

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.



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

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
'Beaten city', "internal image problem" [Parkinson 1990, 255]

→ 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

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“[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 [ŋg], so that *singer* rhymes with *finger*
- ▶ lenition of /k/ (highly salient)
/k/ is either an affricate [kx], or a fricative [ç, x]

Variables — continued

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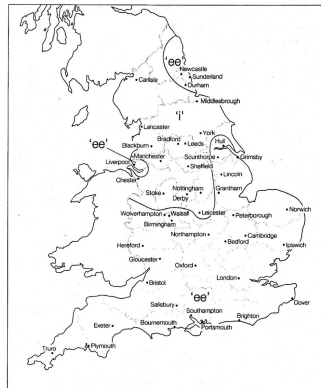
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Map 13 Areas where the pronunciation 'ngg' occurs in *singer*

(a) Trudgill's map for velar nasal plus



Map 15 *Coffee*. 'i' in some northern areas vs 'ee' elsewhere

(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

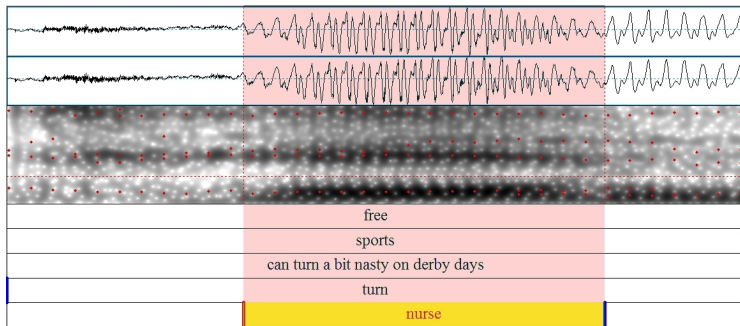
→ Labovian concept of salience (indicator, marker, stereotype)

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
 - ▶ $Z3-Z1 \approx F1$ (high vowels have high values)
 - ▶ $Z3-Z2 \approx F2$ (back vowels have high (!) values)

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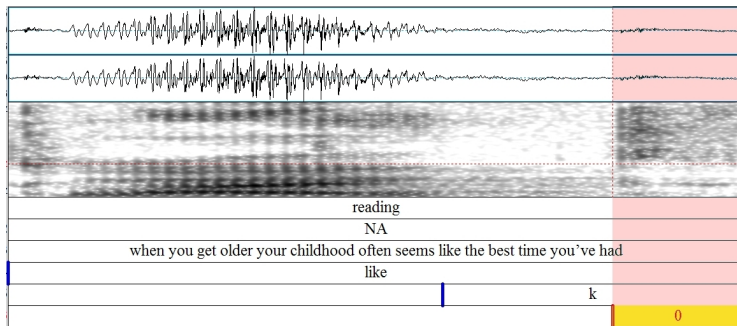
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Analysis — consonants

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



1. automatic measurements of proportional duration of friction
2. additional auditory categorisation as
 - /ŋg/ 0 (nasal) and 1 (nasal plus plosive)
 - lenition 0 (plosive), 1 (affricate), and 2 (fricative)

participants

	19-29		30-55		56-85	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
	total					
WC	3	4	4	2	1	1
MC	5	3	2	5	2	6
	transcribed					
WC	1	2	1	1	1	1
MC	2	2	1	2	1	1

