Salience, image, and revival in Liverpool English

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Why Liverpool?

profile of the variety

► Scouse is “well known to most British people, and very distinctive” [Trudgill 1999, 70]
► Scouse is among the most heavily stigmatised varieties in the UK [Montgomery 2007]

recent history of the city

► Like most northern English cities, Liverpool has experienced dramatic structural changes (accompanied by considerable social hardship)
► The last 20 years or so have seen regeneration and economic revival.
## Profile of Scouse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect area</th>
<th>All locations (n=273)</th>
<th>Carlisle (n=98)</th>
<th>Crewe (n=85)</th>
<th>Hull (n=93)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scouse (Liverpool)</td>
<td>159 (57.8%)</td>
<td>48 (49%)</td>
<td>67 (78.8%)</td>
<td>44 (47.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geordie (Newcastle)</td>
<td>156 (56.7%)</td>
<td>52 (53.1%)</td>
<td>61 (71.8%)</td>
<td>43 (46.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brummie (Birmingham)</td>
<td>132 (48%)</td>
<td>34 (34.7%)</td>
<td>61 (71.8%)</td>
<td>37 (39.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cockney</td>
<td>100 (36.4%)</td>
<td>33 (33.7%)</td>
<td>46 (54.1%)</td>
<td>21 (22.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manc (Manchester)</td>
<td>73 (26.5%)</td>
<td>26 (26.5%)</td>
<td>33 (38.8%)</td>
<td>14 (15.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire</td>
<td>54 (19.6%)</td>
<td>9 (9.2%)</td>
<td>12 (14.1%)</td>
<td>33 (35.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria/Carlisle</td>
<td>35 (12.7%)</td>
<td>33 (33.7%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>31 (11.3%)</td>
<td>10 (10.2%)</td>
<td>16 (18.8%)</td>
<td>5 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Country</td>
<td>21 (7.6%)</td>
<td>9 (9.2%)</td>
<td>7 (8.2%)</td>
<td>5 (5.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potteries (Stoke)</td>
<td>14 (5.1%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>13 (15.3%)</td>
<td>- (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: The ten most frequently identified dialect areas across all survey locations.

- ‘scallies’
- ‘criminals’
- ‘not to be trusted’
- ‘shoot the lot’

[Montgomery 2007]
Post-WW2 Liverpool

1945 to 1960s

- economic boom and pinnacle of Liverpool's career in pop culture (Beatles!)
- ‘Beat city’

→ 56-85 year olds

1970s and 80s

- containerisation and Britain’s re-orientation towards Europe mean economic (and physical) decline, mass unemployment, and an increase in crime for Liverpool

→ 30-55 year olds

mid-1990s to the present

- urban regeneration (often with European funding) and economic re-structuring; focus on tourism and culture
- “[f]orward-looking self-promotion” [Belchem 2006, 54]

→ 19-29 year olds
“[R]egional dialect levelling is widespread in Britain” [Kerswill 2003]

“Some of the kids today are so uber-Scouse even I don’t understand what they’re saying” (male, middle class, 59 years old)
“Scouse is getting Scouser” [Watson 2007]

hypothesis

younger speakers show a stronger preference for local speech forms

(a) younger speakers exhibit less style shifting
(b) younger speakers are less explicitly aware of typical local features
Variables

vowels

- **happy-tensing** (non-salient)
  final vowel in words of the happy set is realised by a tense [i] instead of a lax [ɪ]

- **NURSE-SQUARE merger** (highly salient)
  fur and fair are (near-)homophones for many Liverpool speakers, realisation tends towards [ɛ]

consonants

- **velar nasal plus** (non-salient)
  <ng> is realised as [ŋɡ], so that singer rhymes with finger

- **lenition of /k/** (highly salient)
  /k/ is either an affricate [kx], or a fricative [ç, ʃ]
Variables — continued

