Salience, noticeability and enregisterment of dialect features in Stoke-on-Trent English

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Stoke-on-Trent

Sporadic prior linguistic attention (Poole 1880; Nicholls 1934; Leach 2012). Vowels of city and surrounding region described by Trudgill (1990) and Weiling, Shackleton and Nerbonne (2013: 35)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trudgill (1990-42)</th>
<th>Local set</th>
<th>Transcriptions</th>
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Table 1: Trudgill's (1990:42) description of the vowel system. Shaded cells show features also identified by Weiling, Shackleton and Nerbonne (2013: 35).

Figure 1: Stoke-on-Trent location

Finding 1: Enregisterment of features as ‘dialectal’ is important for noticeability in real time
Finding 2: Degree of non-standardness is unimportant for the noticeability of enregistered features
Finding 3: Mismatch between data elicited in different ways reveals ideological standpoints relating to ‘home’ accent features

Method 1 – Questionnaire

Online attitudes and feature-recognition survey undertaken in 2013. Targeted at people who lived in Stoke-on-Trent. One specific question (Are there specific pronunciations and words that you would associate with the local accent? List any of these below) forms the basis of our questionnaire dataset. 157 respondents completed the questionnaire.

Method 2 – Real-time feature identification task (see also Montgomery & Moore 2018) 113 listeners used an online click button interface to react to a Stoke-on-Trent speaker according to the following instructions: ...listen to the voice sample and listen out for anything in the way this person sounds which makes you wonder where he is from (or confirms where you already think he is from) ... When you hear something that sounds distinctive, please click the button below the sound wave straightforward.

Listeners then reviewed all of their clicks and provided reasons for them.

Method 3: High recognition in both tasks

Demonstrated by: PRICE (and –OOK)

No linear relationship between degree of dipthongization and noticeability of PRICE.

The price vowel is variable in many more dialects of the UK, perhaps giving it a higher noticeability and a stronger indexical link to regional identity. As such, even ‘less’ regional tokens are clicked.

Broad recognition and lack of ties to a specific region may also account for it being ‘claimed’ by residents

Regionality, noticeability and what counts as a dialect feature seem to differ based on the feature itself, and who is evaluating it.

References: