'I'M ST[ʌ]CK IN A R[ʊ]T'

PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION AND CHANGE

IN SHEFFIELD ENGLISH

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Abstract in Norwegian

Denne masteroppgåva handlar om fonologisk variasjon og endring i dialekta i Sheffield nord i England. Målet ved studien er å undersøke i kor stor grad det er variasjon i bruken av seks fonologiske variablar mellom to generasjonar av Sheffieldbebuarar, og om variasjonen er så stor at det kan seiast å vere ei pågåande endring i dialekta. Studien er i hovudsak inspirert av funn gjort av Stoddart et al. (1999) i Sheffield, samt tidlegare studier utført elles i Storbritannia der dei har funne teikn til utjamning (levelling) av dialektane. Utjamning av dialektane i Storbritannia har vore eit populært tema i språkforsking på øya dei siste tiåra, og resultata frå denne studien vert diskutert i lys av dette overhengande temaet.

Fokuset i oppgåva er retta mot korvidt ymse trekk i dialekta i Sheffield nærmar seg ein sørleg uttale. På den eine sida blir det undersøkt om urbane og ungdommelege trekk som sprer seg frå hovudsakleg London er adoptert av den yngre folkesetnaden i Sheffield. Desse trekka er T Glottalling, [leʔə] for *letter*, TH Fronting, [fiŋk] for *think*, og R Fronting, [ʋed] for *red*. På den andre sida undersøker eg fonologiske trekk som er typiske for Sheffield og elles i store deler av det nord-engelske dialektområdet. Eg ønsker å sjå om desse trekka endrar seg i retning av den nasjonale standarden. Dette gjeld BATH broadening, [bɑːθ] for *bath*, STRUT lowering, [kʌp] for *cup*, og loss of velar nasal plus, [haŋ] for *hang*. Det overliggande fokuset er då på om informantane føretrekk dei tradisjonelle, lokale språkvariantane, eller om utradisjonelle, meir nasjonalt forankra variantar er i aukande bruk. Elles er resultata sett i samband med eventuelle kjønnsskilnadar.

Resultata frå studien både bekreftar og avkreftar dei føreslåtte hypotesene. Det er ei tydeleg endring i bruken av loss of velar nasal plus, T Glottalling og TH Fronting. STRUT lowering er også noko vanlegare blant dei yngre informantane. BATH broadening og R Fronting derimot, førekjem til høvesvis liten og ingen grad blant informantane. Det viser seg og å vere ein tendens til at dei mannlege informantane føretrekker dei ikkje-lokale variantane i større grad enn dei kvinnelege, sjølv om skilnadane ikkje er veldig tydelege. Sett i lys av andre studier om dialektendring og utjamning, spekulerer eg i bakgrunnen for variasjonen og endringa i Sheffield. Det kan sjå ut som om auka kontakt med folk sørfrå og større mobilitet er årsaka bak inntoget av sørlege variantar.

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List of Abbreviations

NORMs   Non-Mobile Older Rural Males

RP   Received Pronunciation

SED   Survey of English Dialects

SLF   Survey of Language and Folklore

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   Aim and scope

The present master's thesis aims to investigate the urban accent of Sheffield. Sheffield is an industrial city in South Yorkshire, in the North of England. Northern English accents are often viewed as linguistically more conservative than the southern, mainly because of the absence of the TRAP-BATH split and the FOOT-STRUT split that occurred in the South of England centuries ago (cf. 2.3). Recent research, however, has revealed influences from features typical for London English in various varieties of Northern English, both in Sheffield as well as in other northern cities. Stoddart et al. (1999) provide the field of sociolinguistics with an overview of the Sheffield accent in the late 1990s. They noted some accent features that differ somewhat from the traditional accent of Sheffield, and these discoveries are the basis of the present investigation. A question to be answered then is whether Sheffield English is as northern as ever, or whether a change towards more 'southern'[1] pronunciation can be spotted? This question will be investigated in this thesis, both with a look at some typically northern accent features, as well as a few innovative, non-standard features currently involved in levelling processes throughout Britain.

A small-scale investigation has been conducted in the city centre of Sheffield, and data has been collected from two generations of native Sheffielders. Any phonological differences between these groups are discussed in reference to variation and change. The speech of a generation represents the speech of a certain time period. Accent differences between two or more generations may thus be an important indicator of change. *Age* is hence a factor of great interest to this study, and the extralinguistic factor of *gender* is also considered in the discussion. Ad-

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[1]Phonological features such as BATH broadening and T Glottalling will often be referred to as 'southern' accent features. This is a simplification to refer to the pronunciation historically found in the urban London accent and in surrounding areas, not a reflection of a belief that the accents in the South of England are completely uniform.

ditionally, attitudinal factors and the notion of identity are concepts that are touched upon. A special emphasis is furthermore placed on the concept of *accent levelling*. Levelling is a process where local features are lost in favour of more regional or supra-local features. This issue has received a lot of attention from sociolinguists over the past few decades (see e.g. Foulkes and Docherty 1999b), and is presented more thoroughly in 2.4.

Inspired by Stoddart et al.'s (1999) and others' research in the North (e.g. Foulkes and Docherty 2000; Marsden 2006), six phonological variables were selected for the present investigation. Three of these are features that diverge from the typically 'northern' accent, namely BATH[2] broadening, i.e. [bɑːθ] *bath*, STRUT lowering, [kʌp] *cup*, and 'loss of velar nasal plus', [haŋ] *hang*. The final three variables are innovations spreading from the South. These are T Glottalling, i.e. [leʔə] *letter*, TH Fronting, [fɪŋk] *think*, and R Fronting, [ʋed] *red*.

The aim of this study is thus twofold. On the one hand I am interested to see whether northern accent features are losing ground to a more southern and 'standard' pronunciation. On the other hand focus is on to which extent southern non-standard accent features are adopted. Since there has been little research on the Sheffield accent in recent years, this thesis serves to both fill a gap and provide the field with data from a more recent time. In addition, the present project aims to contribute to the discussion of levelling that is a seemingly on-going process in Britain today, and place the discussion of the accent of Sheffield within this frame.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses proposed below are inspired by a study by Stoddart et al. (1999) as well as previous studies on levelling.

1.2.1 Research questions

1. Is the accent of Sheffield changing? If so, what can be the reasons for the change?

2. Are consonantal features of Sheffield English changing towards a more southern non-standard pronunciation, and thus taking part in the current accent levelling processes going on in Britain today? Will also velar nasal plus, a consonant feature of parts of the North, show evidence of change towards a more levelled variant?

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[2]All vowel features are referred to in terms of Wells' (1982) *lexical sets*. A lexical set is a large group of words which share the same vowel, and is named after a representative keyword, e.g. BATH and STRUT.

3. Normally only consonant features spread nationally, but previous research in Sheffield has shown a slight tendency for the vowels in STRUT and BATH to be changing towards a southern quality. Is this a continuing development?

4. Are there any systematic differences between genders in the use of certain phonological variables?

1.2.2 Hypotheses

1. Based on data collected from two generations of Sheffielders, we will see a change from the older generation to the younger in the use of the investigated variables. This development will be in line with more general accent levelling changes found in previous research.

2. Sheffield English has acquired more of the non-standard features T Glottalling, TH Fronting, and R Fronting. The younger speakers are leading in the use of these features. Also velar nasal plus is losing ground to a southern pronunciation.

3. Not only consonant features, but also vowels are changing towards a southern quality.

4. Females lead the change towards the southern variants in the typical northern variables BATH broadening, STRUT lowering and loss of velar nasal plus. This is due to the overt prestige connected with the southern counterparts, i.e. its inclusion in Received Pronunciation (henceforth RP).

5. Males lead in the use of the innovative non-standard features of T Glottalling, TH Fronting, and R Fronting. This is due to the covert prestige associated with these features, as they are often linked with masculinity and working class.

1.3 Structural remarks

The present thesis is divided into five chapters. The introduction presents the aim and scope of the thesis as well as the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter 2 introduces the sociolinguistic framework of the present study. This includes a general overview of the field, and a discussion of the extralinguistic factors age, gender, and social class. A short history of Sheffield is then presented, followed by a general presentation of the Northern English accent, as well as the more specific accent of Sheffield and the middle north. Some attention is given to previous research on the Sheffield accent, but as there has not been that much research concerned with this particular

accent, the main focus will be on levelling and previous research that looks into accent variation and change in relation to this concept.

The subsequent chapter concerns the methodology of the study, and is divided into two main parts. The first part describes the variables investigated. This includes historical developments as well as token classifications. The second part describes the main methodology of the investigation, i.e. the stages of preparation, the informants, the sociolinguistic interview, and how the data was analysed and how the results were quantified.

The fourth chapter presents the results and discussion of each variable in separate sections. The discussion sees the variables in light of the extralinguistic factors, previous studies, and the research questions and hypotheses. The chapter then continues with a discussion of the results in reference to levelling, before a brief summary of the results and discussion is given.

The fifth and final chapter answers the questions proposed in the introduction and discusses the validity of the proposed hypotheses. A section on the shortcomings of the present project is also included. This section discusses possible changes to increase the validity of the findings, as well as considerations to be made. The chapter then goes on to suggest further research that might be of interest in the Sheffield accent. The thesis concludes with a note on the contributions made by the present project to the field of sociolinguistic research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical background

Sociolinguistics is a field that encompasses a lot of different directions within language studies. It has its roots in dialectology, historical linguistics and language contact (Tagliamonte 2012:1). In general one can say that it is a 'study of the social uses of language' (Chambers 2002:2). The field as we know it today was pioneered by William Labov in the 1960s. Because this field of research is so vast, it has been divided into different categories. Studies concerning accent variation and change has often been referred to as *variationist sociolinguistics*. It is also within this tradition the current study situates itself.

2.1   Sociolinguistic variation and change

Although sociolinguistic studies were performed in the early 20th century, the term 'sociolinguistics' was not yet coined (Bayley 2013). It was introduced by Haver C. Currie in 1952 (in Chambers 2002:15). The interest in the field increased in the 1960s after Labov's pioneering research in Martha's Vineyard in 1963 and the Lower East Side of New York in 1966 (cf. e.g. Labov 1972). With these studies came a shift in focus towards the social dimensions of language change and an interest in the dynamics between the use of linguistic variants and the social order of the community (Meyerhoff 2006:16f). By conducting interviews with different age groups, a 'snapshot' of on-going change was provided, and in addition to *interspeaker variation* (linguistic variation between speakers), with reference to e.g. gender and social class, Labov also found *intraspeaker variation* (linguistic variation within one single speaker) to be of importance. Up until this time there was a governing belief that change could only be studied once it had happened (Meyerhoff 2006:22). Labov's work, however, showed 'that **synchronic variation** (variation right now) is very often the root of **diachronic change** (change over a period of time)' (ibid., emphasis in original).

Linguistic change can be explained by *internal* or *external* factors. The former refers to motivations inside the language system, by for example a strive to keep up the regularity and economy of the language. If the disappearance of a phoneme does not interfere with the understanding between speakers, the 'superfluous' phoneme will typically be eliminated. The latter factor refers to motivations outside the language system, such as language contact, attitudes and speaker activity (Torgersen and Kerswill 2004). However, the use of a new variant does not necessarily mean that the old variant will eventually disappear, and that the new variant will become the norm. A change may begin, but later reverse, and a previously more common variant may yet again be the standard (D'Arcy 2013).

Labov also introduced the concept of the linguistic variable, the abstract feature under investigation, and its variants, the two or more possible realisations of the variable in question, e.g. the variable (t) can be realised as [t], [ʔ], and [t̪] (Bayley 2013). In addition, the *sociolinguistic interview* has its roots from Labovs work (cf. 3.2.3). Whereas the focus before had mainly been on the speech of rural areas, and single sounds or words in isolation, focus has now shifted towards current urban speech, variation and change, and the *vernacular* (cf. 3.2.3). A change in methodology has followed this development. Before Labov's pioneering work a simple question-and-answer format was the norm, while today the sociolinguistic interview is the most common method in research of accent variation and change. It is believed that such an interview is the best way to elicit the vernacular. The inclusion of reading passages and word lists in the interviews, together with a more informal conversation, provide different degrees of formality from the speaker, thus allowing analysis of style.

Style is often included as a variable in sociolinguistic research because of the intraspeaker variation that exists in all speakers. People have a certain linguistic repertoire, i.e. they have knowledge of the possible variants of a variable. People tend to change their style of speech, i.e. use different variants from their repertoire, depending on the situation they are in. It is common for people to use a different style when talking to friends than in a conversation with an employer, professor, etc. (Chambers 2002:4f). Style closely intersects with the notion of *prestige* (Meyerhoff 2006:37). It tends to be common for people to use more prestige variants in formal situations, and less prestige variants in informal situations (Tagliamonte 2012:34). Variants of a variable can have overt or covert prestige. *Overt prestige* refers to prestige that is explicit and acknowledged as prestigious by all speakers within a speech community, such as e.g. RP is to the British population. This is often related to standardness 'or aesthetic and moral evaluations like being "nicer" and "better"' (Meyerhoff 2006:37). *Covert prestige*, however, is a prestige which is hidden, and not overtly expressed by speakers (Trudgill 2000a:74). Covert prestige further

'depart[s] markedly from the mainstream societal values (of schools and other institutions) of which everyone is consciously aware' (ibid.). Style further relates to gender and social class. Tagliamonte (2012:35) explains: 'A prominent finding is that, other things being equal, men style-shift less and women style-shift more'.

Along with these developments since the 1960s was a change in the criteria of the informants. The ideal informants in earlier dialectologist studies were Non-Mobile Older Rural Males (henceforth NORMs). Linguists went to the countryside to study the 'true' accents (Kerswill 2003). After Labov's work, however, focus gradually transferred from rural areas to urban districts, including a focus at the social parameters as well. When one is studying accent variation and change it is common to consider both the linguistic context - the language internal factors - as well as social factors. Most linguistic variables are sensitive to social factors, so these are valuable to consider. In sociolinguistic research the most important social variables are normally social class, age, gender, ethnicity, and social network. In the present study, the two latter variables are not relevant and will not be taken into consideration. The three following sections provide descriptions of the relevant social variables age, gender, and social class.

2.1.1 Age

In variationist sociolinguistics, the aspects of time and age are important. Languages change over time and it is common for the speech of different generations in the same community to differ somewhat from one another. Without this comparative foundation it is hard to make a sound judgment on on-going changes. Age as an extralinguistic variable 'can reflect change in the speech of the community as it moves through time (*historical change*), and change in the speech of the individual as he or she moves through life (*age grading*)' (Eckert 1997:151, emphasis in original).

A possible method in sociolinguistic research is to perform a *real time study*, where one collects data from the same subjects or subjects from the same community who fit the sampling criteria at two or more different times in their lives. Getting a real time corpus is time-consuming, however, and consequently rare. If one has to wait 40 years to get comparable data, few researchers would be patient enough or indeed be allowed to spend 40 years of their careers sampling material for one project (Chambers 2002:212f; Meyerhoff 2006:133). Therefore researchers have found a way around this problem and conduct so-called *apparent time studies* instead: 'Apparent time is a way of simulating and modelling real time change using synchronic data, when the diachronic corpora . . . are not available to researchers or when researchers do not have the time or money to construct their own real time corpus' (Meyerhoff 2006:133). In

an apparent time study the chosen informants are grouped according to age. These age groups represent different generations and different times. An 80 year old represents the speech of a 20 year old sixty years ago, and is then compared to the speech of a 20 year old today. A growing frequency in the use of one linguistic feature and a decline in the use of another when 'viewed according to speaker age can be interpreted as change in progress' (Tagliamonte 2012:43). This method has been used since the early twentieth century and it is a dominating method of studying variation and change today (ibid.). A problem with the apparent time method is that it is a prerequisite that the speech is relatively stable throughout life. In this respect the apparent time hypothesis clashes with the idea of *age grading*. At different points in life people may use linguistic features differently simply because of phases they are going through. This is especially related to adolescence and the use of slang words (Tagliamonte 2012:47f). In addition, it is common for the speech of older people to be more conservative. When just using the apparent time method it is not evident whether the conservatism is due to age-grading or if it can actually 'reflect a change in progress' (Eckert 1997:152). Therefore real time studies are very helpful in establishing that there is in fact a change going on in different speech communities.

2.1.2 Gender

In sociolinguistics it is common to distinguish 'sex' and 'gender'. 'Sex' is used for the biological attribute and 'gender' for the 'social construct which does not map directly on to (apparent) biological sex' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:100). Therefore, in sociolinguistics it is common 'to think of gender as the relevant social category when interpreting the social meaning of sex-related variation' (ibid.). Social class has traditionally been viewed as the most important social variable influencing accent variation and change. This claim has been critiqued in later years, and gender put forward as an equally, or even more, important, variable after evidence from various studies (Milroy and Milroy 1998). Variation among genders is believed to follow the *sex/prestige pattern*. This states that when all other factors are equal, women will tend to use more prestige variants than men. Women are indeed often found to use prestige variants more than men. Whereas men usually favour local variants (which are often followed by stigmatisation), women prefer to use supra-local variants (Milroy and Gordon 2003:101). This pattern applies to the whole of the western world (Romaine 2000:78f) and was even noted as early as 55 BC in classical Rome by Cicero (in Chambers 2002:139). Many have tried to explain why this is, but all theories must necessarily be considered hypothetical. One proposition is that while males derive status from work, women acquire a symbolic status: 'She can be a "good" housewife, a "good" mother, a "good" wife, etc., with respect to the community's norms for appropriate behavior' (Romaine 2000:79).

Part of this appropriate behaviour is then often to use linguistic forms deemed prestigious. This is believed to be related to women's history where they have had fewer opportunities of education and employment (ibid.). Furthermore it is also believed that since women have played a bigger part in children's upbringing, they feel a responsibility to teach children the 'proper' or high status speech. In general, it seems that women are expected to behave in a more of a proper manner than men. This also involves speaking 'properly' and can result in convergence towards a regional or national standard of pronunciation. Non-standard forms are often associated with the working class which again carries associations with masculinity and 'toughness'. These associations 'may lead men to be more favourably disposed to nonstandard linguistic forms than women' (Trudgill 2000a:73).

In a self-evaluation test of the pronunciation of vowels in Norwich it was found that only the female informants over-reported their use of the higher-class variant. Trudgill (2000a:75-77) discusses whether this is because women feel they should use the more prestigious variant, or wish they did because it is considered more proper. At the same time half of the male informants under-reported their use of higher-status forms, claiming that they used more low-status forms than they actually did. This would provide evidence for the claim that men place overt prestige on non-standard accent features, whereas women consider standard features as more prestigious. It has been speculated that because 'society evaluates different characteristics differently in the two sexes, covert prestige exerts a more powerful influence on men, and "normal" prestige on women' (Trudgill 2000a:77).

It has been believed that females are 'more conservative than men when it comes to linguistic changes which are operating in the direction away from the prestige standard' (Trudgill 2000a:77f). Recently however, there have been claims which state that women do not favour prestige forms, they rather create them (Milroy and Gordon 2006:103). An example of this is the current diffusion of T Glottaling. This feature has carried associations of the male working class, and, in extension, masculinity, making it a feature readily adopted also by the middle class males. Nevertheless, findings in some British cities suggest that females are leading the change of increased use of glottal stops. In Cardiff (Mees and Collins 1999) it is even women of the middle class who have the highest use of the traditionally non-standard T Glottaling. It can therefore be claimed that once the majority of women 'accept' and start using a new linguistic feature, this feature goes through a social re-evaluation, and becomes a prestige form (Milroy and Gordon 2003:103).

2.1.3 Social Class

Of all extra-linguistic variables, social class is the most difficult to define. Simplification is therefore a necessity in a study of this limited scope. Several different factors may be of importance in the definition of a social class, typically education, occupation, income, housing, and locality. Class is an important variable in sociolinguistics because people with similar 'wealth, privileges, and opportunities usually have very similar recreations, attitudes, and values, thus further distinguishing themselves from the social groups above and below them' (Chambers 2002:39). The most common class divisions are working class, middle class and upper class. These are often adjusted further by adding 'lower' or 'upper' to the class description, adding to the complications of the variable.

Social mobility is also a factor that is relevant. One can climb the social ladder from one class to another. When a speaker moves upwards, say from the working class to the middle class, it has been noted that the speech tends to converge towards the speech of the class one is joining, thus creating a linguistic gap between the speaker and the class he/she is leaving behind (Tagliamonte 2012:36). Social class and gender are two highly intertwined factors, considering females' tendency to use the more prestigious variants, i.e. the variants of a higher class, and males using more low prestige variants, i.e. converging towards a lower-status pattern of speech. Class is not a clear-cut box, it is rather a continuum, and this makes the classifying process difficult. Because of the complexity of the social class variable, classes are often given fairly wide definitions in sociolinguistic work (Ash 2013).

