

Overview

This handout provides the basis for a discussion of the issue of the influence of TV on language, and then the correlational data from the Glasgow media project, which took place at the University of Toronto on 18 April 2007. Note that the regressions are now revised to include the strongest possible dialect contact variables (not just having relatives in the South of England, but also seeing and talking to them), which entailed some changes to the overall regression models for each variable. The pattern of results remain the same.

Some data on television as a factor in accent change

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1. Context – TV and language change

- Within quantitative sociolinguistics, media thought to:
 - be involved in spread of lexical items
 - raise awareness of linguistic varieties/variation
 - affect attitudes towards linguistic varieties/variation
(e.g. Milroy and Milroy 1985; Trudgill 1986; Chambers 1998)
- If core features of grammar are affected by media
 - voluntary orientation towards media
 - conscious copying from media models
(e.g. Trudgill 1986; Carvalho 2004)
- socially-motivated language change takes place primarily through accommodation during face-to-face interaction (dialect contact); e.g. Labov (2001)

2. Context – The problem of consonant changes in UK urban accents

- Certain consonant features appear to be spreading across UK urban accents:
 - [f] for (th), TH-fronting, in e.g. *think*
 - [v] for (dh), DH-fronting, in e.g. *brother*
 - L-vocalization, e.g. *milk*e.g. Wells (1982), Foulkes and Docherty (1999)
- Profile of those who appear to be innovators:
 - working-class adolescents
 - low social and geographical mobility
- This is also happening in Glasgow (e.g. Stuart-Smith et al, 2007), with the same social distribution, and argued to be part of sociolinguistic construction of identity within working-class adolescents which differentiates them from middle-class speakers in the city.
- Is this to do with the media, e.g. watching London-based dramas, e.g. *EastEnders*?
- On TH-fronting in Norwich, Trudgill (1986: 54) suggests probably a combination of factors working together
 - less overt forms of dialect contact
 - attitudes towards Cockney might play a role

- and later, '[the] sheer speed [of the change] may be due to a 'softening-up' process produced by the engendering of favourable attitudes through TV programmes'; (Trudgill 1988: 44).
- 3. Context – Motivating research into TV and accent change**
- TV is exceptionally prevalent; and some TV programmes constitute social phenomena, e.g. the London-based soap *EastEnders* (1985-)
 - screened 4 times/week plus weekend omnibus
 - regularly attracted 18 million viewers/episode (i.e. almost one-third UK population)
 - viewing of key episodes have caused exceptional surges in electricity demand (e.g. National Grid 2001)
 - viewers can be highly engaged (e.g. Buckingham 1987)
 - Media are assumed to affect social behaviour (e.g. McQuail 2000: 424f), but
 - TV is assumed to be a contributory factor, along with other factors (Klapper 1960: 8)
 - audience assumed to be active interpreters of media texts (e.g. Philo 1999)
 - TV and para-social interaction (e.g. Abercrombie 1996)
 - linguists are starting to include TV:
 - 'as part of the global sociolinguistic condition'; Androutsopoulos (2001: 4);
 - as cause of language change, in German; e.g. Lameli (2004), Muhr (2003)
 - in accounts of language variation, e.g. Br. Portuguese (Naro 1981, Naro and Scherre 1996); Ur. Portuguese (Carvalho 2004).
 - and to wonder about TV in TH-fronting; e.g. Williams and Kerswill (1999); Foulkes and Docherty (2000)
- 4. New data on TV and accent change – the Glasgow media project**
- *Is TV a contributory factor in accent change in adolescents?* (2002-5); ESRC R000239757
 - main research question: Are the media a contributory factor in systemic language change under certain circumstances for certain individuals?
 - specific research question: Does TV play a role in the appearance of Cockney accent features in the speech of Glaswegian adolescents?
 - Research team
 - Research Fellow, Claire Timmins
 - statistics, (Prof) Gwilym Pryce (Urban Studies, Glasgow)
 - media studies, (Prof) Barrie Gunter (Media and Communication, Leicester)
- 5. Methodology**
- Sample: 36 adolescents; 12 adults (working-class)
 - longitudinal - tracks 2 age groups across 2 years
 - methods: sociolinguistic/media effects research – quantitative and qualitative
 - data
 - speech: wordlist and spontaneous
 - questionnaire
 - informal interviews
 - diaries
 - television/language experiment (quiz show)
 - media accent analysis

