation in the /u:/ vowel (in words like 'you', 'soon' and 'goose') (goose-fronting), which is also spreading across South East England but is much less noticeable than T-glottalling. Similar work on the sociolinguistics of /t/ among young people from elite backgrounds includes research by Anne Fabricius and Berta Badia Barrera. To see how far T-glottalling has spread throughout the UK, Jennifer Smith and Sophie Holmes-Elliott review the literature as part of their research on the feature in northern Scotland.

language & technology

Mobile Messaging

Maintaining relationships, running businesses and sharing ideas in the digital world

Researchers: Caroline Tagg, The Open University | Agnieszka Lyons, Queen Mary, University of London

Background

The way we communicate and interact with other people has changed dramatically over recent decades. For many of us, technology is now integral to how we maintain and build relationships with other people. Linguists are increasingly seeking to understand the ways people use technology to communicate and interact. In this research, Carline Tagg and Agnieszka Lyons focused on how people use mobile messaging in work, home and social contexts.

For many of us, technology is now integral to how we maintain and build relationships with other people

Methods

The participants in this study were six multilingual individuals living and working in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in Birmingham and London. The researchers analysed the participants' mobile messaging (exchanges carried out through short, text-based messages sent through mobile messaging apps such as WhatsApp) and also collected lots of data on the participants' offline lives. The data included audio recordings and transcriptions from the participants' home and work environments, fieldnotes, interviews and photos.

The researchers used approaches from linguistic ethnography and digital ethnography, specifically a method that they call 'post-digital ethnography'. Their method understands that the digital world is something that is fully integrated into our lives and cannot be analysed in isolation. As a result, they did not only analyse the participants' mobile messages because they understood that people's digital interactions need to be interpreted in relation to their offline activities and relationships. They focused on how mobile messaging works alongside people's everyday face-to-face activities and can strengthen existing relationships.

This research was part of a four-year ethnographic project called 'Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse wards in Four UK Cities' (TLANG) which ran from 2014 to 2018.

Their method understands that the digital world is something that is fully integrated into our lives and cannot be analysed in isolation

What were the results?

The researchers demonstrated the participants' resourcefulness in mobile messaging. The participants used the digital world to benefit their lives in various ways. For example, Kang Chen from China ran a butcher's stall in

Birmingham. He used the mobile messaging app, WeChat, to make the running of his business more convenient and efficient. His customers could easily leave a message for him to pick up by the end of the day, and, in turn, he could make requests to his suppliers also by WeChat by 9pm each day in order to get a delivery the following day. In this way, the WeChat communications acted as a 'Virtual Noticeboard', creating a permanent record of transactions which Kang, his customers and his suppliers could refer to when convenient.

was in stock and thus avoid a wasted trip to the shop. Despite the benefits of this practice, it had some drawbacks as it blurred the boundaries between Edyta's working and home lives. Edyta's resourcefulness in her use of mobile messaging was also reflected in how she used different apps for different uses. For example, she used Viber to communicate with people she was close to such as her daughter but used SMS text messaging with suppliers.

The butchers stall mentioned in the research. Photo from Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse wards in Four UK Cities (TLANG) (www.tlang.org.uk)

Edyta from Poland used her mobile phone to support her in running her shop in London. Edyta, her customers and her suppliers used mobile messaging to carry out practices which had once been fulfilled by other means such as face-to-face visits or landline calls. Customers could message her to ask if a certain product

Participants also used mobile messaging to share multimodal resources such as links to news articles, events, their location and images of their offline world. For Marta from Poland, her friends shared live updates from their respective locations while on the move and travelling to meet together in person. Hong Kong-born

salon manager Joe and his friends also shared multimodal resources in a group chat. The timing of each post and the response was less important than the freedom to choose when and whether to contribute. For example, Joe posted a link to a video on Facebook without any accompanying text to either direct his friends' attention to it or demand a response but simply to present it for their attention. Joanne, from mainland China, an adviser at a Chinese Community Centre in Birmingham, shared links to articles reflecting her views on the importance of healthy eating with her contacts. By simply posting the link she respected her contacts' choices and demands on their time without demanding a response.

This study has demonstrated that people are resourceful in how they use communication apps on their mobile phones to carry out business transactions, maintain relationships and express themselves in their working, social and home lives.

Reference

Book title: Mobile Messaging and Resourcefulness: A Post-digital Ethnography
Authors: Caroline Tagg and Agnieszka Lyons
Year of publication: 2022
Publisher: Routledge

The shop mentioned in the research. Photo from Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse wards in Four UK Cities (TLANG) (www.tlang.org.uk)

Q&A

Caroline Tagg

Agnieszka Lyons

What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

Our interest in mobile resourcefulness was sparked by our work with migrant entrepreneurs in the UK, many of whom used mobile messaging apps as a key resource in running their businesses and building support networks in an unfamiliar country, while navigating the demands of their personal lives which now included elements of both their pre-migration and post-migration realities. Exploring their mobile communication practices in the context of their busy, sometimes precarious lives enabled us to appreciate the extent to which mobile phone communication is embedded in, and intertwined with, offline settings and encounters. This led us to realise that mobile messaging conversations can only be understood within the wider physical and social contexts in which messages are sent and received. In other words, language researchers cannot fully understand mobile communication without taking into account people's communicative goals, offline activities, and shifting physical locations.

This led us to realise that mobile messaging conversations can only be understood within the wider physical and social contexts in which messages are sent and received

What are the most important findings and take-away messages?

One of our key findings was how resourceful people are in making use of mobile messaging apps. Mobile resourcefulness refers to the way in which people identify and harness the affordances of a particular technology in ways appropriate to and supportive of their specific communicative, relational and transactional goals. For example, we found that Chinese restaurants in Birmingham used WeChat to order meat from the Chinese butcher in the market; that customers used Viber to carry out stock checks before popping out to a Polish shop in London; and that SMS and WhatsApp could be used as handy tools for language learning and expanding individuals' linguistic repertoires.

Another finding concerned the ways in which people move between multiple modes and media in their everyday practices – including email, messaging, social media, voice calls, and in-person communication. A person's choice of media at any one time is socially meaningful because it signals a particular degree of formality, intimacy or urgency – an email may be seen as more formal than a WhatsApp message, a Skype call more intimate than a text message, a voice call more urgent than a written letter, all of which is weaved into individuals established practices and wider media ideologies. The media therefore shapes the kind of linguistic and multimodal resources used. We found it was useful to describe people as having access to and skilfully drawing on a polymedia repertoire – a selection of devices, platforms and apps as well as genres and semiotic resources that can be harnessed in particular interactional contexts to fulfil specific communicative purposes.

Finally, we found that, within their wider polymedia repertoires, mobile messaging was valued by many people because of its convenience and because it could be fitted into busy lives and around other demands on people's time. Unlike a phone call, one does not have to answer a WhatsApp message immediately; and one can do so in busy and noisy working environments. We observed how the timing and nature of mobile messaging conversations

is shaped by the rhythm of people's days, and structured around moments of device attention, when people focus on their phones in a moment of calm, or at the beginning or end of the day, to check their messages and respond, often to multiple conversational threads around the same time. We also witnessed an emerging pragmatic norm around sharing practices in WhatsApp groups whereby individuals post photos, videos, gifs and links which invite but do not demand responses. Whether or not other members of the group respond depends on their availability and whereabouts, and there is often no pressure on any one member to do so. In this way, people recognise the many demands on their interactants' time, and grant their contacts autonomy and agency over their communicative practices. This observation highlights the way in which mobile communication, while enabling perpetual feeling of connection to remotely located friends and family, can also serve and reflect compartmentalisation of an individual's offline lives.

How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Within the wider research literature, our work is important in laying out a methodological approach which we call post-digital ethnography. The post-digital does not refer to a time after digital technologies, but instead recognises that we have gone beyond the point where the digital is considered novel or noteworthy, and that it is instead a normal and rather mundane part of everyday digitalised life. The post-digital approach in our book thus involves digital data as part of a wider ethnography which includes offline observations, linguistic landscape research and interviews, in seeking to understand mobile conversations as an integral part of individuals' lives.

One limitation to the research so far is that it does not tend to shed light on the ways in which mobile conversations are shaped by and, in turn, shape what people are doing in the moment in which they send or receive messages, something that we have recently been exploring with our day-in-the life approach. This involves research participants keeping a time-use diary, in which they note what they are doing, where they are, and who they are with at regular intervals throughout the day. This is then used as a back-drop against which to understand the nature and rhythm of people's mobile conversations with a range of contacts, and how these conversations are seamlessly weaved into the totality of an individual's life, which needs to be understood as consisting of a blend of both online and offline interactions, in which neither takes inherent priority over the other.

Are Emojis a Language?

Comparing language, gesture and emojis

Researchers: Lauren Gawne, La Trobe University | Gretchen McCulloch

Background

Emojis are small, coloured images which are encoded like text and are widely used around the world in online communication. Sometimes when a person is writing, it is difficult to convey the intended emotion without tone of voice or body language to help them. Lauren Gawne and Gretchen McCulloch explore the role that emojis have in filling this gap and allowing a person to express emotion while writing.

You may have seen news articles proclaiming that emojis are a new language. But is this really the case? What are the defining characteristics of language and do emojis meet the criteria? In their research, Gawne and McCulloch show that that emojis are like gesture which is not language but supports and supplements it. For example, if you are giving directions to a person on the street, you might use your hands to support your explanation of which way to turn. You might also circle your hand when saying to someone, 'you're going on and on and on'. Gesture is certainly not language (though of course signed languages are) but it is an important part of how we communicate – so important that people even do gesture when they are talking on the phone!

Gawne and McCulloch analyse the use of emojis in online communication to show that they are not language but, like gesture, but they support language.

Methods

Gawne and McCulloch base their findings about emojis on their observations of how emojis are used in online communication. In particular, they draw examples from the social media platform Twitter by analysing anonymised tweets. Social media such as Twitter provides linguists with rich data on online communication. There are several features of gestures that distinguish it from language. The researchers go through each of these features in turn and assess if they also apply to emojis.

Gawne and McCulloch show that that emojis are like gesture which is not language but supports and supplements it

What were the results?

The first feature of language but not gesture is that it is 'hierarchical and analytic'. Language can be broken down into smaller parts such as small grammatical components or individual sounds. Even though the words *cat* and *mat* differ in only one sound (they are minimal pairs) they refer to different concepts. In contrast, we interpret the meaning of a gesture based on the position of the fingers, hands and arms as a whole. If you changed the position of one finger while making a gesture it would be less likely to change the entire meaning. In this way, emojis are like gesture. If you were wishing someone happy birthday, you could send various different emojis in different orders and different combinations without changing the meaning (such as 🎁🎂🎈 or 🎂🎁🎉 or 🎂🎁🎈).

Another feature of language but not gesture is that it is 'combinatoric', meaning that we can combine language into larger and more complex structures. The researchers give the example that we can negate some parts

of an utterance and not others (for example, 'It's not that I don't like you, it's just that I can't trust you'). In contrast, with a gesture, such as shaking one's head or making the 'cut-off' gesture across the throat, we could only negate the whole concept and we couldn't combine it with other gestures to make a meaningful utterance. For example, shaking your head while giving a thumbs up will just confuse the person you are talking to and is not interpreted as meaning 'not good' or the equivalent of 'thumbs down'. Gawne and McCulloch demonstrate that emojis are like gesture in this way.

If you were wishing someone happy birthday, you could send various different emojis in different orders and different combinations without changing the meaning

A third feature of language but not gesture is that it is 'context-independent', meaning that if you can hear someone but not see them, you can still understand what they are saying. In contrast, if you only saw a person's gestures, for example if you watched a video of them speaking without any sound, you would not be able to understand very much at all of what they were talking about. Emojis work in this same way. We cannot derive anything other than basic concepts from a sequence of emojis alone. If you're not sure this is true, you could pick some sentences at random from a novel and attempt to convey them to your friend using just emojis.

The final feature of language but not gesture is that it has 'standards of form'. Any speaker of English would tell you that 'the cat sat on the mat' is a grammatical sentence but that 'cat the mat on the sat' is not. In contrast, two people could describe the same concept, but use very different gestures. Gawne and McCulloch show that emojis are like gesture in this way. They give examples of times when people expressed the same sentiment but used different emojis. The tweets below all express excitement at the news that the popular American singer and actress Cher will be touring in Sydney but all use different emojis (or none).

- Woo ! can't wait 💖
- See u soon in Sydney 💋🌈🌈🌈💋
- lucky #mardigras can't wait to see you here in aus 🎶💕🌈🏖
- Can't wait to see you onstage! 🏖😘
- Omg I can't wait. I'll be counting the days till then

Gawne and McCulloch have shown that emojis are not language but they are likeable to gestures in that they support and supplement language.

Reference

Article title: Emoji as Digital Gestures
Authors: Lauren Gawne and Gretchen McCulloch
Journal: Language@Internet
Year of publication: 2019
Link to article: click here

Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*

Why are Glaswegians adopting London linguistic features?

Researchers: Jane Stuart-Smith, University of Glasgow | Gwilym Pryce, University of Sheffield | Claire Timmins, University of Strathclyde | Barrie Gunter, University of Leicester

Background

Language change is when the way people speak in a place varies over time. Language change often happens because of dialect contact. Many linguists used to think that language change would only happen if a group of people came into regular, face-to-face, in-person contact with people who spoke a different dialect. Though there are some linguists who still believe this is the case, there is increasing evidence that language change can happen without the need for people to meet in in-person settings. In the modern world, we constantly read and hear dialects that are different to our own. We might encounter lexis (words), phonology (pronunciations), and syntax (grammatical structures) on social media, TV shows, films, online gaming, video calls, video streaming, and the list could go on!

Jane Stuart-Smith, Gwilym Pryce, Claire Timmins and Barrie Gunter analysed if London linguistic features have become more common in Glasgow partly due to popular TV shows set in London. They tested whether the leaders of language change (the Glaswegians who most frequently used the London features) tended to watch more TV shows set in London than other people.

The two linguistic features analysed were l-vocalisation and th-fronting. L-vocalisation is when the 'l' sound towards the end of a word is pronounced like a vowel or as 'w', rather than as dark 'l', meaning that *milk* and *well* might sound like 'miwk' and 'wew'. Th-fronting is when a 'th' sound is pronounced as 'v' or 'f' so that *brother* might sound like 'bruver', and *thing* might sound like 'fing'. Both these linguistic features are originally from Cockney but have spread widely, including to some extent to Glasgow. The researchers wanted to understand why this language change is happening in Glasgow and whether it might relate to the TV programmes that people watch.

l-vocalisation and th-fronting have both become more common in Glasgow than in previous decades

Methods

There were 48 participants, including 36 adolescents who were recruited from local schools and 12 adults who were recruited from local pubs and a women's centre. The participants were audio recorded for up to forty minutes while chatting with someone they knew of the same gender as them. This approach means that the participants were more likely to speak in a casual speech style, meaning that they spoke in way that was quite natural and authentic for them because they were talking to someone familiar and not to the researcher (see observer's paradox).

The researchers counted how often the participants used l-vocalisation and th-fronting and tested if the participants who watched TV shows set in East London were more likely to do so. They asked participants about their viewing habits for four TV shows set in East London: the soap *EastEnders*, the police drama *The Bill*, the comedy *Only Fools and Horses*, and the school-based drama *Grange Hill*.

What were the results?

The researchers showed that l-vocalisation and th-fronting have both become more common in Glasgow than in previous decades. They used a real time approach to analyse if language change has taken place, meaning that they compared recordings from different time periods. They compared the speech of their participants with people who were recorded in 1997 to see if l-vocalisation and th-fronting had become more common. They also used an apparent time approach, meaning that they compared the speech of their older and younger participants (from recordings taken at the same time period) to assess if language change had happened. The real time and apparent time approaches both showed that l-vocalisation and th-fronting had become more common in Glasgow.

Glasgow and London are at opposite ends of Britain, so it seems unlikely that Glaswegians have regular, in-person contact with Londoners. So why are Glaswegians adopting London linguistic features?

Glasgow and London are at opposite ends of Britain, so it seems unlikely that Glaswegians have regular, in-person contact with Londoners. So why are Glaswegians adopting London linguistic features? The researchers showed that the participants who engaged with the TV show *EastEnders* were more likely to use both l-vocalisation and th-fronting than other participants. *EastEnders* is set in East London and the characters speak with accents from this area, including high rates of l-vocalisation and th-fronting. The finding seems to show that language change can happen without people coming into in-person contact with others with different accents. Instead, people might use a linguistic feature that they encounter on TV.

However, regularly hearing a linguistic feature might not be enough for language change to happen. Just watching the show didn't seem to impact how the participants spoke. Instead, the people with the highest rates of l-vocalisation and th-fronting were those who really engaged with the show. These participants reported that *EastEnders* was their favourite show, they had favourite characters, and they criticised the actions of the soap characters. For language change to happen, people should be actively engaged and involved with a person who speaks differently to them, whether that be in actual conversations or from being greatly invested in a TV show.

Reference

Article title: Television can also be a factor in language change: Evidence from an urban dialect
Authors: Jane Stuart-Smith, Gwilym Pryce, Claire Timmins and Barrie Gunter
Journal: Language, Volume 89, Number 3, pages 501-536
Year of publication: 2013
Link to article: click here

Life Changes and Accent Changes

Does a person's accent change when attending university online?

Researchers: Amanda Cole, University of Essex | Ella Jeffries, University of Essex

Background

Accent acquisition is when a person's accent changes throughout their lifetime and they pick up elements of a different accent. When children move to a place with a different accent to them, they normally, over time, adopt the accent of the new location even if it is different to the way their parents speak. After the age of around 12 or 13, a person's accent tends to be more fixed and full accent acquisition is unlikely, but their accent might still subtly change if they come into regular contact with people who speak differently to them.

After the age of around 12 or 13, a person's accent tends to be more fixed

Some linguists argue that for a person's accent to change they must have face-to-face, in-person contact with people who speak with a different accent to them. If this is the case, then regularly encountering a new accent on social media, in TV or films, or via video calls or phone calls would not lead to a person's accent changing (see also Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* summary on language change and TV viewing). Amanda Cole and Ella Jeffries tested if this is the case by analysing if students' accents changed when they attended university online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Beginning university (often aged 18 years in England) is usually the first time that young adults live independently, meet people from all over the country and the world, and encounter many different accents. It is known that students' accents normally change when they attend university, but is this also the case when there is very limited in-person contact?

Methods

Three first-year university students were individually audio recorded on the video conference software Zoom while they read aloud. The participants read the same word list and passages at the end of each of the three terms (Autumn, Spring and Summer) of the 2020/21 academic year. Cole and Jeffries compared how the participants pronounced various vowels and consonants throughout the year to see if their accents had changed.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were various restrictions and lockdowns in place during the 2020/21 academic year, ranging from no in-person social activities except with household members or with a support bubble if eligible, meeting one person outdoors, or up to six people in either indoor or outdoor spaces. The participants' university classes were all conducted online via Zoom and social activities were mostly conducted online.

The university that the students attended was in southern England and the three speakers were all from different parts of southern or eastern England. The three participants had different patterns of social contact throughout the academic year. One participant relocated to university halls and regularly interacted in in-person settings with her housemates. The other two participants lived in their family homes throughout the year. One of these participants mainly socialised, both online and in in-person settings when permitted by the restrictions in place, with his family and the friends he

had before attending university. The other participant regularly interacted online, including via video calls, with other students who he had met since starting his university course.

What were the results?

The participant who lived at home throughout the academic year and did not have regular contact with other students – either in online or in-person settings- did not have notable variation in his accent throughout the year. In contrast, the two participants who had regular social contact with other students – whether that was in online or in-person settings – did not speak the same throughout the academic year. There was linguistic variation between the three terms in the way they pronounced several vowels and some consonants.

It is known that students' accents normally change when they attend university, but is this also the case when there is very limited in-person contact?

The participant who relocated to university halls and had regular in-person contact with her housemates spoke with several Multicultural London English (MLE) features at the start of the year but by the end of the year seemed to be speaking in a way that more closely resembled Standard Southern British English (SSBE). The way she pronounced several vowels seemed to change and she also began to use l-vocalisation less frequently, showing that she was moving away from an MLE accent and towards more standard features.

The participant who had regular contact with other students but not in in-person settings also spoke differently at the beginning and the end of the academic year. His accent seemed to be becoming less standard, perhaps moving closer to Estuary English (EE). For example, at the start of the academic year he never produced t-glottalling, meaning that he always pronounced the 't' in words like *letter*. By Spring and Summer terms he produced t-glottalling over 50% of the time. The accents of these two participants were not changing in the same way or towards the same target. This difference probably reflects the new friendships they made, the people they were most interacting with, and their identity and attitudes towards different accents.

The researchers' study seems to show that provided a person encounters new ways of speaking – whether this results from online or in-person social contact – their accent may change over time.

Reference

Chapter title: Accent change without face-to-face interaction among university students during Covid-19: The role of technologically mediated communication
Authors: Amanda Cole and Ella Jeffries
Book title: English Language Contacts and Change in the Digital Age
Book editors: Heli Paulasto, Lea Meriläinen, Samuli Kaislaniemi and Mikko Laitinen
Year of publication: Accepted
Publishers: Brill

Q&A

Amanda Cole

Ella Jeffries

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this topic?

We are both interested in language variation and change, and we research and teach why people speak differently to each other and how language changes over time. We teach together on a module all about language and the media. In one class we were discussing with our students the different theory and opinions relating to whether a person's accent can change if they encounter new ways of speaking without face-to-face, in-person contact. We ended up chatting after the class and we realised that the online teaching in that time period created an ideal environment to test this theory.

2. What were your main research questions?

- What accent changes (if any) have occurred in the speech of individuals during their first year of attending university online?
- Does the observed degree of accent change relate to the students' patterns of social contact in both face-to-face and online interactions?