One common way to distinguish between working and middle class in industrialised societies is to place people who are doing manual labour in the working class and people who earn their living 'by pencil-work and services' in the middle class (Chambers 2002:42). A common term used to distinguish between the two work groups in America is 'white collar workers' for the non-manual workers and 'blue collar workers' for people working manually (ibid.). Some characteristics follow these prototypes. The non-manual labourers normally have a higher education than the manual labourers, they often have a supervising role over manual labourers, they normally earn more money, and they subsequently tend to have a higher status than the 'blue collars' (Ash 2013). Another typical feature of the working class is that they normally belong to close-knit networks, whereas people from the middle class have rather loose network-ties, thus they are more open to linguistic influence. The role of class plays a bigger role in British society than in the American, however (Milroy 2001). The British society has historically been highly stratified socially, with clear working, middle, and upper class divisions. There has traditionally been little contact between the different groups. When the social networks are limited in this way,

it is common for members of the same group to have the same evaluations concerning linguistic forms. This accounts for some of the linguistic differences between classes. In the extension of this, it has been found that working class speech is the most stigmatised speech in Britain (Milroy 2001:239). Today, however, there is more social mobility due to increased opportunities for education etc. and therefore more adoption of linguistic features across social groups (Rosewarne 1994; Kerswill 2001).

2.2 Sheffield

Sheffield is a typical northern city marked by its early industrialisation and rapid growth. The city is situated at the heart of England and is in the county of South Yorkshire. It was founded early in the 12th century by William de Lovetot, the Lord of the manor. He built a castle and a church on what he perceived to be an attractive location. With a confluence of rivers to the east and north, among them the river Sheaf, from which Sheffield also earns its name, the placement was considered easily defendable from outside attack. Soon after the Lord's settlement, more people began to settle in the area. The village had a steady increase of people from then on (Lambert 2014).

Sheffield's reputation as an industrial town had an early start. Already in the 14th century Sheffield was known for its cutlery. From the 18th century, however, there was a large influx of people due to the Industrial Revolution. The town went through a rapid growth, due to the booming steel industries that developed all over the North of England. Like all other industrial towns, Sheffield was characterised by a large working class, unsanitary conditions, pollution, and crammed living conditions with back-to-back houses for the workers. In the early 20th century, Sheffield's economy also hit a rough patch. After the First World War the industries went into a recession and since then most industries in Sheffield faced a decline, e.g. the major steel, cutlery, and iron industries. Consequently, Sheffield's rate of unemployment increased drastically. During the Second World War Sheffield was a target city for the Germans because of its steel industry, which started to produce weapons and ammunition. In 1940 it was severely bombed, many buildings were destroyed, and 660 people died in the raid (Lambert 2014).

In the 1950s and 60s a new era started for Sheffield. A number of slum areas were demolished to make way for new housing schemes. The city centre went through considerable renovation and development projects to make way for new public spaces to modernise the city. At the same time the steel industry came to a new halt because of increased automation and competition from abroad. As Evans et al. (2002:64) explain: 'Consequent on a world-wide

"overproduction" of steel and the new Conservative government's deflation of the economy ..., the bulk of the Sheffield steel industry ...was in the process, quite straightforwardly, of closing down'. The troubles in employment continued. In 1987 Sheffield had an unemployment rate of 16.2 percent.

Although there are still some important industries left, most employment has shifted from manufacturing industries to service industries (Lambert 2014). The two universities (Sheffield University and Sheffield Hallam University) along with two National Health Service (henceforth NHS) hospitals are the largest employers in Sheffield today (Beal 2009). As an industrial town, Sheffield had quite close-knit networks historically. These networks started to unsettle in the 1980s during the deindustrialisation process. Additionally, when the NHS relocated jobs to Sheffield, a large influx of white-collar workers settled down in the city. This further relaxed the earlier closed networks (Beal 2009). It has also grown to become an important educational city. The first university, Sheffield University, was founded in 1905 and has since grown and developed into a successful institution (Lambert 2014). Because of the university's good reputation, Sheffield has got a large student population; about a tenth of the inhabitants are students. Students come from Britain as well as from all over the world, making Sheffield quite an international city.

Sheffield consists of many suburbs that originated from hamlets and villages outside of the city. These were later included in the county borough of Sheffield as the city grew and absorbed the surrounding areas. The border which makes up Sheffield today was set in 1974 when Stocksbridge Urban District and two parishes from the Wortley Rural District were merged with Sheffield (Wikipedia 2014:URL). Many of these areas 'retained a degree of individual identity until at least the 1950s' (Stoddart et al. 1999:80) and this may apply to some of the areas today as well. Today the City of Sheffield's population has grown to over half a million, while the district of Sheffield is the third largest district in England based on population (Wikipedia 2014:URL).

2.3   The linguistic North

It is a common practice to divide England into two parts; the North and the South. This dichotomy is problematic because it suggests a finite boundary between the two. The strong disagreements on where to draw the boundary are evidence of this. Where exactly the line goes often depends on the person you ask: 'southerners tend to place a "divide" much further south than northerners' (Wales 2006:10) and vice versa. Geographically, old trading routes and rivers, as well as new roads and train lines, are different points where a country can be divided. A common phrase in England is for instance 'North of Watford Gap'. Watford Gap is a service

station in Northamptonshire, subsequently placing the boundary between the South and North at this point. In the North of England, however, there is quite an obvious limit; the political border with Scotland (ibid:11).

Furthermore there is a cultural polarisation between the North and the South of England. For many southerners 'the North' is associated with beautiful, rolling landscapes, farming and fishermen, but it also carries associations to early industrialisation and all the hard facts of life that follows; poverty, hard labour, and also rapid urbanisation (Schneider 2011:69). This has furthermore contributed to a stigmatisation of the Northern English accents, which has often led to characterisations of the accents as being 'provincial' and 'working class' (Wales 2006:4). At the same time, northerners pride themselves of their accents, although they still see the limitations ascribed to them by southerners, or maybe especially by the cultural elite in London: 'Somehow the regional culture combines strong historical roots and regional pride with a sense of marginalization from the perspective of the center of political power, London' (Schneider 2011:69).

Despite many different views on where the North begins geographically and culturally, there is quite a strong agreement among linguists about where *the linguistic North* begins. Trudgill (2000b) distinguishes between 'traditional dialects' and 'modern dialects'. He defines 'traditional dialects' as the dialects that can be found in peripheral and remote places, that are in danger of dying out, whereas 'modern dialects' 'represent more recent developments in the English language of England' (Trudgill 2000b:52). What is interesting here, is that the North-South divide for the 'traditional dialects' is further north than that for the 'modern dialects'. In the 'traditional dialects', South Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands belong to the South, but in the 'modern dialects' they are perceived as northern accent areas. This southward shift has mainly to do with the vowels in STRUT and BATH.

Linguists today generally agree that the vowels of STRUT and BATH are the most salient markers of the linguistic North. The *North-South divide* starts at the Severn-Wash line (Wells 1982; Wales 2006; Beal 2010). This means that the linguistic North goes as far south to include most of the Midlands, in agreement with Trudgill's (2000b) definition of the 'modern dialects'. South of this area, the BATH vowel has gone through a process of broadening and lowering that differentiates it from the vowel in TRAP words (cf. 3.1.1), i.e. [ɑː] in BATH versus [a] in TRAP. This development is often referred to as the TRAP-BATH split. In the North the vowel in BATH remains the same as in TRAP, i.e. an open front [a]. This means that words like *gas* and *grass* rhyme perfectly; [gas] and [gras] (Wells 1982:349).

The other main linguistic marker of the North is the absence of the FOOT-STRUT split (cf. 3.1.2). As opposed to in the South where the lexical set FOOT has the vowel [ʊ] and STRUT has

the vowel [ʌ], the latter vowel typically does not exist in the northern accents. Both FOOT and STRUT words have a close and mid back [ʊ], making *put* and *putt* homophones (Wells 1982:349). Though these linguistic features are common in the North, and typically serve as regional identity markers, naturally they are not used by everyone. As Wells (1982:354) so eloquently explains: 'There are many educated northerners who would not be caught dead doing something so vulgar as to pronounce STRUT words with [ʊ], but who would feel it to be a denial of their identity as northerners to say BATH words with anything other than short [a]'. Hence BATH is seen as a more reliable feature of the northern accent, or as Beal (2010:15) puts it: 'where BATH is concerned, speakers are more likely to be consistently "northern" or "southern" in their pronunciation'. The approximate boundaries of the FOOT-STRUT split (solid line) and BATH broadening (broken line) can be seen in Figure 2.1 below. The X marks Sheffield's approximate position.

Figure 2.1: Approximate northern border of the FOOT-STRUT split (solid line) and the TRAP-BATH split (broken line). X marks the approximate location of Sheffield (Wells 1982:336)

Of course there is not one uniform accent above the Severn-Wash line in the linguistic North. The accents vary from each county and valley, as accents do. Typically, northern accent features tend to be more conservative than the southern. As we have seen this applies to BATH and STRUT, but also FACE, GOAT, and MOUTH, which are all generally monophthongs, and the velar nasal plus (Beal 2010:13-20). It is also thought that the accents grow more distinct the

further north one goes. Because of these differences within the linguistic North, Wells (1982:350) divides it into three parts; *the midlands*, *the middle north* and *the far north*. The midlands is the southern area of the linguistic North, including the West and the East Midlands, hence cities like Nottingham and Leicester in the east and Birmingham and Wolverhampton in the west. The far north consists of the population centres of Tyneside and Tees-side. Here the accent differs considerably from the rest of the linguistic North, with e.g. Newcastle-upon-Tyne's much stigmatised Geordie accent.

In the context of the present study, however, the middle north is the most interesting area. This area consists of the industrial belt from Manchester to Sheffield, straddling the Pennines, and it includes Huddersfield and Leeds. Within this division, the counties of Merseyside and Lancashire differ phonologically from the rest, but Greater Manchester, and West and South Yorkshire are very similar to one another. Wells (1982:350) names these as '"typical" northern accents'. A further representation of the typical accent features of the middle north are presented in the next section on the Sheffield accent.

2.3.1 The Sheffield accent

There are few historical descriptions of the accent in Sheffield. One of the most thorough accounts of the Sheffield accent is found in the works of the Survey of English dialects (henceforth SED), a project aiming to investigate accents in England and Wales between 1950 and 1961. The informants were mainly NORMs (Stoddart et al. 1999). The data from Sheffield is only based on one informant however, a 64-year-old steelworker from the residential area of Hillsborough. He was recorded in 1952. Stoddart et al. (1999) list some of the accent features described in the SED from this one speaker. Not surprisingly, BATH and STRUT were pronounced - as is typical in the linguistic North - with close front [a] and a close-mid back [ʊ], respectively. Other features typical of the middle north include a close-mid [ɪ] in the *happ*Y set, and sometimes even a more open [e]. In the SED [ʊə] was the most common realisation of GOAT words, whereas in Wells' (1982:358) description of the accent of the middle north, GOAT is realised with a long monopthong [oː] or a diphthong [ɔɪ] in South and West Yorkshire. The vowels in FACE and MOUTH are also generally long monophthongs, i.e. [eː] and [aː]. In reference to consonants, H Dropping was a fairly common feature, but there is one specific feature that stands out as a typical attribute of the middle north and also the midlands; the *velar nasal plus*. It is common for words like *sing*, *long* and *song* to be pronounced with a velar plosive [ɡ] after the velar nasal [ŋ], thus making *singer* rhyme with *finger*; [sɪŋɡə], [fɪŋɡə] vs. RP [sɪŋə], [fɪŋɡə] (Wells 1982:365).

2.3.2 Previous studies in Sheffield

The Sheffield accent has not been a frequent object for research in English linguistics in recent years. Stoddart et al. (1999), however, give a comprehensive overview of the state of the accent in the late 1990s, and compare their findings with the informant in the SED. In addition it is an apparent time study, consequently giving a description of how the accent has changed in just about fifty years. The article from 1999 is based on data collections performed by Jana Stoddart and James Oldfield in 1997. They interviewed in total 24 speakers, divided into three age groups: 12-30, 31-55, and 56 and over. The informants were found in 'various parts of the city, using two low-density networks' (Stoddart et al. 1999:73). Their main aim was to 'illustrate the dangers of over-generalisation and oversimplification inherent in the characterisation of SED data exclusively in terms of NORMs' (ibid.). So despite characterising and describing the Sheffield accent as it was in 1997, they do not provide exact quantifications of the usage of each variant, merely descriptions of what seems to be changing and the different possible variants used of a certain variable. Both the most common variants as well as other possible realisations are presented.

Stoddart et al. established that there are several apparently on-going changes in the Sheffield accent. Firstly, they found that '[a] transition is clearly taking place from earlier [a] to [ɑː] in the BATH set' (Stoddart et al. 1999:77). This mainly occurs among younger speakers. In the SED sample, the vowels of BATH, TRAP, and STRUT did not exhibit any variation from [a], [a], and [ʊ], respectively. Regarding the STRUT set they found that [ə] often occurred in weak positions among speakers of all age groups, but otherwise [ʊ] was found to be the most common variant. However, they also note that '[t]he [ɒ] variant in the STRUT set is of particular interest, as it is somewhat closer to standard [ʌ] and, given the existence of [ə] in weak position for this set, opens up the possibility of a move from [ʊ] towards [ʌ]' (ibid:88). They also refer to the Survey of Language and Folklore (henceforth SLF), which was initiated in the 1960s and is still gathering speech samples of different dialects to this day (National Archives 2014:URL). The SLF had also found evidence of [ə] in weak position, but more importantly, instances of [ə] and [əː] were noted in strongly stressed words of the STRUT set (Stoddart et al. 1999:88). Also in GOAT Stoddart et al. (1999:74) saw a change towards the standard (i.e. RP/southern) [əʊ] among all age groups and especially among females. The majority of GOAT words, however, seemed to be moving from a centring [ʊə] to back-closing [oʊ]. Another change concerned the vowel in words such as *night*. The variants listed in the SED had a long monopthong [niːt]. In the 1997 data this had changed into a glide [ɑi]/[ai].

The changes in vowels could not compare to the changes in consonants however. Even

though glottaling was present in the SED data, it had increased radically among younger speakers who used the feature 'two to three times more than older speakers' (Stoddart et al. 1999:75). It was especially common among younger males. The younger males were also the most frequent users of TH Fronting, whereas older speakers preferred the traditional [θ, ð]. Regarding the velar nasal plus, the only environment researched here was the suffix -*ing*. In the SED data -*ing* was mostly realised as [ɪn], and this was still the most common realisation in 1997. Nevertheless, [ɪŋ] was possible among younger speakers. The velar nasal plus [ɪŋg] was found only occasionally mainly in the younger and middle age groups. For the variable (r) the approximant [ɹ] was common for all groups, but a tapped [ɾ] was occasionally found in male speech. In other words there was no sign that R Fronting had reached the city. Stoddart et al. (1999:78) conclude that the Sheffield accent '[has] experienced comparatively limited change over the past half century'. They claim that it is rather the local vocabulary that has suffered most from recent changes and that is in steep decline.

2.4 Accent levelling

A much debated subject in accent variation and change today involves the process of *accent levelling*. A lot of the on-going changes in phonology in Britain are explained by this phenomenon. Accent levelling refers to the process 'whereby differences between regional varieties are reduced, features which make varieties distinctive disappear, and new features emerge and are adopted by speakers over a wide geographical area' (Williams and Kerswill 1999:149). Levelling is not considered to be the same as *standardisation* where speakers lose their local features in favour of the standard, e.g. RP. The change is often directed towards a regional norm. Foulkes and Docherty (1999a:13) explain that 'there appears to be a tension between speakers' desire to continue signalling loyalty to their local community by using local speech norms, and a concurrent urge to appear outward-looking or more cosmopolitan'. This is further emphasised in Watt's (1998:7) description of the vowel changes in the Newcastle accent; the speakers want to keep their identity as northerners, but at the same time they want to 'dispel the "cloth caps and clogs" image' and rather be perceived as *modern* northerners.

Levelling does not happen in one particular way: 'the form [levelling] takes and the mechanisms by which it operates will differ according to local demographic and social factors' (Williams and Kerswill 1999:151). Kerswill (2003) discusses regional dialect levelling and two possible mechanisms behind the process, namely *geographical diffusion* and *speech accommodation*. In the former mechanism, 'features spread out from a populous and economically and

culturally dominant centre' (Kerswill 2003:223). Its spread is wavelike, most often reaching the closest cities first in an urban hierarchical manner. It then spreads from the larger cities before it moves to larger towns, to town, to village, i.e. reaching the rural areas last (Beal 2010:78). The levelling happens when people with different accents come in contact. The latter mechanism, speech accommodation, refers to the tendency speakers have to change their accents to increase the similarity with their interlocutors (Kerswill 2003:223). This only applies if the interlocutors are perceived in a positive manner, however, otherwise one might enhance the differences in one's accent to mark the speakers' dissimilarities (linguistic divergence) (Beal 2010). In situations of speech accommodation it is common for the less widespread variants to be discarded in favour of the supra-local variants or variants 'with a wider geographical currency' (Kerswill 2003:223). If the contact between speakers of different accents go on over a longer period of time 'frequent acts of convergence and divergence might eventually lead to long-term accommodation' (Beal 2010:74). It is common for the variant that is in majority and / or considered more prestigious to be the 'winning' variant in this levelling process.

Levelling is believed to happen on a greater scale now than before due to increased mobility. Today, more people leave their home town to get an education, and once their studies are done they might move elsewhere in search of employment. Many are commuters from one town to another, being in daily contact with other accents: 'There are thus many more opportunities of dialect contact for a much higher proportion of the population than in earlier periods' (Beal 2010:74). Increased mobility leads to a loosening of close-knit networks which in turn increases the receptiveness to new linguistic forms. Kerswill (2003:225) explains that '[a] consequence of this receptiveness is that speakers can be expected to take up diffusing changes more readily, with the result that these changes move more rapidly across the language area' . In addition there is the issue of attitude. People may adopt features they perceive as attractive, and thus avoid unattractive features (Torgersen and Kerswill 2004), such as features associated with the previously mentioned 'cloth caps and clogs' image in Newcastle (Watt 1998:7).

Loose networks are often a characteristic of the middle class. Research has revealed, however, that also close-knit working class communities have adopted levelling changes in cities like Hull, Derby, and Glasgow (cf. 2.4.1). The motivation behind this development is not easy to establish. It has been proposed that influence from the broadcasting media is behind the changes in close-knit communities like these. TV shows aimed at youths have become more common in the last couple of decades in the 20th century, and the hosts of these shows often use non-standard accent features. Also popular TV series like *East Enders* and *Coronation Street* are proposed to influence young people's speech. Additionally, television, and, in more recent

years, the Internet are becoming more and more important in a household (Foulkes and Docherty 1999a:14). Recent research argues against this theory and claim that it does not seem to fit with reality. Both Robinson (2005) and Reiersen (2013) found this explanation to be inadequate as an explanation for levelling. Their objections are based on their findings that although shows like *East Enders* are popular, they are subordinate to American sitcoms like *Friends* and *The Big Bang Theory*. Despite the large input from American English, people do not adopt American accent features (Robinson 2005), thus counter-arguing Foulkes and Docherty's (1999a) proposition.

Levelling can occur at both regional and national levels, but vowels and consonants seem to follow different patterns of levelling. The spread of vowel features is commonly reserved for regional accent levelling (Kerswill 2003). Examples of regional accent levelling are the changes in vowels in the accents of Milton Keynes and Reading. They are shifting towards a quality close to that of the London accent (Torgersen and Kerswill 2004). Also in Tyneside, the traditional diphthongs in FACE and GOAT are losing ground. The supra-local monophthongised variants are becoming increasingly more widespread (Watt 2002) (cf. 2.4.1). For consonants it is a different matter. Several innovations in consonants are spreading throughout Britain from London whose 'working-class accent is today the most influential source of phonological innovation in England and perhaps in the whole English-speaking world' (Wells 1982:301). There are especially three features that are reported to be spreading from the popular London speech, namely T Glottaling, TH Fronting, and R Fronting (Beal 2010:79). The following section will present an overview of recent studies on these variables involved in levelling throughout Britain.

2.4.1 Previous studies on accent levelling

In the past decades Britain has seen an increased interest in the variation and change in different accents. Many linguists have focused on non-standard features spreading from London, such as T Glottalling, TH Fronting and R Fronting. These features are said to be spreading 'like "wildfire" amongst young people in Britain' (Beal 2010:79). Foulkes and Docherty (1999b) put together a collection of articles providing overviews of many accents around the British Isles. Phonological 'innovations' discussed in the light of levelling are also included in these descriptions. Some previous studies concerned with these subjects will be mentioned here.

