MEITS Workshop Youth languages. The age of maturity?
Paris-Nanterre 7 June 2018

Demography vs. identity in the formation of new urban youth varieties

Paul Kerswill
University of York
paul.Kerswill@york.ac.uk
Youth varieties as language change

• Youth varieties are the product of particular kinds of change processes
  – Language contact
  – Multilingualism
  – Language shift
  – Dialect contact
  – Youth style, youth identity
Demography and language change

- Demography:
  - Increase/decrease in population size
  - Driven by natural change (births and deaths) and by migration (in-migration and out-migration)

- Start from Trudgill’s 2004 premise:
  - Dialects are formed as a function of
    - population sizes
    - frequencies of occurrence of dialect features in contact
    - face-to-face accommodation
‘Identity’

- Cover term for all subjective orientations:
  - language attitudes
  - language ideologies
  - beliefs about different social groups

- Studies of indexicality and enregisterment show that these may affect the direction and rate of linguistic change.

- What is the balance between demography and identity in language change?
  - Are youth languages more susceptible to identity factors in this regard?
Dialect formation and youth varieties

• Youth varieties are often described as ‘new’, arising from large-scale immigration starting at a particular point in time

• Focus on 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation migrants

• Can we perform a post hoc analysis of the origins of features of these varieties?
Taking a leaf out of dialect history: the British Industrial Revolution

<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
Taking a leaf out of dialect history: the British Industrial Revolution

Northern cities in the 19th century

- Are these population changes enough to lead to new dialect formation (koineisation → koines)?
- In the absence of contemporary quantitative linguistic data, can we use demographics to find out?
- Mufwene’s Founder Effect, based on the Founder Principle in populations genetics, can help us:
  - Idea that the initial population disproportionately influences the outcomes for later generations, even with large-scale migration
  - Mufwene doesn’t tell us about actual numbers, or the role of children in transmission.
Hypothesis:

• Let us assume that, for a dialect to be changed, there needs to be, *at a given point in time*, a minimum proportion of in-migrant people who have not acquired the local dialect. In the absence of detailed information, we can set this number at 50%.

• This means that the population must increase by 100% for a certain length of time. We can set this at 10-12 years.
Blackburn and Middlesbrough: population growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Figures</th>
<th>1801</th>
<th>1811</th>
<th>1821</th>
<th>1831</th>
<th>1841</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackburn</td>
<td>11,980</td>
<td>15,083</td>
<td>21,940</td>
<td>27,091</td>
<td>36,629</td>
<td>46,536</td>
<td>63,126</td>
<td>76,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesbrough</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>5,463</td>
<td>7,631</td>
<td>18,892</td>
<td>39,284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No evidence that a new dialect formed in Blackburn
- Evidence that koineisation took place in Middlesbrough, founded in 1830. High immigration from Ireland
Back to youth varieties: ‘Multiethnolects’

- Alternative term, which we prefer: **Urban contact variety**

- Shared across minorities, but also by members of majority groups
- Non-ethnic in its indexicality (in principle)
  - Partly true in the community in which it is spoken
  - Outside its own community it may sound distinctly ‘ethnic’
- It is variably **vernacularised**: 

![Diagram](Youth style \rightarrow Vernacular variety)
What we’ll cover today

1. Demography, and identity in the formation of youth varieties
2. Multicultural London English (MLE) features
3. When did MLE start?
5. Alternative explanations
6. A special place for African Caribbeans in the development of MLE?
7. Summing up
The London projects 2004–10


• Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox, Eivind Torgersen, Arfaan Khan
London boroughs
Hackney ethnic group percentages

- White British: 44.12%
- White Irish: 2.39%
- White Other: 12.26%
- Mixed race White Black Caribbean: 11.98%
- Mixed race White Black African: 10.29%
- Mixed race White Black Other: 1.17%
- Mixed race Other: 2.94%
- Asian Indian: 3.02%
- Asian Pakistani: 1.07%
- Asian Bangladeshi: 1.52%
- Asian Other: 0.82%
- Black caribbean: 1.07%
- Black African: 0.79%
- Black Other: 0.78%
In 2011, 54% of primary school and 44% of secondary school children had English as an additional language.
2. MLE features
Diphthong system of elderly male Anglo speaker from Hackney born 1918
Diphthong system of young male from Hackney, Afro-Caribbean origin, born 1989
Reversal of /h/-dropping

/h/ is pronounced in e.g. hole
th-stopping and fronting

• Merger of initial /ð/ in function words with /d/
  – Example: there

• Variably, /θ/ is merged with /f/ as in most nonstandard British varieties, but also with /t/
  – Example: thing
/k/-backing

/k/ is backed to [q] before nonhigh back vowels:

– car, cousin, college
A study of rhythm in London: Is syllable-timing a feature of Multicultural London English?

