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Language Change and Innovation in London: Multicultural London English

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Introduction

London is one of Europe's largest cities: 8.6 million people live within the Greater London Authority and about 21 million live within the larger metropolitan region. In general, capital cities have a major influence on national languages due to their position as *standard* and *reference* varieties; it is therefore no surprise that London has been regarded as the centre of linguistic innovation in British English. Wells (1982: 301) states that 'in view of its position in England as the political capital and the largest city, it is not surprising that London is also its linguistic centre of gravity', and, further, he claimed that '[London's] working class accent is today the most influential source of innovation in England and perhaps the whole English-speaking world'. This claim has remained untested for 34 years.

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There had been no large-scale sociolinguistic investigations of London English, mainly due to the potential problems of carrying out a project, including issues such as population size, demographic complexity and selection of localities. Whatever was taking place in London was only speculation from findings of studies of change processes in south-east England. Torgersen and Kerswill (2004) investigated converging short vowel systems in Reading and Ashford and assumed that what they found were the London vowel features that had diffused and influenced the local accents in the London periphery. Studies in Milton Keynes and Reading found an increase in T-glottaling, H-reinstatement, TH-fronting and RP-like diphthong qualities, and it was suggested that these were the results of diffusion and regional dialect levelling (Kerswill and Williams 2000; Cheshire et al. 2005). The features were hypothesised to originate in London and then spread out following a gravity model (Britain 2002a).

In addition, the few existing studies of London English were old or small scale (Sivertsen 1960; Tollfree 1999) or only included single families (Hurford 1967) or groups of schoolchildren (Beaken 1971). These studies also concentrated on a limited number of linguistic features, but they did demonstrate differentiation according to social class and gender, though almost exclusively for phonological features.

Language Contact in London English, Ethnicity and Immigration

None of the existing studies had considered ethnicity as a social variable. This is a critical limitation as there have been high levels of immigration to London for a long time, and a particularly large increase over the last 60 years. Do immigrant speakers simply adopt existing language usage or are they innovators of new forms of language use? Beaken (1971) indeed argued that school students with immigrant backgrounds spoke Cockney, the traditional London working-class accent, no different from anyone else. However, some speakers were reported to code-switch between Cockney and London Jamaican (Sebba 1993), and Hewitt (1986) observed *crossing* within established friendship groups, an acceptable practice among friends where speakers use elements of the speech of someone with a different ethnic background.

The level of immigration to London has been high for hundreds of years: people have moved there from Scotland, Ireland and the rest of the UK, western and eastern Europe, Empire and Commonwealth countries and more recently countries such as Poland and Turkey. According to Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 162), waves of migration have had a significant impact on the language of London. Indeed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no more than 15% of Londoners had been born there (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 164). In 2013, more than a third of the foreign-born population in the UK were living in London and about 1.3 million foreign-born people were living in inner London, representing an increase of 50%, from just over 800,000 in 1995 (The Migration Observatory 2013). Inner and outer London boroughs have the highest number of immigrants in terms of percentage of the whole population in the UK. Over half of inner London schoolchildren are known or believed to have a first language other than English (Department for Education 2015). It seems almost inconceivable that the presence of such a large immigrant community would not have had an impact on the language. Kerswill and Torgersen (2017) in fact argue that there are early signs of effects of ethnicity on London English, that is, before the large-scale waves of immigration from the 1950s onwards. In recordings of speakers born between 1870 and 1890, they found support of this view in that a speaker who had links with the Jewish community had more *modern* vowel features and more Yiddish-like voice onset time (VOT) values than a speaker without such links.