T Glottalling is the most widespread feature of the non-standard London accent, and it has now become a characteristic of urban speech. (t) is also the most studied variable in English phonology, mainly because of the glottal realisation [?] (Foulkes and Docherty 2007). Extensive T Glottalling is found in the southern towns of Reading and Milton Keynes, but given their close proximity to London, and the fact that T Glottalling has become a feature of Southern

English English, this is not surprising (Williams and Kerswill 1999). Williams and Kerswill (1999:159) are more intrigued by their results in the northern town of Hull 'where T-glottalling does not form part of the original dialect nor of the dialect of the surrounding East Riding'. The younger informants replaced [t] with [ʔ] intervocalically just as frequently as the informants in the southern locations. It was more frequent among the working class among both genders, although males used it slightly more than females. T Glottalling was used in as much as 80% of the cases among male working class speakers. Among middle class informants, however, females were the most frequent users of glottal stops with 30% usage, ten percentage points more than males. The same pattern was found in Reading, but in Milton Keynes males were the most frequent users of T Glottalling in the middle class. Seeing as the working class in Hull is a close-knit community, Williams and Kerswill (1999:151) suggest that in addition to face-to-face contact and speech accommodation, accent levelling can be explained by so-called language missionaries and attitudinal factors. *Language missionaries* is a term used to refer to people who have spent some time away from their native area, and then return, bringing with them linguistic innovations. The latter explanation of attitudinal factors refers to the identification of non-standard features as *youth norms*: 'Adolescents throughout Britain are regularly exposed to southern accents [through broadcasting media], which in turn are associated with young people and youth culture' (Williams and Kerswill 1999:162).

In Milroy et al.'s (1994) study on glottaling in Tyneside, they found a shift from the traditionally local glottal reinforcement [ʔt] to glottal replacement [ʔ]. This change was especially evident among young females. Glottaling was deemed 'prestigious' in terms of geographical spread, as opposed to glottal reinforcement which is the local norm. As mentioned in 2.1.2, Milroy et al. suggest that females create prestigious features instead of just preferring the prestigious. They also claim that class is a secondary variable to gender: 'females lead in the change, and . . . the establishment of the glottal stop as a middle-class form . . . is dependent on, and secondary to, its establishment in the speech of females (Milroy et al. 1994:26).

In Cardiff English, the distribution of T Glottalling stands out in comparison with other British accents. The amount of glottalisation is said to be small in comparison with other accents, and the use of the non-standard feature decreases as one climbs down the socio-economic ladder (Mees and Collins 1999:195). T Glottalling is nevertheless deemed a prestigious feature in Cardiff English (ibid:192). T Glottalling in Cardiff is mostly led by young, middle class females, similar to the development in Tyneside mentioned above. Mees and Collins (1999) note that the feature seems to be infiltrating the speech of working class females to a larger extent as well. They further claim that glottilisation is considered an attractive feature because it 'represents, at

subconscious level, a move away from local Welsh accent characteristics towards more sophisti-
cated and fashionable speech' (ibid:201). Again, comparison with T Glottalling's distribution in
Tyneside is interesting.

Bonness (2011) found an increasing use of T Glottalling among three generations of lower
middle/middle class informants in Northampton. Word-medial tokens, which are more marked
realisations of T Glottalling, were glottalised more often by the third generation, whereas glot-
talling word-finally was found for all age groups, although it was not very common among
the first generation. For the third generation, T Glottalling was near-categorical across word-
boundaries. In word-medial position, the first generation of speakers categorically used the alve-
olar stop, while the second generation's use of the traditional variant was near-categorical. For
the youngest generation, however, T Glottalling was used almost interchangeably in word-medial
position. Furthermore, the young male informants were more frequent users of T glottalling in
word-medial positions, whereas there was hardly any difference between the genders in word-
final environments. In general, T Glottalling in other positions than word-internally is becoming
common among upper class or 'posh' speakers of English, and can thus be said to have lost its
stigma (Kerswill and Williams 2000:78). Bonness (2011:63) explains the increase of new vari-
ants as a result of 'accent levelling initiated through face-to-face contact with overspill Londoners
and other southerners'.

T Glottalling is also very common in Scotland. In Glasgow (Stuart-Smith et al. 2007)
the percentage of T Glottalling is quite similar to that of the distribution in Hull. It is favoured
by the working class, and it possibly enjoys covert prestige among the younger working class.
While middle class speakers show quite an extensive use of T Glottalling with over 50% usage,
they cannot compare to the young working class who used the glottal stop in over 90% of the
cases. Stuart-Smith et al. (2007) propose that the increased use of non-Scottish features is closely
linked with identity. A resentment towards the middle class reigns among the working class pop-
ulation. Using non-standard features is then suggested to be a way to create a distance between
the working class and the middle class, i.e. creating an anti-establishment identity.

A study in Huntly, a small town in north-eastern Scotland, indicates a significant change
from the older to the younger generation regarding T Glottalling. Divided into four different age
groups, the results show a categorical use of the standard alveolar [t] among the over 60 group,
and a near-categorical use among the 25-40 group (Marshall 2001:60). The non-standard [ʔ] is
used to a greater extent by the two younger age groups (14-17 and 8-12), except by the females
aged 8-12. Most of the younger speakers seem to prefer the non-standard. T Glottalling appears
to have '*covert* prestige, and possibly increasing overt prestige, and as such the adolescents accept

it as a symbol, whereas the youngest females resist it longer as a non-standard marker' (Marshall 2001:63, emphasis in original). Marshall further speculates that the adoption has to do with its association with 'youth culture and city values' (ibid.).

Williams and Kerswill (1999) investigated the distribution of TH Fronting in Milton Keynes, Reading, and Hull as well. This feature seems to be more common among the working class speakers than the middle class. Among the middle class females in Reading, there were no occurrences of TH Fronting, whereas for the working class the percentage was relatively high with 76.4% for replacing [θ] with [f] intervocalically. It is recurrent in the working class for all three locations that the percentage of TH Fronting is in the upper half of the percentage scale, whereas in the middle class they are well under the lower half. Also males use TH Fronting more than females in both classes. The distribution is otherwise quite similar in all three towns (Williams and Kerswill 1999). The findings were among others that consonant features such as T Glottalling and TH Fronting (as well as R Fronting) are spreading from the South to the North. To succeed in spreading the features have to be natural and of low prestige. However, southern features that are perceived as posh by northerners will not be as easily adopted due to northern identity factors (ibid:80). Williams and Kerswill (1999:162) suggest that '[t]he adoption of southern, non-standard variants of T and TH does not affect a northerner's sense of regional identity', while an adoption of southern variants in for instance BATH and STRUT, which are more salient, would be a denial of this identity.

Bonness (2011) also found use of TH Fronting in Northampton. It was only used by the third generation, and the young males were the dominant users. Although the feature is in much less use than T Glottalling, Bonness still believes that the underlying mechanism for its entry into the accent is the same, i.e. extensive face-to-face contact with southerners.

Like T Glottalling, TH Fronting has also reached Scotland. Robinson (2005), Stuart-Smith et al. (2007), and Clark and Trousdale (2009) have all found occurrences of TH Fronting in Livingston, Glasgow, and Fife, respectively. In Glasgow, TH Fronting was only identified among the working class informants. Occurrences of [f] instead of [θ] among the older speakers were nearly non-existent compared to the younger speakers in the reading task. In free conversation, however, there was no identification of TH Fronting among the older speakers at all. Also, younger females used TH Fronting slightly more than younger males. This development was also explained by the anti-establishment identity factor mentioned previously (Stuart-Smith et al. 2007). In Fife the main focus of the study was to investigate the role of token frequency in the distribution of TH Fronting. TH Fronting had without a doubt gained ground in Fife, and it was found that 'speakers seem to be adopting the innovation more readily in words with higher

token frequency than lower token frequency' (Clark and Trousdale 2009:49). The pattern was not consistent, however. Clark and Trousdale (2009:52) therefore rather conclude that 'there is rarely ever one single motivating factor responsible for the spread of a linguistic change'.

In Livingston, Robinson (2005) found no occurrence of TH Fronting among the older informants. Among the younger speakers, however, TH Fronting was well established both in the lenis and fortis fricatives. In general, the young boys, both 11- and 15-year-olds, used fronted variants more than girls. The 15-year-old boys were the forerunners of fronting in formal style with 60% fronted realisations. In conversational style, however, they preferred the traditional Scottish variants, i.e. [h] and zero variants. Standard [θ] and the new variant [f] also occurred in free conversation, but to a lesser extent. It might therefore seem like the non-standard innovation is perceived as more 'proper' than the local features. Also here the informants belonged to the working class, although class was not a social variable investigated.

It has been suggested that while the spread of TH Fronting in Milton Keynes and Reading is a result of direct contact, the spread to Scotland and pockets of Northern England has been more difficult to explain. A previously mentioned theory proposes that popular TV series might be the catalyst for innovations in speech far away from the centre of changes (Foulkes and Docherty 1999a). Robinson (2005) proposes an arguably more realistic theory involving TH Fronting's background as an infantile feature. Using [f] instead of [θ] has been seen as immature and it has been sanctioned by adults in the past. Robinson (2005:190) further explains that the 'pattern one would expect to find with this hypothesis is a higher frequency of TH-fronting in younger speakers, first because of their immaturity and second because adult tolerance is likely to increase gradually over time'.

Even though Stoddart et al. (1999) did not list [ʋ] as a realised variant of /r/ in Sheffield in 1997, it is believed that 'the geographical distribution of [ʋ] is similar to that found for both TH-fronting and glottaling' (Foulkes and Docherty 2000:34) and it 'appears to be diffusing from south to north' (Foulkes and Docherty 2007:64). R Fronting has indeed been spotted in the surrounding area of Sheffield. In Hull, north-east of Sheffield, the post-alveolar approximant [ɹ] is the norm, but Williams and Kerswill (1999:147) found that '[l]abiodental [ʋ] is common among children and young adults'.

Also Foulkes and Docherty (2000) have investigated the spread of labiodental (r). In their study they compared the realisation of (r) in Derby and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. The results indicated that R Fronting was firmly established in Derby among the younger population, but less so in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. These results support their levelling hypothesis that the increasing use of non-standard south-eastern consonant variables is spreading from southern locations by

way of geographical diffusion. While in Middlesbrough (Llamas 1998; in Foulkes and Docherty 2000) and Derby, R Fronting was mainly found among the working class males, it was found to be more common among middle class females in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne (Foulkes and Docherty 2000:41-5). Derby is located less than 50 km south of Sheffield, while Newcastle-Upon-Tyne is quite far north.

R Fronting has also spread to Leeds, a neighbouring city of Sheffield (Marsden 2006). Following the same method as Foulkes and Docherty (2000), Marsden (2006) found a clear division between younger and older speakers. The results showed that the young and middle aged groups used the labiodental approximant quite often, while the older group exclusively used the post-alveolar variant. Like in Derby, gender did not seem to be a relevant factor in the distribution of R Fronting. Instead of using social class as a variable, Marsden looked into social networks to try and explain the distribution of the variant. Indeed, use of R Fronting seemed to correlate with whether the speaker had loose or strong network ties: 'The Leeds data suggests that ties to strong local networks facilitate the maintenance of conservative forms and weak network ties create less resistance to linguistic innovations occurring in the wider linguistic environment' (Marsden 2006:168). She further explains that people with weak network ties are more likely to be in contact with people from a wider geographical area and are, in the extension of this, 'more likely to be accountable for variants involved in levelling processes' (ibid:169).

In reference to vowels, Williams and Kerswill (1999) report that, like in Sheffield, also the accent of Hull has seen occurrences of a more central variant (e.g. [ə]) of STRUT in middle class speech. There is no mention of variation in the BATH set however. In general there have been few reports on the typical northern features that will be discussed in the present project; the vowels in BATH and STRUT and the consonant feature of velar nasal plus. Apart from Stoddart et al.'s (1999) brief mention of the distribution in Sheffield, few reports have been found from the rest of the linguistic North. Other typically northern vowel features have been investigated in the light of levelling, however. As was briefly mentioned in the previous section, Watt (2002) looked at the vowels in FACE and GOAT in the accent of Tyneside. He found that the local variants [ɪə] and [ʊə] are losing ground to the supra-local monophthongised variants [eː] and [oː]. Although the supra-local variants are common among almost all speaker groups, they occur especially frequently in the speech of females. One of the explanations Watt (2002) provides for this is the issue of identity. As an area far away from the nation's capital, its loyalty lies with the northern region, and the accent thus changes to the northern regional standard.

In general, the findings throughout Britain suggest an increase in use of non-standard accent features traditionally associated with the London working class. Younger speakers seem

to be the most frequent users of innovative features, but when it comes to gender the findings are not as explicit. Middle class females use T Glottalling more than middle class males in some communities, whereas it is the reverse in others. In Glasgow, females use TH Fronting more than males, whereas males seem to adopt this feature more readily in other cities. It is then interesting to see which path the accent of Sheffield follows and how much variation exists in this accent area.

Chapter 3

Method

This project on phonology is a synchronic study of accent variation and change in Sheffield, England. It compares the speech of two generations of Sheffielders at one point in time with a focus on the realisation of six phonological variables. The apparent-time approach applied here serves to give an insight of possible on-going changes and variation, with age and gender as social variables.

The present chapter describes the choices made when planning and conducting the research, as well as the main stages of the present methodology. The chapter is twofold. The first part gives a description of the phonological variables and their respective variants. The second part introduces the main methodology applied in the research. It provides information on the preparational stages, and it introduces the informants. It also describes the process of collecting, analysing, and quantifying the data.

3.1 Phonological variables

This section aims to provide descriptions of the various phonological variables relevant to this project. Six different variables have been analysed; two vowel features and four consonant features. Vowels are not as easily distinguishable as consonants, they are continuous, whereas consonants are typically more discrete, i.e. variants of a consonant variable are typically more easily distinguished from each other. The realisation of a vowel, however, can be viewed in terms of a continuum. The two vowel features in this study are typical of the Northern English accent. This also applies to the consonant feature loss of velar nasal plus. Their descriptions are provided in the first three sections. The final three variables are non-standard accent features known to be spreading from London. Two variants are assigned to each variable, thus they are treated as binary. A brief description is also given of each variant. The variables are often referred to in

terms of the process they are hypothesised to be going through, e.g. BATH broadening and T Glottalling, but they are also assigned a variable symbol each, e.g. (a) and (t).

3.1.1 BATH broadening

As discussed in 2.3, there are two accent features in particular that distinguish the northern accents from the southern accents, namely the vowels in the lexical sets BATH and STRUT. South of the North-South divide, the vowel in BATH is normally realised as a long back monophthong [ɑː], as in [bɑːθ] *bath*, [lɑːf] *laugh*, etc. In the North this vowel is typically the same as in TRAP [a], and it is one of the most important identity markers for a northerner (Wells 1982:354). This difference between the North and South of England is due to a change that took place in the South during the mid-eighteenth century, namely the TRAP-BATH split. At first the vowel in BATH was only affected by lengthening. The change from a front vowel quality to a back probably happened in the early nineteenth century. Wells (1982:232) refers to this process as 'broadening', and this term has also been adopted here. By the twentieth century BATH was clearly distinguished from TRAP (ibid:232-234), and consequently clearly distinguished from the northern pronunciation. This southern innovation was in fact stigmatised as a feature of the Cockney accent at least up until the early nineteenth century (Beal 2008:132). The innovation soon gained prestige, however, and the short, northern [a] is now the stigmatised feature, although it is a stigma northerners bear with pride (ibid.), as also Wells explains (cf. 2.3).

BATH *broadening* thus refers to the process where the traditional northern short front [a] lengthens and 'broadens', i.e. retracts towards the southern long back [ɑː]. The variable (a) thus have the two variants [a] and [ɑː]. All stressed BATH words occurring in the analysed material are included as tokens, except *half*, *can't* and *banana*, which would belong to the PALM set had it not been for the North-American pronunciation (Wells 1982:356). Therefore these tokens are excluded from quantification in this study.

3.1.2 STRUT lowering

STRUT *lowering* refers to the realisation of the northern STRUT [ʊ] as a more open and slightly fronted [ʌ], i.e. a change from a close-mid back to an open central vowel quality. Similarly with BATH, this is a known change in the South of England often referred to as the FOOT-STRUT split, albeit at a much earlier stage than the TRAP-BATH split. The FOOT-STRUT split refers to a change in Middle English that resulted in a transfer from one phoneme, /u/, to two phonemes, /ʊ/ and /ʌ/. The change is believed to have been established by the middle of the 17th century (Wells

1982:197). The change only affected the accents of southern England, Wales and Scotland, thus Northern English accents alone preserved a five-term system of vowels. In accents with this five-term vowel system the strong form of *could* and *cud* are homophones: [kʊd] and [kʊd] (ibid:351). The 'unsplit' /ʊ/ was identified as a northern characteristic by the middle of the eighteenth century, when John Kirkby in 1746 (in Beal 2008:131) notes that 'his' vowel in words such as *skull* and *supper* 'is scarce known to the Inhabitants of the North, who always use the short sound … instead'.

The variable (ʊ) has the two variants [ʊ] and [ʌ] assigned to it. Seeing as vowels are continuous some intermediate realisations might occur in the sampled data. A common intermediate realisation is a mid-central and unrounded [ə]. This is especially characteristic of near-RP in northern accents (Wells 1982:352). Intermediate forms such as this one are counted as instances of [ʊ], because the aim of the present project is to record the complete change, i.e. realisations of a clear open central [ʌ]. Although words like *once* and *one* are pronounced with an open central [ʌ] in RP, i.e. [wʌns] and [wʌn], they are realised with [ɒ] in parts of the North (ibid:362). This includes the Sheffield accent, therefore these words are excluded from quantification.

3.1.3 Loss of velar nasal plus

Loss of velar nasal plus refers to the pronunciation of the orthographic consonant cluster <ng> as velar nasal [ŋ] as opposed to the traditional northern pronunciation [ŋg], also known as the velar nasal plus (Wells 1982:365f). Before the 17th century the velar nasal plus was the principal way of pronouncing the consonant cluster (Beal 2010:17). In the 1600s however, the educated elite in London stopped pronouncing the final [g], leaving the velar nasal exposed in word-final position (Wells 1982:188). What had happened was 'a coalescence of a consonant cluster: two consonants become one' (ibid.). Hence Wells termed the change *NG coalescence*. This coalescence spread throughout the South of England, and today the dominant realisation in British English is without the velar plosive, i.e. only the velar nasal [ŋ]. However, some areas have retained the velar nasal plus, e.g. the middle north and the western part of the Midlands, including Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester. In Yorkshire, only the Sheffield accent has retained the velar nasal plus. In these areas, the velar nasal plus is preferred by nearly all social classes. Wells (1982:366) claims that NG coalescence in the linguistic North is reserved for RP speakers alone, whereas velar nasal plus is regarded as 'correct' by most other speakers in this area, even middle class women. The 'correctness' applied to this feature is thought to have connections with its closeness to the written standard (Beal 2008:137). More recent research has also claimed that it is a prestige variant in some parts of the North and the Midlands. In Sandwell in the West

Midlands, the velar nasal plus has been found to be more common among women than men. The younger speakers have an increasing use of the variant, and young females seem to be leading the change. Additionally, it has an increasing occurrence in monitored speech (Mathisen 1999:119-121). Mathisen (1999:122) suggests that 'the female speakers are approximating to a local norm of prestige, which is an orientation away from the national standard, and from RP'.

In the North [ŋ] is not considered to be a separate phoneme, it is rather an allophone of /n/ because its realisation is limited to contexts where it precedes a velar plosive (Mathisen 1999). However, the velar nasal plus is not realised in all environments. It is mostly limited to word-final positions and before suffixes e.g. [sɪŋgə] *singer*, [sɪŋgən - sɪŋgɪn - sɪŋgɪŋg] *singing*. There is only a limited area in North Staffordshire where the velar nasal plus may occur before an obstruent, e.g. [sɪŋgz] *sings*, [lɒŋgd] *longed* (Wells 1982:365f).

In this study the variable (ng) is assigned the variants [ŋg] and [ŋ]. In the suffix *-ing* the consonant cluster is often reduced to an alveolar nasal [n] in unmonitored and less careful speech. This is a more stigmatised realisation, whereas the velar nasal plus is considered the correct pronunciation by the northern speakers (Beal 2008:137). Seeing as (ng) is known to be realised as [n] it is expected to appear in this sample as well. This realisation is counted as an instance of the 'new' feature, namely [ŋ]. Because of the limitations of this feature's realisation explained in the previous paragraph, all tokens occurring before an obstruent are not included in the quantification. Tokens are only counted when they precede sonorants and vowels. The relevant tokens are found in intervocalic and sentence-final positions, although (ng) before a pause will also be included in the quantification. Suffixes that represent the comparative or superlative, retain the velar nasal plus in RP, so words like *longer* and *stronger* are not included as tokens, while *long* and *strong* are. This also applies to other words that are normally pronounced with [ŋg] in RP, like *finger* and *English*.

3.1.4   T Glottalling

T Glottalling refers to the replacement of alveolar stop [t] with glottal stop [ʔ], a process also commonly referred to as *glottal replacement*. Glottalling is a typical characteristic of the Cockney accent in London, even though it is found in many types of Englishes (Wells 1982:323). It is in fact also believed to have occurred in Scotland before England. Andrésen (1968:18; in Schleef 2013:203) 'assumed a diffusion of glottal reinforcement from western (1860) to eastern (1889) Scotland' based on historical references concerning the feature. It has traditionally been a highly stigmatised accent feature, associated with London's working class. As T Glottalling is spreading throughout England, and thus becoming increasingly more common, its stigmatisation

decreases as the acceptance increases (c.f. section 2.4.1).