Eivind Torgersen
*Norwegian University of Science and Technology*

Anita Szakay
*Macquarie University*
Vocalic PVI: ethnicity
(Torgersen & Szakay 2012)

non-anglo group is more syllable-timed

Wilcoxon-test: W=488.5, p=0.012
Grammaticalisation processes

New pronoun *man*

*I don't really mind how . how my girl looks if she looks decent yeah and there's one bit of her face that just looks mashed yeah I don't care it's her personality *man's* looking at . I'm not even looking at the girl proper like* (Cheshire 2013)

A new quotative

*this is me “don’t be funny”* (Cheshire et al 2011, Fox 2010)
Analogical forms

**why** you doing that **for**? (cf. *what you doing that for? where are you going to?*)

Forms ‘latent’ in English (cf. Wiese 2013, on Kiezdeutsch)

e.g. bare NPs with verbs of motion

*they go skating rinks*

*I used to go Stratford on Avon*
Alex, aged 17

I mean I literally walked past two thugs that I didn't not knew but they just grabbed me by the hood swang me in a alley and had me at knife point. and I couldn't do nothing but I said . and they said "where you from?“ I said "east london that's where I'm from“ this is them "don't be funny" cos they're . I was right in a bit of east London so they said "don't be funny with me like that cos I'll stab you" and I said “I'm not trying to be funny” this is them "what area are you from . what part?“ this is me “I'm from Haggerston . Fields" and then like they just said "oh yeh I don't like that area reh reh reh" and then like some hero. thank god there is some typical heros who. and it's like if you're short don't even bother come over because you're just gonna get stabbed yourself like .
3. When did MLE start?

- 1950s on: Anglos (white British) and Afro-Caribbeans (mainly from Jamaica) formed the most numerous groups
- Their linguistic repertoires differed (Sebba, Hewitt):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>London vernacular (‘Cockney’)</th>
<th>London Jamaican (‘Patois’)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglos</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Caribbeans</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The view from academe, c. 1984

- Sebba and Hewitt additionally noted an intermediate ‘Black Cockney’ or ‘multiethnic/multiracial vernacular’
  - Apparently for use in adolescent peer groups only
  - So not actually a native dialect, but more a style

- Seeds of MLE visible in these comments
A criminologist speaks

• Criminologist John Pitts notes the start of a new youth language among young black people in the East End in the early 1980s, when their deteriorating social position was preventing them from living up to their parents’ expectations.

  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gd3SJ6qakyY  (29 minutes in)

• Pitts argues that the new dialect reflects a ‘resistance identity’.

• Mufwene’s Founder Effect:
  – Founding populations set the feature base-line for a speech community
  – A very large number of incomers is needed to swamp the base-line dialect

• A rule of thumb for the lasting effect of migration on existing language use (as mentioned):
  – At any one time, at least 50% of the population should have migrated to the community post-adolescence, and this situation should remain for at least 10 years
The London borough of Tower Hamlets

  - Bangladeshi immigration in the London borough of Tower Hamlets
  - Fox provides a summary of London migrations
Immigration to London post-WWII

• Caribbean immigration, 1950s on

• Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigration from early 1970s

• Other ethnic groups from 1980s

• EU accession states from 2004
  – Especially Poland
Just how big were these streams?

Major immigration groups in three London boroughs:

• Croydon:
  – 8.6% Black Caribbean
  – 8% Black African
  – 6.8% Indian

• Hackney:
  – 7.8% Black Caribbean
  – 11.4% Black African
  – 3.1% Indian

• Tower Hamlets:
  – 32% Bangladeshi
  – 2.1% Black Caribbean
  – 3.7% Black African
  – 2.7% Indian
• In London, no single ethnicity except White British (Anglo) comes remotely near to dominating any borough.