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

It seems that a person's accent might change – or at least they could have increased variation in their speech – if they encounter new ways of speaking, whether this is in face-to-face settings or via video calls. We also found that even when people attend the same university, their accents might not change in exactly the same way. This is likely because they do not have the same accents to begin with and they will also have differences in their experiences, patterns of contact with people with different accents, and sense of identity and attitudes towards different accents.

We also found that there may be a link between how a person feels about their accent and how likely their accent is to change and in which direction. For example, the speaker who used several MLE features but began to shift towards SSBE said that she liked her accent only 3/10 in Autumn term. The insecurity she felt in her accent may have created the environment for her to be susceptible to shifting towards more standard and prestigious speech forms. As her accent became more standard, her evaluations of her own accent increased to 5/10 in Spring term and 6/10 in Summer term.

It seems that a person's accent might change – or at least they could have increased variation in their speech – if they encounter new ways of speaking, whether this is in face-to-face settings or via video calls

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

Previous research by Peter Trudgill suggests that face-to-face communication is necessary for language change. Other work has disputed this claim, for example Jane Stuart-Smith and colleagues' study of Glasweigan speakers found that those who showed a strong engagement with the television programme *EastEnders*, a soap opera drama set in East London, were more likely to use linguistic features typically associated with Cockney London speech (see Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* summary).

The focus on young speakers in this study also builds on Ella's previous work which investigated accent perception in young children.

By the time children reach adolescence they are likely to have developed an awareness of regional accent variation that influences how they themselves speak

Ella found that children's ability to categorise speakers according to their regional accent develops throughout the pre-school and primary school years and she showed that this is affected by how much exposure they have to these varieties. By the time children reach adolescence they are likely to have developed an awareness of regional accent variation that influences how they themselves speak – this is similar to what we described above for the speaker in our study who changed her accent in line with changes in how she evaluated her own accent throughout the academic year.

Writing How You Speak

Regional variation in non-standard spellings on Twitter

Researchers: Andrea Nini, University of Manchester | George Bailey, University of York | Diansheng Guo, University of South Carolina | Jack Grieve, University of Birmingham

Background

Some linguistic features are salient which means that people are generally aware of the features and can comment on them. For example, t-glottalling is a very salient feature in British English – you may have heard people discussing or giving opinions on 'dropping t' – but you're much less likely to hear people (except linguists!) commenting on goose-fronting which is a very common linguistic feature in parts of England but is not salient.

Salient linguistic features often have social meaning such that people associate them with certain character traits, a particular lifestyle or a group of people. People might then use a linguistic feature that has social meaning to portray themselves in a certain way. Perhaps they wish to reflect where they are from, a desirable personality trait or an aspect of their identity (such as adolescents using th-stopping to reflect their involvement in grime music and culture in Maybe it's a Grime Ting summary).

Not only do people do this when speaking, but a person may even use salient linguistic features in their writing when they want to draw on the feature's social meaning to signal something about themselves (such as African American English (AAE) features used by gay British men on Twitter to reflect a 'Sassy Queen' persona in Sassy Queens summary). A person might use a non-standard spelling when writing a word to imitate how it is pronounced in a certain dialect. Andrea Nini, George Bailey, Diansheng Guo and Jack Grieve wanted to know if people used non-standard spelling on social media to represent the dialects that they speak. They compared the non-standard spellings used by people in different places in the North of England and assessed if the patterns they found were in keeping with what we already know about the different ways of speaking in this area.

A person might use a non-standard spelling when writing a word to imitate how it is pronounced in a certain dialect

Methods

The researchers analysed data which had already been collected at the University of South Carolina. This data consisted of 183 million geocoded tweets which were posted from the UK on Twitter containing 1.8 billion words. Geocoded means that the posts could be located to a specific geographic location.

Based on their knowledge of the different dialects and how words are pronounced in northern England, the researchers searched through the data for alternative spellings of high frequency words. Their search focused on identifying times that non-standard orthography (spelling) was used to represent phonological features. The regional dialect features that the researchers analysed were all very salient – people were so aware of the features that they creatively changed their spelling. The researchers then compared the non-standard spellings – and the regional dialect features that they were representing – that were used in the different postcode areas of northern England.

What were the results?

The researchers found many examples of people using non-standard spelling to represent northern dialect features. The geographic locations of the people who used the regional dialect features in their writing closely aligned with where the features are normally heard in spoken English, showing that people sometimes use regional dialect features in their writing to reflect where they are from and their local identity. For example, a stereotypical feature of Manchester English is happy-laxing when the final syllable of words like *city* and *happy* sounds like 'eh' or 'ih'. The researchers observed spellings like 'happeh' and 'citeh' in Greater Manchester but also across the North West more widely.

In Tyneside, the vowel in words like *mouth* can sound like 'oo', for example, *now* could be pronounced 'noo'. The researchers observed spellings on Twitter which reflected this regional dialect feature in areas where we know that people commonly use this pronunciation. They found that such spellings were particularly common for words that were linked to a local identity such as 'toon' for *town* when referring to Newcastle United Football Club as in the tweet 'How dare the toon lose another match', and 'broon' for *brown* in reference to Newcastle Brown Ale as in 'Can't believe they ran out of broon ale last night'.

One of the major distinguishing features between northern and southern varieties in England is the foot-strut split. The words *strut* and *foot* tend to be said with the same vowel meaning that they rhyme for people in northern England but not southern England. There was not much evidence of people writing words in ways that reflected the northern pronunciation. However, the researchers found that people who weren't in London or the South East of England sometimes imitated the southern foot-strut split such as writing London as 'landan' as in the tweet 'just touched down in landan town'. In these cases, the people tweeting didn't seem to be representing their own pronunciation but were instead imitating or mimicking a salient southern feature.

Another linguistic feature that the researchers analysed was T-to-R which is when the final 't' in a one-syllable word is pronounced 'r'. T-to-R is common in parts of northern England, for example, in Tyneside you might hear a person say *get a* as 'gerra'. In the North West you might also hear phrases like *lot of* pronounced with an 'r' sound, and this was reflected in the tweets from this area such as 'Come and have a lorra lorra laughs'.

The researchers also plotted the places in the UK where th-stopping (such as saying *thing* as 'ting') was represented in tweets. Th-stopping is a feature of Multicultural London English (MLE) but has also been observed in other places such as in Manchester (see Maybe it's Grime Ting summary). The researchers found that th-stopping was most common in tweets from people based in London but was also found in other urban and ethnically diverse communities such as Birmingham and in some parts of Greater Manchester.

This research has shown that, overall, the regional dialect features that people from different places write on social media does align with how people in these places actually speak. Social media is a useful tool for sociolinguistics to explore patterns of regional variation. The non-standard spellings used by people on social media are fascinating and insightful – they represent, preserve and promote non-standard varieties of English.

Reference

Chapter title: The graphical representation of phonetic dialect features of the North of England on social media
Authors: Andrea Nini, George Bailey, Diansheng Guo and Jack Grieve
Book title: Dialect Writing and the North of England
Book editors: Patrick Honeybone and Warren Maguire
Year of publication: 2021
Publishers: Edinburgh University Press

Q&A

1. What sparked your interest in investigating this area?

As linguists who research variation and change, dialectology and individual-specific language styles, we were interested in how people construct and portray a linguistic identity on social media. There is a long history of studying computer-mediated communication, which is far more than just 'txt talk' and shortenings: it's a really creative domain of language use full of interesting innovations.

2. What were your main research questions?

We wanted to know how people use creative spellings on Twitter in order to represent their spoken accent in social media posts. Specifically, we were interested in whether or not the use of these 'phonetic spellings' shows any regional patterning that matches the geographical distribution of spoken accent variation, as this might suggest users are genuinely tailoring their written language style to more authentically encode their accent.

3. What are the most important findings and take away messages?

Many dialect spellings we studied do show similar regional patterns to their corresponding spoken forms, such as retention of long-U in words like *down* (spelled as 'doon'), or what linguists call TH-stopping in words like *thing* and *these* (spelled as "ting" and "dese"). For example, tweets containing the latter were clustered around urbanised and ethnically diverse areas such as London, Birmingham and Manchester.

However, some features actually show unexpected patterns, used more in places where we wouldn't expect the spoken form to be used. We interpret this is a case of dialect imitation, with social media users impersonating accents that are not their own, e.g. spelling *London* as "landan", which often co-occurs with other spellings that reflect dialect features associated with traditional Cockney accents, e.g. "daan saaf" for *down south*. This tells us something interesting about the 'salience' of different dialect features – in other words, what features people find most noticeable, and are therefore likely to be drawn upon in stereotypes of that accent.

Our take-away message is that there's nothing wrong or incorrect about this type of language use: it is simply people wanting to portray something about their social/linguistic identities in their public-facing social media posts, and another form of 'dialect writing' that has long been a tradition of literature and poetry.

4. How does this piece of research relate to other work you or others have done?

There has been a lot of recent work looking at language use on social media, but the focus has mainly been on the spread of lexical innovations (i.e. new words) or grammatical structures, which are obvious candidates of study in written language. This work stands out as one of the few studies investigating how phonetic variation (i.e. the sounds we use) can be reflected orthographically (i.e. in creative spellings) on social media.

Q&A responses provided by George Bailey

activities for research summaries

Introduction to the Activities Section

This section has been designed for teachers to use with students. It gives you a range of activities to use with students based on the research summaries and Q&As in Section 1 of the pack. Some of the tasks are based on specific research summaries and others are more generic, leaving you the choice of which summaries to set. The thinking behind this is that you can use a generic worksheet template with any summary (and perhaps Q&A) to set a group or class of students a range of research or transformation tasks.

- Generic worksheets
- Transformation tasks

Each of these activities involves using a worksheet template (ideally, printed onto A3 paper) and allocating a specific summary (and Q&A) to each student or group of students. The grids specify the tasks for students and generally take the form of a reading and summarising task to begin with, followed by a transformation task in which the content of the summary and Q&A are turned into a new form.

1. Podcast introduction
2. Talk to students
3. Introduction to online article

Worksheet 1: podcast

Name:	**Research summary title and page refs:**

Spend a few minutes reading the research summary and the Q&A that goes with it, then complete the tasks that are outlined below.

Task 1: In your own words, summarise the key aims and finding of this study in 4-5 one sentence bullet points.

Task 2: You have been asked to present an introduction to this research for a podcast about language aimed at A level and university students. Write the text of your introduction in about 300-350 words, outlining the following:

- Who did the research
- What it's about
- What other areas of work it relates to in the field of language diversity
- Why the podcast is useful and interesting to listen to.

Task 3: Imagine you are one of the hosts of the podcast. Think of two follow-up questions you would like to ask the linguist about their work.

Worksheet 2: talk to students

Name:	**Research summary title and page refs:**

Spend a few minutes reading the research summary and the Q&A that goes with it, then complete the tasks that are outlined below.

Task 1: In your own words, summarise the key aims and finding of this study in 4-5 one sentence bullet points.

Task 2: You have been asked to talk to Year 8 and 9 students in a local school about the ways in which people's language use varies and some of the reasons for this linguistic variation.

Write the text of your introduction to this talk in about 300-350 words, outlining the following:

- The kind of linguistic variation you are talking about
- The kind of research that has been done into it
- Some specific examples of research findings
- Why this is something they should be aware of.

Task 3: As part of this talk, you have also been asked to encourage students to do some of their own research about an aspect of linguistic variation around them. Think of two ideas for small-scale studies that you could ask them to do on their own or with classmates after your talk.

Worksheet 3: article

Name:	**Research summary title and page refs:**

Spend a few minutes reading the research summary and the Q&A that goes with it, then complete the tasks that are outlined below.

Task 1: In your own words, summarise the key aims and findings of this study in 4-5 one sentence bullet points.

Task 2: You have been asked to write an introduction to this research for an online magazine aimed at A level and university students. Write the text of your introduction in about 300-350 words, outlining the following:

- Who did the research
- What it's about
- What other areas of work it relates to in the field of language diversity
- Why the research is useful and interesting.

Task 3: Develop the article further by adding another section in which you integrate two or three quotations from the linguist(s) involved, linking these to the introduction you have already written. Aim for another 150-200 words for this section.

Essay planning tasks

Each of these activities makes use of a previous AQA Paper 2 question as a prompt and asks students to select suitable and relevant material from a set of research summaries to help them work out a plan, an argument and some suitable examples to help them answer the question. There is not an expectation here that students will rely solely on the material in this resource pack to create a plan to answer the question, but rather that they will draw on relevant material from the research summaries to help offer different perspectives.

The following pages contain planning grids which can be used for each question. The first is designed to help students address the terms of the question and to organise ideas and examples that are relevant to answering the question. The second grid can then be used for planning the structure of the essay and making sure that the argument offered takes in different viewpoints, examples and arguments, and can lead to an evaluative overview.

A short feedback section follows that offers a few simple pointers to the papers that might be useful for the question prompts, but this is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

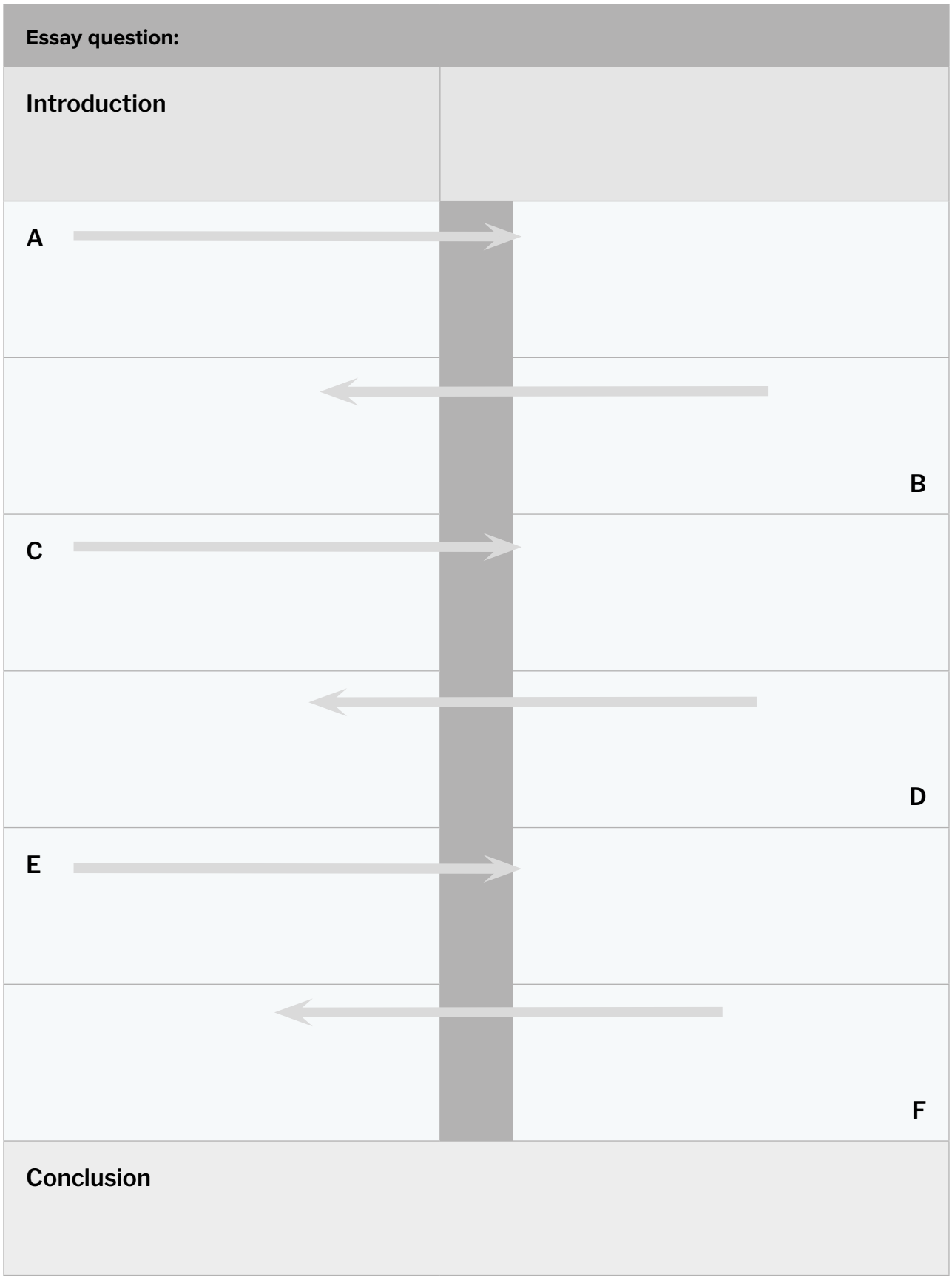
Essay questions

1. Evaluate the idea that language variation has decreased over time.
2. Evaluate the idea that schools should ban the use of non-standard language.
3. Evaluate the idea that British Standard English is superior to other varieties of English used around the world.
4. Evaluate the idea that some accents are more attractive than others.

Exam grid 1

Name:	Essay question:	
What are the key terms in the question that you need to define?		
Which areas of Language Diversity (and potentially Language Change) can you draw on for this question?		
What is your initial view on the question? Rough out a basic argument that you think you will make.		
What existing AO2 ideas from language study (for example, theory, case studies, research, linguistic concepts) can you draw on? Think of what you have covered in class and in previous work before considering material in this resource pack.		
What are the different positions and arguments that might be offered in support and in opposition to the idea in the question? Make a note of the different angles and arguments that could be offered.		
What examples can you use to support your discussion? Think of specific linguistic examples that you can draw on to illustrate different arguments and positions.	For the idea in the question:	Against the idea in the question:
Which research summaries from Section 1 of the pack could be used to develop different arguments and examples here? Make a note of the most relevant summaries and how they could be used.		
Think of the way your argument might develop as the essay progresses. Use the generic planning grid to map out your arguments, a route through the different ideas and examples and a clear introduction and conclusion to your argument.		

Exam grid 2



Suggested feedback

Some suggestions are offered here for the research summaries that might be most useful for each question. It might be a good idea to ask students why they think these research summaries have been suggested to see if they can identify which ideas might be useful within them.

Evaluate the idea that linguistic variation has decreased over time.

- Apps for Maps
- Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?
- Strutting up North
- Sofa, Couch or Settee?
- Manchester Voices
- Levelling up?
- Corn(ish)?
- Cockneys in Essex
- From Cockney to the King
- Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths
- Maybe it's a Grime Ting
- Mobile Messaging
- Are Emojis a Language?
- Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
- Writing How You Speak

Evaluate the idea that schools should ban the use of non-standard language.

- 'Give us my shoe back!'
- Stereotypes and Street Talk
- The Media and MLE
- Speaking Roadman
- The (White) Ears of Ofsted
- Now You're Talking My Language
- 'A lot of them write how they speak'

Evaluate the idea that British Standard English is superior to other varieties of English used around the world.

- Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths
- Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh
- Now You're Talking My Language
- English as a Global Language
- Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy?
- Who is a Native Speaker of English?
- 50 Years of Accent Bias
- Taps, Stops and Chavs

Evaluate the idea that some accents are more attractive than others.

- Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh
- Stereotypes and Street Talk
- The Media and MLE
- Speaking Roadman
- Why the Long Face?
- Sassy Queens
- The Only Way is E-ssss-ex
- Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy?
- Who is a Native Speaker of English?
- Class Judgements
- Taps, Stops and Chavs
- 50 Years of Accent Bias
- Legal Judgements
- Implicitly Prejudiced?
- Writing How You Speak

Specific worksheets

Each of the following tasks makes use of specific research summaries or groups of summaries, so make sure these are available to students when completing them. It would also make sense to have prepared the groundwork here by doing some initial work in class on these areas before moving onto the new material in this pack.

The tasks are grouped under broad ‘topic’ areas but the nature of the course is that there is overlap between ‘topics’ and an intersectional approach is perhaps most helpful for viewing many aspects of linguistic variation and diversity.

Multicultural London English

Several of the research summaries reference Multicultural London English (MLE): both its changing use and the media representations of it. The following activities offer opportunities to focus on who speaks it, how it is changing, attitudes towards it and how it is represented and to come up with practical ideas for further investigation, exploration and analysis.

MLE summaries

The following summaries all reference MLE:

- Legal Judgements
- Cockneys in Essex
- From Cockney to the King
- Stereotypes and Street Talk
- The Media and MLE
- Speaking Roadman
- Maybe it's a Grime Ting
- Why the Long Face?
- Life Changes and Accent Changes
- Writing How You Speak

Media documentary

Task 1

You have been approached by a media organisation who want to produce a radio/ podcast documentary about the changing language of young people in the UK. Your task is to use the various sources here (and any previous work you have done on this area) to come up with a briefing document designed to inform your client about MLE.

- Write a maximum of 500-600 words in total using the following subheadings:
    - What is MLE?
    - Where did it come from?
    - Who uses it?
    - What are its key linguistic features?
    - How is MLE changing?

Task 2

Your client is also interested in how people feel about MLE and what they say and write about it.

- Write a second briefing document (500-600 words) summarising some of the main views and opinions about MLE. Use the following subheadings to organise your document:
    - What do people generally think about MLE?
    - Are there any differences in how different groups of people feel about MLE?
    - How has MLE been represented in the mainstream media?
    - What's your overview?

Task 3

Your client is impressed with your work and decides to ask you to write the introduction to the documentary. Think about the work you have done so far and how you can turn that into a snappy and accessible introduction to MLE for an audience of non-specialists who will be interested in language and culture but not necessarily know very much about language terminology or linguistic concepts.

- Write an introduction of between 400-500 words in which you do the following:
    - Explain what's happening in the changing language of young people
    - Explain what MLE is and where it fits in to this picture
    - Describe and give examples for some of its main linguistic features
    - Bust myths and challenge stereotypes about MLE.

Analysing MLE discourses

The The Media and MLE and Speaking Roadman research summaries and Q&As talk respectively about the ways in which MLE has been represented in the media and characterised on social media.

Task 1

- Read and make some initial notes on the summaries and Q&As that look at how MLE has been represented in the media and on social media.
    - What are the main observations by the linguists who have conducted this work?
    - What patterns have they found in the discourses around MLE?
    - Put together a short summary (200-250 words) in bullet points/notes of what you think are the key points.