6. Linguistic variables

% th word	[th]	[f]	[m]	[thf]	n
1F	48	46	2	4	118
1M	23	66	7	4	107
2F	39	55	3	3	118
2M	41	51	5	3	122
3F	35	55	5	5	125
3M	35	59	2	4	125
4F	100	0	0	0	115
4M	95	1	1	3	121

- adolescents use more [f] than adults
- comparison with data from 1997 shows more [f] in 2003

% th conv	[th]	[f]	[h]	[0]	n
1F	18	36	46	0	339
1M	10	55	35	0	216
2F	19	22	56	3	353
2M	24	34	43	0	261
3F	12	33	53	2	381
3M	10	27	61	1	377
4F	74	2	24	0	320
4M	61	1	38	1	272

- kids use more [f] than adults
- comparison with data from 1997 shows more [f] in 2003

% dh word	[dh]	[v]	[r]	[dhv]	[m]	n
1Fs	81	6	4	0	9	111
1Ms	40	22	31	0	7	103
2Fs	54	7	29	1	9	111
2Ms	67	6	17	0	11	109
3Fs	71	11	15	0	3	113
3Ms	61	11	18	0	10	114
4Fs	91	0	1	0	8	109
4Ms	74	2	17	0	7	109

- kids use more [v] than adults
- comparison with data from 1997 shows more [v] in 2003

% l word	[l]	[V]	[lV]	[m]	n
1Fs	23	73	3	1	149
1Ms	15	75	2	9	141
2Fs	20	76	4	1	144
2Ms	15	79	5	1	144
3Fs	19	76	4	1	149
3Ms	20	78	2	0	149
4Fs	52	39	9	1	148
4Ms	59	27	14	0	141

- kids use more [V] than adults
- comparison with data from 1997 shows more [V] in 2003

% l conv	[l]	[V]	[lV]	n
1Fs	67	29	4	113

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1Ms	72	22	6	112
2Fs	61	31	8	222
2Ms	75	18	7	105
3Fs	61	32	7	226
3Ms	70	23	7	237
4Fs	80	15	5	246
4Ms	73	20	7	168

- kids use a bit more [V] than adults
- comparison with data from 1997 shows more [V] in 2003

7. Extra-linguistic variables

- (Linguistic: position in word)
- age; gender
- thematic 'categories' of variables:
 - dialect contact
 - attitudes to urban accents
 - social practices/identities
 - music (incl. radio)
 - computers (incl. internet)
 - film (incl. video/DVD)
 - sport
 - TV

8. Statistical analysis

- logistic regression
- 'general-to-specific' model
- create list for each thematic category
- prune list after checking for multicollinearity
- run regressions on each category list (e.g. dialect contact, attitudes, TV, etc.)
- significant variables from each list with theoretically interesting variables reinserted gives overall 'shortlist'
- run regressions on list until only significant variables remain
- a useful incidental result is the amount of variance accounted for by each regression model, indicated (in a more approximate way for logistic regression than linear regression) by Nagelkerke r^2

9. Linguistic factors

- Significant factor of specific position in word emerged for each variable:
 - [f] for (th) wordlists: more likely word-finally (2%?)
 - [f] for (th) conversations: more likely word-finally (13%)
 - [v] for (dh) wordlists: more likely word-finally (31%)
 - [V] for (l) wordlists: more likely postconsonantly (10%)
 - [V] for (l) conversations: more likely postconsonantly (13%)

10. Age/gender

- Whilst effects of age and gender were occasionally found across variants for the variables, the regressions for age and gender consistently either failed to be significant, or to show sufficiently high explanation of variance; cf Labov (2001: 272, fn 16).

11. Dialect contact

- Initial baseline: informants born and raised in area.
- Most have few relatives beyond Glasgow, whom they talk to more than they see. Main contact with friends and family within Glasgow.
- [f] for (th) in wordlists: positive link with having relatives in the South of England (8%)
- [f] for (th) in conversations: positive link with visiting London (5%)
- [v] for (dh) in wordlists: positive link with having relatives in Glasgow (6%)
- [V] for (l) in wordlists: positive link with talking to, and seeing, relatives in North and/or South England (6%)
- [V] for (l) in conversations: no significant variables

Summary: Some positive links with relatives and friends living in the South of England, so giving empirical support to assumption of dialect contact as a factor in these changes. But the generally low level of variance explained indicates that dialect contact probably should not be assumed as only mechanism for spread/exploitation of these variants.