Continued Effects of Language Contact and Non-UK Varieties of English and the Role of Friendship Networks in the Propagation of Linguistic Changes and Innovations

Fox (2015) also argues for the continued effects of language contact and the impact of non-UK varieties on the language of London. In her study of Bangladeshi adolescent males and white British adolescents attending a youth club in the traditional East End of London, she found that the

Bangladeshi males had not acquired the traditional Cockney variety of London English and were leading in innovative variants of FACE and PRICE vowels not previously documented for London. They were also leading in changes in the allomorphy system of the definite and indefinite articles. Furthermore, she found that friendship networks provide fertile ground for the diffusion of innovations. Figure 8.1 is a representation of the youth club members' friendship groups and shows the distribution of the [æ] variant of PRICE among the participants in the study. It can clearly be seen that the Bangladeshi males are the most frequent users of this innovative variant but that it is also used by the younger and older white British males to some extent, seemingly reflecting the fact that these groups engage in some of the same social practices. Interestingly, the non-use of this variant by the white British girls appears to correlate with the fact that they did not interact socially with the Bangladeshi males at all. The same pattern was observed for the innovations found for the FACE vowel and also for the changes occurring in the article system (see Fox 2015 for more details).

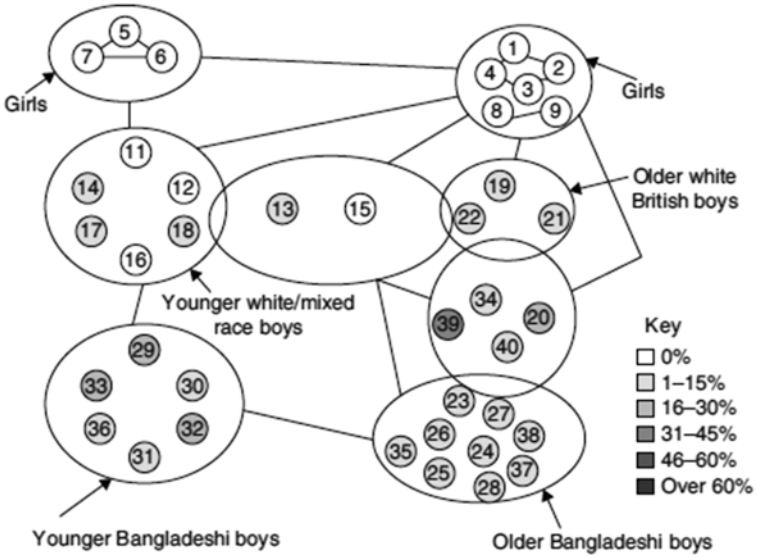

Fig. 8.1 Distribution of the PRICE variant [æ] among different friendship groups

The link between innovation, diffusion and friendship networks was also examined in the Linguistic Innovators study (Kerswill et al. 2007). To analyse speakers' friendship networks in the Linguistics Innovators study, each speaker was asked to name their closest friends and to provide their ethnic background, a task that the speakers found straightforward. The informants were then given a score of 1–5 depending on the ethnic makeup of the friendship network:

1 = all friends of the same ethnicity as self
2 = up to 20% of a different ethnicity
3 = up to 40% of a different ethnicity
4 = up to 60% of a different ethnicity
5 = up to 80% of a different ethnicity

The results (discussed further below) showed that the speakers with the highest friendship network scores had the highest proportion of innovative variants.

It would appear, then, that friendship networks could provide the key to the diffusion of linguistic innovations and that particular speakers could be the innovators responsible for the spread of innovations to other friendship groups and ultimately to the wider community.

The Linguistic Innovators Study

The rationale for this study was to investigate the claim/hypothesis that London is the centre of linguistic innovation in Britain and to investigate the effect of ethnicity on language change and innovation in London. As innovations are hypothesised to be more advanced in the inner city than in the outer city, potentially diffusing outwards, an inner city location, Hackney in the traditional East End, and an outer city location, Havering in the east, were chosen. The locations are shown in Fig. 8.2.

The two boroughs have a very different demographic setup, albeit they are similar in population size. Data from the 2011 Census, shown in Table 8.1, demonstrate that Hackney has a much more diverse population that Havering. While Havering is predominantly white British, in

Fig. 8.2 Localities in the Linguistic Innovators project

Table 8.1 Population mix in Hackney and Havering

	Hackney	Havering
White British	89,030	197,615
White Other	39,897	7185
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	15,869	4473
Asian/Asian British	25,867	4933
Black/African/Caribbean/British	56,858	11,545
Other	13,059	11,481
Total population	246,270	237,232

Hackney less than half of the population is white British with the other ethnic groups being fairly equal in terms of size. We would therefore expect a high degree of dialect/language mixing in Hackney, while less so in Havering.