Task 2

The research summary, The Media and MLE, describes Paul Kerswill's research in which he used a discourse analysis approach to analyse a large number of media articles. This research was published in 2014 so there has since been about a decade of further media discussion about MLE (which Kerswill alludes to in his Q&A). What's been going on with MLE more recently?

- Use the links provided here to look at media representations of MLE in 2016, 2022 and 2023.
- Thinking about the approach that Kerswill used in his work, what do you notice about some of the ways in which MLE is being represented? What discourses can you observe? Put together a list of the different discourses that you note.
- Select an article from each of the time periods (for example, one from 2016, one from 2022 and one from 2023) and compare the ways in which MLE and its speakers are being represented. Are there any shifts or changes in the ways that MLE is written about?
- Now compare two different newspaper articles that offer different viewpoints (for example, *The Guardian* and *Mail Online* articles). Do you notice any different discourses at work?

Task 3

The summary Speaking Roadman discusses Christian Ilbury's work which shows that MLE has gone through a process of enregisterment. Specifically, MLE linguistic features are enregistered as a roadman social persona. MLE is not the only variety or form of English to be enregistered.

- Think about other linguistic varieties that have gone through a similar process and how they have been represented in the media.
- Choose one of the following (or one of your own choices) and carry out some research to see what coverage there has been of it and how media representations have contributed to this process of enregisterment. What linguistic features are associated with the social persona? Is the social persona also associated with a particular way of thinking, dressing or behaving?
    - Essex
    - 'Chavspeak'
    - Scouse
    - African American English
    - Valley Girl
    - 'YouTube voice'
    - Bogan

media texts & activities

Introduction to Media Text Activities

In this section of the pack you are provided with a range of texts from different media sources – from interview transcripts, op-eds, local websites through to online comments – all related in one way or another to the research summaries in Section 1 and their themes. Various activities and tasks have been set for each text, largely designed to help students to focus on Section B of Paper 2.

Some of the activities involve close analysis of articles, exploring how ideas about language diversity have been represented, whether these ideas are sound or open to challenge, and how language has been used to create meanings and convince readers.

Other activities take a more transformative approach, asking students to write in response, create new texts or write for new audiences and purposes.

Activities:

- University of Essex blog & 'Prejudice Police' article
- Vanessa Feltz interview with Dr Amanda Cole
- Victoria Beckham's changing accent
- Young people's accents in South East England
- Roman Road and local culture
- 'Speaking Proper'
- The Conversation

University of Essex blog & 'Prejudice Police' article

Linguists at the University of Essex wrote and published an article in *The Conversation* and then published a blog in March 2022 about linguistic prejudice and 'linguicism'. Some of the ideas in this blog were then picked up in the national press, including an article in the *Mail Online*.

This activity asks you to do the following:

- read and compare the two pieces
- consider the points raised in the Essex blog and the interpretation of them in the *Mail Online* article
- analyse and evaluate the representation of the language issues in the *Mail Online* piece
- read and evaluate the online comments posted by *Mail Online* readers in response to the coverage
- look at further coverage of the same blog in a different newspaper as part of an exam-style question.

Task 1

- Read the University of Essex blog, highlighting and noting some of the key ideas presented.
- Write a short (2-3 sentence/5-6 bullet point list) summary of their key arguments.
- Make sure you have some **examples** and **definitions** noted as part of this summary.
- Use the opinion scale below to ring how convincing their arguments are and then offer three specific points to support your view. If you can link these points to ideas from language study (theories, research, case studies) that you have looked at on your course so far, then include these here.

		Write three specific points to support your judgement:
Totally convincing arguments	5	
Quite convincing arguments	4	
Not sure at all	3	
Not very convincing arguments	2	
Completely unconvincing arguments	1	

Task 2

Now turn your attention to the *Mail Online* article from March 2022.

- Read the article, highlighting and noting some of the key ideas presented (as you did with the Essex blog).
- Try to match up any points that are made in this article to the relevant ones in the University of Essex blog (using the **notes grid** on page 171 if you think it's helpful). How do they compare? What is the *Mail Online* article saying about each of the points made in the University of Essex blog? What is your evaluation of these points and how the *Mail Online* is presenting them?
- What else is the *Mail Online* article adding that isn't covered in the original University of Essex blog? How are they using these additional points and how do they add to the overall argument?

Task 3

Have a look at the examples in the **analysis grids** that follow the articles. Each one of these is designed to help you focus a little more closely on the nuts and bolts of textual analysis. In each grid you will see an extract taken from the *Mail Online* article or the readers' comments that were published online.

For each example, do the following:

- Think about the AO3. What's being said? What point is being made? How is an idea about language (and language users) being represented? Use the AO3 box to note your point.
- Track this back to the AO1. Are there specific language choices around, for example, vocabulary or syntax being made. Use the AO1 box to describe one or more of the features you have identified as being significant and/or meaningful here.

An example has been modelled for you in the first grid. A blank grid is also provided at the end for you to slot in your own examples to analyse.

Notes grid

University of Essex blog	*Mail Online* article	Evaluation and comparison
…"ax" isn't a mispronunciation of "ask" but an alternative pronunciation. This is similar to how people might pronounce "economics" variously as "eck-onomics" or "eek-onomics", for example. Neither of these pronunciations is wrong. They're just different.	Specialists from the University of Essex say there is no such thing as 'correct' language or terminology and that there is nothing wrong, for example, with articulating the verb 'ask' as 'aks'.	The *Mail Online* correctly reports that the Essex linguists don't view 'aks' as 'wrong' and that they argue that there is a problem with the term 'correctness' (they write elsewhere that "Accents or dialects have no logical or scientific claim to "correctness") but do they mention 'terminology' at all? It's not clear why this has been added and what they mean by it.
Many people now wag their finger at the word "ain't" or at people dropping the "g", rendering words like "running" as "runnin'", and "jumping" as "jumpin'".	In a blog, they also insist that using 'ain't' instead of 'is not' or 'am not' is simply an example of 'multicultural London English' developed through contact between different dialects and immigrant tongues, including Jamaican Patois.	The Essex linguists mention 'ain't' but don't describe it as an example of Multicultural London English (MLE) at any stage. When they do refer to MLE it's in relation to other examples. Why is MLE being referenced here?
	But critics said schools had a duty to teach children the difference between formal and informal language and to pull up pupils on their use of slang terms	
	… children who pepper their speech with 'street' language – many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds – would continue to lose out to their more articulate peers	

Now prejudice police say we can't even tell a child to talk proper: University specialists say there is no such thing as 'correct' language or terminology

- In a blog, they say using 'ain't' instead of 'is not' is 'multicultural London English'
- They argue that viewing their usage as lazy or ignorant is 'accent prejudice'
- The specialists also defend the dropping of the letter 'g' at the end of words

By JULIE HENRY FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY
PUBLISHED: 22:00, 19 March 2022 | **UPDATED:** 09:32, 20 March 2022

Share 184 shares 1.9k View comments

AO3	AO1
The headline appears to be expressing outrage and surprise about 'University specialists' commenting on language use.	The use of the adverb 'now' to start the headline suggests that this pronouncement by 'specialists' is one more bad idea in an already long list of bad ideas.

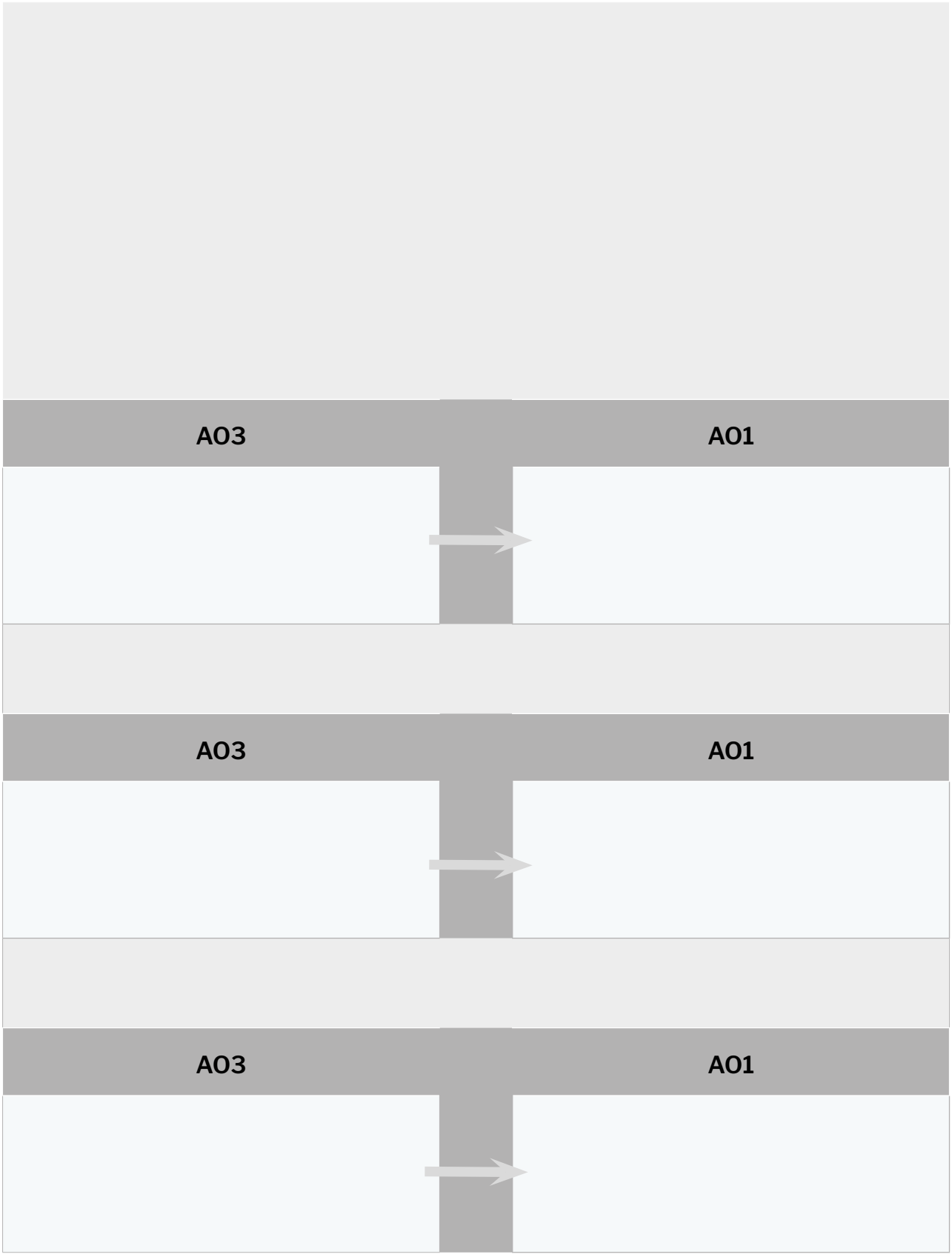
What utter bilge. There has to be rules and standards or in a few years no one will be able to understand each other.

AO3	AO1

Race to the bottom, even our language is being destroyed

AO3	AO1

Analysis grid



Task 4

This final part of the activity is designed to help you with Paper 2 Question 4, in which you need to write your own opinion piece. Usually, you are asked to 'assess the ideas and issues raised' in the two texts set for analysis in Question 3, but this time, you will be using the online responses to the *Mail Online* article as your source material.

The idea here is that by practising short 'writing back' tasks, you will build up the skills, knowledge and confidence to write a full opinion piece further on down the line.

For each example that follows, read the comment/s and offer a short response (of about 50-75 words) in which you:

- challenge the argument being made or offer a more informed perspective
- offer linguistic support for your own argument
- write in a style suitable for an opinion piece in a broadsheet newspaper

Example 1

What utter bilge. There has to be rules and standards or in a few years no one will be able to understand each other.

Example 2

Don't be silly. The first impression anyone gets from you is how you present yourself, so take pride in your appearance and how you speak.

Example 3

I have noticed on radio and TV adverts, Jamaican Patois accents are often being used. Can't believe these marketing companies think it sounds attractive.

Example 4

I would not employ an apprentice who said init, or bro in an interview.

Example 5

Race to the bottom, even our language is being destroyed

Extension task

If you want to take this activity further, you could use another article about this topic. *The Telegraph's* 'Don't correct children when they mispronounce words – that's accent prejudice' alongside the *Mail Online* article to create a pair of texts. You could then do an exam-style Question 3 task using the two texts. If you wished, you could then go on and write a Question 4-style response.

University of Essex blog: Ask or aks? How linguistic prejudice perpetuates inequality

https://www.essex.ac.uk/blog/posts/2022/03/11/how-linguistic-prejudice-perpetuates-inequality

Teacher and artist Sunn M'Cheaux has been posting on social media about "linguicism" after a reader asked him about the word "ax", saying: "Why did we struggle saying 'ask'? Like when I was little, I always said 'ax'. Like I couldn't say the word correctly."

M'Cheaux's response counters the common idea that "ax" (spelled also "aks") is incorrect: "ax" isn't a mispronunciation of "ask" but an alternative pronunciation. This is similar to how people might pronounce "economics" variously as "eck-onomics" or "eek-onomics", for example. Neither of these pronunciations is wrong. They're just different.

Linguicism is an idea invented by human-rights activist and linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas to describe discrimination based on language or dialect. The prejudice around "aks" is an example of linguicism.

Decades of research shows that the idea that any variation from standard English is incorrect (or, worse, unprofessional or uneducated) is a smokescreen for prejudice. Linguicism can have serious consequences by worsening existing socio-economic and racial inequalities.

Flawed argument

Pegging "ax" as a mark of laziness or ignorance presumes that saying "aks" is easier than saying "ask". If this were the case, we would – and we never do – hear "desk", "flask" and "pesky" pronounced "deks", "flaks" and "peksy".

The "s" and "k" being interchanged in "aks" and "ask" is an instance of what linguists call metathesis – a process which is very common. For example, wasp used to be pronounced "waps" but the former has now become the go-to word. Many of the pronunciations bemoaned as "wrong" are in fact just examples of language changing.

"Aks" has origins in Old English and Germanic over a millennium ago, when it was a formal written form. In the first English Bible – the Coverdale Bible, from 1535 – Matthew 7:7 was written as "Axe and it shall be given you", with royal approval.

Beyond written English, "aks" was also the typical pronunciation in England's south and in the Midlands. "Ask", meanwhile, was more prevalent in the north and it is the latter that became the standard pronunciation.

Contemporary prevalence

In North America, “aks” (or “ax”) was widely used in New England and the southern and middle states. In the late 19th century, however, it became stereotyped as exclusive to African American English, in which it remains prevalent. American linguist John McWhorter considers it an “integral part of being a black American”.

Today, “aks” is also found in UK varieties of English, including Multicultural London English. This dialect, spoken mainly by people from ethnic minority backgrounds, came about through contact between different dialects of English and immigrant languages, including Caribbean Creoles, such as Jamaican Creole.

Multicultural London English was initially referred to in the media in a derogatory fashion as “Jafaican”. That label wrongly reduced the dialect to something imitated or used inauthentically.

Other languages have, of course, influenced Multicultural London English. But the English language has been in a constant state of flux for millennia, precisely as a result of contact with other languages. When we talk about “salad”, “beef” or the “government” we are not imitating French, despite the French origin of these words. They have simply become English words. In the same way, Multicultural London English is a fully formed dialect in its own right and “aks”, as with any other pronunciation in this and other English dialects, is in no way wrong.

Linguistic prejudice

Accents or dialects have no logical or scientific claim to “correctness”. Instead, any prestige of which they might boast derives from being spoken by high-status groups.

Many people now wag their finger at the word “ain’t” or at people dropping the “g”, rendering words like “running” as “runnin’”, and “jumping” as “jumpin’”. In, 2020, British home secretary Priti Patel bore the brunt of this mistaken criticism, when journalist Alastair Campbell tweeted, “I don’t want a Home Secretary who can’t pronounce a G at the end of a word.”

Criticisms of “dropping g” exist despite the pronunciation’s origins in Middle English, and not to mention the fact that well into the 20th century, the British upper classes spoke in this way too. This was satirised in a 2003 episode of the British comedy show Absolutely Fabulous, entitled Huntin’, fishin’ and shootin’.

Now that “dropping g” is stereotyped as working class, however, it is stigmatised as wrong. Research shows that linguistic prejudices, however unintentional, against immigrant, non-standard and regional dialects have held back generations of children from achieving their best in school and, of course, beyond it.

Schoolchildren who naturally say “aks” (or any other non-standard form of English) are tasked with the extra burden of distinguishing between how they speak and how they are expected to write. Conversely, no such barrier is faced by children who grow up speaking standard English at home, which can further entrench inequality. These children are already advantaged in other ways as they tend to come from high-status groups.

The way we speak has real implications in how we are perceived. Research in south-east England found that young adults from working-class or from ethnic minority backgrounds tend to be judged as less intelligent than others – a prejudice based solely on the way they spoke. The effect was worsened if the person was from Essex or London, or even if they were thought to have an accent from these places.

The example of “aks” neatly demonstrates the absurdity, the baselessness and, crucially, the pernicious impact of deeming any one form of English to be “correct”. Accent prejudice and linguicism is a reframing of prejudice towards low-status groups who, simply, speak differently.

Amanda Cole, Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Institute for Analytics and Data Science) Department of Language and Linguistics, University of Essex; Ella Jeffries, Lecturer in linguistics, University of Essex, and Peter L Patrick, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, University of Essex. Originally published in The Conversation.

Now prejudice police say we can't even tell a child to talk proper: University specialists say there is no such thing as 'correct' language or terminology

- **In a blog, they say using 'ain't' instead of 'is not' is 'multicultural London English'**
- **They argue that viewing their usage as lazy or ignorant is 'accent prejudice'**
- **The specialists also defend the dropping of the letter 'g' at the end of words**

By JULIE HENRY FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY
PUBLISHED: 22:00, 19 March 2022 | **UPDATED:** 09:32, 20 March 2022

Correcting children who mispronounce words is a form of prejudice, according to academic experts.

Specialists from the University of Essex say there is no such thing as 'correct' language or terminology and that there is nothing wrong, for example, with articulating the verb 'ask' as 'aks'.

In a blog, they also insist that using 'ain't' instead of 'is not' or 'am not' is simply an example of 'multicultural London English' developed through contact between different dialects and immigrant tongues, including Jamaican Patois.

They argue that viewing their usage as lazy or ignorant is 'accent prejudice' towards poorer socio-economic groups who simply speak differently.

They also defend the dropping of the letter 'g' at the end of words, as in saying 'runnin'' instead of 'running'.

The blog, written by Professor Peter Patrick, Dr Ella Jeffries and Dr Amanda Cole from the Department of Language and Linguistics and posted on the university's website, says the dropped 'g' was previously associated with the upper classes – as in the phrase huntin', fishin' and shootin' – and only became stigmatised when it was deemed to be working-class.

They add that 'aks' has its origins in Old English and German and was the typical pronunciation in the South and the Midlands, while 'ask' was more prevalent in the North and eventually became the standard usage.

'Decades of research shows that the idea that any variation from standard English is incorrect – or, worse, unprofessional or uneducated – is a smokescreen for prejudice,' says the blog.

'Linguicism [discrimination based on dialect] can have serious consequences by worsening existing socio-economic and racial inequalities.'

But critics said schools had a duty to teach children the difference between formal and informal language and to pull up pupils on their use of slang terms.

The failure to do so, they added, meant children who pepper their speech with 'street' language – many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds – would continue to lose out to their more articulate peers.

Professor Alan Smithers, director of Buckingham

University's Centre for Education and Employment Research, said: 'It is sad to see academics attempting to take us even further from reality by inventing another "ism".

A shared language is key to the success of a country and teaching it must be a priority for its schools. There is always room for dialects and changes in meaning, but this has to be on the basis of a taught common core.'

The debate comes after a number of schools banned certain words and phrases in an effort to improve pupils' ability to express themselves clearly and accurately.

They include Ark All Saints Academy in Camberwell, South London, where students are corrected for saying 'basically' at the beginning of sentences, using words such as 'cuss' – an Americanism for swearing – and phrases including 'oh my days' and 'oh my God'.

Copthorne Primary School in Bradford, West Yorkshire, is encouraging pupils to avoid saying 'like' repeatedly in conversation.

Former students at the University of Essex include Home Secretary Priti Patel – who has herself been criticised for failing to pronounce the last letter in words that end with 'ing' – and former Commons Speaker John Bercow.

The Telegraph

Don't correct children when they mispronounce words - that's accent prejudice

Linguists said many 'wrong' pronunciations are just a change in language developed through different dialects and immigrant tongues

20 March 2022 • 6:57pm

Image © Alamy

Correcting children who mispronounce words is a form of prejudice, a group of academics have suggested.

Linguists at the University of Essex have argued that there is no such thing as "correct" language, and there is nothing wrong with saying "aks" instead of "ask".

The academics argue that "many of the pronunciations bemoaned as 'wrong' are in fact just examples of language changing".

Pronouncing "ask" as "aks" is common in Multicultural London English, a dialect spoken mainly by people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK today.

In a blog post, the linguists say that viewing variants on what is perceived as standard English pronunciation as lazy or ignorant is “accent prejudice” towards poorer socioeconomic groups.

They also insist that using “ain't” instead of “is not” or “am not” is simply an example of Multi¬cultural London English developed through contact between different dialects and immigrant tongues, including Jamaican Patois.

‘Smokescreen for prejudice’

Professor Peter Patrick, Dr Ella Jeffries and Dr Amanda Cole say that what we think of as “correct” pronunciation is more about fashion than it is about rules.

The linguists point out that in the first English Bible, dated 1535, Matthew 7:7 was written as “Axe and it shall be given you” with royal approval.

“Decades of research shows that the idea that any variation from standard English is incorrect – or, worse, unprofessional or unedu¬cated – is a smokescreen for prejudice,” say the academics.