Table: Age, gender, and social class of subjects

→ 6635 observations

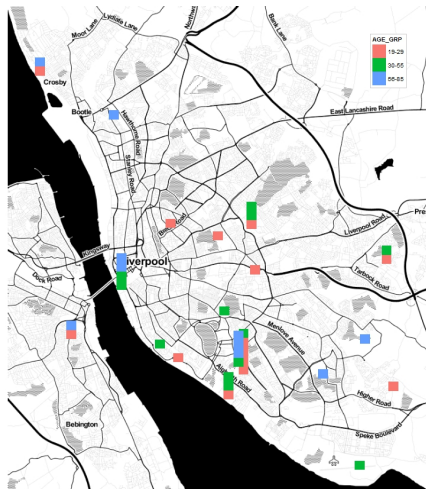


Figure: Areal distribution of subjects

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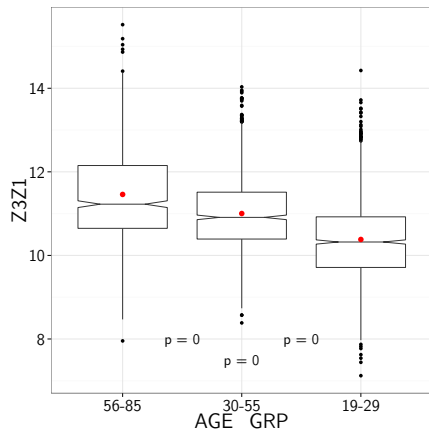
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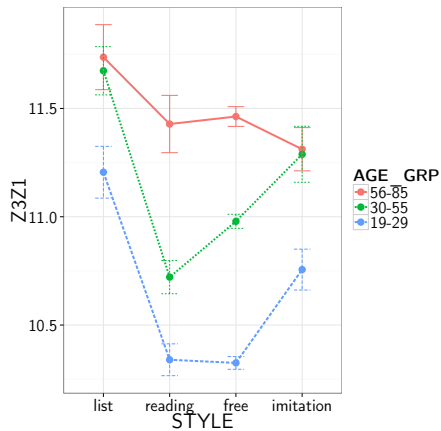
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happyY — height