Glottalling can occur in nearly all phonological environments, and also with other phonemes than /t/, e.g. /p/ and /k/. In this study however, focus is on T Glottalling because it is the most marked glottalling feature of the Cockney accent (Wells 1982:324). The frequency of T Glottalling depends on certain linguistic constraints, e.g. the position of (t) within a word. It has been found that T Glottalling occurs more often word-finally than word-medially (Roberts 2006; in Schleef 2013). Schleef further lists the external constraints that are known to influence T Glottalling, e.g. class, gender, level of formality etc. It is more common in informal speech than in formal situations, and it is mainly favoured by younger speakers. Class is also an extralinguistic constraint as T Glottalling appears to be more common the further down one goes on the social scale. Gender is a more complicated factor, however, because the findings seem to differ from one study to the next. It has been suggested that 'women tend to favor glottal replacement when it is associated with supra-local, as opposed to local, norms' (Schleef 2013:205).

The variable (t) has two variants assigned to it: [t] and [ʔ]. Variant [t] includes all realisations that are not [ʔ], e.g. alveolar plosive [t], preglottal [ʔt], and tapped [ɾ]. The focus of this study is on glottal replacement of (t) intervocalically, including tokens both word-medially and across word boundaries. The tokens are limited to intervocalic environments because of the salience of these occurrences. Intervocalic occurrences of T Glottalling are considered to be an accent feature, whereas preconsonantal glottalling can occur in all varieties of English (Wells 1982:260f). Therefore, instances of (t) before or after consonants are not included as tokens. Prepausal tokens are not included because this can simply be a result of reduction, and glottalling in such positions is also common in many different varieties of English, and consequently not very interesting for the present project.

3.1.5   TH Fronting

Another characteristic feature of London and Cockney speech is *TH Fronting*. TH Fronting refers to the development where the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are replaced by labiodental fricatives [f] and [v] respectively, e.g. [fɪn] *thin* and [brʌvə] *brother*. Fronting of the fortis [θ] can occur in all environments, i.e. initially, [fɪŋk] *think*, word-medially, [iːfə] *ether*, and word-finally, [pɑːf] *path*. Fronting of the lenis [ð], however, only occurs in non-initial position, i.e. [mʌvə] *mother* and [wɪv] *with* (Wells 1982:328). In sociolinguistic research on TH Fronting, it is mostly fronting of the fortis variable that has received most attention. Stuart-Smith and Timmins (2006) adopt the term TH Fronting only to refer to fronting of the fortis variable, and the same approach is applied in the present study, i.e. only the fortis variable (θ) is under investigation.

Although TH Fronting traditionally has been a stigmatised feature, it has seen a massive spread throughout Britain in recent years. A discussion of this is found in section 2.4.1. The earliest mention concerning this phenomenon is from 1787 by Elphinston. Found in 'a rather low type of Cockney English' (Wyld 1929:209; in Kerswill 2003:234), TH Fronting was believed to be a result of personal idiosyncracy, rather than an accent feature. Considering that the feature was not 'fully entrenched' in London English in the early 20th century, TH Fronting has had a dramatic spread in southern urban centres in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The rapid growth has come as a surprise and linguists have struggled to find good explanations for this development. Trudgill (2002:57), however, reasons that the mere loss of the dental fricative [θ] is unsurprising because it is a marked feature. Relatively few world languages have it in their repertoires, and it is acquired late by children. The labiodental fricatives are more 'natural' in comparison, thus they can easily substitute the more 'difficult' dental fricatives among children. Therefore TH Fronting is often regarded as a persistent infantilism (Wells 1982:96). Despite these reasonings, researchers have been baffled by the rapidity of the spread in recent years. The feature can now be heard in many different parts of the country, not only in the South, but also in the North and Scotland, e.g. in Hull (Williams and Kerswill 1999), Northampton (Bonness 2011), and Glasgow (Stuart-Smith et al. 2007).

It has been suggested that both TH Fronting and T Glottalling are features that lie dormant in several speech communities. TH Fronting was said to be a recessive feature in West Riding in the late nineteenth century, and it had been quite common fifty years prior (Wright 1892:91; in Wales 2006:177). In the same time period it was also noted in Sheffield as a recurring feature (Addy 1888:xxxv; in Wales 2006:177). It has been suggested that these features' 'modern burgeoning in popular London English and the *yoof* media, complete with a street-wise image, has provided the catalyst for its resurgence amongst speakers in other regions' (Wales 2006:177, emphasis in original). Because of its stigma, TH Fronting has in the past been avoided by middle class speakers. In recent years, however, evidence of use of the feature in both female and male middle class speech has been found in e.g. Reading and Milton Keynes (Williams and Kerswill 1999). In both these towns the feature was first adopted by working class males, then working class females, later moving up the scale to middle class males, and finally middle class females. This indicates that the feature is affecting speech in a 'change from below' (Altendorf and Watt 2008:209).

The two variants for the variable (θ) are [θ] and [f]. As previously mentioned, fronting of the voiceless fricative can occur in all environments, i.e. initially [frŋk] *think*, word-medially [i:fə] *ether*, and word-finally [pɑːf] *path*. In cases where tokens are followed or preceded by

words with inital or final [f], they are not included in the quantification. Additionally, whenever a token is realised with an alveolar stop [t] or any other realisation than the two variants listed, it is counted as an instance of the variant [θ].

3.1.6   R Fronting

R Fronting refers to the realisation of (r) as a labiodental approximant [ʋ], i.e. *red* is realised as [ʋed] instead of with the traditional post-alveolar approximant [ɹed]. R Fronting has been a highly stigmatised feature, and is also a characteristic of modern London and Cockney speech. Like TH Fronting, R Fronting has been considered an infantilism by many. It has been described as a speech defect and it has also been considered an affectation in upper class speech (Foulkes and Docherty 2000). It was first mentioned in 1844 by Pegge (in Foulkes and Docherty 2000:31) that people 'unable to pronounce *r* invariably substitute a *w*', and also here it was clearly regarded a speech defect. R Fronting, like TH Fronting, is considered a developmental stage that children go through in their acquisition of speech. In comparison with other sounds, the standard post-alveolar approximant [ɹ] is acquired late. A suggestion as to why R Fronting now occurs more frequently in adult speech concerns the formation of a large sub-culture of Jews in London in the middle of the 20th century. Their attempts at mimicking the English post-alveolar approximant /r/ resulted in the labiodental [ʋ]. This may have been a catalyst for children, noticing adult speakers using the variant, and consequently sticking to the 'infantile' feature (Foulkes and Docherty 2000:38f).

R Fronting has also been an effective feature of mockery both in past and present popular culture. In Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, Pontius Pilate is ridiculed for not being able to pronounce 'Roger' and 'Roderick' correctly. Now, however, it is becoming more established and accepted, also in the British popular media with e.g. TV show host Jonathan Ross being an ambassador for the feature. In American English, however, the feature has not gained the same level of acceptance as in Britain, at least not based on occurrences of the feature in popular culture. In the current popular American TV series *The Big Bang Theory* a character, barry Kripke, is ridiculed for having the feature of R Fronting. It is not portrayed as an accent feature, however, it is rather a speech defect.

The variable (r) is assigned two variants, namely the post-alveolar approximant [ɹ] and the labiodental [ʋ]. All realisations which are not the labiodental [ʋ] are counted as instances of [ɹ], including for instance the alveolar tap. Tokens of the variable are counted in the same contexts as T Glottalling, i.e. exclusively in intervocalic positions, both word-medially and across word boundaries.

3.1.7 Summary

This section has sought to provide an overview of the variables and their variants. Table 3.1 below presents the variables investigated in this study, and their variants. The 'traditional' variants refer to the variants historically more common in Sheffield, and the 'new' variants refer to the variants hypothesised to be spreading to Sheffield from the southern parts of England. Examples of tokens are also included in the table.

Table 3.1: Token classifications

Variable	'Traditional' variant	'New' variant	Examples
(a)	[a]	[ɑː]	b<u>a</u>th, l<u>au</u>gh
(ʊ)	[ʊ]	[ʌ]	c<u>u</u>p
(ng)	[ŋg]	[ŋ]	lo<u>ng</u>, si<u>ng</u>i<u>ng</u>
(t)	[t]	[ʔ]	bu<u>tt</u>er, sor<u>t</u> of
(θ)	[θ]	[f]	<u>th</u>ink, e<u>th</u>er, ba<u>th</u>
(r)	[ɹ]	[ʋ]	<u>r</u>ed, hu<u>rr</u>y

3.2 Method

The following section provides an insight into the method applied in this project. It begins with a note on the stages of preparation, followed by descriptions of the informants and the sociolinguistic interview. Finally, the processes of analysing and quantifying the data are described.

3.2.1 Preparation

When conducting sociolinguistic research of this type, a lot of arrangements are required before one can start the process of interviewing. First of all, I drew up a contract, which was presented to, and signed by, all participants in the project. The contract provided a short description of the project, assured the informants that all data would be handled anonymously and informed them

of their right to withdraw from the project at any moment. An assurance of the informants' rights is especially important in an interview situation that may elicit sensitive information. This was not the case in any of the conducted interviews here, but it is nevertheless a precaution to bear in mind.

For the purpose of finding informants, numerous people were contacted through the website *www.couchsurfing.com*. This is a social network for travellers aiming to make travelling less expensive and to engage people around the world in cultural exchange. Through personal experience with Couchsurfing I knew that most members of the network are generally open-minded and helpful. I also considered it highly convenient to approach people here because the user profiles normally include information about the age and hometown of the couchsurfers. This prevented a lot of useless requests and it helped save time. The couchsurfers who fit the selection criteria thus received a message with a request for an interview and a description of the project in short detail. Many of the requests were unsuccessful because the contacted people were (unsurprisingly) travelling themselves in the relevant time period. However, seven people responded positively, and meetings were arranged. The rest of the informants were approached in cafes around Sheffield city centre. All informants were informed that the current project is a master's thesis concerned with language variation and change in Sheffield by comparing two generations of native speakers. To avoid any additional attention to speech during the formal interview session, the informants were not told explicitly that the study is focused on phonology.

3.2.2 Informants

One of the most important sampling criteria in traditional dialectology is to ensure representativeness. A sample should represent a larger population as accurately as possible, and *random sampling* has traditionally been viewed as the best way to achieve this (Milroy and Gordon 2003:25). In a random sampling procedure 'anyone within the sample frame has an equal chance of being selected' (ibid.), whether the sample frame is a voting register or a phone book. A representative sample requires avoidance of bias, however, and most sample frames are indeed likely to be biased. Today, strict random sampling is rarely conducted in sociolinguistic research. Instead some sort of *judgment sampling* is preferred, where researchers predefine the sampling universe and localise speakers prior to the investigation. The selection process can be influenced by social variables the researcher finds to be of interest, e.g. age, gender, social class, ethinicity, etc. (Milroy and Gordon 2003:25-30).

The current project employs the use of judgment sampling, thus the informants have been collected based on some predefined criteria. The first criterion was that the informants should be

natives of Sheffield. 'Natives' are here defined as people who are born and raised in Sheffield. It was also deemed desirable that the informants' parents were from Sheffield as well, but this was not the case for all of them.

Since this is an apparent time study, age is an important criterion. The informants of any apparant time study should belong to two or more generations. The informants gathered for this study are therefore divided into two age groups; younger and older. For the older informants the age limit was set to 50 years of age and above. For the younger informants I decided to seek after young adults from the age of 18 to 25. The reason for this decision was pragmatic. It is less time-consuming to gather data from informants of 18 years or older. If the informants had been under the age of 18, I would need their parents' consent as well as a police clearance certificate. Furthermore, speakers over the age of 18 have surpassed the *critical period* after which individuals' speech can be regarded as settled. The critical period refers to the theory that before puberty one is more sensitive to language acquisition (Hurford 1991). Additionally, age grading is not so common among young adults as it is with adolescents. The lower age limit was therefore set to 18. Despite the fact that all speakers can be considered adults, they are divided into two generational groups. Both groups consist of six speakers, three male and three female, giving twelve speakers altogether. The age of the older group ranges from 61 to 92 years, whereas the younger group's age ranges between 21 and 24.

The third criterion relates to class. Class is not a social variable in this study, but it is all the more preferred that all informants belong to the same social ground. There are several factors that are relevant in defining a social class, such as income, profession, etc. For the purpose of this project, a broad definition of the middle class is employed: anyone with a higher education can be considered a member of the middle class. The informants in this sample can all be said to belong to the middle class, ranging from the lower middle to the upper middle class. Though all of them have a formal higher education, the informants ranges from being unemployed and interns to being retired lawyers. A characteristic of the middle class is that they are relatively geographically mobile. This is also evident from the informants in this sample. Every informant except for Speakers 5, 11, and 12 have spent some years away from Sheffield, either because of higher education, military service or work.

Seeing as Sheffield is an industrial town, it is not surprising that some of the informants come from a working class family. They have since climbed the social ladder, however, by means of education and work. Around half of the informants' parents had a job connecting them to the working class. This is especially the case with the older speakers, although a couple of the younger informants' parents may also be considered as working class. As previously mentioned,

an 'advancement' from working class to middle class usually also involves linguistic convergence to the class a speaker is joining (cf. 2.1.3), hence the parents' professions and social belongings do not seem to be of great importance in determining a speaker's linguistic preferences. The professions of the parents are nevertheless included in Table 3.2 further below.

Though Sheffield historically is an industrial town with a certain amount of industry left, it was assumed that it would be easier finding middle class informants because Sheffield is an educational city with two universities. I expected that a lot of native Sheffielders would be enrolled here, and that it would be a good starting point for finding informants. This turned out to be a greater challenge than assumed, however. Very few native Sheffielders were encountered at the universities, and the ones who could be suitable as informants did not have the time or were not interested in participating. Therefore I had to rely solely on the informants collected through the Couchsurfing website with regards to the younger age group, whereas most of the older speakers were located in different cafes around Sheffield city centre. The sample size is therefore fairly small with only twelve informants. It has been claimed, however, that language variation and change can be accounted for by having a relatively small sample: 'It seems to be generally true that very consistent patterns emerge even with a very small sample, provided that it is *systematically selected*' (Milroy 1987:27, emphasis in original). So in a small-scale investigation such as the present, twelve informants can be seen as a sufficient number. None of the informants have any relations to one another, and they did not receive any form of payment (although they were offered coffee).

Table 3.2 below presents all the informants. It includes the age, gender, and profession of each informant, as well as their parents' respective professions. By including the parents' professions, the social mobility of the informants becomes evident.

Table 3.2: Table of informants

Informant	Age	Gender	Occupation	Parents' occupation
Speaker 1	21	Male	Unemployed (former student)	Father electrician, mother store manager
Speaker 2	22	Male	Student	Father bus driver, mother unemployed
Speaker 3	24	Male	Teacher	Graphic designers
Speaker 4	23	Female	Intern (former student)	Father business owner, mother tax accountant
Speaker 5	23	Female	Chemist	Business owners
Speaker 6	24	Female	Between jobs (former student)	Father police officer, mother nurse
Speaker 7	61	Male	Ecologist	Factory workers
Speaker 8	84	Male	Sales manager (retired)	Father cobbler, mother housewife
Speaker 9	92	Male	Lawyer (retired)	Factory workers
Speaker 10	61	Female	Librarian (retired)	Unknown
Speaker 11	65	Female	Store manager (retired)	Factory workers
Speaker 12	80	Female	Housewife	Father musician, mother housewife

3.2.3   The sociolinguistic interview

In investigations of accent variation and change, the sociolinguistic interview modelled by William Labov is the most common way of collecting data. The interviews can be conducted as a one-on-one exchange, or in groups, and are normally carried out in person. The interviews are meant to elicit 'extended stretches of unscripted, conversational speech' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:58). The sociolinguistic interview has a more flexible structure than other methods of eliciting data, e.g. rapid and anonymous surveys, and written questionnaires. It allows for the changing of subject if the informant is clearly uncomfortable and questions can be adjusted individually. When the aim is to record the most vernacular and unmonitored speech possible, this method stands out as the best alternative.

The *vernacular* here refers to the colloquial, spontaneous speech used by people in their

everyday lives. It was defined by Labov (1972:208) as 'the style in which the minimum attention is given to the monitoring of speech'. In sociolinguistic research it is common to try and elicit the most vernacular speech possible, because it is believed to 'offer[] the best database for examining the processes and mechanisms of linguistic change or the structural characteristics of a particular variety' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:50). Seeing as people accommodate their speech to that of other people and depending on the situation they are in, it is impossible for a researcher to say that one has recorded a speaker's vernacular speech. The vernacular is a fundamentally abstract object. The idea of any speech event being completely natural is therefore simply untenable (ibid.). The aim is then to make the informants as comfortable and relaxed as possible, and for them to engage in a topic of conversation that decreases their awareness of the situation they find themselves in. The problem of eliciting the vernacular is highly intertwined with *the observer's paradox*: 'we want to observe how people speak when they are not being observed' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:49). A setting where one is interviewed is formal to start with, and when the interview is conducted by a non-native stranger, it automatically adds to the formality of the situation. The presence of a tape recorder may additionally increase the speaker's attention to speech. Subsequently, researchers need to be well prepared before conducting the interviews, so that the observer's paradox is minimised. There are several ways of doing this, e.g. by finding a topic that gets the informant emotionally involved, conduct group interviews, etc. The ways I have tried to minimise the effects of the observer's paradox in this study is explained below.

The aim of a sociolinguistic interview is for the conversation to flow as effortlessly and freely as possible, because an interview session is quite different from a spontaneous conversation among friends. Therefore it is helpful to make a list of topics and questions in preparation of the interviews. The interviewer manages the conversation by asking questions, therefore a well-prepared list of topics is essential. To make the speakers as little self-conscious about their speech as possible, it is believed that finding conversational topics that are of interest to the speaker or that get them emotionally involved, is the best approach. The best known topic is Labov's (1972b:93; in Milroy and Gordon 2003:65f) 'danger of death' question. It seems as though inhabitants in Sheffield have led a more peaceful life than Labov's informants in New York, however, for when the informants were asked whether they had ever been scared to death hardly anyone had any anecdotes to share on the topic.

Considering that I found most of my informants through an online travelling network, 'travel' was an obvious choice of topic, mainly among the younger informants. In addition, questions were asked concerning their education, hobbies, and plans for the future. Previous research has found that adults 'spoke fondly of their childhoods and had much to say about how the

town had changed since they were young' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:60). Questions concerning childhood and the changes in Sheffield were also successful at eliciting long stretches of speech from the older informants of the present study. Also inquiries into the Northern English culture and how it differs from the southern were given enthusiastic answers from most informants. The questions were open in style and aimed at inviting the speaker into a conversation.

In addition to the question and answer format, the interview also included a reading task. This was primarily to make sure that each informant produced a certain amount of the relevant tokens in case the interview session was insufficient in doing so. The reading passage selected is one often used in sociolinguistic interviews, namely 'Comma gets a cure'. This text was written by McCullough and Somerville (2000), and all the standard lexical set keywords created by Wells (1982) are included in this text. The original text was altered slightly for the purpose of the present study, however. Passages with no relevant tokens were deleted, but only where the deletion did not interfere with the coherence of the text. In addition, some words were replaced by other words that are relevant for this project. I also included a list of 29 sentences constructed to include as many applicable tokens as possible. None of the informants had any trouble performing the reading tasks, although there were a couple of words some of the speakers struggled with. These were mainly *ether* and *veterinary*.

The reading task furthermore elicits another degree of formality, which allows for analysis of a different style. Informants might get nervous and get performance anxiety which makes them more conscious of their speech. Moreover, it is believed that speakers are more aware of spelling when reading a text, which may lead them to adopt a more formal speech. Style is not a variable of the present project, seeing as the main aim of the reading task is to secure a minimum amount of tokens from each informant. Nevertheless, where style seems to be of importance, it is commented on in the discussion. Both 'Comma gets a cure' and the list of sentences are included in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

According to Labov (1984:32; in Milroy and Gordon 2003:58) one should record one to two hours of speech of every informant to obtain useful phonological data. It may be difficult to find good enough questions, and a sufficient number of questions, to fill such a time span, however. The length of the interview also depends on the time the informants have to spare. Studies of style-shifting show that speakers style-shift throughout the course of an interview, thus investigators 'should be careful in assuming that speakers will adopt or maintain a particular style simply based on the fact that some period of time has elapsed in an interview' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:58). Therefore Milroy and Gordon (ibid.) suggest that 20-30 minutes might be enough. It is nevertheless important to bear in mind that the formal interview situation takes

some getting used to, and it is preferable to have enough time for the speaker to accommodate to the situation. Because of time restraints, some of the interviews in this study were shorter than desired. Most interviews lasted from 30 to 40 minutes, but some were around 25 minutes and the shortest was only 11 minutes long (Speaker 9). An interview as short as this is unfortunate, but when I have to rely on other people's good will and time I simply have to be appreciative of what I got. A positive side to the short interview in question is the presence of a friend of the interviewee during the last half of the session. This is fortunate seeing as people are less likely to diverge from their every-day speech in the presence of friends (Milroy and Gordon 2003:67).