However, some academics and educators disagree. Professor Alan Smithers, director of Buckingham University's centre for education and employment research told The Telegraph that as a poplar-born Cockney lad, he benefited from learning the “correct” pronunciation of English in grammar school.

Professor Smithers says that what he describes as a “common core” of language “is extremely important”.

“It enables people to think precisely and communicate accurately,” he said.

Pardon? The most common mispronunciations

Navigating the complexities of the English language can be trickier than it looks. Here is a list of our most commonly mispronounced words...

But Dr Amanda Cole, a co-author of the blog post, who also grew up with a Cockney accent, said that her colleagues’ position on linguistic prejudice is “not a niche opinion”.

Speaking to The Telegraph, Dr Cole, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Essex, points out that Professor Smithers’s argument “leans into a completely falsified notion that people can change the way that they speak”.

Dr Cole said it was true that attempts to teach people “in a way that is perceived as being ‘correct’... it can in some way feel that it can produce advantage. But that is because society is structured in a way that places unfair advantages on certain ways of being, including speaking”.

“As we have the responsibility to challenge those prejudices, rather than expecting people to assimilate into it,” she added.

Vanessa Feltz interviews Dr Amanda Cole

One of the media responses to the University of Essex blog (in Activity 1) was an interview between Vanessa Feltz and Dr Amanda Cole on BBC Radio London. The full transcript of the interview can be found at the end of this activity, but some extracts from it have been selected for the following tasks.

Task 1

Before you start reading any of the transcript, have a think about the following statements and indicate on each scale (where 1 = **strongly disagree** and 5 = **strongly agree**), what you think.

If you are working as a group or a class on this task, work out a mean (average) score for each statement and keep a note until later.

	1	2	3	4	5
There is such a thing as 'correct' or 'incorrect' English.					
It is rude to 'correct' other people's speech.					
Pronouncing words with -ing on the end without a 'g' sound is lazy and incorrect.					
Words should be pronounced how they are spelled.					
People should not be judged for pronouncing words in their own accent.					

Task 2

- Read the simplified transcript of the interview and use the grid on page 182 to summarise the three most important points you think each speaker makes about language use.

	Amanda Cole	Vanessa Feltz
1		
2		
3		

Task 3

Using the list of the most important points raised by the speakers, on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 = **strongly disagree** and 5 = **strongly agree**), rate these statements based on your own perspective.

- What evidence does each speaker produce for the statements?

Amanda Cole:

Most important points	1	2	3	4	5

Vanessa Feltz:

Most important points	1	2	3	4	5

Task 4

- Imagine you have been asked to write a report on this interview for an online newspaper. In 300-350 words, write a piece that summarises the key arguments. Your target audience is non-specialists (general members of the public) who visit the site for news updates on popular cultural and social issues.
- Write a headline and standfirst for this piece as well.

Headline

Standfirst

Task 5

- Imagine you are about to interview each of the speakers about their views on language. Using the interview you've just been studying as a starting point, come up with three questions for each speaker that you would like an answer to.

Questions for Vanessa Feltz

Questions for Amanda Cole

Amanda Cole and Vanessa Feltz Interview

BBC Radio London, 21st March 2022

Vanessa: On to our subject now: correcting children who in inverted commas, “mispronounce” words, is a form of prejudice. That's according to a group of linguists at the University of Essex. They say many in inverted commas, “wrong pronunciations” are just a change in language developed through different dialects and immigrant tongues. Pronouncing *ask* as *arcs* is common in Multicultural London English – a dialect spoken mainly by people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK today, and they also insist that using *ain't* instead of *is not* or *isn't* or *am not* is simply an example of Multicultural London English developed through contact between different dialects and immigrant tongues.

So I wonder whether you agree with them. You think it's just a way of speaking. It's just as valid and just as appropriate as any other way. There is no wrong. There is no right. Language is in a constant state of flux. It evolves. So, you don't correct people. You don't say “It's not, ain't: it is not”. You don't say “It's not arcs: it's ask”.

You don't say anything of the kind, and you don't say, “not when I **ge'** home. It's when I **get** home”. You don't say that. You don't say anything of the kind. You don't say “It's not bro**v**er. It's bro**th**er”. You don't say that, because why shouldn't they say whatever they wanna say in the way that they say it, they are speaking.

And let's face it, you can understand them. It's not as if you can't. What they're doing is making themselves completely and edifyingly clear. So, to pretend you don't understand is just not true. You can understand perfectly well. So, if you understand what they're saying and that's the way they say it, is there anything wrong with that?

08007 312000. If you're a teacher, do you let it ride or do you correct it? If you are a parent, do you think, well, this is the way that people speak now and I understand them perfectly well, there's no need to correct it. Or do you think it's very simple? There is right and there is wrong. There's a correct way of doing it and an incorrect way of doing it, and of course you correct it.

Of course, you do. You're going to make sure that your child or your pupil speaks in the **correct** way, not the **incorrect** way. 08007 312000. Let's talk to Dr Amanda Cole from the University of Essex Linguistics Department about this. Hello, Dr Cole. Good morning.

Amanda: Hello. Good morning. Thank you for having me on.

Vanessa: It's a pleasure to have you on. So, what about this idea that there's no such thing as mispronunciation any old way is perfectly fine.

Amanda: Well, when we talk about mispronunciation, really what we're talking about is variation. We're talking about different people speaking differently to each other because they have different dialects, different accents, and that reflects, you know, where someone is from. It can also reflect things to do about background, class, race, age, gender, all these different things feed into the way that different people speak.

Vanessa Yes.

Amanda: And none of that is wrong. So, it, you know, it can't be wrong to speak in a way that comes natural to you in your natural dialect.

Vanessa: Well, why not? What if what you say is grammatically incorrect, for example, what if..

Amanda: What is incorrect? I mean, who decides what's incorrect or what's correct? These are absolutely social constructs and I mean...

Vanessa: Well, I think, I think there's possibility that you just said it can't be wrong. I think you said correct me if you didn't, of course I was listening carefully, but I think you said it can't be wrong to speak in a way that comes ***natural*** to you. I think you said, I don't think you said *natural-**ly*** to you. And I think, you know

Amanda: I mean that's ‘cause I'm from Essex, and that's ‘cause I come from a family of East Londoners and that's the way that we say it. I've learned that through my family and that's my natural way of speaking. So, some may think that's wrong, they

might not think that's correct, but that absolutely flies in the face of a huge, overwhelming weight of linguistic evidence that there is no correct way of speaking. It is something that is socially constructed. And it actually is a way that really maintains and bolsters inequalities and prejudices within society. That these ideas that certain groups speak wrong, and certain groups speak right. And it's no coincidence the groups that are seen to speak correctly...it's a complete construct...

Vanessa: So, did you say that on purpose because you said certain groups speak wrong. And certain groups speak right. Then in the next line, you said, in your next sentence you said, speak correctly didn't say correct

Amanda: Variation. None of us have to speak the same all of the time. So even within, within a single speaker, we are sometimes gonna say *runn**ing***, sometimes we might say *runn**in***, sometimes I might say *wrong*. Sometimes I might say *wrongly*, but I'm not actually focusing on the way that I'm sounding to you, I'm focusing on what I'm saying. And I think it should be the message that I'm putting forward, you know, the weight of my ideas.

And also, as a, as an academic, that's studied this. I think that is sort of, that is what I think people should be kind of taking away. And I think that *incorrectly* doesn't focus on the way that people say things it actually very much detracts from being able to focus on the sort of weight of what they're saying.

And it's something that's been shown to really favour um, the middle class as opposed to working class. So, working class people tend to speak in a way that's seen as less correct. And as a result of that, when they're reading aloud the exact same sentence or when they're saying something, they're judged as less intelligent, speaking less correctly.

Um, and I mean, really that's something that's deeply unfair and we should be challenging those ideas, we shouldn't be enforcing this idea that there's correct ways of speaking.

Vanessa: except that the implication is that you can't learn to adjust maybe in a minor way, what you say, so that you use language in the grammatical way rather than the ungrammatical. I'm not talking about the...

Amanda: I mean, there is no ungrammatical way.

Vanessa: Well, why isn't there? Why not? For example, throughout this conversation, when you've fancied it, you have used an adjective instead of an adverb. So you've said, you've said, you know, do it *correct* instead of doing it *correct**ly*** or *natural* instead of *natural**ly***.

But you know that there's a difference and you know that one thing describes a, a noun and the other thing describes how you do something. How you do the verb. So you don't, so you don't, so you don't run quick, you run quickly

Amanda: No, you can run *quick*. Well, you can run *quickly*. I mean, you understood what I meant. Actually across the whole of the British Isles people will use language in that way.

That's actually not even something specific to where I'm from. And actually dialects are also rich in grammar. It's not that they're ungrammatical, they actually are variable-based. They're very based around structure. They're no less articulate, they're no less capable of expressing an opinion or an idea.

And actually I think we're still sort of struggling to pull away from this core concept that there is one way of speaking or writing that's grammatical, one way of speaking that is correct. 'Cause it's purely not, and it's hard for us to see that because we have been so normalised, naturalised into that way of thinking. But it is deeply, it's just, it's just not true.

Vanessa: But I, but I think people will, think that the, one of the, uh, great justifications for grammar, of the correct grammar and for speaking *correct**ly***, is clarity. You make it clear what you're saying, and as soon as you misuse or use the wrong, the wrong **part** of the word or the wrong **part** of the sentence in the wrong order, you confuse the meaning. So if you say, for example, "we ain't got no food", what that really means, the double negative means "we have got food". "We ain't got none." Means, what does it mean? "We ain't got no, we ain't got no food", means "we haven't got no food, we've got food". But what you mean when you say "we ain't got no food" is "we haven't got any food".

But you're not saying that.

Amanda: I'm not saying that's true. It's not true. 'Cause I think you and me would understand if

we heard someone say that what they meant and the, the concept, around clarity once again is favouring some groups. ‘Cause who are we seeing as the baseline? You know what I mean? Who are we seeing as speaking properly and as speaking with clarity?

If you don't understand what someone else says to you, then why should that be their fault? Why is it not that they just speak in a dialect that's different to you? And maybe there might not be complete mutual intelligibility all the time. So even beyond that, when people often **say** that they don't understand what someone's saying, they don't understand their accent. This is often something that people say but isn't completely based in reality. It's a way to sort of trip people up. It's a way to make it seem that what they're saying is wrong, but actually fundamentally you **do** understand what I'm saying. You understood what I meant when I said *wrong* rather than *wrongly*.

You understood what I mean if I use the double negative. We **do** understand different dialects, and if we **don't**, then why does the onus fall on the people who speak what is not considered to be the standard way of speaking.

Vanessa: Well, I think from time immemorial people speak in a variety of different ways.

In general, you speak to your own friends, people of your own age in a certain way, a relaxed kind of maybe dialect or a particular accent or a particular kind of patois, or whatever it is that you use, that you are familiar with. You might do that with your mates. You might do it with your parents, you might do it with your grandparents.

You might do it at home with the people that you know and are intimate with. In general, people are capable of and want to make a slight adjustment when they're, for example, at school or when they're in church or when they're having a meeting with a bank manager or whatever they're doing in a formal context, because, um, language as we say, evolves, there's no particular right or wrong, but there's language that's more fitting for one context and more fitting for another.

So, people in general slide from one to another, don't they?

Amanda: But there’s contradiction in that, isn't there? Saying that there's no language that's correct? You know, people can speak the way that comes natural to them, but also, they **can't**, they need to speak in a way that's more standard. They need to adjust. And really what we're saying with that is people need to assimilate into the standard way of speaking.

And really, if we're permitting accent prejudice, we're actually permitting societal prejudice. ‘Cause that is what's bolstering these ideas. These ideas that some groups speak wrong, and as I've said, that is not based on any logical claim about language. Language changes throughout time. What we now consider to be correct is, you know, just as time is, you know, it's a screenshot in time and it's changed from hundred years ago, 200 years ago, a thousand years ago, and we give the example in the blog that we write of people saying, *runnin*, *jumpin*, *talkin* with *in* ending rather than *ing*.

That is actually something that was used by the upper classes. Even up to, you know, a couple of centuries ago, and it was associated with correct speech, with being upper class. And now it’s used by working-class people more, it’s considered to be wrong. So, it's not anything inherent about accent or about the way we speak. Really what it's reflecting is it's reflecting the way that certain groups are judged and what we think is a window into societal prejudice by the way that accents are judged.

Vanessa: And, and, you know, every time the Mayor of London says he comes from *Tootin*, which he says all the time, and you think, but if you read it, you'll see the G on the end of it. And you are actually a solicitor and you've had to sit all kinds of, uh, examinations

Amanda: You don't say *Tooting-**G***

Vanessa: it's too, I don't say *Tooting-**G***, I say *Tooting, I N G*

Amanda: Phonetically that is not a G sound. We’re not talking about G G G. That's a completely different sound. And actually, since when did we have to say English the way it's written? Since when did we say *through* with a GH on the end? So that's a complete strawman argument. There's no G on the end of ING for most people in Britain. So, to say that it's wrong to say *runnin* is once again a **complete**, um, it's a complete mistake.

And actually, that variation has been around in English since Middle English. So, it's centuries old. So why is it we now suddenly think that it's wrong to say *Tootin* and that it's right to say *Tooting*?

Vanessa: I suppose because it sounds slovenly, and it sounds, um, to some extent illiterate. It sounds as if you can't read the word and you haven't read it. You live there. You were born there. You grew up there, but you can't pronounce it. Maybe that's why.

Amanda: But okay. So, in the word *London*, you don't say *Lon - **don***, do you? Don't say the O. So, is that because, you know, is that a form of illiteracy, is that a form of slovenliness? No, it's a form of pronunciation. That's the way the word is said.

And it actually doesn't always have to translate exactly to how the way the word is written. So why is it that's okay from, you know, people to say *London* if they're middle class, but it's not okay for the working class, to say *Tootin* because apparently, they're not saying it the way it's written.

Vanessa: It seems Okay. Because the Mayor does it. And the Foreign Secretary, uh, sorry the Home Secretary does it, doesn't she? Priti Patel does it too. And Beth Rigby on Sky TV, she does it too. So maybe it is acceptable because all of these people have found that it's been no impediment at all to high office in many different fields. So maybe people agree with you and you're absolutely right about it.

Very interesting to talk to you. Thank you very much indeed for joining us.

Amanda: Thank you.

Vanessa: Dr Amanda Cole from the University of Essex Linguistics Department. Maybe you agree with every word she says. Maybe you think that is absolutely right. There is no wrong, there is no right. You don't go around correcting people.

If they say *Tootin*, let them say *Tootin* and let them be Mayor of London. What's wrong with that? Or maybe you can't bear it and it seems to you to be an indication of laziness or an indication of an unwillingness to appreciate, I don't know, language as you feel it ought to be spoken or grammar as it ought to be adhered to.

Depends on your perspective, your point of view.

Victoria Beckham's accent

This activity asks you to think about attitudes to accents and how those attitudes are presented in an article by Adam White from *The Independent* in August 2022. It is also designed to help you with the process of unpicking an article like this and feeling more confident about exploring a language issue that draws on a range of cultural reference points.

Task 1

Do some initial research before reading the article.

- Look up the Instagram videos by Victoria Beckham that are mentioned at the start of the article. Listen to her accent and voice more generally.
- Now search for an interview with Victoria Beckham (aka Victoria Adams/Posh Spice) from her time with The Spice Girls (1994-2000). Listen to her voice and accent from this time.
- Use the research grid below to help you find explanations of some of the following references made in the article.

Task 2

- Now take a few minutes to read the article. As you read it, think about how the references have been used and what the use of them might have achieved.

Once you have read the article, consider the overall points being made by the author, the arguments he makes, the anecdotes and illustrations he uses and the expert views and evidence he draws upon.

- Write a short (2-3 sentences/5-6 bullet points) summary of his key points.

Reference	Who/what?
The Spice Girls	
WAG	
Heat	
Vicky Pollard	
Stephen Merchant	
Catch-22	
Alex Scott	
Rylan Clark	
Angela Rayner	
Elizabeth Taylor	

Task 3

- Now look more closely at some of the ways in which the author presents his arguments and represents his own experiences in the article. Use the selected examples below as a starting point.
- Identify where in the text they are from and consider the context around each example. Think about some of the following questions you might want to ask about these examples.
  - What image is the author presenting of himself and why might he be doing this?
  - How is the author positioning himself in relation to his readers and why might he be doing this?
  - What kinds of language choices is the author making and what do you think they might be designed to achieve?
  - How successfully is the author using these techniques to present his views to the reader?

Example	Quotation	Your observations
1	For probably the first and only time in my life, I had something in common with Posh Spice: I, too, have an artificially crafted voice and an accent of unknown origin, a product of some indiscernible mix of misguided embarrassment and self-preservation. I'm guessing a lot of us do.	
2	When I was 18 years old, I was told that my natural Bristolian accent – not quite Vicky Pollard, but at least vaguely Stephen Merchant-esque – projected my status in the world, and that I would need to "fix it" in order to get anywhere.	

Example	Quotation	Your observations
3	There was the teacher who informed me I needed to “speak properly”. Another who swiftly picked up on every hard “r” sound I produced.	
4	As for me, I did eventually lose the shame placed on me for my natural accent, even if my years of trying to suppress it have now left me with a jarring soup of a voice that veers between Bristolian, Irish, and Elizabeth Taylor. What didn’t go away, though, is the anger about having felt the need to change it in the first place. As a country rich in accents and cadences, we need to do better.	

Task 4

As a final task, find a second text that has accent as a focus. Some suggested texts are given. Treat the texts as if you were using them for a Paper 2 Section B Question 3 question. Write (or plan) an analysis of it in which you:

- Analyse how language is used in the texts to present views about accents.

In your answer you should:

  - examine any similarities or differences you find between the two texts
  - explore how effectively the texts present their views.

Suggested texts:

- Are regional accents a problem? From Professional Callminders website https://www.professionalcallminders.co.uk/2021/11/are-regional-accents-a-problem/
- From RP to Cock-er-nee. From *The Critic* website https://thecritic.co.uk/from-rp-to-cock-er-ney/
- Academics Complain of ongoing Accentism at UK universities. From *Research Professional News*. https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-universities-2022-5-academics-complain-of-ongoing-accentism-at-uk-universities/
- A regional accent can take you a long way. From *The Observer*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/15/a-regional-accent-can-take-you-a-long-way

Lifestyle

LET'S UNPACK THAT

I understand why Victoria Beckham changed her voice – sounding posh opens doors for you

The internet may have been baffled by Posh Spice all of a sudden sounding more posh on Instagram, but **Adam White** gets it

Wednesday 24 August 2022 04:42 • 6 Comments

Image © Alamy

It was a few years ago that I noticed Posh Spice was getting a bit posher. In the life and times of Victoria Beckham, this was long after the Spice Girls and her artistic collab with Dane Bowers. It was post-Wag. Post-Heat. This was amid her (current) run as Victoria Beckham: Fashion Mogul. Gone was the sharp, ice-blonde bob and that knowing self-deprecation; in their stead were clean lines and a polished seriousness. And that original voice of hers – loud, bolshie, lots of dropped consonants – was phased out in favour of something else. Slower. Airier. Clipped.

Weirdly, this change in voice seems to have only just been picked up. Over the weekend, Beckham posted a make-up tutorial to her Instagram, demonstrating how to achieve her "signature smokey eye" with one of her beauty products. Viewers, though, were distracted by her voice. "I love her but I swear she didn't always sound like this," one person commented. "I know she's Posh Spice but girllll [sic]." Another added: "Sorry but [she] tries too hard with her accent, not natural at all."

Most of the comments under her video followed a similar track: nothing, it seems, brings together a bored, miserable public quite like an opportunity to kick a Beckham. But I also felt an unexpected pang of recognition. For probably the first and only time in my life, I had something in common with Posh Spice: I, too, have an artificially crafted voice and an accent of unknown origin, a product of some indiscernible mix of misguided embarrassment and self-preservation. I'm guessing a lot of us do.

When I was 18 years old, I was told that my natural Bristolian accent – not quite Vicky Pollard, but at least vaguely Stephen Merchant-esque – projected my status in the world, and that I would need to "fix it" in order to get anywhere. This was during a Shakespeare-reading class at a fancy-pants drama school I was attending, which also operated as a kind of hellscape of chronic humiliations. There was the teacher who informed me I needed to "speak properly". Another who swiftly picked up on every hard "r" sound I produced. Yet another, who asked me what area of Bristol I was from before recalling how she and her girlfriends used to travel there to make out with Black boys to make their fathers angry. It was all very, very grim.

Because I was young and stupid, I came away from the experience convinced not that it was a ghastly enterprise filled with horrible people, but that I was the problem. And that if I'd just had a different voice from day one – one that projected a degree of ambiguous poshness – I'd have escaped that litany of digs and queries about my background. And, more

generally, that it'd be so much easier to blend in in places where I otherwise felt like an outsider. Turns out I'm not alone.

Dr Amanda Cole is a sociolinguist at the University of Essex, whose work revolves around accent bias and how it intersects with class, race and gender. She tells me that while Beckham may not have deliberately altered her voice – our accents often change depending on the context in which we are speaking – it is "a fact that people with certain accents are discriminated against or judged more harshly than others".

Cole's recent research found that certain groups of people are consistently judged as less intelligent, friendly and trustworthy than others when reading the same sentence aloud. These include people from Essex being rated 11 per cent less intelligent than those from southwest London, and working-class people being thought of as 14 per cent less intelligent than people from the upper middle class.

Beckham, whatever her spicy nickname, was never exactly "posh", but she was "posh" compared with her bandmates – she famously once said she was embarrassed that her businessman dad used to drive to her local comprehensive school in a Rolls-Royce. Despite that, it does make sense that Beckham's voice would change – be it consciously or unconsciously – as she entered new social stratospheres of wealth and moguldom.