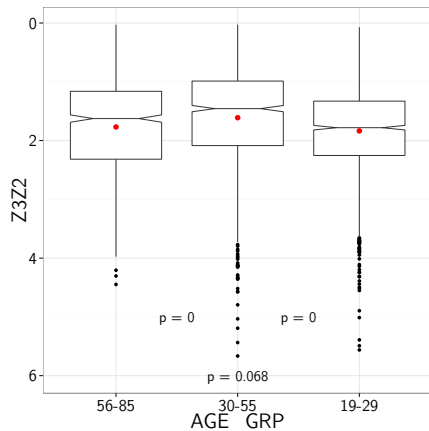


(a) Z3-Z1 by age

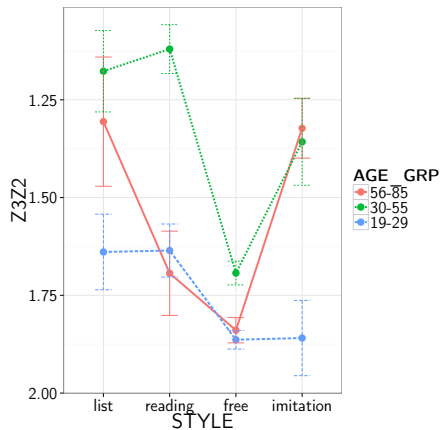


(b) Z3-Z1 by style

happyY — advancement

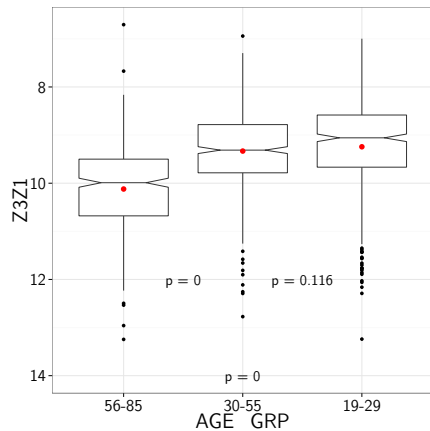


(a) Z3-Z2 by age

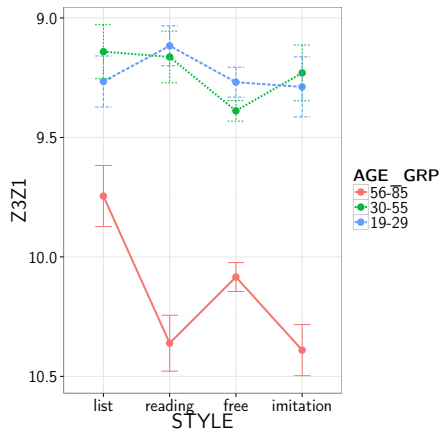


(b) Z3-Z2 by style

NURSE — height

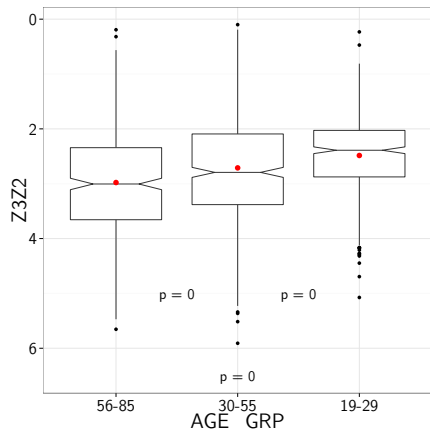


(a) Z3-Z1 by age

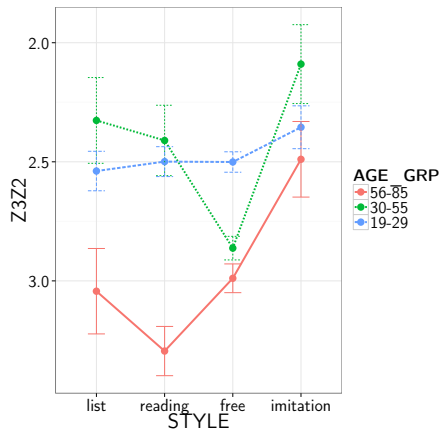


(b) Z3-Z1 by style

NURSE — advancement



(a) Z3-Z2 by age



(b) Z3-Z2 by style

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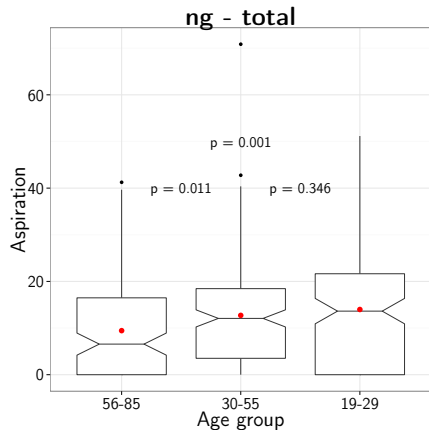
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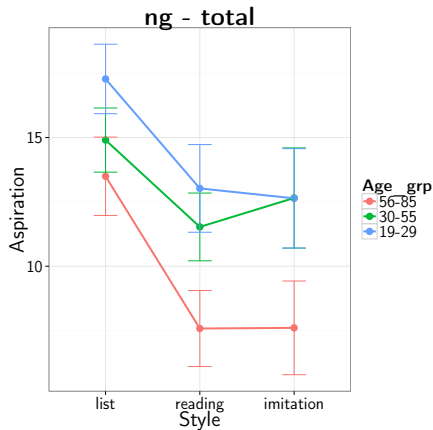
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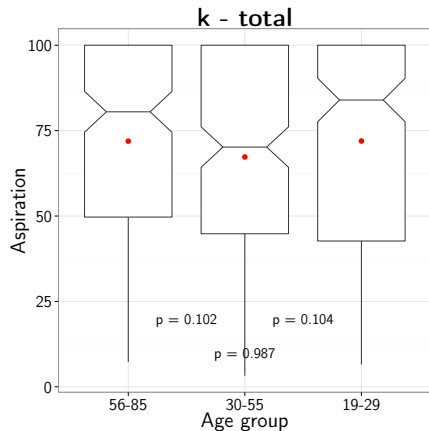
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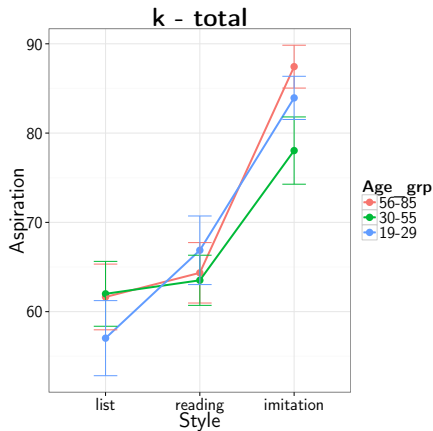
(a) PDF of /ŋg/ by age



(b) PDF of /ŋg/ by style

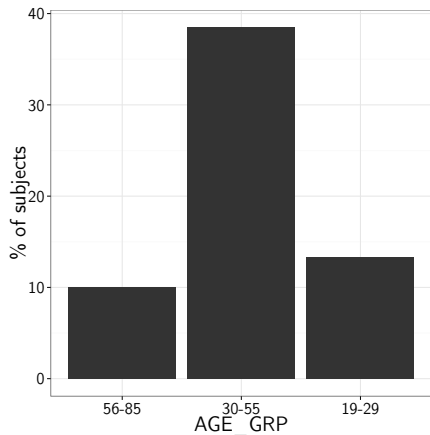


(a) PDF of /k/ by age

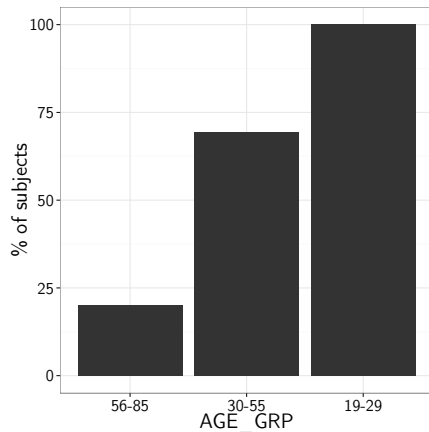


(b) PDF of /k/ by style

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

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Recent examples in the city centre



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- ▶ happyY
 - ▶ 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



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