Sociolinguistic typology, dialect formation and dialect levelling in industrial and post-industrial Britain: vernacular speech since 1800

Paul Kerswill
Accounting for dialect formation and dialect change

• Chronological starting point: Great Britain during the rise of the Industrial Revolution

• ‘Using the present to explain the past’ (Labov)
  – Implies a set of social processes which are universally applicable as causes of dialect change
  – In different proportions in different times and places

• Candidate for a universal social process: face-to-face communication leading to dialect contact

➢ This is our starting point
Dialect contact

Outcomes largely determined by:

- the linguistic features in the ‘feature pool’
  - What relative frequency?
  - What relative difficulty/complexity?

- who is in contact with whom
  - children, adolescents, adults
  - and in what social settings
Mobility and contact in the UK

• Mobility is (at least one) key to understanding dialect formation and dialect change

• Mobility is long and short term:
  – Relocation from rural to urban, and from urban to rural
  – Commuting (a mainly middle-class pursuit)
  – Visiting
  – In the 20th century: two world wars
  – 2nd half of 19th century: railways, suburbanisation of cities
  – 1st half of 19th century: formation of new industrial urban areas through migration
Demographic change
Britain: the world’s first urbanised and industrialised country

• Britain at the peak of the Industrial Revolution, and the most urbanised country in Europe:
  – 1831 34% lived in cities
  – 1851 50% “
  – 1931 80% “
  – 1991 90% “
The demographic framework: From rural to industrial 1801–1911

Employment in agriculture, 1851 and 1911
Employment in manufacturing, 1851 and 1911

3.3-4 Employment in manufacturing, 1851 and 1911
2.1-4 Population density, 1801-1911
2.5–8 Population growth, 1801–1911
components of population growth, 1851–1911
Northern cities in the 19th century

• Is population growth rapid enough to lead to the formation of new dialects?
## Northern cities in the 19th century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>18th Cent.</th>
<th>1801</th>
<th>1831</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>12K (1725)</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>762,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>20K (c1750)</td>
<td>33,322</td>
<td>48,950</td>
<td>80,184</td>
<td>246,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>16K (1771)</td>
<td>94,421</td>
<td>183,015</td>
<td>249,992</td>
<td>552,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull</td>
<td>7.5K (1700)</td>
<td>21,280</td>
<td>40,902</td>
<td>57,484</td>
<td>236,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>43K (1774)</td>
<td>88,577</td>
<td>205,561</td>
<td>339,483</td>
<td>642,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>30K (1766)</td>
<td>82,430</td>
<td>180,222</td>
<td>320,513</td>
<td>711,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>7K (1736)</td>
<td>60,095</td>
<td>112,408</td>
<td>161,475</td>
<td>451,195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk), Wikipedia, local councils
Summary so far

• Big demographic changes, with high concentrations in the new industrial towns/cities in the north of England, the south of Scotland and South Wales.

• These new concentrations were caused by population increases over a relatively short period.
  – result of in-migration and natural increase.

• Population increases by migration in industrial areas is rapid. In some places it was probably rapid enough to cause linguistic *swamping* of original population.
  – For swamping, around 50% of non-native population is needed.
  – More work on demographics needed!
Demographic change, economic change and interpersonal relations

• What effect does demographic change since 1800 have on community and wider societal structures?

  – Interpersonal social relations have changed

    • How does this affect language change?

  – Keywords: mobility, urbanisation, contact, socioeconomic class, gender, ideology
What were British English dialects like in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century?

- What evidence do we have?

- Can we project what is known about recent linguistic change onto a past era?

- What trends might we expect?
  - Dialect levelling
  - Dialect divergence (innovation)

- What sort of communities existed in the past?
What is our best evidence for late-19th century conservative dialect?


... interpreted and visualised for us by:

ON
EARLY ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION,
WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO
SHAKSPERE AND CHAUCER,
CONTAINING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CORRESPONDENCE OF
WRITING WITH SPEECH IN ENGLAND, FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON
PERIOD TO THE EXISTING RECEIVED AND DIALECTAL FORMS,
WITH A SYSTEMATIC NOTATION OF SPOKEN SOUNDS BY
MEANS OF THE ORDINARY PRINTING TYPES.