• But some parts of some boroughs do have a majority of non-British born, non-English speaking inhabitants.
  – Begs the question of how these minority areas can exert sufficient influence.

• This means that *demography alone* does not allow us to claim a single origin for any of the features.
  – Multiple origins?
5. Alternative explanations

- FACE and GOAT vowels
- GOOSE vowel
- Reinstatement of /h/
- Stopping of /ð/ in function words with /d/ and /θ/ with /t/
- Syllable timing
- New [q] allophone of /k/
• Stormzy (2015):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqQGUJK7Na4,
0:50 backup dancer
0:54 backup
0:55 comes everywhere
0:56 can’t rumble
New pronoun *man*

- As with [q], we are moving towards a different kind of explanation that cuts across demography: the attractiveness of a cultural style stereotypically associated with a particular group of young people.

- Very much in line with Potts’s idea of a resistance identity directly signalled through linguistic choices.
Güldemann (2012): “A still poorly-analyzed quotative strategy without overt reference to a speech event is the use of thetic non-verbal identificational and presentational clauses that focus on the identity of the speaker as the source of the reported discourse.”
Syllable timing:

- Cf contact varieties, including Maori English, Singapore English
  - Probably West African English too
6. A special place for African Caribbeans in the development of MLE?

- Cultural dominance of this group in post-war London music scene
- Signalled today by Jamaican slang in MLE
- MLE felt by some to be ‘fake Jamaican’ or ‘Jafaican’ – i.e. ‘foreign’
- Racial discrimination
- Resistance identity

➢ We can begin to look for a Jamaican origin for some parts of the vowel system by looking at the speech of the early post-WWII Jamaican migrants:
NOTE: He shows a typical Jamaican vowel configuration, with ingliding /e/ and /o/. His stressed syllabic /r/ is usually r-ful; otherwise he is mostly r-less. (conversation; NCSU)
Adolescent speakers (aged 16–19) of Afro-Caribbean origin, born c1989. (For diphthongs, only onsets are shown.)

• Recordings:

  – Jamaican immigrants recorded by John Wells in 1970

  – London-born Jamaicans recorded by Mark Sebba in 1984
Everton, aged 20, recorded 1984
Composite vowel systems of 11 adolescent London-born Jamaicans recorded in 1984 (For diphthongs, only onsets are shown.)
Conclusions – 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} generations of Jamaicans in London

• 1\textsuperscript{st} generation (immigrants, 1960s)
  – Different island creoles + Caribbean English + speech accommodated to London English

• 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation (1980s)
  – Expanded repertoire with London Vernacular (Cockney), plus London Jamaican and (incipient) MLE
  – Code-switching

• 3\textsuperscript{rd} generation (2000s)
  – Restriction of repertoire (for some)
    • Loss of London Jamaican
    • Loss of Cockney
    • MLE dominates – FACE, GOAT aligned with ‘Patois’ style
There is no unique origin for multiethnolect features

- Founder effect relates to the first large migration strand
  - May account for prevalence of Jamaican slang, but doesn’t account for African American slang
- Frequency has some impact
- Strong indexicality effects for some features
  - Needs investigation
  - Internally-motivated change which gains indexical meaning ([q] for /k/)
- Some global features are adopted
  - But why these and not others?
- The combination of features in MLE is not entirely predictable, but contingent on a rapidly changing demography and inter-group relations
7. Summing up

• So far, used Trudgill’s determinism model of new-dialect formation (2004)

• But doesn’t work well:
  – We’re dealing with language shift involving ‘group second-language acquisition’ (Winford 2003)
  – Speakers choose from a ‘feature pool’ (Mufwene)

• Why GOOSE-fronting but not FOOT-fronting?
  – *Global* change – cf also SPEAKER + BE LIKE quotative

• MLE vowels and THIS IS + SPEAKER are *local* changes

• From the early days of MLE, identity factors have played a powerful role.
  • Comments by Pitts, Sebba, Hewitt
• That’s it!
References

Jenny Cheshire, Susan Fox, Penelope Gardner-Chloros and Maria Secova New quotatives in London English and Paris French: parallel pathways?