12. Attitudes

- Attitudinal survey of 7 urban accents, and ‘mental’ image of 8 urban accents.
- London accents rated lower than other accents.
- [f] for (th) in wordlists: positive links with liking London/Manchester samples; negative link with liking an Edinburgh accent (posh) (12%)
- [f] for (th) in conversations: negative links with liking a Manchester accent, being able to identify London sample correctly, give London sample as favourite (5%)
- [v] for (dh) in wordlists: positive link with being able to identify London sample correctly (13%)
- [V] for (l) in wordlists: positive links with liking London/Manchester samples; negative link with liking Newcastle sample; and a Manchester accent (8%)
- [V] for (l) in conversations: no significant variables

Summary: Some positive links for liking London accent, and/or being able to identify London accent correctly, but also scattered relationships with other accents. Explanation of variance still quite low.

Note: We find no evidence for ‘softening-up’, i.e. that watching popular programmes set in London is linked to liking the London accents more. In fact, multiple regression analysis shows a negative link between liking the London sample and watching *EastEnders* (see Stuart-Smith 2006).

13. Social practices

- Our sample captures some existing groups and fragments of others.
- The majority of the sample identify each other as ‘neds’, i.e. young urban delinquents “*I’m a wee Glasgow person. I wouldnae say I’m a ned ’cos I don’t like go oot and start fights an’ aw that.*” (2m3)
- [f] for (th) in wordlists: positive links with disliking school, going out at weekend, deviate from uniform policy; negative link with having many friends (18%)
- [f] for (th) in conversations: positive link with going out at weekend, having more friends; negative link with hanging out (but 2%)
- [v] for (dh) in wordlists: positive link with going out at weekend (7%)
- [V] for (l) in wordlists: positive link with deviating from uniform policy (6%)

- [V] for (l) in conversations: positive link with deviating from uniform policy, engaging in ‘older’ social practices (but 2%)

Summary: Rather gross characterisation of social practices nevertheless yields a few representative variables, and some positive links with more anti-establishment practices. Explanation of variance differs across variables, but tends to be low.

14. TV

- Our informants report access to 3+ TV sets at home, and say that they watch TV every day, with average exposure of around 3 hours/day.
- London-based programmes are rated highest for soap (*EastEnders*), comedy (*Only Fools and Horses*), and police drama (*The Bill*).
- TH-fronting/DH-fronting/L-vocalization occur variably in ‘media-Cockney’.
- [f] for (th) in wordlists: positive links with *EastEnders* as favourite programme, criticising soap characters, liking *EastEnders* (*The Bill*); negative links with general exposure to TV, watching Scottish, Northern and US-based dramas, talking about TV whilst watching TV, talking about TV in the conversations (5%)
- [f] for (th) in conversations: positive links with *EastEnders* as favourite programme, and source of favourite characters, like accent of *The Bill*; negative links with watching Scottish, Northern and US-based dramas, watching *EastEnders*, *Only Fools and Horses*, like US-based dramas, liking the accent of *Grange Hill*, watching TV with friends, talking about TV in the conversations, mentioning London programmes in conversations (5%)
- [v] for (dh) in wordlists: positive links with watching *EastEnders*, criticising soap characters, talking about TV films, talking about TV in the conversations; negative links with general exposure to TV, watching or really liking Scottish programmes, watching TV with friends, talking about TV when out with friends, mentioning London programmes with friends (13%)
- [V] for (l) in wordlists: positive links with watching *EastEnders*, *EastEnders* as favourite programme, and source of favourite characters, liking *EastEnders*, also *Only Fools and Horses*, criticising soap characters, talking about TV in conversations, liking accent of *OFAH*; negative links with general exposure to TV, watching/liking/liking accent of US-based programmes, talking about TV films, mentioning London programmes in conversations.
- [V] for (l) in conversations: positive links with watching *EastEnders*, *EastEnders* as favourite programme, and source of favourite characters, liking *EastEnders*; negative links with liking Northern programmes, and the accent of American/Northern programmes, talking about TV films, and talking about TV in the conversations. (4%)

Summary: A number of factors are significant, positive correlations mainly with engagement with *EastEnders*, but negative with simply watching TV, or engaging with Scottish/Northern/US programmes. The relationships with reported activities during TV watching, and/or discussing TV during the recorded conversations are more mixed. Fairly consistent pattern across the five variables. Explanation of variance generally low.