Cole adds that people shifting their voices or losing their accents reflects the world that we all occupy. "It's very easy to understand why an individual changes their accent, or feels the need to do that, because they themselves want to get on or they want their children to get on," she says. "What's underpinning that, though, is just inequality and prejudice in society. When we see prejudice, it's no coincidence that it targets certain groups, because those groups are seen as inferior. Accent bias is actually just a window into those prejudices."

Not that there are any specific guidelines to follow. In truth, working-class people get trapped in a catch-22: lose your accent to avoid being judged, but also be judged for losing it in the first place. Cole points to a raft of recent examples of people in the public eye, with working-class backgrounds, who've been mocked or jeered at for speaking in their natural accents. They include TV presenters Alex Scott and Rylan Clark, as well as Labour MP Angela Rayner.

"All these people have been criticised for their accents, and it's used as a way to make it seem like their voices shouldn't be heard in those specific settings," she says. "But at the same time, when working-class people do change their accent, it's seen as something inauthentic. It's seen as ingratiating yourself to the higher classes – it seems insincere – or as something deliberate and calculated. So it's just another way of slapping working-class people down."

Learning to navigate a class system lined with trap doors is a very working-class experience, and there is something vaguely comforting about even the poshest of Spices encountering that. But it's also depressing that rather than empathising with her change in voice, a number of onlookers have chosen to mock her instead. Particularly when – if we're being totally honest – many of us can identify with that feeling of changing ourselves if the alternative is being laughed out of the room.

As for me, I did eventually lose the shame placed on me for my natural accent, even if my years of trying to suppress it have now left me with a jarring soup of a voice that veers between Bristolian, Irish, and Elizabeth Taylor. What didn't go away, though, is the anger about having felt the need to change it in the first place. As a country rich in accents and cadences, we need to do better.

Young people's accents in South East England

This activity and set of tasks is based specifically on one of the summaries in Section 1, Amanda Cole and Patrycja Strycharczuk's From Cockney to the King and some of the media responses to it.

You might also find it useful to refresh your memory about some of the other research summaries that reference dialect levelling and Multicultural London English (MLE), along with the summaries that discuss attitudes to accents and media discourses around 'Jafaican'.

These summaries are:

- Apps for Maps
- Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?
- Strutting up North
- Sofa, Couch or Settee?
- Levelling up?
- The Media and MLE
- Cockneys in Essex
- Stereotypes and Street Talk
- Speaking Roadman
- Maybe it's a Grime Ting
- Why the Long Face?

Task 1

- Make sure that you have read the research summary From Cockney to the King before doing anything else.
- Make a note of some of the key findings of this study about the kinds of language being used by young people in South East England.

Task 2

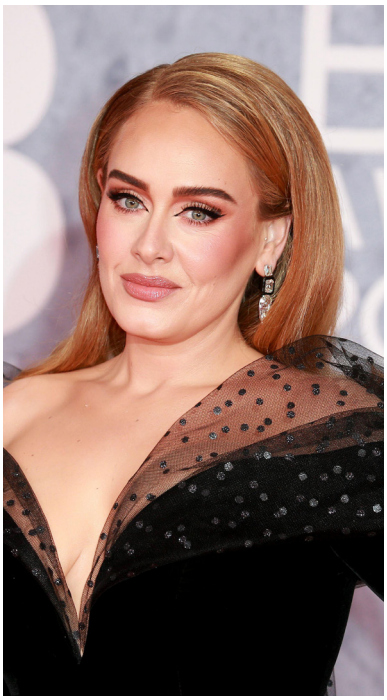
- Now read *The Telegraph* article 'King's English and Cockney' by Charles Hymas and answer the following questions:
    - How fair a reflection of the research is the coverage in this article?
    - Do you notice any errors or omissions?
    - Do you notice any additional material added?
    - How do you feel about the focus that's offered in the article? What themes or ideas are foregrounded and why might this be significant?

UK NEWS WEBSITE OF THE YEAR
The Telegraph

King's English and Cockney replaced by three new accents, study finds

Britons depart from overtly class-based post-war speech epitomised by either clipped vowels or working-class dialects

By Charles Hymas, HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR
30 October 2023 • 6:33pm



Images © Alamy

The King's English and Cockney have all but disappeared among young people as three new accents have emerged, research has found.

Voice analysis found the two accents had been overtaken by standard southern British English (SSBE), as articulated by Ellie Goulding; estuary English, as spoken by Adele; and multicultural London English, as voiced by Stormzy.

The research, using computer algorithms to analyse voices of adults aged 18 to 33, shows how far Britons have departed from the overtly class-based post-war accents epitomised by the clipped vowels in the King's English of BBC presenters and the working-class cockney of film stars such as Michael Caine and Barbara Windsor.

The voices of nearly 200 people from across south-east England and London were recorded, then analysed by a specially designed algorithm that listened to how they spoke and grouped them by how similarly they pronounced vowels in different words.

Around 26 per cent of those surveyed by the researchers at Essex University spoke estuary English, which has similarities with Cockney, but is more muted and closer to received pronunciation, euphemistically known as the King's or Queen's English.

Estuary English speakers pronounce words such as "house" more like "hahs", but not as extreme as found in Cockney.

The accent, so named because it has extended out along the Thames estuary, is spoken across the South East, but particularly in parts of Essex, and is similar to how Stacey Dooley, Olly Murs, Adele or Jay Blades speak.

New accents and the celebrities who speak them

Estuary English

Accent that spread outwards from London containing features of King's English (received pronunciation) and cockney. Spoken by a range of people, from blue-collar workers to middle class.

Examples: bu'er (butter) miwk-bottoo (milk bottle)

Speakers: Adele, Stacey Dooley, Olly Murs, Jay Blades.

Standard southern British English

Accent that is the modern equivalent of received pronunciation. More commonly associated with people from middle and upper classes.

Examples: Syllable stress in first syllable: CEE-ment (cement), UHM-brella (umbrella), PO-leese (police).

Speakers: Prince Harry, Ellie Goulding, Josh Widdicombe

Multicultural London English

Accent that emerged in late 20th and early 21st centuries; spoken mainly by working-class people in multicultural parts of London.

Examples: Beht (bate) and boht (boat)

Speakers: Stormzy, Bukayo Saka, Little Simz

SSBE, which is typically perceived as a prestigious, "standard"- or "neutral"-sounding accent, is a modern, updated version of received pronunciation.

SSBE speakers comprised 49 per cent of the sample analysed by the researchers, led by Dr Amanda Cole, a lecturer in language and linguistics at Essex University.

Such speakers tend to say words like "goose" with the tongue further forward in the mouth – sounding a bit more like "geese" – than what would be expected in received pronunciation, according to Dr Cole.

This drift away from received pronunciation was evident in the changing accent of Queen Elizabeth II over her lifetime, spanning the changing diction of the nation from post-war Britain to the birth of the 21st century.

A feature of SSBE and estuary English is the glottal stop. In estuary English, it replaces the 't' in wa'er (water), be'er (better) and ci'y (city). But in SSBE, it only replaces the 't' at the end of the word, such as wha' (what), or bu' (but). Speakers include Ellie Goulding, Josh Widdicombe and potentially even Prince Harry.

Around 25 per cent of the young people used the third accent, multicultural London English.

They pronounced the vowels in words like bate and boat with the tongue starting at a point higher up in the mouth compared to standard southern British English, so that they might sound a little bit more like "beht" and "boht".

They tended to be Asian British or black British and many were from London, but there were also people from across the South East who spoke with elements of a multicultural London English accent.

England footballer Bukayo Saka, and rappers Little Simz and Stormzy are examples of people with these features in their speech.

However, gone from among those surveyed was any measurable evidence of the King's English or Cockney. "Cockney, the working-class London accent of Barbara Windsor or Michael Caine, and received pronunciation, which some call Queen's English (or perhaps now King's English), did not appear in our analysis," said Dr Cole.

"That's not to say that there aren't any young people in our sample who might have spoken these accents but, if so, they were too few and far between for the algorithm to identify."

Dr Cole said the shift in accents was a result of increased movement of people, resulting in greater contact between dialects, the growth of universal education and literacy and people buying into the idea that there is a “correct” or “standard” way of speaking.

“Standard southern British English and estuary English are not as different from each other as Cockney and received pronunciation. This could be evidence of what’s known as dialect levelling – where young people from different parts of the region now speak more similarly to each other than their parents or grandparents did,” she said.

Speakers of standard southern British English and estuary English generally tended to be white British, and women were more likely than men to speak the former, which is closer to the King’s English.

‘Women chastised for accents’

“It’s not surprising to find that women speak in a more socially prestigious way, as much previous research suggests women are often more chastised for speaking with regional accents than men,” said Dr Cole.

Estuary English emerged as a phenomenon in the 1980s and 1990s, with politicians such as Gillian Shephard, then education secretary, bemoaning its spread as evidence of a decline in speaking standards from the King’s English.

“Attempting to prevent accents from changing is like sweeping back an incoming tide with a broom – fruitless and defying nature. Instead, we should embrace linguistic diversity, work to combat accentism (discrimination based on a person’s accent), and accept that accents will always continue to change,” said Dr Cole.

Task 3

The same research paper was covered in several other news outlets, including the following:

BBC News Online

The Observer opinion piece

The Guardian Pass notes

Mail Online

You might want to have a look at a few of these to get a sense of how other outlets covered the research and what they had to say about it.

In response to some of these other articles, readers offered comments and responses. Some of these are offered on page 200 (they are typed exactly as seen on the websites, apart from number 4 which has been edited down slightly). Each one has been anonymised and given a number instead.

- Read the comments and do the following:
    - Identify the key themes that you notice in the comments and responses.
    - Make a note of what kinds of language discourses are being offered.
    - Think critically about these comments and what they might tell us about why stories about language often provoke such reactions.

For example, in the comment below, a critical view of new accents/accent change is being offered through the use of a discourse of decline (the supposed beginning of a downwards path for the language) and perhaps also a discourse of ignorance (the use of the noun phrase 'dumbing down' suggesting a change from a state of intelligence to ignorance).

And so it begins, the dumbing down of the English language.

There is not an "official" list of discourses to apply to examples like this: it's more a case of you identifying something that you think is part of a bigger picture or pattern of language use, not necessarily just in this text but in other similar texts. For example, many writers and commentators complain about language change and variation while using discourses of decay, pollution, invasion, warfare and nostalgia, but you don't necessarily have to call them that and may well find another way of putting it. The important thing is to identify what's being said – the view that's being offered – and how it might potentially link to wider ideas about language and language users.

Task 4

Amanda Cole was interviewed on Lexis podcast about the coverage of her paper and you can listen to that episode here (from 1:01:00).

- Have a listen to this interview and think about the coverage offered in the various news outlets and the responses from readers that you have been working on in Task 3.
- Plan and draft the opening paragraphs of your own opinion piece in which you respond to the research and pick up on some of the reactions to it. Try to map out a line of argument you might take and how you would build in some linguistically-informed comments to challenge the misconceptions and prescriptive views that the research has generated.

Comments and responses

1. I listen to presenters today and cringe. Bring back the British well spoken English please.

2. The country that gave us Shakespeare now reduced to the lowest common demonitor.

3. A strong accent is detrimental to a career generally. Clear communication and recognition of its need are signs of intellect.

4. I'm constantly bombarded with ads for products originating in the UK wherein the narrator speaks in MLE. I used to live in London and teach da yoof. For all the talk of codeswitching, the ones who used MLE were more often than not just partially illiterate.

5. This all started with the bbc letting their on air staff speak in regional accents, instead of maintaining their high standards of the the quens nother bbc fail

6. It sounds dreadful and casts doubt on their general intelligence. Men sound like school boys. They think it sounds "cool" but it really makes them sound thick.

7. The accents go with the people. The people have gone.

8. All I'll say is that if your kids speak MLE, make sure they can code-switch to another English variant. It might be cool to speak MLE with mates, but you don't hear it very often (at all) in the world of work.

9. Most people seem to be, like, saying "like" every 3rd or 4th word, in like every, sentence. ??????

10. I know the exact accent, very annoying. A lot of girls use that accent. Delusions of grandeur.

Roman Road and local culture

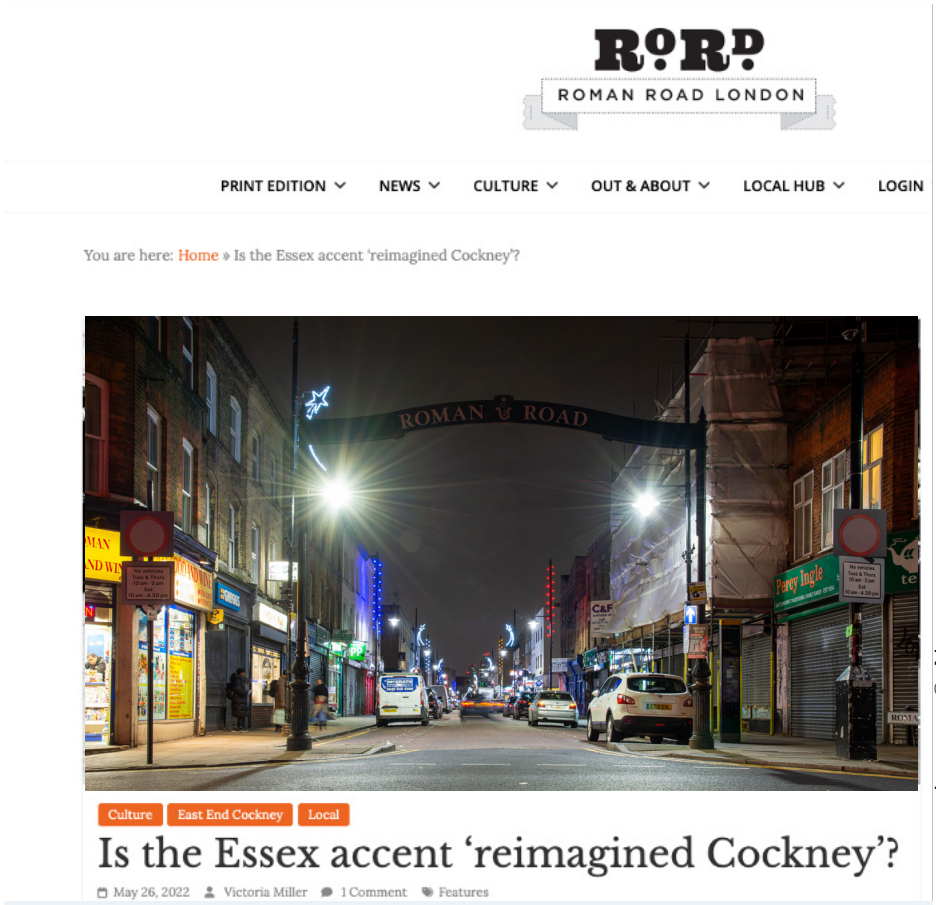
This activity uses a community newspaper from the East End of London (*Roman Road LDN*) to set up tasks designed to help students research and write about a local variety of language. You might decide to use this as part of exam preparation when responding to a source text and reworking some of its content for a different audience and purpose or as part of wider research on the links between accent, dialect, culture and identity.

The work here is linked to some specific research summaries:

- Apps for Maps
- Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?
- Strutting up North
- Sofa, Couch or Settee?
- Levelling up?
- Cockneys in Essex
- Writing How You Speak

Task 1

- Read the article 'Is the Essex Accent Reimagined Cockney?' by Victoria Miller to begin with and make some initial notes on the key points being raised and the key people quoted.



Images © Alamy

link: https://romanroadlondon.com/is-essex-cockney/

With similarities between the Cockney dialect and Essex accent, we set out to uncover, is Essex really Cockney?

London's famous Cockney dialect has been broadcast on our screen for decades; from Barbara Windsor's ringing cries of 'get outta my pub!' to Michael Caine's oft-quoted incredulous yell of 'you were only supposed to blow the bloody doors off!', these were said in the undeniable dialect that is Cockney.

But wait a minute, isn't that accent a little familiar? The quick-witted jabber, dropped consonants, and glottal stops are features of accents heard in recent television shows such as Gavin and Stacey and The Only Way Is Essex aka TOWIE.

Has Cockney, the resounding dialect of London's East End, crept further east down the Thames?

Rather than crept, Dr Amanda Cole, a researcher in sociolinguistics at University of Essex, explains that after WWII, 'wholesale movements of people' migrated from the East End to Essex, particularly to southern Essex.

Whole communities transplanted their Cockney cooking, culture, and dialect to Essex. Before this mass movement of East Enders to Essex, the accent, according to Cole, was a 'more rural East Anglian accent that perhaps had more in common with Suffolk and Norfolk.'

After decades of merging the traditional Essex accent with the influx of Cockneys, she concludes that 'there's a lot of Cockney linguistic features that are spoken in places. That's not to say that it's necessarily now completely identical to the way that people speak in East London... but there's certainly a lot of similarities.'

Cole's interest in understanding the linguistic similarities between the Cockney dialect and Essex accent stems from her own family's experiences.

Brought up in Debden, Cole comes from a family of East Londoners who relocated from Fish Island

to Essex after the war. That is why, she explains, 'I was interested in, to what extent can we say that the Cockney dialect has moved along with the large amounts of people that have moved to Essex?'

But to label yourself a Cockney, traditionally, you would have to have been born within the sound of St Mary-le-Bow's chiming bells.

When speaking to people along Roman Road, some were happy to say that the Cockney dialect is spoken in Essex, while others were less convinced.

Katie Wakerley is one of them. Wakerley, who is in her early twenties, works for her family-run hardware store Thompson's on Roman Road. She grew up in Chingford where, she recalls, 'there was always a debate at school over who spoke Cockney and who didn't'. She believes that if you were born in Essex and live there, you cannot call yourself a Cockney or speak Cockney, not least because the two patters 'are completely different' to her ear.

Wakerley said even if your parents are Cockneys, like she views her mum to be (she was born in Whitechapel Hospital so well within the traditional catchment area of the Bow Bells), that doesn't mean to say the next generation are because they have been influenced by modern culture, such as social media, which dilutes or alters accents. This can be seen most evidently in TOWIE with its use of youthful and playful, sometimes rhyming, phrases ('No carbs before Marbs', meaning 'I'm going a diet before holiday'), reminiscent of Cockney rhyming slang, and its own exclusive Essex lingo (remember Joey Essex coining reem, meaning desirable or cool, anyone?). It's a bit of Cockney, mixed with modern culture, for the younger generation.

Chris Ross, the famed East End Cockney Poet, is less convinced that to call yourself a Cockney and speak like a Cockney you need to be born within a certain area.

An East End lad through and through, Ross was born and brought up in Mile End and Stepney Green, went to St. Paul's Way School in Bow, and is a diehard West Ham supporter. When mask-wearing was in place during the height of the pandemic, he was even spotted in a claret and blue facemask. Wearing his seven-decade-old Cockney heritage, and speech, with pride, Ross would be forgiven for believing that a Cockney, and the dialect, should only reside in the East End. But not so.

He thinks that the East End shouldn't claim the Cockney dialect as their own, rather it is the accent of London's working class. A dialect, he argues, doesn't adhere to defined borders or boundaries.

He lives in an East London postcode but says that at the top of the street, there's a roundabout that demarcates East London from Barking which historically has been part of Essex. He argues that you cannot claim an accent just because it so happens to fall into a certain postcode: 'Councils and governments draw lines on maps, saying this is the East End and that's Essex [but] you're no different from the bloke on the other side of the street.'

Ross has stayed in the East End but has friends who moved out to Essex in the 80s: 'Cockney, you would have to say now, spreads out to the seaside. You go to Southend, you go to Canvey Island, you go to Clacton, or anywhere, it's all London and everybody talks the same as we do.'

A little like Cole and Wakerley, Ross sees that accents progress and change with different influences but, Ross and Cole are more open to the fact that features of Cockney can be spoken elsewhere, not just in the East End. For Cole, she concludes that the aspects of the Essex accent could be labelled as 'a kind of a reimagined Cockney'.

Like people, time and place, accents are never static; new waves of generations borrow different sayings, quips, and words from other dialects, even languages. And this is true of Cockney. It is a blend of English, with borrowed words from Yiddish, nabbed sayings from Romani, and its rhyming slang, which evolved in the 19th century, was a means for market traders to confuse customers, and for gangsters to evade the police.

While some to whom we spoke lamented the fact that Cockney was being subsumed by other influences and, as such, is a slow-dying dialect, others, such as Cole, Wakerley and Ross, all agreed that accents evolve. In Cockney's case, it may be that the Essex accent is just another branch of the Cockney family tree, just updated to keep up with the 21st century.

Task 2

- From the work you have done on the course so far and using the research in this pack, decide what you think about some of the following statements.
    - How true are some of the arguments made here and what evidence can you think of to support or rebut some of the claims being made about changing accents and dialects?
    - Make some notes for each of the following questions and try to reference at least one piece of research for each point.

1. The Essex accent is 'another branch of the Cockney family tree'.
2. 'Like people...accents are never static'.
3. The older dialect of Essex has changed over time.
4. '...if you were born in Essex and live there, you cannot call yourself a Cockney or speak Cockney.'
5. '...you cannot claim an accent just because it so happens to fall into a certain postcode.'

Task 3

Now think more broadly about varieties of English around the UK and beyond.

- Imagine that you have been asked by the producers of a local history and news website like *Roman Road LDN* in your own local area to write a feature about one of the varieties that's used in the area. They want you to consider some of the following in your feature:
    - Its features and notable characteristics
    - Any of its well-known users or local celebrities
    - Its history and development
    - How it's being used or is changing now
- To do this, you might need to carry out some further research away from the classroom, involving interviewing local people, reading about the local varieties and how they have changed. One useful research summary for this is Corn(ish)?.
- Aim to write a blog piece like 'Is the Essex Accent Reimagined Cockney?' of about the same length in which you talk about the social and cultural importance of the local variety.

