

## Background

- Sociolinguistic research shows rapid diffusion of a number of linguistic features, highlighting the process of change not only in urban but also more rural areas (e.g. Britain, 2007). At the same time, varieties retain local forms in the face of more supralocal pressures (e.g. Honeybone, 2001).
- This research examined the processes of linguistic change in a hitherto relic and under-researched dialect area in south west Scotland, the Rhinns of Galloway.
- I examined two prominent phonological features of the accent, a long, “bladed”, clear /l/ and a low, backed /a/.



## Research Questions

- To what extent are the distinctive features, the “long”, bladed /l/ and the long, backed /a/ changing in the speech in the local area?
- To what extent do the variables age, gender and speech type influence the patterning of the linguistic features?
- What insights do they provide into language change in the area?

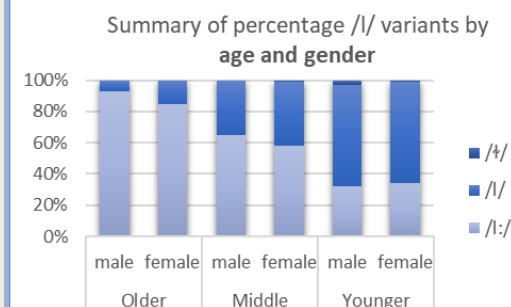
## Methodology

### Sample

	Older 60-65	Middle 30-45	Younger 10
Male	4	4	4
Female	4	4	4

- Participants were recorded in two contexts, firstly careful speech (word list and reading text, representing all phonological environments) and secondly casual speech in conversation with the researcher.
- Three variants of /l/ were:  
**/l/, /l:/ and /ɫ/**,  
e.g. **last, leave, milk, mallet, ball**
- Four variants of /a/ were:  
**/ɑ/, /ɑ:/, /a/ and /ǣ/**,  
as in **man, apple, exact, back, land**
- Over 4700 tokens in the speech of the 24 community members across the two speech styles were analysed in SPSS.

## Results

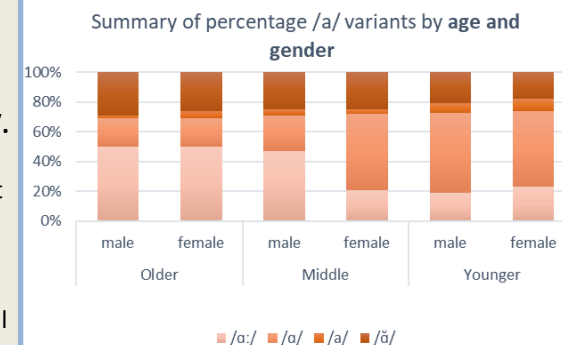


### /l/

Variation is circumscribed to competition between two local varieties, the prolonged, “bladed” /l:/ and clear /l/. Moreover, the former is giving way to the latter. Female led change is in progress towards the clear /l/. Dark /l/ is extremely rare.

### /a/

For this variable two local forms also predominate, **/ɑ/ and /ɑ:/**. For younger speakers the long backed variant is shorter. A short, clipped **/ǣ/** in specific linguistic environments is also evident across all speakers.



## Discussion

Despite some change across age in two distinctive phonetic features in the Rhinns of Galloway these results indicate that this variety has largely resisted the spread of more innovative or supralocal norms. Rather, change in use is constrained to the adaptation of already existing local forms.

I suggest that the geographical and historical context of the area, its proximity to and contact with northern Ireland, together with close community ties, may, in part, explain these findings.