All but three interviews were conducted in various cafes in the city centre of Sheffield. For the pre-planned meetings this arrangement was preferred by the informants out of convenience. The other informants were approached in cafes because of a personal assumption that people are relaxed and more open to talking to strangers when sitting alone in a cafe than if I had approached them on the street. The interview with Speaker 4, however, was conducted in her parents' office building in a quiet room, and the meeting with Speaker 6 took place in a tranquil park. The interview with Speaker 7 was conducted over Skype, an online communication service, because he did not have the opportunity to meet with me when I was in Sheffield. The atmosphere during the interviews was generally calm and friendly, although a couple of the informants initially found the situation of being tape-recorded by a stranger uncomfortable and 'strange'. In these situations it seemingly did not take long for them to relax and focus more on the conversation than on the fact that they were being recorded. The overall impression is that most of the informants were comfortable in the situation they found themselves in.

3.2.4   Auditory analysis and quantification

This section provides an overview on the process of transcribing, analysing and quantifying the data. The recorder used was Olympus VN-702PC. Due to a built-in USB connection, the recorded data was easily transferred as WMA-files to my personal laptop. The interviews were listened through several times and transcribed orthographically as precisely as possible. Orthographic transcriptions are convenient because tokens then become easily recognisable prior to the analysis. It is a highly time-consuming process, however, and several weeks were reserved for this purpose. After the orthographic transcriptions were completed, all relevant tokens were identified and, after repeated listenings, classified as one of the two variants assigned to each variable. Tokens that were unclear or indistinguishable were excluded from quantification. The analysed data consisted of approximately 45 000 words. I did not always analyse the whole interview, however. Some interview sessions were fairly long, and I found it to be too time-consuming

and unnecessary to transcribe the entire interview in these cases, as most of the variables are frequently used. Thus only the final part of these interviews were transcribed. If the transcribed sections of the interviews did not elicit enough tokens of a variable, I listened through the remainder of the interviews and only transcribed excerpts where wanted tokens occurred.

The recordings were analysed auditorily. Auditory analysis relies on the researcher's careful listening and auditory judgment. It is a perceptual and impressionistic method of analysing and may thus be coloured by subjectivity; researchers might hear a variant that no one else hears, perhaps based on wishful thinking. This method is better for some variables than others. As previously mentioned, discrete variables such as consonants are typically easier to distinguish from one another than vowels, which are continuous (Milroy and Gordon 2003:144). Since this study looks at two vowel variables, it was especially important to be consistent in the analysis. All variables have been assigned two variants each. This means that all realisations of vowels along the continuum that have not quite reached the realisation of the 'new' or 'southern' variant, are counted as instances of the traditional variant. Thus intermediate [ə] was counted as an instance of [ʊ] in STRUT words. Also if the consonant features were realised as something other than the two variants assigned to them, they were counted as instances of the traditional variant, e.g. a tapped [ɾ] was counted as [t].

One way to increase the reliability of the auditory analysis is to include a larger number of tokens in the analysis, so that misinterpretations are of less consequence. Another option is to have someone else listen through the material and check the quality of the analysis. Therefore the supervisor of this project, Bente Rebecca Hannisdal, a trained phonetician, has listened through a sample of the interviews. There was a high degree of agreement in the majority of the cases in our respective analyses. In cases where the analyses differed, a second assessment was carried out.

In the quantification of tokens the *principle of accountability* was followed, which declare that 'analysts should not select from a text those variants of a variable that tend to confirm their argument, and ignore others that do not' (Milroy and Gordon 2003:137) i.e. all variants of a variable are included regardless of its realisation. There are many views on how many tokens of each variable are needed to get a reliable result that reflects the speakers' norm (ibid:163). A number of 30 tokens has been proposed by Guy (1980; in Milroy and Gordon 2003:164) as being a reasonable objective. Milroy and Gordon (2003:164) further state that a token count below ten is in danger of being subject to fluctuation, whereas a number higher than ten 'moves towards 90 percent conformity with the predicted norm, rising to 100 percent with 35 tokens'. The present study aimed at analysing 50 tokens of each variable for each speaker. This was not a problem

concerning most of the variables, except for (a). Tokens of the BATH lexical set were relatively infrequent in all of the interviews. When a token occurred more than 50 times, only the final 50 tokens were counted. This is based on the belief that the informant is more relaxed and used to the situation after some time has passed, so then the realisations might be more close to the vernacular. Furthermore, all unstressed tokens were excluded from the sample, and, as already mentioned above, tokens that were not audible enough for reliable coding, whether it be because of background noise, mumbling, or the rapidity of speech, were not included in quantification.

When all tokens had been analysed, they were counted and then converted into percentage scores. According to Milroy (1987:113), binary variables, such as the ones included here, are best dealt with in percentage scores. A problem with using percentage scores, however, is that the actual amount of tokens counted is hidden. One out of five is a very different result than ten out of fifty, though both numbers make out 20 percent. Therefore both the percentage scores and the actual number of tokens are included in the tables in the subsequent chapter where the results are presented. Both individual and group scores were calculated. Group scores can be calculated in two ways. One approach is to compute scores for the group as if it were a single speaker. Another method is to compute scores for each individual first, and then average them. The latter approach is adopted here. Group scores are useful in that they increase the statistical significance of the results, and they make it possible to make generalisations based on extralinguistic variables such as age and gender.

Chapter 4

Results and discussion

This chapter presents the results of the analyses of the data gathered from the sociolinguistic interviews of Sheffielders. Each variable is presented in individual sections, and both the results and the discussion of the findings are included in these sections. The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether the accent of Sheffield is changing. The discussion sees the variables in light of the research questions, the proposed hypotheses, and the extralinguistic factors of age and gender. After processing and surveying the quantified data, some other aspects of the study might be interesting to comment on, e.g. the use of a variable in different styles of speech. The issue of levelling is discussed in a separate section. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings.

The variables are presented in separate sections. Here, the results are introduced in tables as group scores, and the findings are commented on and discussed. In the tables, the number of tokens for each variant is provided (N), as well as the respective percentage scores of the variants. Group scores of age and gender are given in individual tables. The percentage scores are provided in full numbers, without decimals, i.e. 75,7% will be listed as 76%. This is to make the discussion easier to follow. Group scores are convenient in that they increase the statistical significance of the study. A downside to this method, however, is that the variation within the groups is concealed. Therefore, individual scores are also included in bar charts. In the bar charts, the dark blue colour represents the traditional variant, whereas the light blue represents the proposed new variant of the variable in question. For a reminder of the age and profession of each informant, see Table 3.2 in 3.2.2.

4.1 BATH broadening

BATH broadening refers to the transfer from the traditional northern short front [a] to the long back 'southern' [ɑː]. This change happened in the South of England as early as the mid-eighteenth century, while in the North the accent has been conservative and held onto the traditional short front variant. Stoddart et al. (1999:74), however, found that there were occurrences of [ɑː] among younger speakers in Sheffield. Based on this, one of the hypotheses of the present study was that there would be an increase in the use of the 'new' variant in the Sheffield accent today.

The aim of the interview session was to elicit fifty tokens of each variable from every informant. For most variables this was not a problem. Words relevant for BATH broadening, however, were not used as frequently as the rest of the variables. Therefore only 305 tokens were elicited altogether. All of the informants produced ten or more tokens each, however, so the amount from each person should be enough to minimise the likelihood that any patterns are subject to random fluctuations (Milroy and Gordon 2003:164). The total amount of the tokens gathered and their distribution between the two variants are presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: BATH broadening: Total scores

Variants of (a)	[a]		[ɑː]	
	N	%	N	%
Total	292	96	13	4

From the table above we can see that only 13 tokens, i.e. 4%, are realised as the new variant [ɑː]. Although the new variant is present in the speech of the Sheffielders, it seems to be extremely rare. The results hence indicate a conservative pattern of distribution. As can be seen in Table 4.2 below, there has not been a change in the frequency of the new variant between the two generations either.

Table 4.2: BATH broadening: Group scores according to age

Variants of (a)	[a]		[ɑː]	
	N	%	N	%
Younger	179	96	8	4
Older	113	96	5	4

Most tokens of the BATH variable were elicited from the younger informants who produced 187 tokens altogether. The younger males produced 79 tokens of the BATH variable, and from the younger females 108 tokens were elicited. The older males used tokens of the variable (a) 51 times, and their female counterparts produced 57 relevant tokens, giving a token count of 108 for the older age group. In both age groups, the new variant is notably uncommon. Although the numbers of tokens are slightly different, the percentage score is still 4% for both the younger and older speakers in the use of [ɑː].

Table 4.3: BATH broadening: Group scores according to gender

Variants of (a)	[a]		[ɑː]	
	N	%	N	%
Male	125	96	5	4
Female	167	95	8	5

Table 4.3 above shows virtually no difference in the use of the new variant between the two genders. While the male informants use [ɑː] 4% of the times, 5% of the tokens elicited from the females are realised with the southern variant. The results are very similar to that of age, and it seems that none of these extralinguistic factors are relevant in the distribution of BATH broadening. The occurrences are so few that the actual number of tokens that have 'broadened' is very small and arguably inconsequential. Individual scores for each speaker are presented in Figure 4.1.
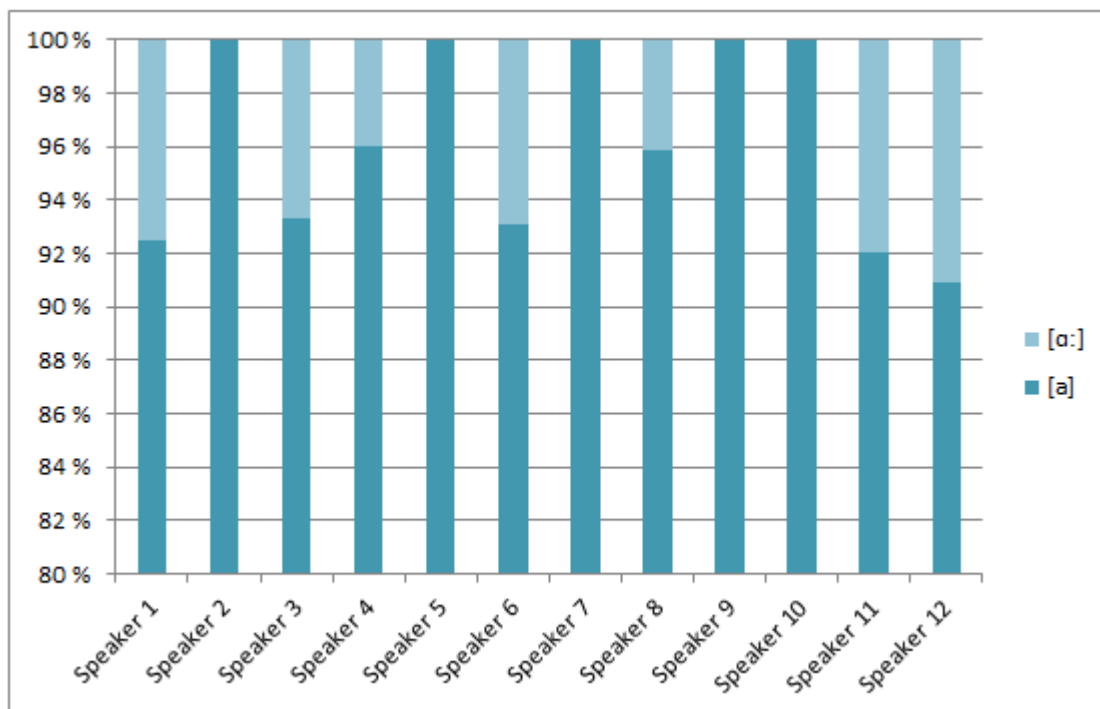
Figure 4.1: BATH broadening: Individual percentage scores

Figure 4.1 illustrates the upper percentage scale for the realisation of BATH, from 80 to 100%. The individual scores show that several of the informants, both young and old, male and female, do not have one single occurrence of the long back [ɑː]. This concerns Speakers 2, 5, 7, 9, and 10. Even the most frequent user of the southern variant (Speaker 12) has no more than 10% occurrences of [ɑː] (2 tokens out of 22). Of the words that were realised with the southern [ɑː], there does not seem to be a clear lexical pattern, although *aunt* was a recurring word pronounced [ɑːnt] by three speakers in the reading task. The eight other speakers producing this word, however, used the traditional vowel. Other words where the southern variant was used were *past, last, example, master*, and *France*.

In terms of variation, BATH broadening follows a mainly one-sided pattern. This pattern is highly conservative. The vowel of BATH is the most salient marker of the northern accents, and also the most prestigious accent feature. As Wells (1982:354) explained, northerners normally would view diverging from the short front [a] as a betrayal of their identity as northerners. When this is taken into account when looking at the scores here, the results cannot be said to be surprising. The overwhelming use of the traditional variant suggests that it is a firmly retained accent feature in Sheffield, and not likely to change towards the southern variant in the near future. Some of the informants even mentioned their preference for using the short front [a] as opposed to the long back [ɑː]: 'you will never hear me say b[ɑː]th. Uh in fact i doubt if you've heard, will hear hardly any Sheffield people say b[ɑː]th. It's always a half vowel' (Speaker 8).

With regard to the extralinguistic variables investigated in this study, age and gender, it is apparent that neither of the two has any relevance. The scores according to gender show that merely one percentage point distinguishes males and females in the use of the new variant. If the scores are calculated based on both gender and age, the results for the older speakers are of a slightly different nature, however. Older females have a little higher percentage use of [ɑː] than the rest, but the margins are so small that it seems irrelevant. If the scores for older females and older males are calculated separately, we can see a difference of five percentage points between the older males (2%) and females (7%) in their use of the broadened variant. This difference has levelled out among the younger informants, where once again only one percentage point distinguishes the genders. The similar results across age groups suggest that this variable is not going through a change, but is rather a stable variable. The Sheffielders are aware of the southern variant, it is part of their linguistic repertoire, but sticking to the traditional short front [a] might be a way of establishing their identity as northerners.

While Stoddart et al. (1999:77) are quite determined in stating that 'a transition is clearly taking place from earlier [a] to [ɑː] in the BATH set', the present findings do not seem to support this view. The results are very similar across age groups. This suggests that occasional occurrences of the southern variant have been common for quite some time. When the use has not increased in the course of 50 years, it is more a statement of there being a status quo situation than an on-going change. The fact that there are some occurrences of the new variant might just be a result of it being part of the repertoire of the speakers, and considering that the researcher has a near-RP accent, this might have influenced the speech of the informants. The few occurrences might also be due to the fact that the informants are middle class, and since the long back vowel of BATH is a prestigious feature in the South, northern middle class speakers may at times possibly 'slip up' and use the southern variant. A decreasing use of the southern variant among the females from the older generation to the young might mean that the older generation is a bit more aware of BATH's prestige seeing as it is a feature of RP, whereas the younger generation takes greater pride in the northern accent feature of the short front [a]. Seeing as the percentage scores are so small for the new variant in the samples from both generations, these speculations must be regarded as highly tentative.

Of course, the fact that BATH broadening actually occurs in this sample might be a pointer to future developments. In addition, the fact that the results of Stoddart et al. (1999) differ so much from the present study's findings, is highly interesting. It is not clear from their article which class their informants belong to. Considering the different results, it is plausible to assume that the informants in Stoddart et al.'s study differ in certain ways from the informants in the

present project, for example in their social stance. If their informants were all working class, this could perhaps have explained the diverging findings. If the present sample had included working class speakers, it would be interesting to see whether the new variant would occur more frequently, considering the claim of Stoddart et al. (1999).

According to the hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1, BATH broadening should have occurred to a larger extent in the present sample, and there should have been a clear difference between the two age groups. In addition, I expected females to show a more frequent use of the new variant than the males. All in all, the hypotheses in regards to BATH broadening are disproved. It may be concluded that the vowel of BATH is a non-flinching part of the Sheffield accent. It seems to serve as an identity marker for northerners and it does not seem likely that it will lose ground to the southern variant any time soon.

4.2   STRUT lowering

STRUT lowering refers to the lowering and centring of the traditional northern [ʊ] to the southern [ʌ]. Along with BATH, the vowel of STRUT is the most salient feature of the northern accent. There have been reports of the feature changing towards a more central quality, both in Sheffield (Stoddart et al. 1999), and in another northern city, namely Hull (Williams and Kerswill 1999). The reports claim that the close mid-back [ʊ] moves towards a central [ə]. In the extension of this, I wanted to investigate whether there has been a further change towards the southern open central [ʌ]. As mentioned in 3.1.2, all intermediate realisations, e.g. [ə], are counted as instances of [ʊ].

As was mentioned in the previous section, a token count of more than ten is considered enough to ensure a statistically valid sample. In the case of STRUT lowering, 50 tokens from each informant were analysed, except from Speaker 9, who produced 31 tokens of STRUT words[3]. This altogether resulted in 581 analysed tokens. 87% of these were realised as the traditional northern variant [ʊ], whereas the new, southern variant occurred in 13% of the tokens, as can be seen in Table 4.4.

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[3]The interview with Speaker 9 was very short, only 11 minutes, therefore none of the investigated variables have the requested token count of 50.

Table 4.4: STRUT lowering: Total scores

Variants of (ʊ)	[ʊ]		[ʌ]	
	N	%	N	%
Total	506	87	75	13

In the table above we can see that 506 tokens are realised with the traditional [ʊ], and 75 tokens are realised with the new variant [ʌ]. The percentage scores for each variant are then 87 and 13, respectively. The amount of tokens realised with the new variant is considerably bigger for STRUT lowering than for BATH broadening. A presentation of the scores based on age is provided in the following Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: STRUT lowering: Group scores according to age

Variants of (ʊ)	[ʊ]		[ʌ]	
	N	%	N	%
Younger	256	85	44	15
Older	250	89	31	11

Of the 281 tokens elicited from the older informants, 250 tokens, i.e. 89%, are realised as the traditional northern variant. The remaining 31 tokens, 11%, are realised with the new southern variant. The younger informants hence use the new variant slightly more than the older informants do. Of the 300 tokens elicited from the younger age group, 256, i.e. 85%, are of the traditional variant. They then use the southern variant in 15% of the cases. There is thus a slight increase in the use of the new variant in the speech of the younger informants compared to the older age group. Table 4.6 below also shows that there is a slight difference in the distribution of (ʊ) between the genders.

Table 4.6: STRUT lowering: Group scores according to gender

Variants of (ʊ)	[ʊ]		[ʌ]	
	N	%	N	%
Male	235	84	46	16
Female	271	90	29	10

The females are slightly more conservative in their realisation of STRUT words than the males. The males pronounce (ʊ) as [ʌ] in 16% of the tokens, whereas the females only use the new variant in 10% of the cases.
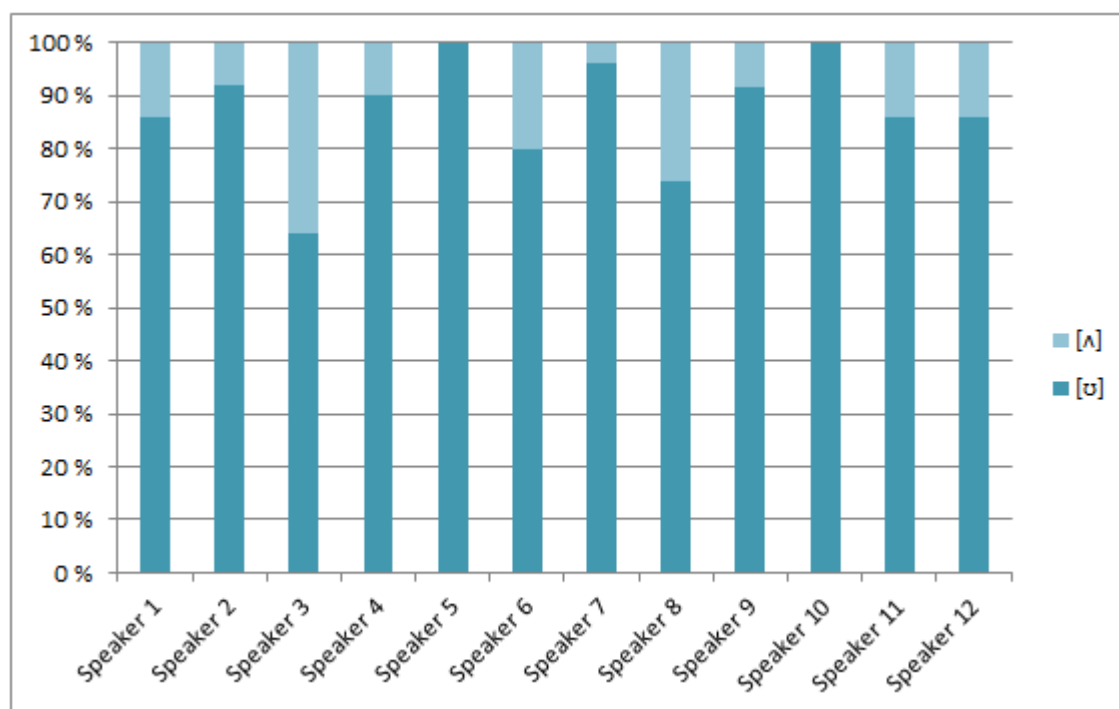
Figure 4.2: STRUT lowering: Individual percentage scores

As can be seen from the individual scores presented in Figure 4.2 above, only Speaker 5 and Speaker 10 (both females) show no use of the new variant. Otherwise the scores are quite even with percentage scores ranging from approximately ten to twenty in the use of [ʌ]. Speaker 3 stands out with around 36% usage of the new variant. This is nearly ten percentage points more than the speaker with the second highest score for [ʌ], Speaker 8. Overall there is a lot of interspeaker variation both across age groups and genders. There is also a great variation in the words where [ʌ] is used. *Stuff* was the most frequent token with nine occurrences where

50

the vowel is realised with [ʌ]. *Nothing*, *months*, and *funny* were the most frequent words after *stuff* with six, four, and three occurrences of [ʌ] respectively. Besides these there was a huge number of single occurrences that did not seem to follow any pattern. *Lush, brother, sun, couple, hunting,* and *tough* were among the words realised with the southern variant [ʌ]. It is furthermore interesting to note that the informants sometimes varied between the two variants in a very short space of time. The quote in the title is an example of this: 'I'm st[ʌ]ck in a r[ʊ]t' (Speaker 4).