‘Speaking Proper’

This activity is based around an opinion piece written by Clare Foges in *The Times* newspaper about the need for ‘proper English’. It references a number of different studies and ideas about language and therefore might be most useful as a set of tasks to use towards the end of the whole course in a more synoptic way. It also takes students away from this pack and into more individual research, reading and reflection, so perhaps consider using this activity with that in mind.

Task 1

- Read the opinion article ‘No, professor, speaking properly still matters’ by Clare Foges in *The Times*.
    - Highlight every reference to language or a form of language use. Group these together and look for patterns. For example, what nouns are used to describe accents or dialects? What adjectives are used to modify those nouns? Are adverbs used to describe speech styles?
    - Identify the key metaphors that contribute to the main discourses in this piece. You will see references to ‘barriers’, ‘conquering disadvantage’ and ‘tickets to a better life’. How do these work and how do they fit together into a wider picture or argument?

On pages 206-207, you will find a set of questions and prompts linked to the text, relating to different views Clare Foges puts forward, particular references she has made and choices of language that might be significant.

- Work your way through the text, noting down a response to each of the questions.

1. Why does Foges begin her article with this reference point? Is there a significance in mentioning an 'anarcho-communist' band here? Is there perhaps a suggestion that language is political (to some?) and that arguments about it might fall along left-right lines?

2. Does the shift of focus from the lyrics of the band to a new subject (the linguist she mentions) have a particular significance? What might she be saying about the connection between them?

3. The representation of RP as 'posh-speak and its alienating powers' is not something that the linguist has said himself, so why phrase it like this?

4. Why choose the expression 'To level the field'? Does this suggest any wider connotations or implications? Can you see this phrase used elsewhere in the article?

5. Another link to a wider social and political agenda is suggested with the phrases 'On the heels of all-must-have prizes…' and 'similarly wrong-headed'. Foges offers a short explanation of the phrase 'all must have prizes' in her own article, but it might help to know that this is drawn from a politically right-wing critique of education that suggests modern education is too interested in equality to have high standards. Think about the connections being made here.

6. The modality of 'Standard English is best because…' is interesting to look at. How does it present the writer's view? The subsequent sentences tend to adopt a similar level of certainty.

7. *Deviating…grate…sloppily… mangling… failing… properly…* All these phrasings are worth closer inspection. What kinds of discourses are being echoed/ created here?

8. In the last line of the first column, who is the 'we' doing the labelling of the speaker? Are we all being included in this?

9. While a survey is quoted here, is it directly relevant to the argument at hand? Even if the survey asked about speech, what's mentioned here is 'how they came across', which might have something to do with language use but that isn't the only factor.

10. The argument moves into the territory of social class in this second column too. Is there a contradiction in discussing the poorer prospects of those from 'poorer backgrounds' and those that don't have 'middle-class voices' but then saying 'Few things affect our chances more than how we speak'? Maybe class is actually more important than language here? What do you think?

11. A fairly standard argument is deployed later in column two where Foges argues that 'properly' does not have to mean stuffily or poshly and that regional accents can be 'mellifluous' too. But 'correctly' is used without much definition here. What does she mean?

12. When Foges starts to look at grammar and lexis, there's a different focus. Examples of supposedly unpopular phrases are used (*innit* and *off of*) and MLE is identified as a problem (and associated with people pretending to be something they are not). What do you make of these examples and how they are being used?

13. The reference to the Accent Bias Britain project is an interesting one but is it a fair reflection of their results? Have a look at what Foges says here and think about it in the tasks that follow.

14. A discourse of restriction is used again when Foges mentions ‘invisible barriers’. Where else has this discourse appeared in this article and why might it be significant?

15. Apparently, only the brave can speak out because everyone else is too ‘squeamish’ to do so. Is this true? Can you think of any recent examples of language use being criticised or commented upon in the media?

16. The wider debate about accents is linked to a news story (about Lord Digby Jones criticising Alex Scott’s speech). Foges claims it wasn’t about accent ‘but diction’. Is this an accurate observation?

17. Read back through the section of the article that begins ‘Linguists such as Hollmann would probably dismiss all this as hopelessly old-fashioned…’ through to ‘…do hold people back’. Think carefully about the ways in which these different views about language are described and characterised by the writer. Why do you think she has chosen some of this phrasing?

18. When Foges chooses to use the modal verb *must* in the clause ‘the dusty old concept of elocution must be revived’ what does this suggest?

19. There’s some self-conscious discussion of elocution in the lines after ‘It would need careful rebranding, of course’. Why does she phrase it like this and what might this indicate about the author’s positioning and relationship to her audience here?

20. What’s the significance of quoting the fictional Professor Henry Higgins from *My Fair Lady*? How is language use (and English, more generally) being represented in this quote?

21. Why has she opted for a discourse of conflict and conquest in the final paragraph?

22. Once you’ve used these ideas and questions as a starting point for discussion, you could take a few steps back and consider the bigger picture; what’s the main argument being advanced here? Some commentators on Twitter have suggested that she is ‘victim-blaming’ and arguing that she is arguing that it’s the people with language prejudices who should be accommodated, rather than those who use non-standard forms. What do you think?

23. What linguistic evidence does Foges use to support her argument that young people should have elocution lessons to advance their prospects?

No, professor, speaking properly still matters

The career chances of young people depend on their ability to communicate and there will be no levelling-up without it

Clare Foges

Sunday September 19 2021, 6.00pm BST, The Times

Let our words go free/ Coo and howl/ Lay flat your vowels/ Ah ay ee/ Goodbye RP." The anarcho-communist band Chumbawumba once sang about wanting received pronunciation dead; now someone else has it in for posh-speak and its alienating powers. Willem Hollmann, professor of linguistics at Lancaster University, argued last week that our curriculum and exams are biased because they are based on "socially prestigious" standard English, disadvantaging those who grew up saying "I were" rather than "I was".

To level the field the professor would like the national curriculum to recognise grammar that deviates from standard English. On the heels of all-must-have-prizes — the educational approach which deemed that children could never fail — we have the similarly wrong-headed all-uses-of-English-are-equal.

They're not, though. Standard English is best because (the clue is in the name) it is the standard, with rules the vast majority understand. It is the medium through which writers and speakers of the language can achieve maximum clarity and minimum confusion. This is why deviating from it can grate. If people speak sloppily, mangling their grammar and failing to enunciate their words properly, language turns from a window between souls into a wall between them — and swiftly, subconsciously, we label the speaker. When someone says "could of" instead of "could have", or "pacifically" instead of "specifically", or "froo" instead of "through", they are labelled. The interviewer labels them "not sharp enough". The colleague labels them "not up to it".

A 2017 survey found that four fifths of banking leaders said they thought candidates from poorer backgrounds were less likely to secure a job because of how they came across during interviews; issues relating to presentation were considered more of a problem than poor exam grades. The Social Mobility Commission has found that civil servants who speak with the "right accent" get the most promotions, and that law and accountancy firms apply a "poshness test" to job applicants, favouring those with middle-class voices. Few things affect our chances more than how we speak.

Before I am attacked by a mob of Brummies, Geordies, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Cornish and all those with enviously mellifluous tones, let me clarify that speaking "properly" is not shorthand for speaking like the Dowager Countess of Grantham. Where the speaker hails from is irrelevant; the issue is whether they enunciate properly and follow basic grammatical rules. Huw Edwards, Sir Lenny Henry and Steph McGovern have burrs bred in Bridgend, Dudley and Middlesbrough respectively, and they also speak clearly and correctly.

Some dialects do come with grammatical deviations and linguistic tics that employers may find off-putting. Multicultural London English (MLE) has spread fast over the past couple of decades, from working-class young people in inner cities to teenagers in country towns who desperately want to appear cool. MLE is recognisable through phrases such as “off of”, the liberal use of “innit”, and the regularisation of the past tense of “to be”: “You was there, I weren’t”. A research project called Accent Bias in Britain has found that in professional settings, those speaking MLE and “Estuary English” are consistently viewed as less competent and less hireable. Even when giving high-quality answers, they are marked down, indicating “pockets of negative bias against these voices”.

Those who speak this way or with other glottal stop-scattered styles are surrounded by invisible barriers to success, yet we as a nation are too squeamish to say anything about it. Anyone going near the subject is likely to be slammed as an incorrigible snob. This much was demonstrated recently when the ever-pugnacious Lord (Digby) Jones tweeted a critique of the BBC Olympics coverage. “Enough! I can’t stand it any more! Alex Scott spoils a good presentational job on the BBC Olympics Team with her very noticeable inability to pronounce her ‘g’s at the end of a word. Competitors are NOT taking part, Alex, in the fencin, rowin, boxin, kayakin, weightliftin & swimmin.”

Scott hit back: “I’m from a working-class family in East London [. . .] & I am PROUD.” London’s mayor, Sadiq Khan, spying a bandwagon to be leapt on, tweeted “From a proud sarf Londoner to a proud East Londoner: well said . . .” Stephen Fry sniffed “you disgrace the upper house with your misplaced snobbery”. Though Jones might have been rude, I cannot see that he was wrong to expect a certain standard of spoken English in the national broadcaster’s coverage of the Olympics. Nor was he snobby; he was talking not about accent but diction. Isn’t it patronising to assume that those from a working-class background are bound to drop their ‘g’s?

Linguists such as Hollmann would probably dismiss all this as hopelessly old-fashioned. They feel there is no such thing as speaking “correctly”. They believe that a language is a living thing, not dead wood but a tree whose branches sprout with grammatical deviations and neologisms. They think that it is for people like Jones to challenge their biases, not for people like Scott to change their speech. As Scott tweeted after the row: “Never allow judgments on your class, accent, or appearance to hold you back [. . .] don’t change for anyone”. This is all feelgood, stick-it-to-the-snobs stuff, but the fact is that such judgments do hold people back.

We do young people no favours by pretending that the way we speak doesn’t matter any more, because it does. If we are to truly “level up” as the government has promised, the dusty old concept of elocution must be revived. It would need careful rebranding, of course. The word “elocution” conjures up images of dank boarding schools, boys forced to say “how now brown cow” under the spectre of the cane. Modern speech coaching would be a world away from that: not punitive but transformative, presented to young people as the ticket to a better life.

It would also give them the joyous feeling of mastering their mother tongue. As the famous elocutionist Professor Henry Higgins puts it to Eliza Doolittle: “Think what you’re dealing with. The majesty and grandeur of the English language, the greatest possession we have. The noblest thoughts that ever flowed through the hearts of men are contained in its extraordinary, imaginative, and musical mixtures of sounds. That’s what you’ve set yourself out to conquer [. . .] And conquer it you will.”

If young people from across Britain are to conquer disadvantage and low expectations, they must first conquer diction and grammar, smashing the invisible sound barriers that have held them back.

Task 2

Several letters were written to *The Times* about this article. The names and addresses of the writers have been redacted and replaced with letter codes.

- Have a look at these and rank these in relation to your thoughts about them.
    - Which letters do you most agree with and which do you least agree with?
    - Are there any that are harder to categorise? If so, why might this be the case?
    - Try to justify each of your decisions with at least one piece of linguistic evidence.

A

Sir, I welcome Clare Foges's excellent defence of standard English as precisely that ("No, professor, speaking properly still matters", Comment, Sep 20). I have taught literacy and English as a second language for more than 30 years to children and adults. Non-readers are confused because the phonic system falls down when words are mispronounced, and developing readers, who use understanding to fill in the gaps, rely on consistent grammar for that to work. It constitutes neglect, I would argue, not to teach all students these basics and to maintain the standard at every stage of education and in the media. As infants, we learn our mother tongue from what we hear, which is why mastering a second language draws on both the spoken and written language, backed up by the rule book.

B

Sir, Clare Foges suggests that everyone should be educated to use standard English to avoid being a victim of dialect bias. But this is analogous, in my view, to asking everyone in the country to convert to Christianity to avoid bias on religious grounds. The harm caused by dialect bias would be better addressed by educating biased elites to recognise and overcome their bias, so that they treat all candidates equally whatever dialect they use.

C

Sir, I am reminded of the words of the headmistress I worked with at a secondary girls' school in the East End many years ago. In a conversation about one particular girl, she said: "She is the only girl in the school who is not bilingual in English." The rest were indeed able to switch between the dialect of the East End and grammatical, well-enunciated English.

D

Sir, Clare Foges writes that speaking properly still matters but how can we make it "cool" to do so? When we learn a foreign language we learn the standard version of that language. We are not taught street French or Brazilian Portuguese. These are more advanced and difficult to learn. So perhaps the solution is to teach English as a foreign language, understand our grammatical conundrums first then celebrate dialects, learn to speak in Scouse, Brummie, posh Oxford, etc, and enjoy this amazingly versatile and imaginative language that we are lucky enough to call our own.

E

Sir, In the autumn of 1990 I was in Vienna at a treaty negotiation. The British chairmen read some text with incorrect grammar: I offered the correct grammar. The chairman was nonplussed but in unison the East German, Russian and Hungarian delegates said: "Ah, future perfect passive." They were correct and it was truly impressive. I have lived and worked abroad for several years and have been constantly amazed at how often foreigners excel at accurate, expressive and clearly enunciated English.

F

Sir, Following on from Clare Foges's excellent article on the importance of "speaking properly", I now so regularly correct the pronunciation of presenters of and contributors to television and radio programmes that my wife tells me that I have "a diction addiction".

Task 3

A linguist involved in one of the projects referenced in the Clare Foges article took issue with how the writer had presented some of the research. Devyani Sharma of the Accent Bias Britain project sent her own letter to *The Times* to pick up on how their work had been presented.

- Before reading Devyani Sharma's letter, you might find it helpful to look back at the relevant research summaries and Q&As about this project to refresh your memory of the main findings.
    - 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain
    - Legal Judgements
- Read the letter from Devyani Sharma and look back at the relevant parts of the article.
- Do the points made by Sharma change anything about your interpretation and understanding of the Foges article?

Sir, Clare Foges uses selected findings of the Accent Bias Britain project to suggest that prejudice against non-standard accents is inevitable. But the research found: first, that bias against working class and ethnic minority accents was not universally shared across the UK but was mainly found in southern British listeners aged above 45 and from higher social classes. Second, lawyers disregarded accent when judging levels of expertise in job interview responses. Third, the simple step of reminding listeners not to rely on accent stereotypes when rating professional competence significantly reduced observed biases. These findings show that accent bias is not universal and can be mitigated through modest interventions. This offers a way forward without a need to impose middle-class accent norms and suppress diversity. Exhuming Henry Higgins ain't the solution.

Task 4

- Having read the article and the letters in response to it, write your own letter to *The Times*.
    - Aim for about 200-250 words and pick a specific point or argument that you'd like to respond to.
    - Make sure you have at least one relevant linguistic fact or concept you can use to inform your letter.

Task 5

This task involves some reading of sources that are not included in this pack, so might be done as a homework, revision or extension task.

Another of the linguists referenced in *The Times* article, Willem Hollmann, whose work sparked the Foges op-ed, wrote a piece for *The Conversation* taking on some of the 'misconceptions' (as he saw it) about standard English that are often recycled in the media.

- Have a look at the piece he wrote and reflect on the ways in which *The Times* article represents his views and the wider issues around linguistic variation and diversity.

Article: Five things people get wrong about standard English.

Link: https://theconversation.com/five-things-people-get-wrong-about-standard-english-168969

The Conversation

This final set of tasks is based on a very simple template. Each task uses a pair of articles published in *The Conversation*, written by a linguist about some of their most recent research. The task here is simply to repurpose the articles (or parts of them) as an opinion piece (or similar), using the factual and informative original texts as the AO2 language content for a more opinion-based piece of writing.

Essentially, the student's job in each case is to:

- Gain a clear sense of the main findings of the articles and ideas being presented.
- Select the most useful AO2 material from that for the specific task set (and potentially link this to existing AO2 knowledge from other parts of the course).
- Build a suitable AO5 structure, argument, style and voice around the key material and produce a new and engaging text.

Task 1

- Use *The Conversation* articles as your source material for an opinion article that addresses ideas around accent prejudice and social discrimination.

Accentism is alive and well – and it doesn't only affect the north of England

Working-class and ethnic minority accents in south-east England judged as less intelligent – new research

Task 2

- Use *The Conversation* articles as your source material for an opinion article on changing patterns of linguistic variation in the UK.

Barbara Windsor: you're more likely to hear a cockney accent in Essex than east London now

The cockney dialect is not dead – it's just called 'Essex' now

Task 3

- Use *The Conversation* articles as your source material for an opinion article on the policing of young people's language in education.

Slang shouldn't be banned ... it should be celebrated, innit

How Black children in England's schools are made to feel like the way they speak is wrong

Task 4

- Use *The Conversation* articles as your source material for the script of a podcast feature on the changing nature of young people's language in the UK.

Dinter, bitz and gwop: a guide to British youth slang in 2016

Skepta, grime and urban British youth language: a guide

glossary

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Accent acquisition	When a person picks up a new accent and begins to speak differently to how they did previously, normally after relocating to a new place.	Life Changes and Accent Changes
Accent attitudes	A person's judgements, ideas and opinions about an accent or people with that accent.	Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements Implicitly Prejudiced? **See also:** A Dutch Chav from The Hague? Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE The (White) Ears of Ofsted Who is a Native Speaker of English? 'A lot of them write how they speak' Taps, Stops and Chavs
Accent bias	Any situation in which an accent is viewed more positively or negatively than another or when an individual has been judged, treated in a certain way or commented on because of their accent.	A Dutch Chav from The Hague? Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements Implicitly Prejudiced? Who is a Native Speaker of English? **See also:** Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE The (White) Ears of Ofsted Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? 'A lot of them write how they speak' Taps, Stops and Chavs

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Accent labels	A way of investigating accent attitudes. A researcher might ask participants explicitly about their accent attitudes by naming the accent and asking for their opinion. The accent label is the way that the linguist has named the accent, for example, 'Cockney', 'Scouse', 'Multicultural London English' or 'Brummie'. Not all studies use the same accent labels, for example, one researcher might ask participants what they think of a 'West Country' accent, and another might ask for opinions on a 'South West England' accent. The results might not always be the same, so it is important for linguists to carefully consider the accent labels they use. An alternative approach to investigating accent attitudes is asking participants to give their opinions about guises (actual people who they hear speaking aloud).	50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements **See also:** Stereotypes and Street Talk
African American English (AAE)	A linguistic variety of English spoken by some African American people in the US. AAE is spoken in many different parts of the US and is often described as an ethnolect. The features of AAE include g-dropping, th-stopping, dh-stopping, price-monophthongisation, not having rhoticity, zero 's' and copula absence.	Maybe it's a Grime Ting Sassy Queens Writing How You Speak
Apparent time	An approach to analysing if language change has happened and, if so, how much change has occurred. In an apparent time approach, data is collected at the same time point from people of different ages. The researcher then compares how people from different ages speak. If younger and older people speak differently, this might be a sign of language change. An alternative method to assessing if language change has occurred is the real time approach.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Cockneys in Essex Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* **See also:** Corn(ish)?
BBC Voices	A dialect corpus of data collected in the early 2000s which mapped how people speak across the UK.	Sofa, Couch or Settee?
Careful speech style	A context in which a person is paying close attention to their speech, for example, if they are reading aloud or in a very formal setting such as giving a speech in front of a large audience. In careful speech styles, people are normally more likely to use standard linguistic features than in casual speech styles (see style shifting). In a sociolinguistic interview, some elicitation tasks and reading aloud minimal pairs, a word list and a passage are careful speech styles.	Corn(ish)?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Casual conversation	A part of a sociolinguistic interview in which a researcher audio records themselves chatting to a participant. The researcher can then analyse the linguistic features used by the participant. A benefit of a casual conversation is that, unlike when asking participants to read minimal pairs, a word list or a passage, the researcher is not limited to just analysing phonological variables (different pronunciations). The researcher can also analyse lexical variables (the words used) and syntactic variables (different grammatical structures). In the casual conversation, the linguist wants to encourage the person to speak in a way that is very natural and authentic for them (overcoming the observer's paradox). The researcher might do this by choosing a location that is not very formal, and by making the conversation feel casual and friendly rather than like an interview. They also might avoid talking to the participant about their dialect so that they do not become conscious of how they speak (and begin to speak differently). The researcher might even talk to the participant about topics that are emotional or which encourage them to tell a story about their personal experiences so as to distract them from thinking about how they speak (in the past, linguists sometimes asked participants to talk about a time they were in danger of death though this is now seen as ethically not always a good idea!).	Corn(ish)? Cockneys in Essex Manchester Voices
Casual speech style	A context in which a person is speaking casually and informally and is not paying close attention to their speech, for example, if they are chatting freely and openly with friends or family. In casual speech styles, people are normally more likely to use non-standard linguistic features than in careful speech styles (see style shifting). In a sociolinguistic interview, a linguist will normally have a casual conversation with a participant. The linguist will carefully choose the topics of conversation, the setting and will try to ensure the person feels relaxed so that they speak with a casual speech style (see observer's paradox). Some elicitation tasks also represent a casual speech style.	Corn(ish)? Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
Clear 'l'	A way of pronouncing 'l' with the tip of the tongue raised to touch behind the front teeth. In most dialects of English around the world, including in Received Pronunciation (RP), clear 'l' is heard at the start of words such as *light* and *love* but not at the end of words such as in *ball* or *milk* when dark 'l' would be heard instead. Clear 'l' is a phonological linguistic feature.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Cockney	A linguistic variety typically considered to be spoken by working-class people in East London. Cockney has been one of the most influential dialects of English, shaping the way people speak across Britain and beyond.	Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE Speaking Roadman Why the Long Face? Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* Life Changes and Accent Changes
Collocates	Words that often occur near or next to each other, for example, *merry* is often a collocate of *Christmas* as these two words frequently occur together.	The Media and MLE
Colonial languages	The language of the group who invade and settle or exert political control in another country.	Now You're Talking My Language **See also:** English as a Global Language Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Who is a Native Speaker of English?
Community of Practice (CoP)	A group of people who regularly come together for a shared purpose whether that be as a friendship group, a support group, a work team or to take part in a hobby or activity. People in the same CoP can establish a shared set of beliefs, identity or language that they use and understand (such as specific words and meanings).	Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls 'I'm not proud, I'm just gay' 'I'm a boy, can't you see that?'
Consonant cluster reduction	When one or more consonant is not pronounced in instances when at least two consonants occur next to each other. For example, many people say *handbag* as 'hanbag' (or even 'hambag'!), especially when speaking quickly. This is an example of consonant cluster reduction as the 'd' sound is not pronounced because it is in a cluster of other consonants.	Sassy Queens
Copula absence	The absence of *are* or *is* in a sentence, for example, 'they nice' and 'she eating'. Copula absence is a syntactic linguistic feature.	Sassy Queens
Dark 'l'	A way of pronouncing 'l' with the back of the tongue raised towards the roof of the mouth. In most dialects of English around the world, including in Received Pronunciation (RP), dark 'l' is heard at the end of words such as in *well* or *ball* but not at the start of words such as in *late* or *like* when clear 'l' would be heard instead. Dark 'l' is a phonological linguistic feature.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Dh-stopping	When the 'th' sound in words like *that*, *this* or *them* is pronounced as a 'd' sound so that they sound like 'dat', 'dis' and 'dem'. Dh-stopping is a phonological linguistic feature.	Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face?
Dialect contact	When different linguistic varieties – or, more accurately, the people who speak them - come into contact. Dialect contact can happen because of population movement, social mobility or media and technology.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Levelling up? Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* **See also:** Life Changes and Accent Changes
Dialect corpora	See dialect corpus	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?
Dialect corpus	A collection of information on how people speak across a geographic area such as the Survey of English Dialects corpus or the English Dialects App corpus, or the BBC Voices corpus.	Apps for Maps Strutting up North Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? **See also:** Sofa, Couch or Settee? Writing How You Speak
Dialect levelling	When linguistic varieties become more similar across a region or geographic area, meaning that people from different places begin to speak more similarly to each other than in previous generations. Dialect levelling normally involves a reduction of regional dialect features with people instead adopting standard linguistic features or those which are found across a wide geographic area. Dialect levelling happens, in part, because of dialect contact and the influence of standard language ideology which promotes the idea that there is a standard or correct way of speaking.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Levelling up? Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King
Digital ethnography	An approach to carrying out research which builds on linguistic ethnography but is adapted to the digital world. In a digital ethnography approach, the researcher carries out detailed observations of online content and communications to understand people's experiences, opinions and social interactions.	Speaking Roadman Mobile Messaging

