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Citation: Møller Jensen, Marie (2011) 'Divn't take wor Tyne': linguistic identity in Newcastle upon Tyne. In: School of Arts and Social Sciences Postgraduate Research Conference, 8 September 2011, Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

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“Divn’t take wor Tyne”: linguistic identity in Newcastle upon Tyne

Marie Jensen

studying for a

PhD in Empirical Linguistics

Principal supervisor: Ewa Dabrowska

Introduction

- The north of England, and Newcastle as a case in point, is often thought of and portrayed in mainstream media as backwards and working-class (Lancaster 1995).
- Newcastle/Gateshead's past was filled with heavy industry and coal-mining and it is only recently that it is re-defining itself as a cultural centre with much more to offer than derelict mines and shipyards. Development of and changes to the Quayside can be linked to the development of and changes in regional identity. (Miles 2005)
- Northern identity is closely tied to a sense of place but also marred by an awareness of the questionable place of the location within the social landscape of England (Wrightson 1995) which seem to persist despite the recent 'culture-led regeneration' (Watt 2002)
- However, the recent 'culture-led regeneration' of the town focusing on more 'middle-class values', such as modern art and classical music (Miles 2005), seems to contradict the stereotype of 'backwards and working-class'.
- But what about the Tynesiders who are proud Northerners (and Geordies!) with all that entails? If the place they have identified with is being changed and no longer represent values that are familiar to them, where will they anchor their identity?
 - → Revitalisation of local vernacular forms to signify local identity.

Changes in Tyneside English

- Levelling – definition:
 - Loss of marked local vernacular items, replacement by regional or standard forms. The outcome is convergence of regional dialects toward each other and/or the standard. (Kerswill 2003, Trudgill 1986).
- Watt (2002)
 - Study of phonological levelling in Tyneside English
 - Variables (FACE and GOAT)
- Cheshire, Kerswill, and Williams (2005)
 - Expectation: levelling in one part (phonology) leads to levelling in another part (morphosyntax)
 - Finding: no (substantial) connection
- Urban development and “culture-led regeneration” emphasising middle class values and a lack (or loss) of what (used to?) characterise Newcastle leads to a linguistic move towards less localised varieties (i.e. levelling).
- My suggestion: revival of vernacular morphosyntactic forms and construction of Tyneside linguistic identity in the face of external changes

Pilot studies

- Jensen (2008) and Jensen (2009)
 - Variables: (do + NEG) and (you)
 - Corpora:
 - TLS (1960s) 37 informants
 - PVC (1990s) 36 informants
 - Total: 73 informants (Jensen 2008)
 - NECTE2 (2007-2008) 24 informants
 - Total: 97 informants (Jensen 2009)

Current work

- Variables:

- (do + NEG)
- (you)
- (I)
- Verbs

- Corpora:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| • TLS (1960s) | 37 informants |
| • PVC (1990s) | 36 informants |
| • NECTE2 (2007-2008) | 48 informants |
| • Total: | 121 informants |

(do+NEG) Beal (1993, 2004)

- Auxiliary *do* = *div* (negated: *divn't*)
- Auxiliary *div* is unique to Tyneside, occurs in both positive (rare) and negative statements and tag questions.
- *Divn't* does not occur in the third person singular which is always *doesn't*
- *Div* is never used as a main verb
 - *what div I like to do in my spare time well...* (TLS28, male, old, WC)
- The standard form *don't* and local form *divn't* are used consecutively by speakers
 - *you know and I divn't suppose he ever come back I don't suppose he ever showed his face in Newcastle again* (PVC02b, male, old, MC)
 - *and that you know and this pott singer I divn't care for that fellow I like to hear it sometime but as for watching it on television I don't care much for that you know* (TLS14, male, old WC)
 - *nar I divn't knar I really don't know* (NECTE2, male, young, WC)

Method

- Syntactic and semantic equivalence of standard and vernacular forms assumed.
- Intralinguistic:
 - Grammatical number
 - Grammatical person
 - (Tense)
 - Standard/vernacular.
- Extralinguistic:
 - Class
 - Gender
 - Time of collection
 - Age

Results from pilots – (do + NEG)

- Frequency table

	N (total)	N (stand.)	% (stand.)	N (vern.)	% (vern.)
TLS	1054	975	92.5%	79	7.5%
PVC	1659	1599	96.4%	60	3.6%
NECTE2	1383	1302	94.1%	81	5.9%

- Real and apparent time comparisons

TLS (N=1054)	Old (1880-1920)	Young (1920-1944)		
	8.02%	7.04%		
PVC (N=1659)		Old (1910-1950)	Young (1970-1975)	
		1.99%	4.54%	
NECTE2 (N=1383)				Young (1986-1990)
	Marie Jensen "Divn't take wor Tyne"			5.9%

Results from pilots – (do + NEG)

- Class

TLS (N=1054)	WC	MC
Standard (N=975)	51.1%	48.9%
Vernacular (N=79)	55.7%	44.3%
Significance	$X^2=0.624, df=1, N.S.$	
PVC (N=1659)	WC	MC
Standard (N=1599)	37.7%	62.3%
Vernacular (N=60)	78.3%	21.7%
Significance	$X^2=40.047, df=1, p<0.001$	
NECTE2 (N=1383)	WC	MC
Standard (N=1302)	46.4%	53.6%
Vernacular (N=81)	90.1%	9.9%
Significance	$X^2=58.365, df=1, p<0.001$	

Results from pilots – (do + NEG)