(a) Trudgill’s map for velar nasal plus

(b) Trudgill’s map for happy
interviews

“classical”, one-on-one sociolinguistic interviews

- free speech
  - childhood
  - changes in the city
  - football and other sports
  - Liverpool’s image in the UK
  - rivalry with Manchester
  - language

- reading passage
- word list
- accent imitation

→ 40–60 minutes of recorded speech per subject
→ Labovian concept of salience (indicator, marker, stereotype)
Analysis

1. transcription of audio recordings (40–60 minute interviews)
2. semi-automatic measurements of relevant sounds by means of a Praat script

All of the following figures are designed in such a way that higher values on the y-axis represent ‘more Scouse’ variants.
Analysis — vowels

NURSE, SQUARE, and happy

1. automatic measurements of F1, F2, and F3 in the middle of the vowel
2. vowel-intrinsic normalisation using the Bark-difference method
   - Z3-Z1 \approx F1 \text{ (high vowels have high values)}
   - Z3-Z2 \approx F2 \text{ (back vowels have high (!) values)}
Analysis — consonants

velar nasal plus and lenition of /k/: proportion of aspiration

1. automatic measurements of proportional duration of friction
2. additional auditory categorisation as
   \[
   /\eta g/ \quad 0 \text{ (nasal)} \text{ and } 1 \text{ (nasal plus plosive)}
   
   \text{lenition} \quad 0 \text{ (plosive)}, 1 \text{ (affricate)}, \text{ and } 2 \text{ (fricative)}
   \]
participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>19-29</th>
<th>30-55</th>
<th>56-85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>WC</th>
<th>MC</th>
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<tbody>
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Total:

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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Age, gender, and social class of subjects

→ 6635 observations

Figure: Areal distribution of subjects
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Introduction

Background

Variables

Method

Interviews

Analysis

Participants

Results

**happY — height**

(a) Z3-Z1 by age

(b) Z3-Z1 by style

\[
\begin{align*}
AG_1 & = 0.5 \\
AG_2 & = 0.15 \\
AG_3 & = 0.1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
AG_1 & = 10.5 \\
AG_2 & = 11.0 \\
AG_3 & = 11.5 \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
Z_1 & = 56-85 \\
Z_2 & = 30-55 \\
Z_3 & = 19-29 \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Conclusions**
Salience, image, and revival in Liverpool English

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happy — advancement

(a) Z3-Z2 by age

(b) Z3-Z2 by style
(a) Z3-Z1 by age

(b) Z3-Z1 by style
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Happy

NURSE—advancement

(a) Z3-Z2 by age

(b) Z3-Z2 by style
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\[
p = 0.011 \\
p = 0.346 \\
p = 0.001
\]

Aspiration

Age group

\[
\text{Age_grp} \\
56-85 \\
30-55 \\
19-29
\]

Style

Aspiration

list \\
reading \\
imitation

(a) PDF of /ŋg/ by age 

(b) PDF of /ŋg/ by style
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\[ /k/ \]

(a) PDF of /k/ by age

(b) PDF of /k/ by style
Awareness

(a) awareness of NURSE by age

(b) awareness of /k/ lenition by age
Performance

Lee Mack on ‘Scouse dolphins’
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiLr_Y65m5w
Recent examples in the city centre
Conclusions

- **happY**
  - significantly more centralised in youngest group
  - development away both from Scouse and from RP
  - signalling of ‘Northern’ identity? cf. [Flynn 2010]

- **NURSE**
  - significantly fronted in youngest group
  - almost significantly lower in youngest group
  - no style shifting in youngest group
Conclusions

- /ŋg/
  - increase already in middle group
  - no ‘classical’ style shifting in any group

- lenition of /k/
  - youngest group almost significantly more Scouse than middle group
  - consistent style shifting in all groups

- awareness
  - happy and /ŋg/ completely below the radar
  - conscious awareness of NURSE-SQUARE merger decreases (no stereotype in youngest group anymore)
  - increasing awareness of /k/; even more of a stereotype now
Literatur