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Discourse	The written or spoken communication about a subject. In the A Level, discourse is also used to refer to repeated patterns of language that create particular ways of representing the world. For example, a discourse of pollution or invasion might be used to describe linguistic variation, or discourses of correctness and morality employed to describe language users.	Corn(ish)? Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE 'STFU and start listening to how scared we are' The Only Way is E-ssss-ex 'I'm a boy, can't you see that?' 'I'm not proud, I'm just gay' **See also:** A Dutch Chav from The Hague? The (White) Ears of Ofsted Now You're Talking My Language 'A lot of them write how they speak'
Discourse analysis	A method which involves the analysis of discourse (the written or spoken communication about a subject). When using a discourse analysis approach, a researcher studies the types of language used to talk about a subject, how the language (be it written or spoken) is structured and interprets these points in relation to the wider social and cultural context.	The Media and MLE 'STFU and start listening to how scared we are' 'I'm not proud, I'm just gay' 'I'm a boy, can't you see that?'
Elicitation task	A task that is designed so that a person will say aloud a particular word, phrase or concept. There are many different types of elicitation tasks. For example, a person might be asked to tell the researcher the differences between two pictures, to describe a picture of a scene, to name an item in a picture, or to explain how a person would get from A to B on a map.	Manchester Voices Corn(ish)?
Empirical research	Research that tests a hypothesis by collecting data, evidence and observations.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? English as a Global Language
English Dialects App (EDA)	A free app developed by Adrian Leemann and other researchers which was launched in January 2016. The app asked participants to provide information on their dialect, resulting in a large dialect corpus of the ways people speak across England.	Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Sofa, Couch or Settee? Levelling up?
Enregistered	See Enregisterment	

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Enregisterment	When one or more linguistic features are linked in people's minds - along with ideas about how a person looks and behaves - with a social persona or the stereotyped speaker of a particular linguistic variety.	A Dutch Chav from The Hague? The Media and MLE Speaking Roadman Sassy Queens The Only Way is E-ssss-ex
Essex	A county which borders East London. Though there are many different ways of speaking in Essex, what many now think of as an Essex accent has much in common with Cockney.	Cockneys in Essex The Only Way is E-ssss-ex Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain
Estuary English (EE)	A linguistic variety spoken in South East England that is somewhere between Cockney and Received Pronunciation (RP) with some people speaking relatively similarly to Cockney and others speaking closer to RP. EE is a relatively recent linguistic variety that was first written about in the 1980s. EE is closer to Cockney than Standard Southern British English (SSBE) and is thought to be spoken more by working-class people.	Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements Life Changes and Accent Changes
Ethnolect	A linguistic variety that is supposedly just spoken by people from one ethnic group.	Maybe it's a Grime Ting
Explicit attitudes	Attitudes that a person is normally aware of and can verbalise. A person's explicit attitudes might not be the same as their implicit attitudes.	Implicitly Prejudiced? **See also:** 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE
First-person singular pronoun	The words *I*, *me*, *myself* and *mine* are all first-person singular pronouns. They are first-person because they are referring to the person who says them and they are singular because they are only referring to one person (unlike *we*, *us*, *ours* and *ourselves* which are first-person plural pronouns). Though these words are all first-person singular pronouns, there are differences between them. *I* is a subject pronoun, *me* is an object pronoun, *myself* is a reflexive pronoun and *mine* is a possessive pronoun.	Speaking Roadman 'Give us my shoe back!'
Flat adverbs	The use of adjectives in adverbial positions such as 'dress nice' rather than 'dress nicely'. Flat adverbs are a syntactic linguistic feature	'Give us my shoe back!'

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Foot-strut split	A linguistic feature referring to when a person says words like *foot* and *strut* with a different vowel. The foot-strut split is one of the major distinguishing features between the accents of northern and southern England. If we imagine a line running through the Midlands, people north of that line tend to say *foot* and *strut* with the same vowel but people south of the line normally say them with different vowels. The foot-strut split is a phonological variable.	Strutting up North Levelling up? Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Writing How You Speak
G-dropping	When words like *running*, *talking* and *jumping* are pronounced 'runnin', 'talkin' or 'jumpin'. The term 'g-dropping' is not ideal because these pronunciations are not actually the result of a person not pronouncing a 'g' sound. Instead, when a person says '-in' rather than '-ing' their tongue is further forward in the mouth, normally behind their top teeth. G-dropping is a phonological linguistic feature.	Cockneys in Essex Sassy Queens
General Northern English (GNE)	A linguistic variety spoken by some people in the North of England which is identifiably northern but cannot be pinpointed to any specific place. GNE is the product of dialect levelling in northern England.	Levelling up? Legal Judgements Implicitly Prejudiced?
Gesture	The movement of a body part to convey an idea or a concept, often supporting and supplementing speech.	Are Emojis a Language?
Goose-fronting	Saying words like *goose*, *moon* or *food* with the tongue relatively far forward in the mouth. Goose-fronting has been becoming more common in many linguistic varieties of English around the world, including in various parts of Britain, for several decades. This means that, over time, each generation tends to say words like *goose* with the tongue further forward in the mouth. Some linguistic varieties of English have quite extreme goose-fronting such as in Australian English, New Zealand English, Cockney and Multicultural London English (MLE). Goose-fronting is a phonological linguistic feature.	From Cockney to the King Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Writing How You Speak
Guise	Linguists often ask participants to respond to an audio clip of speech, for example, making evaluative judgements about an accent. The speakers they hear are called 'guises'. Studies can either use the Matched Guise Technique or the Verbal Guise Technique.	Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements Taps, Stops and Chavs **See also:** Implicitly Prejudiced?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Happy-laxing	When the final syllable of words like *city* and *happy* is pronounced with a lax vowel such as 'eh' or 'ih' so that they sound like 'happeh' and 'citeh'. Happy-laxing is common in parts of North West England such as in Manchester. An alternative pronunciation of these words is with happy-tensing. Happy-laxing is a phonological linguistic feature.	Writing How You Speak Levelling up?
Happy-tensing	When the final syllable in words like *happy* and *city* is pronounced with the tense vowel 'iy' so that they sound like 'hap-iy' and 'cit-iy'. Happy-tensing is common in the South of England among many other places. An alternative pronunciation of these words is with happy-laxing. Happy-tensing is a phonological linguistic feature.	Levelling up?
H-dropping	Not pronouncing the 'h' in words like *home*, *hat* or *happy*. H-dropping can be heard in many urban centres in both England and Wales but is much less common in rural areas or other parts of the UK. H-dropping is a phonological linguistic feature.	Cockneys in Essex
Heritage language	A language that a person learns in childhood from their family but which does not have official status and is not a predominant language spoken in the country where they live.	Why the Long Face?
Imperative mood	When a verb is used as a request or a command. The verb *go* is in the imperative mood in, 'go now!', but the same word is in the indicative mood in, 'I go to the shops most days'.	'Give us my shoe back!' 'STFU and start listening to how scared we are'
Implicit attitudes	Attitudes that a person is not normally aware of and cannot verbalise. A person's implicit attitudes might not be the same as their explicit attitudes.	Implicitly Prejudiced?
Indicative mood	When a verb is used as a statement. The verb *go* is in the imperative mood in, 'Go now!', but the same word is in the indicative mood in, 'I go to the shops most days'.	'STFU and start listening to how scared we are'
Inner Circle varieties	According to Kachru's three circles of English, Inner Circle varieties are those which are spoken in countries where English is used as a 'native language'. Examples of Inner Circle varieties are British English, US English and Australian English.	English as a Global Language Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? **See also:** Now You're Talking My Language Who is a Native Speaker of English?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Kachru's three circles of English	A model for classifying speakers of English. The Inner Circle is countries where English is used as a 'native language' such as the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the US. The Outer Circle includes countries where English has historical importance or is commonly used in some settings, but often as a second language, including many countries that are former colonies of the British Empire such as India, Singapore, Kenya and Malaysia among others. The third circle is called the Expanding Circle and includes countries where English is learnt as a foreign language such as China, Egypt, Japan and Saudi Arabia among others. Many linguists now consider this model to be outdated.	English as a Global Language **See also:** Now You're Talking My Language Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Who is a Native Speaker of English?
Language change	Linguistic variation over time within a single linguistic variety. If the way people speak in a certain location has varied over time, then language change has happened. Two methods for measuring if language change has occurred in a community are the apparent time approach and the real time approach.	Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Manchester Voices Cockneys in Essex Why the Long Face? Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* **See also:** Levelling up? From Cockney to the King Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths
Language ideology	An idea or opinion about language that often feels very natural, logical and unquestionable to the person who believes it. Language ideologies tend to be very well established in the way people think in a society which means that people might not even realise there are alternative ways of thinking about language. An example of a language ideology is Standard Language Ideology.	The (White) Ears of Ofsted
Leaders of language change	When language change is happening in a certain location, the leaders of language change are the people from that place with the highest rate of the incoming linguistic feature.	Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
Lexical	See Lexis	

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Lexis	The vocabulary and words used in a linguistic variety to refer to different concepts.	Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Sofa, Couch or Settee? Corn(ish)? Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? Sassy Queens Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* Writing How You Speak **See also:** 'A lot of them write how they speak'
Linguistic ethnography	A research method combining theory and approaches from linguistics (the scientific study of language) and ethnography (the study of cultural and social practices often observed through participant observation). Linguistic ethnography aims to understand language and society by using very flexible and open methods to observe and reflect on how language is used and spoken about. In linguistic ethnography, researchers carry out detailed participant observation to observe and reflect on the ways that people use and speak about language and how this relates to the dynamics and interactions within social groups and the wider social and cultural context. Linguistic ethnography collects naturalistic data, for example, the way people speak when they are going about their lives or interacting with others. A linguistic ethnography approach differs to the more structured approach used in a sociolinguistic interview which collects data on how people speak by asking them to read aloud minimal pairs, word lists or passages, complete elicitation tasks, or talk one-on-one with a researcher in a casual conversation.	'Give us my shoe back!' Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? 'I'm a boy, can't you see that?' 'I'm not proud, I'm just gay' Mobile Messaging
Linguistic levels	The different aspects that make up a linguistic variety including syntax (grammar), phonology (pronunciation) and lexis (the words used).	Strutting up North Corn(ish)?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Linguistic variable	An element of language that can be said in different ways without changing the meaning. The different ways that a linguistic variable can be produced are the linguistic variants. A lexical linguistic variable includes one or more different words that are used to refer to the same concept. For example, the concept of 'adult male' might be a linguistic variable with multiple different variants such as 'man', 'bloke', 'geezer' or 'lad' among others. A phonological linguistic variable may have several different pronunciations. For example, there are two different linguistic variants of the foot-strut split: a person may say *strut* so that it rhymes with *foot* or they may use a different vowel altogether. But no matter how a person says the vowel in the word *strut*, the meaning of the word is the same. A syntactic linguistic variable has two or more different grammatical structures which convey the same meaning. For example, was/were variation is a syntactic variable that has many different variants. A person might use standard-was ('I was hungry') or might use non-standard-were ('I were hungry'), but the meaning is the same (they wanted their dinner!).	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Sofa, Couch or Settee? Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Why the Long Face? Can You Sound Gay and Working Class?
Linguistic variant	The different ways that a linguistic variable can be produced. For example, a phonological linguistic variable may have several different pronunciations. A lexical linguistic variable includes one or more different words that are used to refer to the same concept. A syntactic linguistic variable has two or more different grammatical structures which convey the same meaning. The different ways of producing the variable (whether that be different pronunciations, words or grammatical structures) are called the linguistic variants. Some groups of people may use a linguistic variant more often than other groups of people, often due to where they are from (regional variation) or their social characteristics or background (social variation). Sometimes 'linguistic variant' is shortened to just 'variant'.	Strutting up North Sofa, Couch or Settee? Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Maybe it's a Grime Ting Taps, Stops and Chavs

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Linguistic variation	Different ways of saying the same thing. Linguistic variation occurs on many different linguistic levels such as phonology, lexis and syntax. For example, there may be several ways of pronouncing the same word, and several different dialect words and grammatical structures that convey the same meaning (see linguistic variable and linguistic variants). There are three main types of linguistic variation: regional variation (differences in how people speak depending on where they are from), social variation (differences in how people speak that relate to factors such as their gender, age, class and ethnicity), and style shifting (variation in the speech of an individual). A linguistic feature may be more commonly used by people from a certain place or social group, or by a person in some settings or contexts compared to others.	Apps for Maps Strutting up North Sofa, Couch or Settee? Manchester Voices Levelling up? Corn(ish)? 'Give us my shoe back!' Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Why the Long Face? The Only Way is E-ssss-ex Taps, Stops and Chavs Life Changes and Accent Changes **See also:** Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King 'Give us my shoe back!' Maybe it's a Grime Ting Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
Linguistic variety	Like dialect, the term used to refer to a way of speaking including accents, dialects and whole languages. Linguists use the term 'accent' when they are only talking about phonology (pronunciation). In contrast, a dialect includes phonology as well as lexis and syntax. The term 'linguistic variety' also refers to a way of speaking at all linguistic levels (including phonology, syntax and lexis) but the term is more neutral. The term 'dialect' sometimes has negative connotations, and some people might use it to describe a way of speaking that they perceive as incorrect or ungrammatical. For this reason, linguists often prefer the more neutral term 'linguistic variety' to refer to the way a group of people speak.	Levelling up? Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? Implicitly Prejudiced?
L-vocalisation	In most dialects of English around the world, dark 'l' is heard at the end of words such as in *well* or *ball*. However, l-vocalisation is when the 'l' at the end of a word is pronounced like a vowel or a 'w' sound'. If a person speaks with l-vocalisation, *milk* and *well* might sound like 'miwk' and 'wew'. L-vocalisation is a non-standard linguistic feature that originated in Cockney but has now spread widely across London's surrounding areas and beyond. L-vocalisation is a phonological linguistic feature.	Cockneys in Essex Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* Life Changes and Accent Changes

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Matched Guise Technique	A method in which participants respond to audio recordings of speech produced by the same person (guise). For example, participants might be asked to provide evaluative judgements about the same person putting on different accents or audio clips produced by the same person which the researcher has edited in different ways. An advantage of the Matched Guise Technique is that the researcher can be pretty sure that it was a person's accent that led to them being evaluated or judged in a certain way rather than factors such as the pitch of their voice or how quickly they speak. A disadvantage of the Matched Guise Technique is that when a person imitates an accent other than their own they may not do so very authentically which may bias the results. An alternative to the Matched Guise Technique is the Verbal Guise Technique.	Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Legal Judgements
Minimal pairs	Pairs of words that differ only in one sound. *Cat* and *bat*, *take* and *tape*, or *cart* and *heart* are three examples of minimal pairs. Linguists may ask a person to read aloud minimal pairs when they want to examine how they pronounce very specific sounds. For example, a person who speaks with th-fronting might say the minimal pairs *three* and *free* the same. The words *put* and *putt* (like in golf) are also minimal pairs. A linguist could ask a person to read aloud these words in order to test if they speak with a foot-strut split. If the person has a foot-strut split they would say the two words differently, but if they don't have the split, the words would sound identical. The downside of using minimal pairs is that a person may not speak in a way that is authentic or natural for them because they are very focused on how they speak (see observer's paradox). Minimal pairs are considered a very careful speech style meaning that a person is quite likely to use standard linguistic features – even more so than if they were reading a word list or a passage. Minimal pairs are also only useful if a linguist is interested in phonological variables (different pronunciations), but not lexical variables (the words used) or syntactic variables (different grammatical structures). Minimal pairs can form part of a sociolinguistic interview.	Manchester Voices Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Are Emojis a Language?
Multicultural British English (MBE)	A term coined by Rob Drummond to describe a linguistic variety of English which includes features of Multicultural London English (MLE). MBE can be heard in many different areas of the UK but is not identical in all the places it is spoken. This is because the people who speak MBE use some MLE features alongside features from their local dialect.	Maybe it's a Grime Ting

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Multicultural London English (MLE)	A linguistic variety of English which was first documented in ethnically and linguistically diverse areas of East London by the linguists Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen. MLE is a relatively recent variety of English that is thought to have been spoken since the 1980s. Some linguists consider Multicultural London English (MLE) to be a multiethnolect. MLE has several linguistic features in common with other southern varieties, including features of Cockney that have spread across London's surrounding areas such as l-vocalisation, t-glottalling and th-fronting. In other ways, MLE differs to Cockney and other southern varieties as it includes features that have been influenced by languages and dialects of English from around the world. Phonological features of MLE include th-stopping, dh-stopping, goose-fronting and price-monophthongisation. Syntactic features of MLE include the pronoun 'man', non-standard-was and the tag 'innit'. Lexical features include lexis with Jamaican heritage such as 'bare', 'rass' and 'mandem', and terms used by men to address other men such as 'blud', 'bro', and 'my guy'.	Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? Legal Judgements Life Changes and Accent Changes Writing How You Speak **See also:** Class Judgements
Multiethnolect	A non-standard linguistic variety which is spoken by people from different ethnic groups. Some linguists consider Multicultural London English (MLE) to be a multiethnolect.	From Cockney to the King Stereotypes and Street Talk The Media and MLE Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face?
Multilingualism	When a person can speak, write or understand more than one language.	Now You're Talking My Language **See also:** English as a Global Language
Neologism	A recent and new word or term.	'I'm a boy, can't you see that?' Who is a Native Speaker of English?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Non-standard	The term 'non-standard' is often used when describing a linguistic variety or linguistic feature that is not considered to be standard. Non-standard linguistic features are often thought of in society as incorrect, ungrammatical or regional. Linguists may use the term 'non-standard' to reflect how a linguistic variety or linguistic feature is perceived in society, but they do not consider any way of speaking to be superior to any other. Non-standard linguistic varieties or linguistic features do not normally have high social status, but people sometimes (but not always) find them warm, attractive and appealing (high social attractiveness).	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Levelling up? 'Give us my shoe back!' Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Stereotypes and Street Talk Speaking Roadman Why the Long Face? The (White) Ears of Ofsted Sassy Queens Class Judgements 'A lot of them write how they speak' 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Taps, Stops and Chavs Legal Judgements Writing How You Speak **See also:** Corn(ish)? Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King Life Changes and Accent Changes
Non-standard-was	A linguistic variant of was/were variation. Non-standard-was is when a person says, 'you was', 'we was' or 'they was' (in contrast to standard-were). This feature is considered non-standard and is common in many regional dialects including in South East England.	Cockneys in Essex Why the Long Face? 'A lot of them write how they speak'
Non-standard-were	A linguistic variant of was/were variation. Non-standard-were is when a person says, 'I were', 'she were', 'he were' or 'it were' (in contrast to standard-was). Non-standard-were is considered non-standard and is a regional dialect feature of North West England.	Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls
Object pronoun	Pronouns which are the object of a sentence, meaning that an action is done to them. For example, 'the dog saw him', 'the children love them', 'the world owes her'. The object pronouns in English are *me*, *it*, *you*, *him*, *her*, *us* and *them*.	

