How data from sociolinguistic studies can be used in materials for schools and colleges

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Methodology and datasets

- Research projects
  - Linguistic Innovators: The English of adolescents in London; ESRC 2004-7
  - Multicultural London English: The emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety; ESRC 2007-10
- Fieldwork in inner and outer London
- ~250 informants
- More than 250 hours of recordings
- Transcriptions of 2.8 million words

Why study London English?

- Origin of linguistic innovation in the UK
- High level of migration
  - High level of dialect and language contact

Findings

- Phonological and grammatical change
- Linguistic innovation
  - Vowel system
  - Consonant system
  - Was/were; wasn't/weren't
  - Quotatives
  - Relatives
  - Intensifiers

Youth language and linguistic innovation

- **Who is in the lead in change?**
  - Non-Anglo
  - Inner city
  - Male
- **Role of friendship networks**
  - Members of high-density multicultural networks have a higher degree of innovative variants

ESRC and impact

- The impact statement is an important part of research proposals

- How to write a good impact statement?

  - "An important aim of the project concerns users who are not linguists. We will offer presentations, seminars and workshops to students and teachers at the schools and colleges to raise awareness of language use and style in everyday life and provide information on multicultural English. We will especially focus on teachers involved in A-level English Language and English as a second language, and language teachers and language support staff in general. We will offer masterclasses and talks at national residential courses organised by the National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth. We will also be involved in A-level seminars and conferences for teachers at Lancaster. We will set up a blog and a project website. The blog will especially be aimed at English Language teachers and A-level Students. We will also work with language teaching professionals."

- College workshops

A-level English Language Curriculum

- **Increase linguistic awareness**
  - Undertake independent investigative work related to language in use
  - Develop and apply their understanding of the concepts and methods appropriate for the analysis and study of language
  - Contemporary language
  - Regional varieties and language change
  - Spoken language
  - Language attitudes

- **Use of real linguistic data**
  - London data already used in exams and course books

Wolfram and colleagues' work in the US

- Videos (TV programmes) on their own not suitable for schools
- Instead:
  - Materials with descriptions of specific language features
  - Exercises for students
  - Background info and suggestions for teachers – making the teacher the expert
  - Additional resources
- Must be achievable by students and consistent with the goals of the curriculum

H-dropping task

- Awareness of own pronunciations
- Examine differences between
    - Areas of London
    - Age groups
    - Ethnic groups
    - Types of friendship networks

The letter 'H'

Two of my friends are arguing over the correct pronunciation of the letter 'H'. One says it should be pronounced haych, the other says it is perfectly acceptable to pronounce it with no h (so aych).
Anyone know which is correct?? (Posted on an English Grammar website)

In spoken English many people 'drop their aitches'. This means that they do not pronounce the /h/ in words like 'hammer, 'house' and 'holiday'. Linguists refer to this as 'H-dropping'. You may have been told not to drop your aitches because some people think it is 'incorrect' or 'bad'. However, it is a traditional feature of accents all over England, including London.

Research in Milton Keynes and Reading found that old people had a large proportion of H-dropping. The figure was as high as 92 percent, which means that they did not pronounce the /h/ in 92 percent of words beginning with /h/. Teenagers in those towns had a much lower percentage: the figure was as low as 14 percent.

Why do you think that was the case?

Data from London showed that old speakers in Hackney had 58 percent H-dropping. Old speakers in Havering had 26 percent H-dropping.

Can you think of possible reasons for the difference between the two boroughs for the old speakers?

Teenagers in Hackney and Havering were different in their level of H-dropping:

	Anglo speakers with mainly Anglo friends		Anglo speakers with mainly non-Anglo friends	Non-Anglo speakers
Hackney	19%	18%	4%	
Havering	42%	38%	10%	

Who has most H-dropping?
Who has least H-dropping?
What is the effect on H-dropping for the Anglo teenagers in having many non-Anglo friends?
Can you think of possible reasons for the non-Anglo speakers' low level of H-dropping?
Why do you think there is a difference between Hackney and Havering in the levels of H-dropping?

Narrative task

- Narrative tasks with and without quotatives
- How would the students themselves use the quotatives?
- Comparison with original data

Narrative task 1

- and I thought "I don't think we should go this way cos look at the big gang" they're like "ah yeah we'll go back and we'll get the teacher to bring us" the cadet teacher and I thought "okay now I'm not being that wimpy yeah I'm not going that far" I said "we'll just walk up the other way" this is them "it's alright for you you know your way around this area you can get away from them" I thought "no but they won't see us going up here" so they thought "no we'll just walk down" so I thought "oh how sad is this"

Narrative task 2

- they said "oh the signal sergeant wants to see you" so I went down to his little office and he said "come in corporal "and I looked round and I thought "who's he talking to?" I he said "get to the tailors and get a stripe up" he said "you've been promoted to lance corporal" I said "why?" he said "you're going to brigade headquarters as an instructor" I said "why an instructor?" he said "well you were the last one to come through the signalling school" he said "so if there's anybody who's had the latest information it's you"

Increase language awareness

- Studying language change using spoken data makes it more relevant for students because they can relate it to their own use

- It brings language alive for them

- Increases awareness of own and others' language use

- What is 'correct' language?