The results of the analyses show that there are indeed instances of the southern variant in the informants' speech, and more so than with the variable of BATH. STRUT lowering is subject to much variation, however. The male informants seem to use the new variant more than the females, whereas the younger speakers use the new variant slightly more than the older informants. Also here the differences are relatively small, like they were for BATH, although the pattern for STRUT is not equally conservative.

The realisation of STRUT as a southern [ʌ] has seen a slight increase from the older to the younger generation. This might serve as an indication that the southern variant is steadily gaining ground in the speech of the Sheffield middle class. The results are in line with the hypothesis that stated that typical northern variants would be changing towards a southern quality. Still, a higher percentage score of the southern variant was expected among the younger generation. However, only the tokens that could clearly be distinguished as an open central [ʌ] are counted as instances of this variant. For many of the informants, [ə], or another intermediate realisation, seems to be as common as the traditional [ʊ]. Only Speaker 10 consistently used a back rounded [ʊ] throughout the course of the interview. All of the other informants, some more than others, used the central [ə] at times. So although the scores for the new variant [ʌ] are relatively low, the amount of intermediate realisations suggests a move away from the traditional back rounded [ʊ]. What would be interesting to see is whether the younger informants use the central [ə] more often than the older speakers. That would perhaps be a better indicator of change than the exclusive focus on the southern variant.

Considering Wells' (1982:354) statement that the northern [ʊ] is perceived as a vulgar feature by many educated northerners, I expected a higher frequency of the southern variant among the middle class informants of this study. The objection to pronouncing STRUT words with [ʊ] may just manifest itself as the central [ə] and thus accounts for the frequent use of [ə] among these informants. However, the southern variant of STRUT is used more than the southern variant of BATH, which does suggest an orientation away from traditional northern pronunciation. With Wells' claim in mind it seems likely that features that are stigmatised or perceived as 'vulgar', such as the traditional northern vowel in STRUT, change more easily towards a standard

or prestigious norm.

The male informants seem to be the forerunners in the use of the southern variant, a result that counters the hypothesis claiming that women would use the new variant more frequently in the variables typical for the linguistic North. Both the older and the younger males use [ʌ] more than the females, four and nine percentage points more, respectively. Considering the fact that [ʌ] is a feature of the RP accent, it is likely to be viewed as a prestigious feature. Seeing as linguistic changes often follow the sex/prestige pattern, females 'should' be the group using the 'prestigious' feature more. One could claim that the traditional northern [ʊ] is viewed as more prestigious in the female population. This may account for the slight gender difference in the results. The numbers here are very small, however, and that makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions.

The use of [ʌ] is not very great, and there are in fact two informants who never used the new variant at all. However, it is present to such an extent that it might infiltrate into the accent more in the coming years. After all, Stoddart et al. (1999) only found occurrences of the central [ə] in their study on the Sheffield accent, and not the southern [ʌ]. On the other hand, the fact that the older speakers in this sample at times realise tokens of STRUT with the new variant, suggests that it has in fact existed in the Sheffield accent for quite some time. The increased use of [ʌ] by the younger speakers, although the numbers are small, might suggest that a change is afoot. Considering the salience of the traditional vowel, it will probably take quite some time if this indeed is indicative of change. The small difference between the two age groups implies a very slow rate of change, but when it is such a salient feature of the accent, a change must probably happen very gradually.

4.3   Loss of velar nasal plus

Loss of velar nasal plus concerns the change in the articulation of the orthographic consonant cluster <ng>. In the traditional Sheffield accent this cluster is pronounced [ŋg]. Loss of velar nasal plus thus refers to the realisation of the cluster as a simple velar nasal [ŋ]. The velar nasal plus is a traditional feature of certain accents in northern parts of England and the Midlands. Stoddart et al. (1999) found occurrences of the variant [ŋ] in their sample from the late 1990s, so the object of this study is to see whether this southern variant has gained more ground. (ng) is analysed in both word stems and in the suffix *-ing* (cf. 3.1.3), e.g. *long*, *singing*, etc., but only tokens where (ng) precedes sonorants and vowels are included in the analysis.

For this variable, 561 tokens were elicited from the entire group of informants. 300 of

these were produced by the younger informants, and 261 tokens by the older generation. 50 tokens were analysed from each speaker, except, again, from Speaker 9 whose interview only elicited 11 occurrences of the variable in relevant contexts. Table 4.7 below displays the distribution of the two variants of (ng).

Table 4.7: Loss of velar nasal plus: Total scores

Variants of (ng)	[ŋg]		[ŋ]	
	N	%	N	%
Total	11	2	550	98

Like the feature of BATH broadening, loss of velar nasal plus also shows a one-sided pattern of distribution. It differs from BATH broadening, however, in that the distribution is almost completely in favour of the new variant. Only 11 of the elicited tokens are realised as the traditional velar nasal plus. This makes up as little as 2% of the entire sample of (ng) tokens. The results for the two age groups are presented in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Loss of velar nasal plus: Group scores according to age

Variants of (ng)	[ŋg]		[ŋ]	
	N	%	N	%
Younger	5	2	295	98
Older	6	2	255	98

There is no difference between the age groups with regard to the results for loss of velar nasal plus. Only two percent of the tokens are realised with the traditional variant, whereas the new form is used in an astounding 98% of the cases for both age groups. There are hardly any occurrences of the traditional velar nasal plus. If the results are calculated based on gender, there is an inconsequential difference between the male and female informants. These numbers are presented in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Loss of velar nasal plus: Group scores according to gender

Variants of (ng)	[ŋg]		[ŋ]	
	N	%	N	%
Male	9	3	254	97
Female	2	1	298	99

There is a large agreement across genders in the realisation of (ng) as well. The males produce nine tokens of [ŋg] altogether, a score of 3%. Only two out of 300 tokens are realised with the traditional variant among the females. This makes up a percentage score of 1%, two percentage points less than the males.
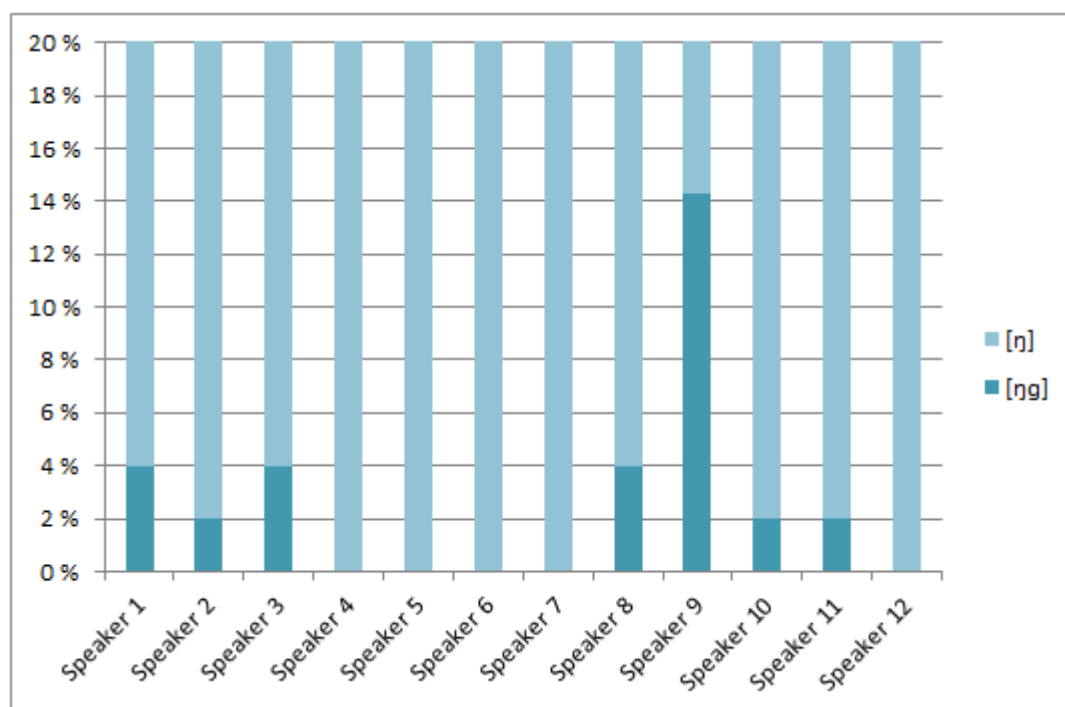
Figure 4.3: Loss of velar nasal plus: Individual percentage scores

Figure 4.3 presents the individual percentage scores for the velar nasal plus. The figure only shows the lower part of the scale from 0% to 20%, because of the low scores of the traditional variant [ŋg]. None of the younger females produced any tokens of [ŋg]. Also Speaker 12, an older female, did not produce any traditional variants, but stuck to the new variant [ŋ] throughout. Although the amount of velar nasal plus produced by males is a bit bigger than the females', they still only produced two tokens of the [ŋg]-variant individually at the most. Speaker

7 did not produce any tokens of the traditional variant.

It is evident from the results that the traditional feature of velar nasal plus in the Sheffield accent has lost ground to the new variant, at least among middle class speakers. The new variant seems to be fully established, and the loss of velar nasal plus is nearing completion. One can speculate about the reason for BATH and STRUT's stability in contrast to that of velar nasal plus. The vowels in BATH and STRUT are features that are common for most parts of the linguistic North, and are thus possibly more stable markers of regional identity and belonging. The velar nasal plus on the other hand, is a feature common in only some parts of the North, thus it may not have the same salience or status as a regional identity marker.

Neither of the extralinguistic factors seem to be of any relevance for loss of velar nasal plus. Although the males use the traditional variant two percentage points more than the females, the difference is so small that it is of no consequence. What is perfectly clear, however, is that the middle class of Sheffield is losing its traditional accent feature of the velar nasal plus, thus confirming the initial hypothesis which said there would be a change in traditional accent features. Considering that there are few signs of velar nasal plus in any of the informants' speech - neither young nor old - there is reason to believe that this change happened a long time ago, possibly as early as the 1950s. This is mere speculation, however.

The results here do not coincide with Mathisen's (1999) findings in Sandwell in the West Midlands (cf. 3.1.3). The Sandwell accent is seeing an increase in the use of the velar nasal plus among younger informants, and Mathisen claims that it is becoming a prestige variant among the inhabitants. In the conversational speech of her teenage informants, [ŋg] occurred on average in 50% of the tokens. Mathisen (1999:111) further claims that 'particularly with women it seems to be a local prestige form'. This only applied to stem-final (ng) such as in *sing* and *singing*, however. In the verbal suffix *-ing*, [n] was the preferred variant for 80% of the cases. In this suffix the velar nasal plus was 'virtually absent' from conversational speech, but a common variant in reading style. This suggests that the variant is assigned local prestige in Sandwell. The same cannot be said in Sheffield, however. Even though the tokens from the reading passages are not quantified separately, it is worth mentioning that there did not seem to be any more occurrences of the velar nasal plus in reading style than in the more casual interview style. I would have expected more of a difference between the two styles because of the spelling where the sound [g] is represented orthographically. Its inclusion in spelling is, according to Beal (2008:137), part of why velar nasal plus has been perceived as a prestigious feature in parts of the North and the Midlands. Mathisen also found some differences between classes. The middle class used the southern variant more, but the frequency of the traditional variant is nevertheless a lot higher

among the middle class in Sandwell than in Sheffield. Based on the results here it is possible to conclude that the velar nasal plus has lost its prestige in Sheffield, at least in the middle class speech. While Sandwell is seeing an increase in the use of the velar nasal plus, middle class speakers of the Sheffield accent seem to have rejected this feature, and the new variant [ŋ] is clearly taking its place.

Stoddart et al. (1999) exclusively looked at the suffix *-ing* when they did their comprehensive study of the Sheffield accent. They note that '[ɪŋg] is found occasionally, mainly in the middle and younger age groups' (Stoddart et al. 1999:76). They further claim that '[ɪŋ] [is] possible, but not common' (ibid.), i.e. the most common variant in their study was the 'stigmatised' [ɪn] (Beal 2008:137). Although some of the informants in the present study mostly use [ɪn] in suffixes, e.g. Speakers 7, 5, and 2, all the rest realise the majority of the tokens with the velar nasal [ŋ]. This especially applies to the female informants (except Speaker 5). All occurrences of the orthographic consonant cluster <ng> are quantified together, however, leaving no distinction between the suffix *-ing* and the simple consonant cluster <ng>. Words with the suffix *-ing* have a higher token frequency than words such as *long*, *song*, etc., simply because you can add the suffix to any verb. Therefore it might be interesting to do a study with emphasis exclusively on the suffix to see which variant is becoming the most common. The impression from this study is that [ɪn] and [ɪŋ] are used almost exclusively among most speakers.

4.4   T Glottalling

T Glottalling refers to the replacement of the alveolar stop [t] with a glottal stop [ʔ]. This is an accent feature that has been spreading throughout Britain for quite some time, and it has even been included in the speech of younger RP speakers (Wells 1982:261). In this study, T Glottalling has been investigated in intervocalic positions, both word-medially and across word boundaries, e.g. *city*, *what else*, etc.

Stoddart et al. (1999:75) report that glottalling is used two to three times more frequently among younger speakers than older in Sheffield, and that males in particular have adopted the feature. The intention of the current investigation is to see whether this is a continuous trend in Sheffield, and whether the pattern is the same in relation to gender.

Also for this variable, 50 tokens were gathered from each informant, except for Speaker 9 who only elicited relevant tokens 22 times. These numbers put together give 572 analysed tokens; 300 from the younger informants, and 272 from the older. The total token count and variant distributions are presented in Table 4.10 below.

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Table 4.10: T Glottalling: Total scores

Variants of (t)	[t]		[ʔ]	
	N	%	N	%
Total	275	48	297	52

There seems to be an equal distribution of the variants [t] and [ʔ]. The traditional [t] is realised in 48% of the analysed tokens, and the innovative [ʔ] is used in 52%. Table 4.11 below provides the scores for T Glottalling divided on the different age groups.

Table 4.11: T Glottalling: Group scores according to age

Variants of (t)	[t]		[ʔ]	
	N	%	N	%
Younger	53	18	247	82
Older	222	82	50	18

Though the scores of each variant of (t) are very similar when all the tokens from both generations are added together, the scores according to age give a more nuanced picture. While the older informants only use the new, glottal variant 50 times (18%), the younger population use the new variant in 247 of the 300 elicited tokens (82%). The numbers are reversed, and this is the most clear indicator of a change in progress so far in this study.

Table 4.12: T Glottalling: Group scores according to gender

Variants of (t)	[t]		[ʔ]	
	N	%	N	%
Male	117	43	155	57
Female	158	53	142	47

When the two variants are seen in the light of their distributions according to gender, the differences are not that great anymore, as can be seen in Table 4.12 above. The females use T

Glottalling in 47% of the cases on average, while the male informants use the glottalised variant ten percentage points more. The younger males are the ones who use the glottal stop most. They only produced the traditional alveolar stop in 10% whereas the glottal stop was used in 90% of the analysed tokens. The younger females, however, used the traditional variant in 25% of the cases, i.e. realising 75% of the tokens with [ʔ]. There is thus a 15 percentage point difference among the younger males and females in the use of T Glottalling.

For the older generation, the females use the glottal stop more than the males. The females produced 30 glottalised tokens (20%), whereas the older males only uttered 20 glottalised tokens of 122 possible, giving a percentage score of 16. The individual percentage scores are provided in Figure 4.4 below.
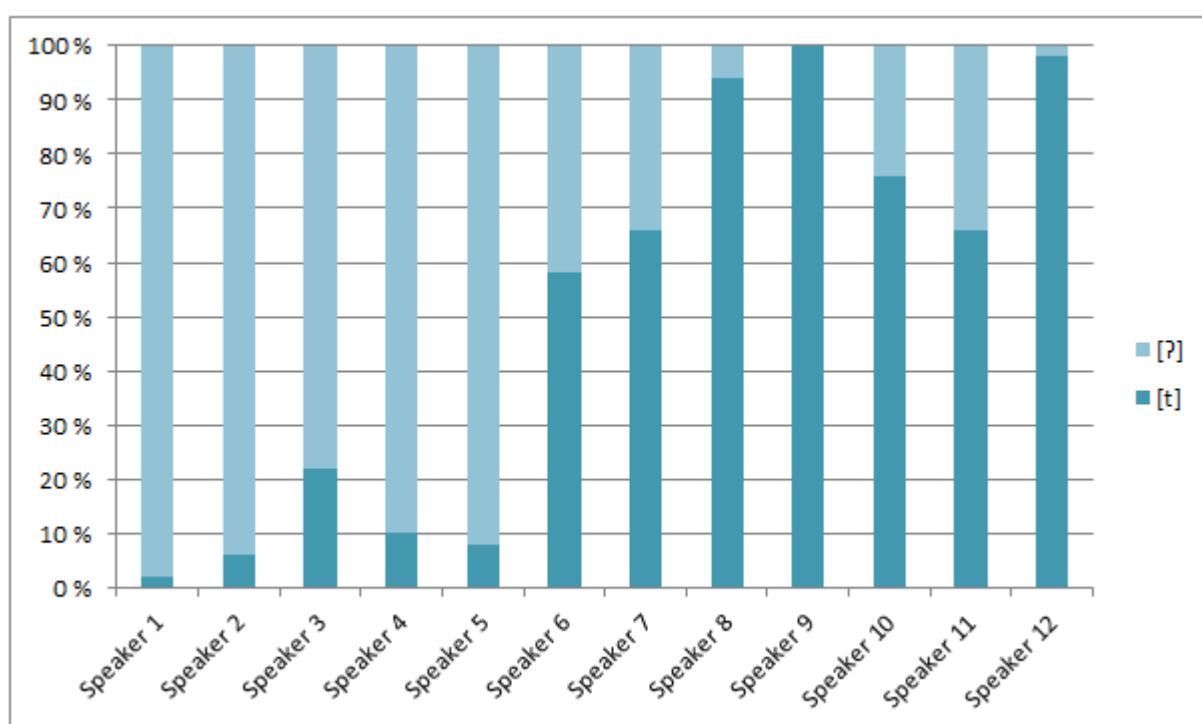

Figure 4.4: T Glottalling: Individual percentage scores

It is evident from Figure 4.4 that the younger group glottalises their (t)'s more than the older generation. The most conservative of the older speakers are Speakers 8, 9, and 12. Speaker 9 does not glottalise a single token, whereas Speakers 8 and 12 use the glottal stop in less than 10% of the cases. Every other informant of the older age group have around 25-30% T Glottalling in their speech. Speaker 6 stands out from the rest of the younger speakers with her nearly 60% use of the traditional variant, and she is thus closer to the pattern found among the older speakers. Most of the other younger informants have 90% or more T Glottalling. Speaker 1 has nearly replaced all (t)'s with a glottal stop. Only one token is realised with the alveolar stop.

When the present results are viewed in light of the extralinguistic factors gender and age, a clear pattern appears. Although there is a difference in the gender distribution, in that on average males use the new feature more, age stands out as the most important extralinguistic factor. The amount of T Glottalling among the older generation makes it fair to assume that T Glottalling has been present in the Sheffield accent for quite some time. The major difference in the use of T Glottalling between the two age groups, however, suggests that T Glottalling is taking over in conversational speech. It has become an established feature of the Sheffield accent, and is used nearly categorically by most of the younger speakers.

Based on previous studies on glottal replacement, it is possible to claim that the distribution of T Glottalling is following the same pattern found in parts of Britain. It is recurrent that it is overwhelmingly common for younger generations, and like in Milton Keynes, Huntly, and Northampton, males are employing the feature slightly more than females. The initial hypothesis stating that males use the feature more thus seems to be confirmed. Studies from Tyneside (Milroy et al. 1994), Cardiff (Mees and Collins 1999), and Reading and Hull (Williams and Kerswill 1999) show a different pattern, however. In these cities, T Glottalling among the middle classes are led by females. Thus it is possible to assume that it is regarded as a prestigious feature in these locations. Milroy et al. (1994:26) even claim that T Glottalling's establishment among speakers of the middle class is conditioned by females' acceptance of the feature (cf. 2.4.1). This might furthermore indicate that T Glottalling in the Sheffield middle class has not yet achieved a prestigious status. Intervocalic T Glottalling has in general been more stigmatised and this might be the reason for the slightly larger use by the male informants in Sheffield.