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Observer's paradox	Linguists normally want to access a person's most authentic and natural way of speaking, but the presence of the researcher means that the speaker is likely to adjust how they speak (see style shift). The person may speak in a way that is more standard than how they normally speak when in the presence of the researcher or when completing a task for a piece of research: this is especially the case if they are being audio recorded or if they are playing close attention to their speech (careful speech style). The puzzle of how to access a person's natural way of speaking while carrying out research which unintentionally makes them speak less naturally is called the observer's paradox.	Manchester Voices Corn(ish)? Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* **See also:** 'Give us my shoe back!' Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh
Orthographic	See orthography	
Orthography	The ways of spelling a word or phrase.	Sofa, Couch or Settee? Sassy Queens Writing How You Speak
Participant observation	When a researcher does not actively engage a participant in any tasks or conversation, but instead, closely observes them as they go about their lives or interact with others. Participant observation is an important part of a linguistic ethnography approach.	'Give us my shoe back!' Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Speaking Roadman 'I'm a boy, can't you see that?' 'I'm not proud, I'm just gay'
Passage	A section of text that a linguist may ask a participant to read aloud to see how they pronounce certain words or sounds. Much like a word list, a passage has benefits over a casual conversation because the linguist can deliberately include words and sentences in the passage which contain the linguistic variables that they are interested in. A downside of using a passage is that a person may not speak in a way that is authentic or natural for them because they are very focused on how they speak (see observer's paradox). A passage is considered a careful speech style meaning that a person is quite likely to use standard linguistic features – but this is not to the same extent as when a person reads from a word list or minimal pairs. A passage is also only useful if a linguist is interested in phonological variables (different pronunciations), but not lexical variables (the words used) or syntactic variables (different grammatical structures). A passage can form part of a sociolinguistic interview.	Apps for Maps Manchester Voices Levelling up? Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Why the Long Face? Taps, Stops and Chavs Life Changes and Accent Changes

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Pedagogy	Approaches and theory relating to teaching	'A lot of them write how they speak' **See also:** Now You're Talking My Language English as a Global Language The (White) Ears of Ofsted
Phonological	See Phonology	
Phonology	The pronunciations of a linguistic variety, relating to how the mouth and throat are positioned when a person says a sound such as a consonant or a vowel.	Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Corn(ish)? Cockneys in Essex Speaking Roadman Why the Long Face? Sassy Queens Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* Writing How You Speak **See also:** Levelling up? From Cockney to the King Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Maybe it's a Grime Ting The Only Way is E-ssss-ex Can You Sound Gay and Working Class?
Possessive pronoun	The pronouns used to express ownership of something. For example, 'the dog is mine' and 'this coffee is hotter than yours'. The possessive pronouns in English are *mine*, *yours*, *his*, *hers*, *its*, *ours* and *theirs*.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?
Price-monophthongisation	Saying words like *price* as 'prahs' so that the vowel is quite flat and sounds like a longer version of the vowels in *cat* or *cart*. Price-monophthongisation is found in several varieties of English including in African American English (AAE), accents in the southern states of the US, Multicultural London English (MLE) and Cockney. Price-monophthongisation is a phonological linguistic feature.	Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Sassy Queens

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Real time	An approach to analysing if language change has happened and, if so, how much change has occurred. A real time approach compares data on how people speak that was collected at different time points. If people recorded at a past time point speak differently to people at a later time point, this is a good sign that language change has happened. An alternative method to assessing if language change has occurred is the apparent time approach.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Manchester Voices Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* **See also:** Life Changes and Accent Changes
Received Pronunciation (RP)	Received Pronunciation (RP) (sometimes referred to as 'Queen's English', or more recently, 'King's English') is often considered a standard accent in Britain (see Standard Language Ideology). RP has high social status and is often perceived in the UK as a prestigious and correct way of speaking. RP has roots in South East England and has many linguistic features in common with other accents from this region. However, many linguists have claimed that RP is regionless, meaning that it is spoken across the UK and particularly England. RP is similar to Standard Southern British English (SSBE) which is often considered to be a modern, updated version of RP that includes more regional dialect features from southern England.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? From Cockney to the King Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements Implicitly Prejudiced?
Reflexive pronoun	The pronouns used when the subject and the object of a sentence are the same. The reflexive pronouns of English are *myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves* and *themselves*. These pronouns are used when something or someone does an action to themselves such as 'he loves himself' or 'she gave herself a pat on the back'.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Regional dialect features	Non-standard linguistic features that are found in a specific region or geographic area. Regional dialect features can be at any linguistic level such as phonology, syntax or lexis.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Sofa, Couch or Settee? Corn(ish)? From Cockney to the King 'Give us my shoe back!' Writing How You Speak **See also:** Manchester Voices Levelling up? Cockneys in Essex Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Speaking Roadman The (White) Ears of Ofsted Why the Long Face? 'A lot of them write how they speak' Taps, Stops and Chavs Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
Regional variation	A type of linguistic variation. Regional variation is when there are differences in the linguistic features used - or how frequently they are used - between people from different geographic places.	Strutting up North Sofa, Couch or Settee? Manchester Voices Levelling up? Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Class Judgements Writing How You Speak **See also:** Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? The Only Way is E-ssss-ex
Rhoticity	When the 'r' sound is pronounced in words like *car*, *farm*, *hers* and *beer*. Rhoticity is common in many countries around the world such as in the US, Canada, Barbados and Ireland, and in some parts of the UK such as in Scotland, Northern Ireland, South West England and Lancashire. Rhoticity is a phonological linguistic feature.	Apps for Maps Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Sassy Queens

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Salient	A term describing linguistic features that many people are aware of, can comment on, and often have opinions about. For example, t-glottalling and goose-fronting are both common across Britain but the former is very salient, and the latter is not very salient at all, in fact, most people have never noticed differences in how people say the vowel in *goose*.	Speaking Roadman Implicitly Prejudiced? Writing How You Speak **See also:** Sassy Queens
Second-person singular pronoun	The words *you*, *yourself* and *yours* are all second-person singular pronouns. They are second-person because they refer to the person who is being addressed, and they are singular because they are only referring to one person. *You* is both a subject pronoun and an object pronoun, *yourself* is a reflexive pronoun and *yours* is a possessive pronoun.	Speaking Roadman
s-fronting	A linguistic variable referring to how far forward in the mouth a person's tongue is when they say 's'. The further forward the tongue is, the more hissy (or sibilant) the 's' sounds. Women normally produce 's' further forward in the mouth compared to men because they tend to have smaller mouths. S-fronting is a phonological linguistic variable.	The Only Way is E-ssss-ex Can You Sound Gay and Working Class?
singular 'us'	When the word 'us' is used instead of 'me' as a first-person singular pronoun. Singular 'us' is a syntactic linguistic feature.	'Give us my shoe back!'
Social attractiveness	How pleasant or appealing a linguistic variety is judged to be. People who speak linguistic varieties which have high social attractiveness are often judged as being friendly, trustworthy and helpful. When linguists are investigating accent attitudes, they often test both social attractiveness judgements and social status judgements. Accents which are evaluated as very socially attractive might not always be thought of as having high social status (and vice-versa).	Stereotypes and Street Talk Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Implicitly Prejudiced? **See also:** 'Give us my shoe back!'
Social meaning	The personality traits, lifestyle practices or behaviours that come to mind when hearing a person use a certain linguistic variety or linguistic feature. Linguistic varieties or linguistic features which have social meaning might even be associated with a whole social persona (a stereotyped caricature of a type of person such as a chav, VSCO girl, valley girl, Sloane Ranger, an Essex girl or roadman) – this is called enregisterment.	A Dutch Chav from The Hague? Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Maybe it's a Grime Ting Sassy Queens The Only Way is E-ssss-ex Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Writing How You Speak **See also:** Speaking Roadman Taps, Stops and Chavs

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Social mobility	The possibility or likelihood that a person's class position will change throughout their lifetime or compared to that of their parents.	Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Stereotypes and Street Talk 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements
Social persona	A caricatured type of person who is associated with a particular way of thinking, dressing and behaving, such as a chav, VSCO girl, valley girl, Sloane Ranger, an Essex girl or a roadman. The social persona may also be associated with a particular way of speaking. If this is the case, it is said that the linguistic feature(s) is enregistered as the social persona (see enregisterment).	A Dutch Chav from The Hague? Speaking Roadman Sassy Queens **See also:** The Only Way is E-ssss-ex
Social status	How prestigious, correct or standard a linguistic variety is judged to be. People who speak linguistic varieties which have high social status are often judged as being intelligent, competent, educated and confident. When linguists are investigating accent attitudes, they often test both social status judgements and social attractiveness judgements. Accents which are evaluated as having high social status might not always be thought of as socially attractive (and vice-versa).	A Dutch Chav from The Hague? 'Give us my shoe back!' Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Stereotypes and Street Talk Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Class Judgements 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Implicitly Prejudiced? **See also:** Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Social variation	A type of linguistic variation. Social variation is when there are differences in the linguistic features used - or how frequently they are used - between people from different social groups such as those relating to gender, age, class or ethnicity. Linguists often find social variation between people from the same geographic place but from different social groups.	Manchester Voices Corn(ish)? Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls The Only Way is E-ssss-ex Class Judgements **See also:** Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls 'Give us my shoe back!' Strutting up North Corn(ish)? Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? Taps, Stops and Chavs Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
Sociolinguistic interview	A common method in sociolinguistics for collecting data on how people speak. In a sociolinguistic interview, typically, participants will be audio recorded while having a casual conversation with the researcher and while taking part in various other tasks such as reading aloud minimal pairs, a word list or a passage or while taking part in an elicitation task. The tasks differ in how much attention a person is likely to pay to their speech. Reading aloud minimal pairs, a word list and a passage are careful speech styles (with minimal pairs being the most careful speech style and a passage being the least). A casual conversation is considered a casual speech style, and elicitation tasks can be either. Linguists sometimes compare if participants speak differently in each of these settings (style shifting). Normally, linguists find that in the more careful speech styles, people tend to pay more attention to their speech and consequentially use more standard linguistic features than in casual speech styles.	Manchester Voices Corn(ish)? Cockneys in Essex Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Why the Long Face?

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Standard	The term 'standard' is often used when describing a linguistic variety or linguistic feature that is considered in society to be prestigious, neutral and correct. Linguists may use the term 'standard' to reflect how a linguistic variety or linguistic feature is perceived in society, but they do not consider any way of speaking to be superior to any other. Standard linguistic varieties or linguistic features often have high social status.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Levelling up? Corn(ish)? Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King 'Give us my shoe back!' Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh Maybe it's a Grime Ting The (White) Ears of Ofsted Implicitly Prejudiced? 'A lot of them write how they speak' Taps, Stops and Chavs Life Changes and Accent Changes **See also:** Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls 50 Years of Accent Bias in Britain Legal Judgements Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy?
Standard Language Ideology	The societal idea or belief that there is a standard, correct or superior way of speaking a language. As with all language ideologies, Standard Language Ideology is not widely challenged in society. For example, for many people in the UK, it just feels normal, indisputable and like common sense that there is a correct way of speaking and writing English. In reality, linguistic varieties which are considered standard are not inherently or scientifically better, more grammatical or more expressive than regional dialects. Linguistic varieties which are seen as standard (such as Received Pronunciation (RP) in the UK) often have high social status. Standard Language Ideology can lead to accent bias because non-standard linguistic varieties are often devalued and seen as inferior.	'Give us my shoe back!' The (White) Ears of Ofsted English as a Global Language Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? 'A lot of them write how they speak' Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths **See also:** Stereotypes and Street Talk
Standard Scottish English	We often think of Received Pronunciation (RP) as a standard accent, but there are also other standard accents in the UK. Standard Scottish English is a standard accent spoken in Scotland.	Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Upwardly Mobile in Edinburgh

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Standard Southern British English (SSBE)	A linguistic variety spoken in southern England. SSBE is similar to Received Pronunciation (RP) but can be considered a modern, updated version that includes more regional dialect features from southern England. SSBE is considered a standard accent that has high social status.	Levelling up? From Cockney to the King Implicitly Prejudiced? Life Changes and Accent Changes
Standard-was	A linguistic variant of was/were variation. Standard-was is when a person says, 'I was', 'she was', 'he was' and 'it was'. This pattern is considered standard.	Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls
Standard-were	A linguistic variant of was/were variation. Standard-were is when a person says, 'you were, 'we were' and 'they were'. This pattern is considered standard.	
Style shift	See style shifting	
Style shifting	Linguistic variation in the speech of an individual person. Style shifting is when a person speaks differently in different contexts. A person may alter how they speak depending on who they are talking to, what they are speaking about, how much attention they are paying to their speech (see casual speech style and careful speech style) and their emotional state as well as many other factors.	Manchester Voices Corn(ish)? Maybe it's a Grime Ting The Only Way is E-ssss-ex
Subject pronoun	Pronouns which are the subject of a sentence, meaning that they do an action. For example, 'I love cats', 'she plays football' or 'he eats slowly'. The subject pronouns in English are *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *we* and *they*.	
Survey of English Dialects	A survey carried out under the direction of Harold Orton between 1950 and 1961 to create a large dialect corpus of the different ways of speaking across England. The researchers asked non-mobile (who hadn't lived in multiple locations), older, rural males (NORMs) in 313 localities across England to provide information on their dialect. Participants were asked which word they would use to refer to a certain concept such as a shard of wood under the skin or how they would pronounce a specific word such as *five*, *house* or *cross*.	Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Sofa, Couch or Settee?
Syntactic	See syntax	

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Syntax	The grammar of a linguistic variety, including how different words and phrases are structured and arranged in a sentence.	Apps for Maps Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Strutting up North Corn(ish)? Cockneys in Essex Speaking Roadman Why the Long Face? Sassy Queens Watching and Speaking *EastEnders* **See also:** 'Give us my shoe back!' Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls The (White) Ears of Ofsted 'A lot of them write how they speak'
T-glottalling	A pronunciation in which a person produces a glottal stop rather than a 't' sound. Sometimes people refer to t-glottalling as 'dropping' or 'not pronouncing' the 't' but this isn't the case. A glottal stop is actually the release of air from behind the vocal folds in the throat. T-glottalling was first heard in several different parts of Britain such as in Glasgow, London and East Anglia but has since spread widely. T-glottalling is more commonly heard at the end of words such as in *but*, *what* or *mate* than in the middle of words such as *water*, *better* or *bottle*. T-glottalling is a very salient and stigmatised linguistic feature.	Taps, Stops and Chavs Life Changes and Accent Changes Writing How You Speak
Th-fronting	Th-fronting is when a 'th' sound is pronounced as a 'f' sound so that *thanks*, *cloth* and *nothing* might sound like 'fanks', 'clof' and 'nofing'. The term 'th-fronting' can also describe when a 'th' sound is pronounced like a 'v' so that *brother* might sound like 'brover'. This type of th-fronting doesn't happen at the start of words, for example, you wouldn't hear someone say *this* as 'vis'. Th-fronting is a phonological linguistic feature.	Cockneys in Essex Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Watching and Speaking *EastEnders*
Th-stopping	When the 'th' sound in words like *thing*, *thanks*, or *something* is pronounced as a 't' sound so that they sound like 'ting', 'tanks' and 'someting'. Th-stopping is a phonological linguistic feature.	Speaking Roadman Maybe it's a Grime Ting Why the Long Face? Sassy Queens Writing How You Speak
Translanguaging	Making use of different linguistic resources that are available to a speaker, often from different languages, to communicate with others. As a concept, translanguaging also challenges the idea that languages should be viewed as having strict boundaries.	Now You're Talking My Language

glossary

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Trap-bath split	A linguistic feature referring to when a person says words like *trap* and *bath* with a different vowel. The trap-bath split is one of the major distinguishing features between the accents of northern and southern England. In the North of England and much of the Midlands, words like *trap* and *bath* are said with same vowel. In most of the South of England (not including parts of the South West), people tend to say *bath* with a long vowel that is different to how they say *trap*. The trap-bath split is a phonological variable.	Apps for Maps Levelling up? Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Implicitly Prejudiced?
T-to-R	When the final 't' in a one-syllable word is pronounced 'r' such as *get a* being said 'gerra'. T-to-R is common in parts of northern England. T-to-R is a phonological linguistic feature.	Writing How You Speak
Urban West Yorkshire English	An accent from urban areas in West Yorkshire, particularly Leeds and Bradford.	Legal Judgements
Verbal Guise Technique	A method in which participants respond to audio recordings of speech produced by the different people (guises). For example, participants might be asked to provide evaluative judgements about different people speaking aloud. An advantage of the Verbal Guise Technique is that the accents are authentic unlike if a person were attempting to imitate accents other than their own. A disadvantage is that it can be hard for the linguist to know if it was a person's accent that led to them be evaluated or judged in a certain way rather than factors such as the pitch of their voice or how quickly they speak. An alternative to the Verbal Guise Technique is the Matched Guise Technique.	Can You Sound Gay and Working Class? Who Sounds Competent and Who Sounds Trustworthy? Class Judgements Legal Judgements Taps, Stops and Chavs **See also:** Implicitly Prejudiced?
Was/were variation	A linguistic variable referring to whether a person says 'was' or 'were'. The standard pattern is for the pronouns *I*, *she*, *he* and *it* to go with 'was' (standard-was) and *you*, *we* and *they* to go with 'were' (standard-were). In many dialects of English such as in London you may hear non-standard-was meaning that a person might say, 'you was', 'we was' or 'they was'. In North West England non-standard-were is common, meaning that a person might say, 'I were', 'she were', 'he were' or 'it were'. Was/were variation is a syntactic variable.	Strutting up North Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Why the Long Face? The (White) Ears of Ofsted Cockneys in Essex **See also:** 'A lot of them write how they speak'

Term or concept	Definition	Summary and Q&A
Word list	A list of words that a linguist may ask a participant to read aloud to see how they pronounce certain words or sounds. The benefit of a word list over a casual conversation is that a linguist can choose the words which contain the linguistic variables that they are interested in. The downside of using a word list is that a person may not speak in a way that is authentic or natural for them because they are very focused on how they speak (see observer's paradox). A word list is considered a careful speech style meaning that a person is quite likely to use standard linguistic features. Much like a passage or minimal pairs, a word list is only useful if a linguist is interested in phonological variables (different pronunciations), but not lexical variables (the words used) or syntactic variables (different grammatical structures). A word list can form part of a sociolinguistic interview.	Manchester Voices Cockneys in Essex From Cockney to the King Populars, Townies, Geeks and Eden Valley Girls Foot in Mouth and Traps for Baths Why the Long Face? Life Changes and Accent Changes
Zero 's'	Verbs in the present tense in English are typically the same regardless of who the subject is. For example, in 'I walk', 'you walk', 'we walk' and 'they walk', the word *walk* doesn't change. However, when verbs are paired with the third person singular (he/she/it), they normally have an 's' on the end such as in 'she walks', 'he walks' and 'it walks'. This is considered the standard pattern. Zero 's' is when the third person singular 's' is absent such as in 'she walk the dog' or 'he feed the ducks'. You might hear zero 's' in several linguistic varieties such as in African American English (AAE) in the US or in East Anglia in England. Zero 's' is a syntactic linguistic feature.	Whatever Happened to the Hodmedods? Sassy Queens

glossary

permissions

permissions

Articles

We are grateful for permission to reproduce the following articles in New Directions.

TMG's King's English and Cockney replaced by three new accents, study finds by Charles Hymas

© Charles Hymas / Telegraph Media Group Limited 2023

'No, professor, speaking properly still matters', The Times: 19.09.2021

By permission of News UK / News Licensing

'Diction and the value of standard English', The Times: 20.09.2021

By permission News UK / News Licensing

Now prejudice police say we can't even tell by Julie Henry (freelance writer) Originally published in Mail on Sunday 20/03/2022

Credit: dmg media licensing

Is Cockney Essex? blog courtesy of the Social Streets C.I.C

I understand why Victoria Beckham changed her voice – sounding posh opens doors for you© Adam White/ The Independent

TMG's Don't correct children when they mispronounce words - that's accent prejudice by Janet Eastham (Content) © Janet Easham / Telegraph Media Group Limited 2022

The Conversation for permission to reproduce the article 'Ask or aks? How linguistic prejudice perpetuates inequality' by Amanda Cole, Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Institute for Analytics and Data Science) Department of Language and Linguistics, University of Essex; Ella Jeffries, Lecturer in linguistics, University of Essex, and Peter L Patrick, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, University of Essex, originally published in https://theconversation.com/ask-or-aks-how-linguistic-prejudice-perpetuates-inequality-175839

Images

The following images are licensed through Alamy

Nine Elms, Battersea, seen from Ruskin Park, a south London green space in Lambeth, on 3rd September 2023, in London, England. Contributor: Ruskin Photos / Alamy Stock Photo

Edinburgh city centre, Scotland, 2023. Credit: Arch White / Alamy Stock Photo

British school children kids and teacher, London Contributor: Kathy DeWitt / Alamy Stock Photo

Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, 2023. © Darryl Dyck/The Canadian Press via AP Contributor: Associated Press / Alamy Stock Photo

Stormzy, 2023 © Picture by Julie Edwards. Contributor: JEP Celebrity Photos / Alamy Stock Photo

Adele, 2022 Contributor: Alexi / Alamy Stock Photo

Victoria Beckham, Paris, France on March 01, 2022. Photo by Aurore Marechal/ABACAPRESS.COM Contributor: Abaca Press / Alamy Stock Photo

London, England, UK - January 2, 2020: Pedestrians walk past the shops and resturants of Roman Road in London's East End at night. Credit: Joe Dunckley / Alamy Stock Photo

Images within research summaries

Images within research summaries are either provided by the researchers referenced or from open source articles or public domain sources, as detailed here.

Apps for Maps

The English Dialect App. Image reproduced from the research paper https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2215039017300589

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 Deed | Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International | Creative Commons

Strutting up North

Map showing participants' responses for 'What is your word for the evening meal?'

Image reproduced from the research paper https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-linguistic-geography/article/towards-an-updated-dialect-atlas-of-british-english/07AD1E071645452F33A118B08E038CD6

CC BY 4.0 Deed | Attribution 4.0 International | Creative Commons

Sofa, Couch or Settee?

Image reproduced from the research paper https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frai.2019.00011/full

Copyright © 2019 Grieve, Montgomery, Nini, Murakami and Guo. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

A Dutch Chav from The Hague?

The image of Haagse Harry statue is from Wikimedia commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Statue_of_Haagse_Harry#/media/File:Haagse_Harry_statue_Grote_Markt_-_1.jpeg

Taps, Stops and Chavs

How often participants produced t-tapping and the type of school they attended. © author, who has given permission for the article to be reproduced https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/