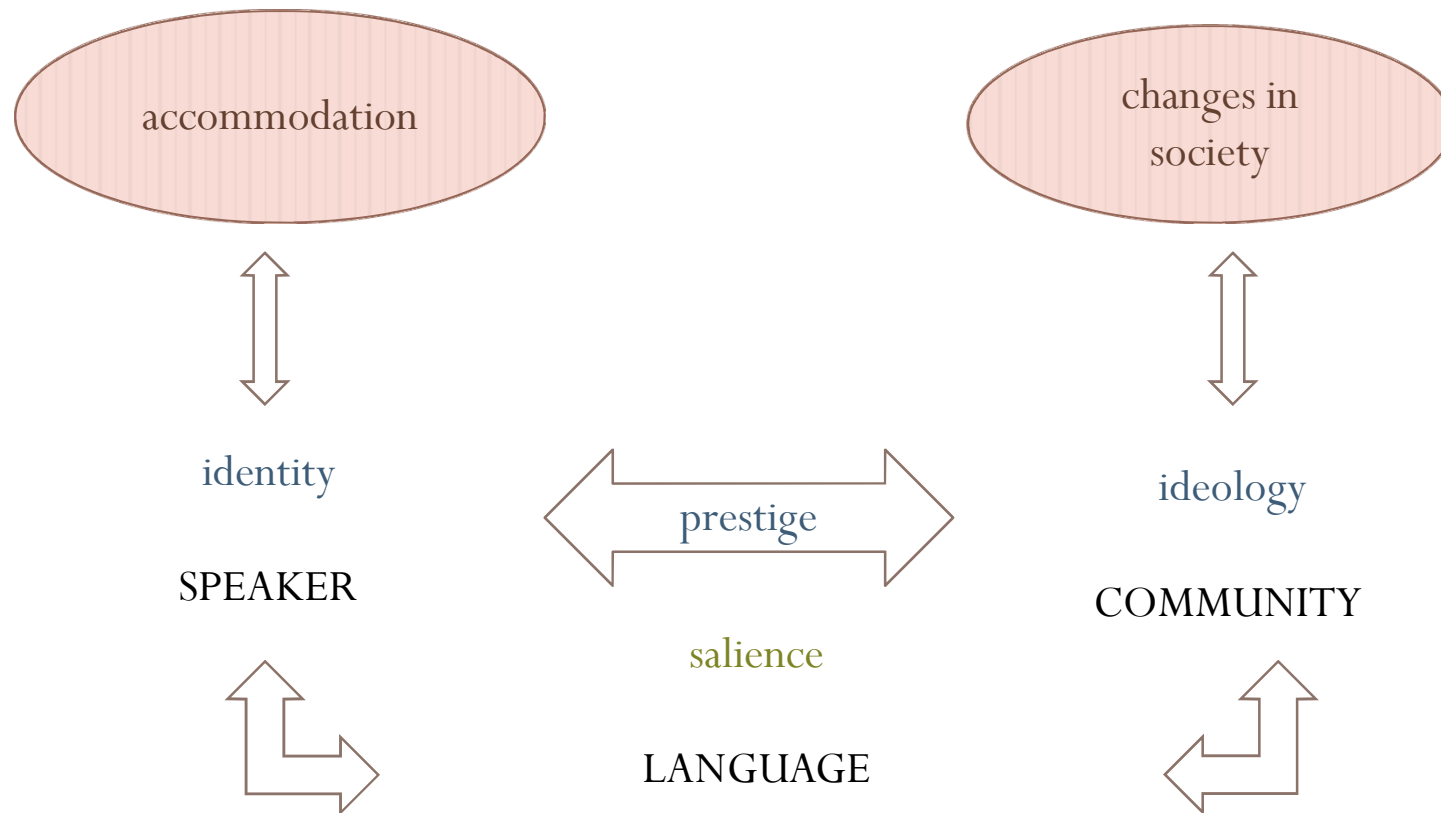
- Statistical real time analysis, TLS+PVC

(N=2713)	TLS	PVC
Standard (N=2574)	37.9%	62.1%
Vernacular (N=139)	56.8%	43.2%
Significance	$X^2=19.947, df=1, p<0.001$	

- Statistical real time analysis, young PVC+NECTE2

(N=2440)	PVC young	NECTE2
Standard (N=2311)	43.7%	56.3%
Vernacular (N=129)	37.2%	62.8%
Significance	$X^2=2.071, df=1, N.S.$	

Models of factors in language change (Jensen 2009)



Results - conclusion

- **Class :** WC speakers use more vernacular variants in all 3 corpora (TLS not statistically significant)
- **Change over time:**
 - 1960s TLS speakers use more vernacular forms than 1990s PVC speakers (loss of local forms)
 - 2007-2008 NECTE2 speakers use more vernacular forms than 1990s young PVC speakers (revitalisation of local forms very recent)
- Contrary to Watt (2002), no levelling was found in the morphosyntactic variables. Instead, I found an increase of vernacular forms, especially among young, working class, male speakers.
- These findings substantiate claims made by Cheshire, Kerswill, and Williams (2005): direction and rate of change affects different aspects of language in different ways.
- Revival of vernacular morphosyntactic forms by the younger generation can be linked to the formation of an exclusively Tyneside identity centred on a sense of place, a linguistic dimension to a geographical space to which the speakers belong.
- The linguistic construction of a local identity in north-east England:
 - Sunderland (Burbano-Elizondo 2006), Middlesbrough (Llamas 2006)

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