Bonness (2011) also found increasing use of T Glottalling in Northampton. The oldest generation used T Glottalling at a much lower frequency than the youngest generation. It was further found that the third generation in Northampton frequently used glottal stops in word-medial intervocalic positions, where the two older generations chiefly avoided it. Although this difference in distribution has not been quantified in this data collection from Sheffield, the impression is that the informants here follow the same pattern. Whereas the younger informants used the glottal stop in both positions, e.g. *not actually getting*, *sporty*, *skating*, etc., the presence of the glottal stop in the older informants' speech seemed to be restricted to tokens across word boundaries, such as *not anymore*, *quite innovative*, and *sort of*.

Although this thesis is not originally concerned with style, it is interesting to note the big difference of T Glottalling in reading style and conversational style. All quantified tokens were from the interview excerpt, except for four tokens in Speaker 9's sample which came from the reading passage. Except for in Speaker 9's case then, the quantified data presented for T

Glottalling is not influenced by the more formal reading style. A closer look at the tokens from the reading passage, and their realisations, reveals a huge difference from the conversational style. I have consequently included Figure 4.5 to display the difference between the two styles.
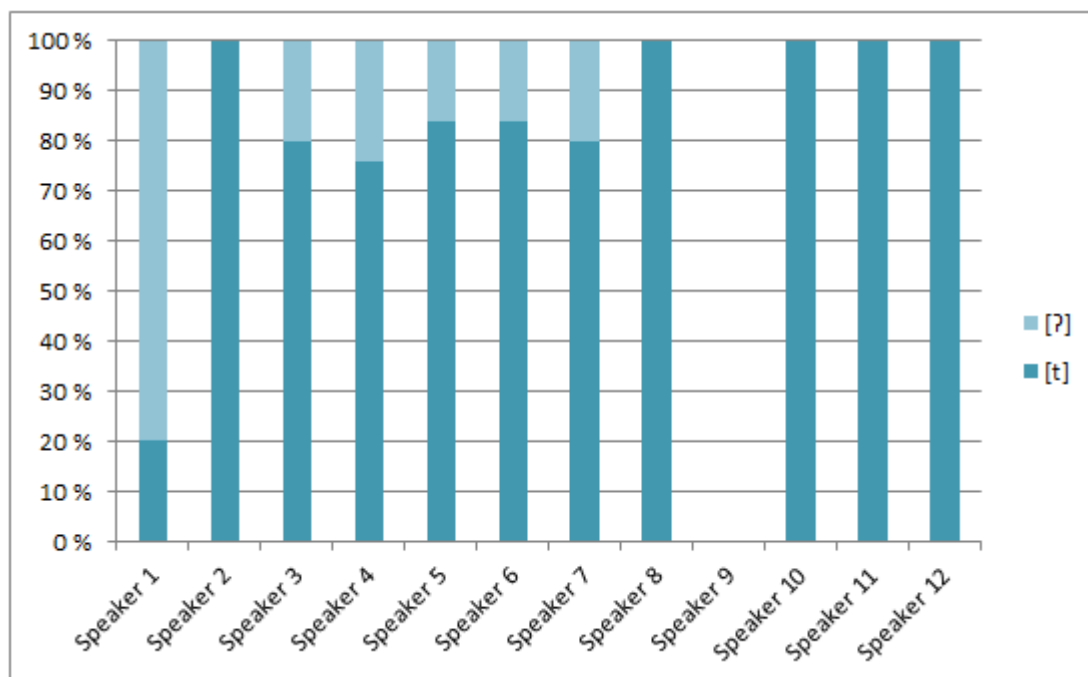

Figure 4.5: T Glottalling: Individual percentage scores in reading style

Figure 4.5 presents individual percentage scores for T Glottalling in reading style. Speaker 9's data has not been included, both because he did not read the entire text and therefore his reading passage only consisted of 4 tokens of (t), and also because these tokens have been used in the previous calculations. All but Speaker 7 of the older informants exclusively prefer the traditional alveolar stop in reading style. For Speakers 8 and 12 this is not a big change considering the low frequency of T Glottalling in their conversational style. For Speakers 10 and 11, however, the frequency of T Glottalling has decreased with approximately 25 and 34 percentage points respectively. The average use of the glottal stop in conversational style for the younger informants is 82%. In reading style, this number is 18. Speaker 2 does not use the glottal stop once, while the rest of the younger informants (except Speaker 1) use T Glottalling around 20% of the times. Speaker 1 contrasts with the rest of his peers. Although he uses the alveolar stop more in reading style than in conversational style, he still only uses the traditional variant in 20% of the tokens. The more frequent use of T Glottalling in Speaker 1's speech might be because of his attention to 'try and not use telephone voice', meaning that he was very attentive to speaking as he would 'normally' do, while reading. This is mere speculation, however.

The difference between T Glottalling in reading style and conversational style seems

to support the previous claim stating that this feature does not yet enjoy overt prestige in the Sheffield middle class. It is also in line with Robert's (in Schleef 2013) statement concerning T Glottalling's prestige (c.f. 3.1.4). It seems primarily to be reserved for informal or conversational style, and it consequently appears to still be deemed more appropriate to use the traditional alveolar stop in more formal and checked situations. Nevertheless, the initial hypotheses seem to be supported. There is a huge increase in the use of T Glottalling across the two generations, which suggests a change in progress. Furthermore, males are the most frequent users of this non-standard feature diffusing from the South.

4.5   TH Fronting

TH Fronting refers to the pronunciation of (θ) as a labiodental [f]. This feature's origin is believed to be in the Cockney accent of London, although it is a known infantilism throughout the English speaking world. TH Fronting has spread from London to cities in the surrounding area, but also towards northern parts of the country, including Scotland. Although TH Fronting was not found in the SED, Stoddart et al. (1999) saw some occurrences of the feature among younger speakers in their sample from Sheffield in the late 1990s. Based on this, I expect a further increase of TH Fronting among younger speakers in Sheffield today.

In the analysis of TH Fronting, 50 tokens were elicited from all informants, except Speaker 9 who only produced 12 tokens of the variable. The 262 tokens analysed from the older informants' speech showed no occurrences of the fronted variant, however. Therefore, only the younger informants' results are presented in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: TH Fronting: Total scores for the younger informants

Variants of (θ)	[θ]		[f]	
	N	%	N	%
Total	251	85	49	15

Of the 300 tokens elicited from the younger group, 49 are fronted. This means that 15% of the elicited tokens are of the new variant. There is thus an increase of 15 percentage points in the use of TH Fronting between the younger and the older generations.

Table 4.14: TH Fronting: Group scores for younger informants according to gender

Variants of (θ)	[θ]		[f]	
	N	%	N	%
Male	108	72	42	28
Female	143	95	7	5

Table 4.14 above displays the results distributed on the two genders. Only seven of the 150 elicited tokens among the females are of the fronted variant, i.e. a score of 5%. The percentage score for the males is a lot higher than the females' with 28% fronted variants. This suggests that males are the forerunners in the adoption of this feature. What is not clear from the table, however, is the use of the fronted variants by each individual speaker. This is therefore illustrated in Figure 4.6 below.
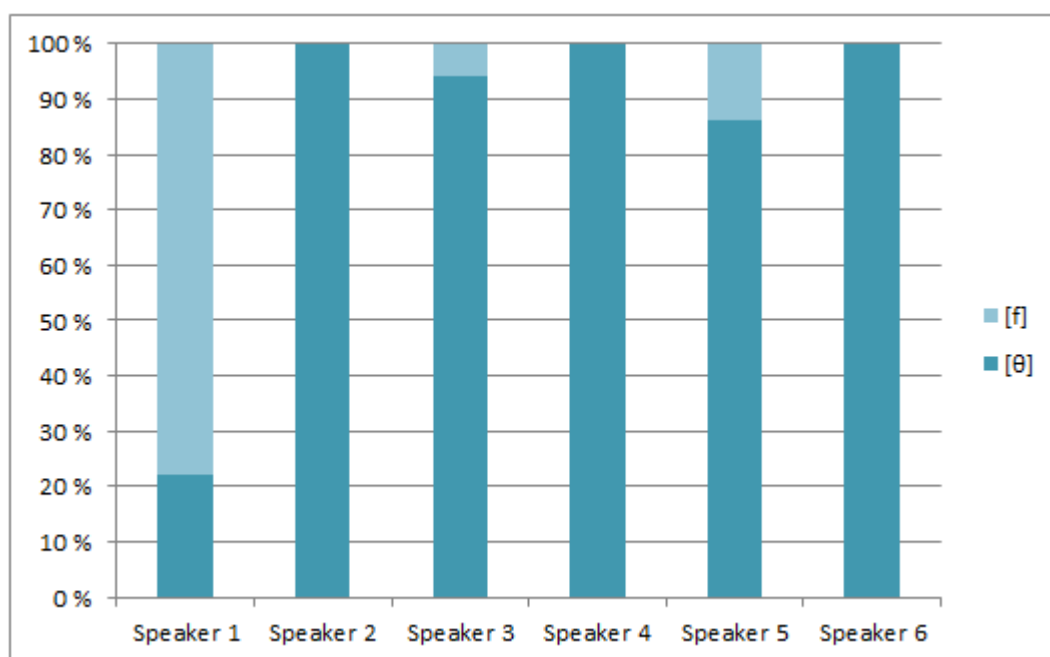
Figure 4.6: TH Fronting: Individual percentage scores

The figure depicts the individual scores for TH Fronting in the younger age group. It becomes clear from this figure that only half of the younger informants produced any tokens of the fronted variant. Speakers 1, 3, and 5 are the only ones producing tokens of the new variant, i.e. two male and one female informants. Whereas Speakers 3 and 5 use the fronted variant in three and seven tokens, respectively, the feature is clearly most established in the speech of

Speaker 1. 39 of the 50 analysed tokens are of the fronted variant, i.e. a score of 78%. He thus stands behind most of the TH Fronting found in this sample, and is somewhat of an anomaly compared to the rest of his peers.

The very frequent use of the fronted variant by Speaker 1 might be explained by his stay in London in the recent past. He also stated that he was planning on going back to London in the near future, and the extensive use of [f] may be a result of extensive contact with southerners and speech accommodation. Also Speaker 3 had studied in the South of England, so this might be a contributing reason for occurrences of the fronted variant in his speech. Speaker 5, however, the only female using this variant, has lived her whole life in the North of England, getting her university degree in Huddersfield 20 miles north of Sheffield. She still produced fronted variants in 14% of the cases, more than double the amount of Speaker 3. Although Speaker 5 has lived all her life in close proximity of Sheffield, she is a frequent traveller, who admitted to going to London for approximately two weeks every year. Thus the existence of TH Fronting in all three speakers can be explained by language contact with southerners. What is interesting with Speaker 5's results are that despite being the only female to show any use of TH Fronting, she is also the one who is most conservative in the realisation of the traditional northern accent features. In all instances of BATH and STRUT words, she used the traditional variants [a] and [ʊ].

There did not seem to be any clear patterns in the use of new variants in the other variables. With TH Fronting, the words *thing* and *think*, and their derivatives e.g. *anything, thought* etc., were the most frequently fronted words with 24 and 16 occurrences respectively. These words are also used very frequently at a whole. This coincides with the study in Fife (Clark and Trousdale 2009), where it was found that TH Fronting seems to be most easily adopted in words of a higher token frequency. Furthermore, it seems to be slightly less common for the fronted variant to occur in word-final position. The most frequent user of TH Fronting, Speaker 1, appears to prefer fronting in word-initial and -medial positions, while words such as *north, month*, and *worth* are pronounced with the traditional variant [θ].

Although TH Fronting cannot be seen as an established feature in the speech of the Sheffield middle class, there is a huge interspeaker variation. The fact that it is indeed apparent in some of the informants' speech suggests that we are seeing the first steps of a change towards more fronting of (θ) in Sheffield's middle class. Also, if one considers that Stoddart et al. (1999) found occurrences of TH Fronting among younger speakers as early as the late 1990s, the presence of TH fronting today is a pointer to a slow and steady change towards a more frequent use of fronted variants.

Regarding the relevant extralinguistic factors, especially age seems to be of importance.

There was not one single instance of TH Fronting among the older informants, whereas it did occur among the younger informants. As mentioned in section 2.1.1, an increasing use of one feature and the decline in use of another viewed in terms of speaker age can be seen as an evidence of a change in progress. Though the results in this study do not show an overwhelming adoption of the new feature, except for with one of the informants, the fact that it is present in some of the younger people's speech suggests a change in progress.

In relation to gender, males use the new variant 23 percentage points more than the females. This seems to suggest that the males are the forerunners for the adoption of TH Fronting, and thus TH Fronting appears to be following the same pattern as T Glottalling and STRUT lowering. This reflects the results found by Bonness (2011) and Robinson (2005) in Northampton and Livingston respectively, which also showed a preference for TH Fronting among the male informants. This was also the case in the study conducted by Williams and Kerswill (1999) in Milton Keynes, Reading, and Hull. In contrast to these findings, the use of TH Fronting was greater among the younger females in Glasgow (Stuart-Smith et al. 2007). Non-standard features like the fronted variant of (θ) are often linked with working class speech and masculinity (cf. 2.1.2), and this might be the reason for the high percentage score among males in the present study. The results are then in line with the hypothesis which predicted that males would be the forerunners in the use of TH Fronting.

In reference to other studies done on TH Fronting, it seems to be a recurring result that TH Fronting is more established in younger working class speakers than middle class ones. This is the case both in Milton Keynes, Reading, and Hull (Williams and Kerswill 1999), and Livingston (Robinson 2005). This might be an explanation for the low use and non-existence of TH Fronting among most of the informants in this study. Additionally, if one considers the fact that Stoddart et al. (1999) found evidence of TH Fronting 15 years ago, one would arguably expect a greater dominance of the feature today. This might be yet another indication that most of Stoddart et al.'s informants were from the working class. If this is the case, the present results show that the feature has only recently started to diffuse upwards to the middle class.

When I conducted the research in Sheffield, one working class male was interviewed. Although that interview has not been analysed or quantified, some observations were made. One of these observations was that he varied between using fronted [f] and traditional [θ]. Although one speaker is too little to generalise on, it might serve as a pointer as to how the linguistic situation is among the working class, especially when this is seen in relation to the spread of the feature in other British cities. Considering this, and the fact that TH Fronting has been more common among the working class population in previous research, it would maybe have been

more interesting to look for informants from this social class in Sheffield as well.

Based on the results in other cities, one can make a highly tentative suggestion about TH Fronting being an established feature in the working class and that it has slowly started diffusing to the middle class. The existence of the feature in the speech of three of the informants might serve as an indication of the future developments of the Sheffield accent.

4.6 R Fronting

R Fronting refers to the realisation of (r) as a labiodental approximant [ʋ]. It is a feature with roots in the South of England, spreading from London. It seems to follow the spread of T Glottalling and TH Fronting, albeit at a slower pace. In Sheffield, the traditional realisation is the post-alveolar approximant [ɹ]. There had been no observations of R Fronting in neither the SED nor in Stoddart et al.'s (1999) study. However, occurrences in surrounding areas increase the likelihood for the feature's adoption in the Sheffield accent. R Fronting has spread from the south-east of England to include other parts of the country, e.g. Derby in the East Midlands (Foulkes and Docherty 2000), Hull in Yorkshire (Williams and Kerswill 1999), Newcastle in the far north (Foulkes and Docherty 2000), and Leeds in West Yorkshire (Marsden 2006). The existence of R Fronting in several parts of the North makes it plausible to assume that the feature may have made its entry in the Sheffield accent as well. This does not see to be the case, however. In the collected data from Sheffield there are no occurrences of R Fronting among any of the informants. Considering that use of R Fronting has been found further north and in the surrounding area, e.g. in Derby, Leeds, and Hull (cf. section 2.4.1), the complete absence of the feature in the collected data from Sheffield came as a surprise. The hypotheses concerning this feature are consequently refuted.

When comparing previous studies with the present investigation, some aspects become clear that might explain the non-existence of R Fronting in the sample from Sheffield. In the surrounding areas, R Fronting occurred mostly among younger working class speakers, e.g. in Middlesbrough (Llamas 1998; in Foulkes and Docherty 1998) and Derby (Foulkes and Docherty 2000). The lack of R Fronting in the present data collection might then be explained by the fact that the informants are exclusively middle class. It is plausible that the feature exists among the younger working class in Sheffield, but that it has not yet gained enough prestige, neither overt nor covert, for the middle class to adopt the feature.

A finding that counters the above argument is the distribution of R Fronting in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Foulkes and Docherty (2000) found that middle class females were the most fre-

quent users of R Fronting. When this result is seen in the light of the sex/prestige pattern, it suggests that the feature is considered prestigious by the younger female population of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. In addition, Marsden (2006) found that R Fronting was more common in the speech of people with looser network ties than people who had a more limited and close network. Social class was not a variable in Marsden's study, but the middle classes are generally known to have looser network ties than the working classes. One might assume that the people who had adopted R Fronting more readily in Leeds were in fact of a middle class background. Considering that most of the younger informants in the present study are all geographically mobile, having lived away for several years and/or are frequent travellers, they are likely to have loose network ties. Why R Fronting has not been adopted then, is a mystery. If the present sample had included more informants, and thus broadened the scope, it is possible that R Fronting would occur, however. Six younger informants are not that many after all. The fact nevertheless remains that R Fronting has not yet been adopted by the representatives of Sheffield's younger middle class in this sample. Still, it will be interesting to follow the future developments of (r) in the Sheffield accent, considering the on-going changes in surrounding areas.

4.7 The results in relation to accent levelling

One of the main issues in sociolinguistic research in Britain today concerns accent levelling. I will therefore view the results of this study in light of the different levelling processes affecting British accents. As could be seen from the results, there are a few apparently on-going changes in the Sheffield accent. These mainly concern T Glottalling and TH Fronting, but also possibly STRUT lowering. One change is also fully established, namely loss of velar nasal plus, whereas BATH broadening and R Fronting have occurred to little and no extent. Might these changes be a result of accent levelling, and if so, what might the motivation behind it be? These questions will be handled in the following paragraphs. It is important to bear in mind that the speculation is highly tentative, seeing as the present thesis' primary focus is on *how* Sheffield English changes, and not *why*.

Sheffield is historically an industrial town with a large working class. As mentioned in 2.1.3, the working classes normally form close-knit communities that resist linguistic change to a larger extent than the more open and mobile classes higher on the social scale. Though there is some industry left in Sheffield, the city has seen a drastic shift in its demographic since the deindustrialisation process in the 1980s. Employment was transferred from manual labour to jobs in the service and office sectors. There was also an influx of white-collar workers in the

same time period, coming from other parts of the country. This loosening of network ties along with increasing numbers of in-migrants to the city might be part of explaining the changes seen in the Sheffield accent. Both of these factors mean an increase in language contact. The present study only deals with two generations, and more than fifty years separate the youngest from the oldest informant. There is therefore an extensive gap between the generations where no linguistic data is gathered for the present study. It would therefore be interesting to have data from people born around the time of the in-migration to see whether this societal change had any effect on the investigated features.

In section 2.4.1, previous studies on levelling and their findings are presented. T Glottalling and TH Fronting were two accent features that reports have said are spreading like wildfire among the younger population of Britain (e.g. Beal 2010:10). Their spread is proposed to be the result of language contact, mobility, and 'youth norms' (Williams and Kerswill 1999:159). In the present study, T Glottalling was present among both generations. This was also the case in Stoddart et al.'s (1999) description of the Sheffield accent, i.e. it is not a newly adopted feature. Its frequency in the last decades has exploded, however. As mentioned above, this explosion might be a result of the immigration, and subsequent loosening of network ties in the 1980s. Additionally, Sheffield has two universities that bring many new students to the city for a period of three years or more. This adds to the language contact and enhances the possibility of features levelling towards non-local variants, and might be one factor behind the spread of T Glottalling and TH Fronting in Sheffield English.

Bonness (2011) reports that while T Glottalling in word-final position is an established change in the Northampton accent, the replacement of the glottal stop in word-medial position is a change currently in progress. In the present study, these contexts have not been looked at separately, but the impression is that the accent of Sheffield follows the same pattern as that of Northampton. T Glottalling in word-medial position is still stigmatised, but its use is increasing rapidly in the conversational speech of young adults. Seeing as there often is a wish among people to sound 'modern' and 'urban', and T Glottalling in word-medial intervocalic position is a special characteristic of urban speech, the feature can easily be adopted by younger speakers.