15. Combined regressions

- The overall design of the project was a multifactorial model.
- A number of regressions were run for each linguistic variable testing all possible TV factors, in conjunction with differing degrees of dialect contact variables. The best model, specifically for dialect contact, is presented here for each variable.¹

<i>(th) wordlists</i>	<i>ExpB Reg 1</i>	<i>ExpB Reg 2</i>
wdfinal	1.87	1.85
record video		
like animation films	-5.42	-4.67
rent comedy	-4.71	-5.26
Real Radio	-1.96	-1.76
support Celtic	1.83	1.76
watch snooker	4.77	4.00
watch Formula 1		
computer games alone	1.16	1.15
chatrooms		
internet other		
dislike school	1.55	1.59
like London sample		
see/talk rel NS England	1.43	1.30
watch TV		
% TV conv		
watch Cor St		
watch ER		
EE fav prog	2.42	2.41
<i>N</i>	756	756
<i>Nagelkerke r square</i>	0.34	0.33

<i>(th) conversations</i>	<i>ExpB Reg 1</i>	<i>Reg 2</i>
wordfinl	11.67	11.81
music weekend	-1.62	-1.53
% music informal		
play football	2.56	2.35
watch Formula 1	-2.71	-2.54
chatrooms	-1.46	-1.38
internet other		
dislike school		
out w/end night	1.21	1.19
visit London		
% TV conv	-1.06	-1.06
watch Cor St	-1.31	-1.34
watch ER		
fav char EE	1.43	1.36
<i>N</i>	1327	1327
<i>Nagelkerke r square</i>	0.23	0.23

¹ The variables are the overall 'shortlist', the numbers in the 2nd and 3rd columns the Exponent B (a statistic reflecting the relative odds of the B coefficient, which effectively expands the scale so that is possible to see the strength of effects more easily) for statistically significant correlations from the model.

<i>(dh) wordlists</i>	<i>ExpB Reg 1</i>	<i>ExpB Reg 2</i>
wordfinl	67.25	47.05
% film conv		
music day w/end		
go w/end night	3.41	3.22
dislike school	1.94	2.03
identify London sample	1.54	1.59
see/talk rel NS England	(1.83)	
talk about TV films	4.98	5.41
identify WC Glasw		
watch TV	-2.26	-2.27
talk TV inf		
watch/like CSt		
watch/like ER		
watch/like EE	8.73	12.88
<i>N</i>	665	684
<i>Nagelkerke r square</i>	0.54	0.46

<i>(l) wordlists</i>	<i>Exp B Reg 1</i>	<i>Exp B Reg 2</i>
<i>people</i>	2.76	2.71
Real Radio		
% music conv	-1.21	-1.12
do athletics	-2.11	-2.15
involved sport		
internet games		
internet other		
deviate uniform	4.55	5.82
like N/c sample		
like London sample		
see/talk rel Neng		
see/talk rel Seng	1.19	1.18
visit London		
watch TV		
% TV conv	1.04	1.03
Lond prog conv	-2.03	-2.00
like C St		
like ER		
like EE/criticise chars	6.25	3.92
<i>N</i>	900	900
<i>Nagelkerke r square</i>	0.20	0.18

<i>(l) conversations</i>	<i>Exp B Reg 1</i>	<i>Exp B Reg 2</i>
<i>people</i>	6.66	6.66
like comedy films	1.93	1.93
support Celtic		
play snooker		
deviate uniform		
older activities		
like London sample		
email friends from Glasgow		
see/talk rel NS England		
visit London		
watch TV		
talk about TV films		
% TV conv	-1.06	-1.06
watch C St		
watch ER		
EE fav prog/char	1.98	1.98
<i>N</i>	<i>1015</i>	<i>1015</i>
<i>Nagelkerke r square</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.20</i>

16. Summary of combined regression results

- Extensive multicollinearity between social variables shows the extent to which these variables are interrelated.
- Explanation of variance shows
 - in general, no category sufficient alone to account for variation
 - categories taken together provide more satisfactory regression models
- Specific category results show
 - positive evidence for dialect contact with Southern England (th/l: wordlists)
 - robust nature of factors capturing social practices (all bar l: conv)
 - attitudinal variables are weaker than other factors
 - robust nature of TV factors, specifically engagement with *EastEnders* (all five)
- implication is that a range of social factors, including dialect contact, social practices, and TV, are involved in the variation in these variables in these speakers.