INCLUDING
A RE-ARRANGEMENT OF PROF. F. J. CHILD'S MEMOIRS ON THE LANGUAGE OF
CHAUCER AND GOWER, REPRINTS OF THE RARE TRACTS BY SALESBY ON
ENGLISH, 1647, AND WELSH, 1667, AND BY BARCLEY ON FRENCH, 1521,
ABSTRACTS OF SCHMELLEI'S TREATISE ON BAVARIAN DIALECTS, AND
WINKLER'S LOW GERMAN AND FRISIAN DIALECTICON, AND
PRINCE L. L. BONAPARTE'S VOWEL AND CONSONANT LISTS.

BY
ALEXANDER J. ELLIS,
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MEMBER OF THE MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY, FORMERLY SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE, B.A., 1837.

PART V.
[pp. 1*-88*, 1433-2267.]
EXISTING DIALECTAL AS COMPARED WITH WEST SAXON
PRONUNCIATION.

WITH TWO MAPS OF THE DIALECT DISTRICTS.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED FOR THE PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY,
THE EARLY ENGLISH TEXT SOCIETY, AND THE CHAUCER SOCIETY, BY
TRÜBNER & CO., 57 AND 59, LUDGATE HILL.
1889.
Forms of ‘I am’ in EPED
Stopping of $[\theta]$ in initial $thr$-
Fig. 2: The pronunciation of the vowel in *down* in the EPED
Mapping Ellis isn’t the whole story:

“Area. The whole of the s.Yo., comprising the great industrial centres of Huddersfield, Halifax, Keighley, Bradford, Leeds, Dewsbury, Barnsley, Sheffield, and Rotherham on the w. and s., with the country towns of Wakefield, Ponteefract and Doncaster on the e. A most diversified country. The w. parts inhabited by a great manufacturing population, rejoicing in their dialect. The e. parts populous, but not manufacturing.” (p. 364)

• “The real dialect is heard in the surrounding villages.” (p. 364)

• “Of course it is in the villages and not in the town that peasant speech is heard. In the town a peculiar attempt to speak rs. is made by the smaller tradesmen.” (p. 394)

• “[T]he refined town speech of petty traders at Leeds, I have reduced elsewhere to a comparison with received speech …” (p. 366)
Do we have other evidence of change or stability in 19th century vernacular speech?

1. A commentary:

“There can be no doubt that pure dialect speech is rapidly disappearing even in country districts, owing to the spread of education, and to modern facilities for intercommunication. The writing of this grammar was begun none too soon, for had it been delayed another twenty years I believe it would by then be quite impossible to get together sufficient pure dialect material to enable any one to give even a mere outline of the phonology of our dialects …

… as they existed at the close of the nineteenth century.”

Joseph Wright (1905) *English Dialect Grammar*
Do we have other evidence of change or stability in 19th century vernacular speech?

2. Linguists’ evidence:

- Glottalling of intervocalic /t/
  - Older than late-20th century sociolinguists have assumed (Beal 2007)
  - Began in Scotland, spreading to northern England.
  - Its appearance in London is an independent development
Interim conclusions on mid-19th century dialects

Language

• Some descriptions of rural dialects exist
  – Ellis (1889)
  – Wright (1892) *Dialect of Windhill, Yorkshire*

• No full descriptions of urban dialects
  – Not even commentaries!

• But we can detect strongly regional, if not local, speech
  – We must assume that new dialects had been formed – no actual evidence

Society

• We must assume vast social changes in just 50 years
  – Migration, urbanisation
  – New forms of social differentiation – capitalism in its rawest form
Finding a baseline of younger people’s speech, c. 1900

• **Survey of English dialects (SED), 1962-71**
  – Elderly speakers born in 1870s–1900s
  – Non-mobile older rural males (NORMs)

• A baseline of highly localised, non-urban speech of older people in the mid-twentieth century
Forms of ‘I am’ in EPED and SED

These two figures suggest great continuity over 70 years 1880–1950.
What is the evidence for dialect change in the later 20\textsuperscript{th} century? (post-SED)

- Follow up Wright’s despondent call from 1905
- Variationist studies from 1960s on
- Increasing focus on region and geography (Britain, Llamas, Watt, Kerswill, Cheshire, Maguire)
Dialect change and social change (David Britain 2009, 2012)