It is clear from the present results that TH Fronting is not as established in the Sheffield accent as T Glottalling. 15% of the tokens from the younger informants are fronted, although only half of the group shows any use of the feature. Still, seeing as it was present in Sheffield in the late 1990s (Stoddart et al. 1999), the feature has been latent in the accent for quite some time. The most likely reason behind the adoption of TH Fronting among the younger informants in this sample, seems to be mobility. All three speakers who showed any use of the fronted variant,

had either spent several years in the South, or travelled frequently to London, and have thus been in extensive face-to-face contact with southerners. They can therefore be labelled as 'language missionaires' (cf. 2.4.1). It is not possible to know, however, whether their use of TH Fronting will influence their friends' accents. All informants are unknown to one another, and they are part of different networks. However, since all of them have been away from Sheffield for a time, their network ties might be loosened and their receptiveness of new features is likely to have increased.

In Kerswill's (2003) discussion on levelling, geographical diffusion, i.e. innovative linguistic features spreading like a wave due to language contact, is mentioned as a possible mechanism behind levelling (cf. 2.4). Another underlying mechanism proposed is speech accommodation. The latter mechanism is explained by people's tendency to accommodate their speech to be more similar to their interlocutors'. It is difficult to say whether these mechanisms are behind the on-going linguistic changes in Sheffield. In view of previous research, it is known that T Glottalling and TH Fronting have spread to many cities in England and Scotland. Leeds, Hull, and Newcastle in the North have all seen an increase of these features, therefore it is possible to assume that geographical diffusion is one mechanism behind the change. However, the scores for TH Fronting in Sheffield are low compared to its occurrence in other cities. Also the fact that there are no signs of R Fronting in the present sample suggests that the adoption of non-local variants is not a result of geographical diffusion. This is a likely claim seeing as Sheffield is located north of Derby, where R Fronting seems to be firmly established, and south of Newcastle, where middle class females are the most frequent users of the feature (Foulkes and Docherty 2000). Both of these cities have seen an increase in R Fronting. According to the theory of geographical diffusion there should then be traces of R Fronting in Sheffield as well. This claim can also be modified, however, seeing as the use of R Fronting in the accent of Derby was led by young working class speakers. This could also be the case in Sheffield, but without informants from the working class there is no way of knowing at present. Further research is therefore required before the reasons behind this development can be determined, though I propose that speech accommodation due to increased mobility and language contact are the most likely mechanisms behind the levelling seen here.

In reference to the northern variable of velar nasal plus, it is evident that the Sheffield accent is losing a local feature in favour of a supra-local variant. This might be influence from the South, but seeing as only parts of the North have the feature (cf. 3.1.3), it might be just as likely that the change is influenced by other northern accents which do not have the velar nasal plus traditionally. As mentioned in 3.1.3 Sheffield English is the only accent in Yorkshire which

has the feature of velar nasal plus, and is thus on the boundary and not in the core area of this feature's distribution. Thus Sheffield English may be more prone to influence in this particular variable. This becomes more likely in light of the small or lacking changes in the other typical northern features of STRUT and BATH. However, since both the older and the younger informants show nearly a consistent use of the new variant [ŋ], this is a change that has occurred a long time ago. The motivation behind the change is therefore difficult to establish.

There was a slight increase in the use of the southern [ʌ] in STRUT words in the younger age group compared to the older. This could be a sign of a levelling towards the southern standard, though the process appears to be a slow one. It seems as if STRUT is inferior to BATH as a northern identity marker, and additionally it has a lower status (c.f. Wells 1982:354). Therefore it might be more easily replaced. The increasing mobility of all people in Britain and subsequent language contact might make STRUT lowering happen to a greater extent in the future. This brings me to the discussion of BATH broadening and levelling. The scores for the traditional variant were very high. The low occurrence of the new variant [ɑː] might be a explained by a sense of *loyalty* to the Northern English culture and identity. As was mentioned in section 2.4, people tend to want to signal loyalty to their local community. This is done by keeping their local linguistic forms, and instead appear modern and cosmopolitan by adopting features that are not so coloured by a specific community, such as T Glottalling and TH Fronting (Foulkes and Docherty 1999a). So, the younger population of Sheffield seems to keep their identity as northerners and does not diverge from the most salient local forms, but emphasises their youthfulness and distance from older generations by adopting certain urban and non-traditional features.

The increase in the use of the non-local features T Glottalling, TH Fronting, STRUT lowering, and loss of velar nasal plus, is most likely due to the mobility of the informants and the increased language contact that follows this mobility. All of the younger informants favour travelling as a pastime, and all have lived away from Sheffield for a couple of years or more. The more mobile one is, the more one gets in contact with other people, and language can thus easily be coloured by this contact. This explanation seems to be more credible than that of geographical diffusion seeing as accents further north have seen a more extensive adoption of both TH Fronting and R Fronting than the results of the present study indicate.

As mentioned in 2.4, consonant features traditionally spread more widely than vowel features do. Consonant features spread on a national scale and are therefore more likely to lose their regional distinctiveness. In this study, the results for the consonant features loss of velar nasal plus, T Glottalling, and TH Fronting seem to support this view. Vowel features most often only level towards the regional norm, and not the national. The results for BATH

broadening in this study seem to be in line with this norm, considering that the short front [a] is not only a feature of the Sheffield accent, but for most of the linguistic North. It is a regionally distinctive variant, and is as such less likely to change to the southern pronunciation. The vowel in STRUT, however, seems to be slowly changing towards the southern regional standard. As mentioned in 4.2, this might suggest that speakers more easily adopt the pronunciation with a wider (national) distribution when the local and regional features are stigmatised. The vowel in STRUT has traditionally been stigmatised among 'educated northerners' in the linguistic North. The vulgarity associated with the feature might explain STRUT lowering's slow levelling towards the national standard.

4.8   Summary

In the current chapter the results from the investigation on the variation and change of six linguistic variables in the Sheffield accent have been presented. The vowels in BATH and STRUT, as well as the velar nasal plus, are traditional features of the northern accent. The hypothesis concerning these features was that they are levelling towards their southern counterparts, making the northern accent features more in line with the southern accent. The last three features, T Glottalling, TH Fronting, and R Fronting, have been spreading rapidly from London in recent decades. Therefore I hypothesised that the Sheffield accent also had seen a similar increase in the use of these features. In reference to these hypotheses the results varied quite a bit. The results for each 'new' variant according to age groups are provided as percentage scores in Table 4.15 below.

Table 4.15: Percentage scores of the proposed new variants of the Sheffield accent according to age

Variant	Older informants	Younger informants
[ɑː]	5%	4%
[ʌ]	11%	15%
[ŋ]	98%	98%
[ʔ]	18%	82%
[f]	0%	15%
[ʋ]	0%	0%

As can be seen from the table, the hypotheses are not verified for all of the variables. The traditional northern features are relatively stable, except for loss of velar nasal plus where the traditional variant is almost completely absent from the sample. The vowel of BATH shows a near-categorical use of the traditional variant. The vowel of STRUT sees a bit more variation, and might be seeing the start of a change towards increasing use of the southern variant. Of the non-standard features spreading from the South of England, the variable (t) has seen a great change towards the new variant [ʔ]. For the two other features, only TH Fronting was found in this sample. Also here there was a lot of interspeaker variation and [f] was only present in a few of the informants' speech. However, this might be the start of a change in the (θ) variable towards an increased use of the non-standard realisation. There was no evidence of any variation of the variable (r).

Because of females' tendency to want to converge to the more prestigious linguistic forms, I further hypothesised that females would lead the change in the typical northern accent features towards the southern realisation. This idea was based on the fact that the southern realisation is close to the RP accent, which traditionally is deemed the most prestigious accent in England. The consonant changes spreading from London, however, were assumed to be led by the younger male informants. These features are associated with working class and masculinity, and in some other towns where these features have gained ground, males have been the primary users, e.g. in Milton Keynes (Williams and Kerswill 1999) and Northampton (Bonness 2011). The results for the northern accent features are uniform according to gender, except for the vowel of STRUT.

Although there was not a big difference between the genders, the males used the new variant slightly more often than females. This finding refutes the initial hypothesis. The consonant features spreading from the South also did not differ much according to gender. However, there was a tendency for the males to use the innovative features more than the females. In general, it seems like the male informants favour the non-local variants to a larger extent than the females. This finding is not in line with the results of certain other studies. Milroy et al. (1994), for instance, found that glottal replacement was used more among females than males in Tyneside, as did Mees and Collins (1999) in Cardiff. In a study on vowels, also in Tyneside, the females favoured the supra-local variants while the males preferred the local variants (Watt 2002). The results of the present study then probably do not show a change led by attitudinal factors linked to overt prestige connected to any of the non-local variants. This is further emphasised by the low frequency of T Glottalling in reading style.

Finally, the issue of levelling was discussed. It seems as if Sheffield is seeing some of the same developments as the rest of Britain in that non-traditional consonant features (except for R Fronting) are being adopted in the Sheffield accent. This especially applies to the loss of velar nasal plus and T Glottalling. The vowels, however, do not show equally clear signs of changing towards a national standard, although the results for the STRUT variable might be indicative of a bigger change to come. The levelling of the Sheffield accent might be a result of external factors such as increased language contact, although this is a tentative theory.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The results from the present study do not show a one-sided pattern of acquiring southern accent features. Some of the variables investigated are clearly changing, while some show small signs towards a change, and others have not changed at all. This chapter sums up the findings and answers the questions asked in Chapter 1. The hypotheses are also be commented on, whether they are confirmed or disproved. To round off the thesis, three final sections are included. The first discusses the shortcomings of the present study, and the second proposes further research that might be of interest to the field of variationist sociolinguistics. The thesis concludes with a section on the contributions made by the present thesis.

5.1 Concluding remarks

In the introduction, four questions were asked regarding the language situation in Sheffield. The previous analyses and discussion have brought us closer to answers to these questions.

5.1.1 The results in relation to the research questions

1. The accent of Sheffield seems to be undergoing change to a certain extent. While some of the features investigated have seen little or no change, other features have changed radically. The former statement especially applies to the variables (a) and (r), which showed little or no variation, whereas the latter applies to the variables (ng) and (t) in particular, and (ʊ) and (θ) to a lesser extent. I tentatively propose that these changes are part of the process of accent levelling, and especially the underlying processes of speech accommodation and mobility seem to be of relevance to the current variation and change found in Sheffield English. The stability of the (a) variable, however, I suggest is the result of a

sense of loyalty to the northern identity among Sheffielders.

2. Of the non-standard features spreading from London, only T Glottalling has been adopted by all informants. Both age groups have the feature, but it is much more common among the younger informants. T Glottalling's low frequency in reading style suggests that it is not yet considered a prestigious feature among either age group, however. TH Fronting is only reserved for the younger speakers, but only half the group has adopted the feature. The feature's presence in the accent is nevertheless an indication of a further increase in the use of this feature, especially considering the spread elsewhere in Britain. There was no sign of R Fronting among any of the informants, despite its spread to neighbouring areas. In the northern consonant feature loss of velar nasal plus, the traditional variant was hardly present in any of the informants' speech, neither old nor young. A change has then clearly taken place away from the traditional accent with regard to this feature, but seeing as the older age group did not use the feature any more than the younger, the change has probably occurred a long time ago.

3. While the vowel in BATH is stable and conservative in its realisation, the vowel in STRUT shows more variation, and may be seeing more of a change towards the southern realisation [ʌ].

4. There seems to be a slight tendency for males to favour the non-local variants more than females, both regarding the traditionally northern features, as well as the non-standard features spreading from London. The gender differences are small, but males seem to lead in the use of 'new' features, e.g. [f] and [ʌ], while females to a larger extent keep the traditional variants [θ] and [ʊ].

When these answers are seen in light of the hypotheses introduced in 1.2, it is clear that some of the hypotheses turn out to be supported, whereas others are refuted by the findings of the present study. The findings are discussed in reference to the hypotheses below.

5.1.2 The results in relation to the hypotheses

1. The most clear indication is change is seen in loss of velar nasal plus. This feature has almost no occurrences of the traditional variant, but as this is the case among all informants in both generations, the change may be viewed as completed for this variable. It seems that only some of the other variables investigated are going through a process of change, however. This is most evident in the cases of T Glottalling and TH Fronting, where the

results show a considerable difference between the two generations. A small increase in STRUT lowering is also found among the younger age group, although the difference is not as great as with the three former variables. This might nevertheless indicate the start of a change towards a more southern quality of the vowel. The remaining variables display little or no variation. The vowel of BATH broadening has a very conservative pattern of realisation, and does not seem to be changing among the middle class informants. Finally, no variation is apparent in the variable R Fronting, as all tokens of (r) are realised with the traditional variant. I have not investigated the underlying mechanisms of the change, but based on information from some of the informants, and knowledge acquired from previous studies and descriptions of accent levelling, there is reason to believe that accent levelling mechanisms such as mobility and speech accommodation are relevant in the current changes in the Sheffield accent.

2. Sheffield English has acquired more southern accent features to a certain extent. This especially applies to the consonant features loss of velar nasal plus, T Glottalling, and TH Fronting.

3. Only STRUT lowering seems to be affected by a levelling towards the southern variant. BATH broadening shows a one-sided pattern in favour of the traditional variant. The differences in the results with these variables seem to be linked to prestige. [a] in BATH is a prestigious accent feature of the linguistic North, whereas [ʊ] in STRUT has historically been perceived as vulgar by many, and may thus be more inclined to change.

4. Gender does not seem to be a very important factor in the change of the northern variables. Small patterns could be found that seem to disprove the hypothesis, however. The females did not use any of the new variants more than the males in reference to the typical northern features. BATH broadening and loss of velar nasal plus were used to the same extent by both genders, whereas STRUT lowering was used slightly more by the male informants.

5. The final hypothesis seems to be confirmed. The male informants of the present study used the non-standard features T Glottalling and TH Fronting more than the females. The differences were not very great, however, thus it seems that gender is not such an important extra-linguistic variable when it comes to the features investigated here.

5.2 Shortcomings

In section 3.2.2 I discussed the issue of representativeness in sociolinguistics. In research of the kind conducted in this study, a fully representative sample would be very time-consuming and difficult to gather. Therefore the sampling criteria were very restricted. Only two age groups have been interviewed, and more importantly, the social class is limited to one. Only members of the middle class have participated, therefore the results cannot be seen as representative of the entire population of Sheffield. The observations solely apply to the middle class and can say nothing about the linguistic situation of the Sheffield working class.

The representativeness of the middle class would be further increased if I had been successful at gathering more informants. With a limited time period to procure data, and with no contacts in Sheffield, finding people who are prepared to have a conversation with a stranger for half an hour, is a difficult task. Although most interviews were of a fairly good length, there were a couple of interviews that were shorter than originally wished for. This may have affected the speech of the informants, seeing as there was little time to get comfortable in the rather formal interview situation.

Also, with the sociolinguistic interview as the main method of eliciting data, the observer's paradox is inevitable. There are limitations when it comes to getting the wanted unmonitored, vernacular speech. Although the interviews were fairly casual and informal in style, there is always a level of formality present when one is conversing with a stranger and, additionally, being tape recorded. People tend to accommodate to the present situation and to the speech of their interlocutor, and their accent might be coloured by this. In addition, some of the informants, having been notified that they were participants of a project on Sheffield English, were at times very conscious of their pronunciation. Comments like 'I'll try and not use telephone voice' (Speaker 1) and 'you will never hear me say b[ɑː]th' (Speaker 8) proved their awareness of their own speech. In these cases, the conversation continued onto other themes, but it is difficult to say whether their awareness of their speech diminished or not.

Another possible complication of the sampling is that I have an accent similar to that of RP. Seeing as the aim of the investigation was to see whether the Sheffield accent was adopting southern accent features, being interviewed by someone with a southern-like accent may be unfortunate. Considering that people are known to accommodate to each other's speech, my accent might have increased their awareness of southern variants, which may have affected their speech, and hence the results.

As has been explained in a previous section, vowels are less conspicuous than consonants,

hence it might be difficult to be consistent in an auditory analysis. Perhaps if I had conducted an acoustic analysis, the results could have included more phonetic detail. It would also possibly be easier to pinpoint the variation in STRUT lowering, which seemed to be great indeed.

5.3 Further research

Considering the limitations of the present project outlined above, I would propose that more extensive research in the Sheffield area is needed. First of all it would be interesting to see whether the results would be the same, or if one would find different patterns if more informants were included. It would also be highly interesting to investigate the speech of the working class. Does their speech differ a lot from the middle class informants of the present study? It would additionally be interesting to include more age groups, to see if it is possible to find a starting point for some of the on-going changes.

Seeing as the present project has revealed variation and change in the traditionally northern accent features of STRUT and velar nasal plus, it would be interesting to investigate other typical northern features such as the vowels in FACE, GOAT, and MOUTH, which are traditionally monophthongs. Are these becoming diphthongised or do they show the same conservative pattern as the vowel in BATH?

The present project has focused on three non-standard features spreading from London. There are other features that seem to be involved in a national levelling process, however. These would be interesting to investigate in Sheffield as well. First of all, I would suggest having a look at the voiced variable (ð) in reference to TH Fronting, seeing as the present study is only concerned with the voiceless (θ). Furthermore, keeping an eye out for R Fronting would be interesting, considering this feature's spread to areas close to Sheffield. Will it reach Sheffield? Additionally, features such as L Vocalisation would be interesting to investigate in the future. Rising intonation at the end of statements, so-called up-speak, is also a phenomenon that is gaining ground in England today. This was also observed in the speech of some of the informants, and might be interesting to investigate further.

Future research on the STRUT variable and velar nasal plus would benefit from having more variants assigned to them. As mentioned in 4.2, many of the STRUT tokens had an intermediate realisation, and to have more variants would provide a more accurate picture of the feature's realisation. This also applies to loss of velar nasal plus, where tokens often were realised [n], but quantified as instances of [ŋ]. Several studies have focused solely on the suffix *-ing*, so perhaps an exclusive look at this in the Sheffield accent would be beneficiary, but with three variants:

[ŋg], [ŋ], and [n].

5.4   Contributions made by the present thesis

By conducting research on the Sheffield accent, I have contributed to the long line of sociolin-guistic studies on accent variation and change. Though small in scope, this study presents data from a little investigated accent in recent times, and thus fills a gap. Some additional information on the linguistic situation in Sheffield today has been gathered. The study furthermore partly confirms previous findings both in Sheffield as well as in other urban districts, such as the spread of some non-standard accent features from the urban centre of London. The present study also found new directions taken by typically northern accent features towards a southern norm. The findings furthermore contribute with new information on other aspects on accent change and in part refute previous research; the study sheds new light on the spread of BATH broadening and R Fronting, and thus may provide a more nuanced picture of the variation and change of the Sheffield accent compared to previous studies in Sheffield and research in other areas.

This master's thesis, along with Stoddart et al.'s study from 1999, may thus serve as a starting point for future research on the Sheffield accent. The present study may also be used to compare and contrast possible changes in other accents of English in Britain today.

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Appendix 1

Comma gets a Cure

Well, here's a story for you: Sarah Perry was a veterinary nurse who had been working daily at an old zoo in a deserted district of the territory, so she was very happy to start a new job at a superb private practice in North Square. That area was much nearer for her and more to her liking. Even so, on her first morning, she felt stressed. She ate a slice of bread with butter, had a glass of water, checked herself in the mirror and washed her face in a hurry. Then she picked up her things and headed for work.

When she got there, there was a woman with a goose waiting for her. The woman gave Sarah an official letter from the vet. The letter implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth disease.

Before long, the goose began to strut and dance around the office like a lunatic. The goose's owner, Mary Harrison, kept calling, "Comma, Comma", which Sarah thought was a laughable name. To stop Comma, Sarah first tried singing a tune to her. Finally, she administered ether. In no time, the goose began to tire, so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and give her a relaxing bath.

Once Sarah had managed to bathe her, she wiped her off with a cloth and laid her on her right side. Then Sarah confirmed the vet's diagnosis. Almost immediately, she remembered an effective treatment that required her to measure out a lot of medicine. Sarah warned that this course of treatment might be expensive - either five or six times the cost of penicillin. I can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison thought it was a fair price for a cure.

Appendix 2

List of sentences

I'm thinking of going to Bath tomorrow morning.

My brother's laugh is horrible.

I really like freshly baked bread with melted butter.

I stood there waiting, but he never showed up.

She took half of the pizza, and left the crust.

The prize is a big golden cup.

You simply must come to the party.

He's upstairs watching a show.

Could I get a free sample of this perfume?

Would you pour me a glass of brandy, please?

The sum of money amounts to thirteen pounds.

Her mother and father are coming over tomorrow.

You can't get everything you want in life.

The choir was singing a Christmas carol.

I went to visit my aunt on Monday.

Monkeys swing from tree to tree.

This is my third time at the theatre.

What's the matter?

You need to hang up the new lamp, otherwise we won't see anything when it gets dark.

My mouth is really dry. Could you get me some water?

You should ask Stephen to go to the dance with you.

Hand me that bottle of water, will you?

Running up the hill makes me short of breath.

I want a proper English breakfast with black pudding.

You forgot to do the latter part of the assignment.

You sing like an angel.

Are you telling the truth?

I'm stuck in a rut.

He was fast asleep.

He's writing a letter for his mother.