17. Interpreting the correlations with TV

- may stand for another factor unaccounted for within the model, e.g. possibly covert positive attitudes towards Cockney (cf. Kristiansen 2003)
- may refer to those adolescents, who show such features, and who also prefer *EastEnders*/other programmes set in London (entails potential coherence in social patterning of kids which we didn't find)
- may result – in some way – from their engagement with popular programmes set in London. If so, along with current media effects researchers, we would not assume a direct transmission effect from TV, but rather that we would have to model the connection between innovative variant and TV behaviour.

Note: other significant factors in model are unlikely to be assumed to have a direct causal effect on L-vocalization, e.g. deviating from school uniform

18. Awareness of ‘media-Cockney’?

- Explored using informal imitation task (boys only) given during informal interview (cf Preston 1992)
 - informants shown a set of picture cards
 - asked to pronounce words first in their own accent
 - shown a picture of a leading actor from *EastEnders*
 - asked to talk about his accent and theirs
 - asked to say words again, but with the same accent as the actor
- Fine phonetic analysis of the pairs of words

19. Awareness – results

- All thought the character’s accent was different from theirs
‘It’s like a sore throat accent ... or ... they took his tonsils oot or something’
‘Ah ‘hink they pronounce more’
‘He changes the letters, if it was ‘f’ he’d use ‘v’
‘he talks different’ ‘he talks more tough’
‘It’s aw right ... I wouldnae like to speak like it but’

20. Imitation of ‘media Cockney’

- idiosyncratic, subtle, alteration of segments
- more alteration to suprasegmentals
- no apparent systematic alteration of variables
- no evidence from this, of awareness of these features as particular features of this character’s speech
- implication: variation in these speakers is not resulting from conscious copying

21. Summary/discussion

- Consistent patterns across 5 variables point to the integrated involvement of a range of social factors in the changes in progress in these speakers, including
 - dialect contact
 - social practices
 - engagement with TV, though not apparently leading to awareness/positive attitudes
- Thus study provides empirical support for the role of dialect contact in these changes, as has always been assumed (especially given reports of these variants in the 1950s),
- underscores the importance of social practices, and presumably associated development of sociolinguistic patterns, for these speakers, within the local context of the city as assumed in Stuart-Smith et al (2007),
- and extends the range of factors involved both in terms of specifying social practices/pursuits, and of including ‘external’ factors.

22. Modelling the TV links

- The correlations (implicitly), and other evidence from the project (e.g. experiment, qualitative analysis), highlights the role of individuals
- We suspect that modelling the results for TV (amongst other factors) probably requires us to return to individual speakers in their local environment,
- and with that a shift of perspective, specifically to one which emphasizes watching TV as a socio-culturally embedded activity during which viewers appropriate such elements as fit their view of the world (‘communicative appropriation’) and exploit them to their own ends; e.g. Holly et al (2001).

- We suggest that phonetic variants may be/have been/are being appropriated into the existing system, but only to the extent that existing sociolinguistic identity is not compromised (which might account for these particular variants). We note:
 - We have no evidence of any shifts in vowels which might relate to London-based models, or of similar statistical patterning in vowels.
 - The ‘innovative’ variants occur alongside a thriving system of local non-standard variation, such as [h] for (th), [r] for (dh), Scots l-vocalization, Scots vowel variation (e.g. *oot/out*, *aff/off*)
 - Awareness of [f] for (th) developed recently; we don’t know about the other variables.
 - There is no evidence that our informants intend to sound anything other than ‘pure Glaswegian’.

Thus if TV is involved in these changes, we assume that it can only be understood as another socially-bound process dependent on local context. But note that until we have further evidence (in terms of ethnographically-collected data for more spontaneous interactions, and also TV behaviours), this remains the beginnings of a speculative model.

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