• ‘Dialect loss’, ‘dialect attrition’
  – On different levels: phonology, morphosyntax, lexis
  – Dialect contact *not necessarily implicated*

• Dialect supralocalisation/regional dialect levelling
  – Caused by **dialect contact**

• Dialect contact caused by the **supralocalisation of British society**: urbanisation, counter-urbanisation, new towns, new suburbs.
Patterns of dialect change

Dedialectalisation:
  • Lexical, phonological, grammatical dedialectalisation
  • May happen *without* contact

Dialect levelling/dialect supralocalisation

Diffusion:
  • Geographical diffusion (contagion diffusion)
  • Migration diffusion

Innovation:
  • May be endogenous (to speech community, not only ‘language-internal’) – i.e. non-contact
  • May be induced by dialect or language contact
Phonological dedialectalisation
(move to Standard English pronunciation of words)
Example from County Durham, northeast England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word set</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Village/Year of birth</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Byers Green 1880</td>
<td>Ushaw Moor 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Orton 1933)</td>
<td>(Kerswill 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>food, choose, move, prove ...</td>
<td>‘choose’ vowel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>out, mouth, house, town, cow, down ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Set 2 varies between ‘choose’ and ‘mouth’ vowels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>owt (‘anything’), nowt (‘nothing’) ...</td>
<td>‘mouth’ vowel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>four, daughter, thought, bought ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Set 4 varies between ‘caught’ and ‘mouth’ vowels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


For both authors, speech communities vary according their degree of external contact

- Communities are more or less isolated/peripheral or mainstream/high-contact

Do these have explanatory value for the development of British dialects?
Contact types and language change: summary (Trudgill)

• High-contact situations involving child–child contact are more likely to lead to complexification in inventories and paradigms

• High-contact situations involving adults–adult contact are more likely to lead to simplification of inventories and paradigms

• Low-contact situations are likely to lead to preservation of existing complexity

• Low-contact situations are more likely to lead to the spontaneous production of complexity (internally motivated)
Translating contact-type to community-type (Trudgill)

- Contact vs. isolation
- Dense vs. loose social networks
- Social stability vs. instability
- Relatively small vs. relatively large community size

➢ We’ll discuss these this morning, while adding a crucial subjective, attitudinal dimension
How social structure at community level affects language change

Andersen (1988):

• **Open** vs. **closed** communities, also applying to the dialects spoken there. **External contact** is high vs. low.

Now we introduce a new distinction:

• **Exocentric** vs. **endocentric** communities, also applying to dialects. Subjective, **attitudinal factors** favour vs. disfavour selecting incoming, external norms.
Four community types
(after Andersen and Røyneland)

• **Endocentric closed** (Type 1): geographically peripheral, and self-contained.

• **Endocentric open** (Type 2): urban, innovative in the context of a ‘great or fair amount of interdialectal communication’ (Andersen). Because of their openness (high external contact), features may diffuse outwards. Resistant to outside features (endocentric).

• **Exocentric closed** (Type 3): linguistic norms are pervious to outside influence, but contact is slight.

• **Exocentric open** (Type 4): often rural, and unlike Type 1 not protective of local norms. Instead, they are strongly affected by incoming features, diffusing from local urban centres.
Speech community typology and dialect change: Great Britain
Off the shelf: hierarchical diffusion: [f] in words in which [θ] is expected.


- STOP PRESS! Th-fronting first appeared in Liverpool in a big way in cohorts born some time after 1985 and some time before 1995 (Kevin Watson, pers. com.)
• South-to-north diffusion of [f] and [v] suggests origin in London area

• This suggests a series of:
  – **Exocentric** communities, either closed or open (low or high contact) receiving features from a neighbouring town
    • Geographical diffusion, as traditionally conceived
  – and **endocentric open** communities, which are sources of innovations, diffusing outwards
    • Urban centres
    • ‘Off the shelf’ features (notably th-fronting)
      – The *initial spread* of these is the result of contact, but not involving young children acquiring language within a community, but more likely adolescents and adults
**Under the counter:**
Belfast (a)  
(J. Milroy 1994)

**Inner-city Belfast:**
endocentric closed  
(Type 1)

**Outer-city Belfast:**
exocentric open??  
(Type 4)
• The opposite end of the scale: a small, relatively isolated community: Huntly, Aberdeenshire

Social network index (Network Strength Scale) based on local ties
Huntly (Aberdeenshire): ‘Mental urbanisation’ plotted against PHOVAR variable (Marshall 2004: 162)
Dialects at the periphery

• Huntly: an exocentric closed (Type 3) community. An orientation away from the community is enough to bring on the adoption of ‘off the shelf’ features.

• Next stage: transition to exocentric closed (Type 4) Holy Island (Maguire 2014)
  – Rapid dialect loss
  – Replaced by a general Northeast variety
  – High contact, many incomers, need to commute
  – But a handful of local people unexpectedly maintain the dialect, and even accentuate it
    • Cf. Martha’s Vineyard (Labov 1963) and Smith Island and Ocracoke (Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1999)
Three key community types

• Importance of *endocentric open* (Type 2) speech communities – Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle
  – Urban, sources of innovation, diffusion outwards

• *Exocentric closed* (Type 3) speech communities – Huntly
  – Small
  – Orientation away from own community, but low contact
  – Transitional – unstable phase? Holy Island suggests shift to *Exocentric open* (Type 4)

• Within a framework of change, Types 2 & 4 are opposites
  – Type 2: optimal *senders*
  – Type 4: optimal *receivers*
Multiethnic cities: a new type of speech community?

- London, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Berlin, Oslo, Paris ...

- Rise of *multiethnolects*: speech varieties with multiple origins,
  - Overrides the founding population’s speech by swamping

- Conditions for the emergence of a multiethnolect:
  - c. 50% of population are second-language speakers of host language
  - Several input languages (3 or more?)
  - High degree of social contact among children/young people

- Similarity to the rise of koines/new dialects
  - Highly mixed dialect (or language) input, with no dialect (or language) in a majority
  - Close, medium-term social relations among children and young people
ESRC projects on dialect change in London, 1990–2010


• October 2007–September 2010 (Lancaster): *Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety*

Researchers: Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Ann Williams, Eivind Torgersen, Sue Fox, Arfaan Khan
Diphthongs – Nazma (Moroccan parentage, Hackney, b. 1988)
London is *diverging*

- London’s inner city is only marginally taking part in South-east regional dialect levelling
  - E.g. little fronting of GOAT vowel
  - Instead, raising and backing of GOAT
  - But takes full part in nationally prevalent th-fronting, t-glottalling and GOOSE-fronting

- At the same time, the inner city is innovating
  - Diphthong shift reversal
  - /h/-reinstatement (replacing typical /h/-lessness of Cockney)
London’s inner city

• Innovatory features are endogenous to the inner-city communities

• ‘Multicultural London English’
  – Complex set of language contact factors
  – Children growing up learning English in an environment where L1 and/or local dialect models are in a minority
    • The same goes for Anglo children

• Metropolitan inner cities are often socially and economically marginalised: leads to their being Type 1 – endocentric and closed
Conclusion: speech communities in Britain

- **Endocentric closed** (Type 1): Metropolitan inner city. Innovations endogenous. Examples: **London’s inner city, 2000s** (high internal contact), **Belfast inner city, 1970s** (low internal contact?).
  - Economically deprived, less mobile?

- **Endocentric open** (Type 2): Urban centres, with strong external contacts favouring outward diffusion. Examples: **Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester**.
  - Not economically deprived, some mobility?

- **Exocentric closed** (Type 3): Low-contact communities with positive orientation to outside linguistic norms. Example: **Huntly**, late 1990s. But also: at a time of social upheaval, **Glasgow inner-city communities adopted external features, e.g. th-fronting** (Stuart-Smith).
  - Change by ideology, not contact.

- **Exocentric open** (Type 4): Often rural communities, and unlike Type 1 not protective of local norms. Strongly affected by incoming features, diffusing from local urban centres, losing identity. Example: **Holy Island**, but also suburban areas of cities.


• Milroy, L. 2007. Off the shelf or under the counter? On the social dynamics of sound changes, in Christopher Cain and Geoffrey Russom (eds), *Studies in English Historical Linguistics III*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 149-72