Two age groups of speakers were interviewed. The young speakers were hypothesised to have more advanced or innovative forms than the old

speakers, who represented a traditional Cockney baseline. The young speakers were 16–19 years old, while the old speakers were 70–80 years old. Forty-nine young speakers were interviewed in both Hackney and Havering, giving a total of 98. Eight old speakers were interviewed in both localities, 16 in total. All speakers had a broadly working-class background in terms of their place of residence, low level of education and their relatively unskilled occupations before retirement.

As stated above, the older speakers represented a traditional Anglo Cockney baseline; thus, ethnicity was only a social variable for the young speakers. Two groups of speakers were targeted: Anglos and non-Anglos. The Anglos were those whose families had lived in the area for three generations or longer. The non-Anglo speakers, although mostly born in London, had a more recent immigrant background, with one or both parents being first or second-generation immigrants to the city. It turned out to be impossible to find enough non-Anglo speakers in Havering; hence a small number of *commuters*, who attended local colleges but lived outside the borough and who commuted from areas closer to inner London, were added to the sample. The sample of young speakers is shown in Table 8.2.

The Hackney Anglo adolescents can be divided into two groups: those with a low friendship network score (3) and those with a high score (4–5). In Havering, however, the Anglo speakers in the most diverse networks only reached a score of 3. This clearly describes the large difference in ethnic composition of friendship networks for Anglo speakers in the two boroughs. Thus, much of the linguistic difference between the boroughs can be linked to the ethnic composition of friendship networks among the Anglo speakers. The non-Anglo speakers were all in diverse friendship networks (network score 4 and 5), and the non-Anglo group was much more ethnically heterogeneous with 11 different self-defined ethnicities.

Table 8.2 Sample of young speakers

	Anglo girls	Non-Anglo girls	Anglo boys	Non-Anglo boys	Total
Hackney	10	12	12	15	49
Havering	14 (+ 2 commuters)	3(+ 3 commuters)	20 (+ 2 commuters)	1(+ 6 commuters)	49

The data consist of sociolinguistic interviews with pairs of friends or small groups of friends, chosen by the participants themselves. The same female fieldworker conducted all interviews. All interviews were transcribed in full to allow for analyses of grammatical and discourse variables. The transcriptions were transformed into the Linguistic Innovators Corpus and used for corpus linguistic analyses of grammatical and discourse variables (e.g. Gabrielatos et al. 2010; Torgersen et al. 2011). In total, the dataset consists of 1,079,845 words, excluding the fieldworkers' contributions. There are in total 110 hours of recordings.

Results

Several phonological, morphological, syntactical and discourse variables have been examined to date and we will present an overview of the main findings. We have examined the effects of geographical location, age, gender, ethnicity and friendship network on the realisation of linguistic variables. For phonological variables, monophthongs demonstrated differentiation between inner and outer city. A number of the short vowels appear to be undergoing an anti-clockwise chain shift when we compare the old speakers to the young speakers.

As shown in Fig. 8.3, there is lowering and centralisation of TRAP, raising and backing of STRUT and fronting of FOOT, while there are only small changes for KIT, DRESS and LOT. The shifting of TRAP, STRUT and FOOT are part of the south-eastern short vowel shift (Torgersen and Kerswill 2004). There is also a large difference between young and old speakers for GOOSE, with extreme GOOSE-fronting particularly for non-Anglos and Anglos in dense multicultural friendship networks (Cheshire et al. 2008). In Havering, the young speakers have a less lowered and backed TRAP, suggesting conservatism in outer London, which puts them more in line with the elderly speakers and shows them as having qualities that more resemble the levelled diphthongs observed in the rest of south-east England (Kerswill and Williams 2005; Kerswill et al. 2008). This is shown in Fig. 8.4.

For diphthongs, we have documented diphthong shift reversal. It involves the backing of MOUTH where the non-Anglos are in the lead and a more raised onset for FACE, where non-Anglos have a more raised

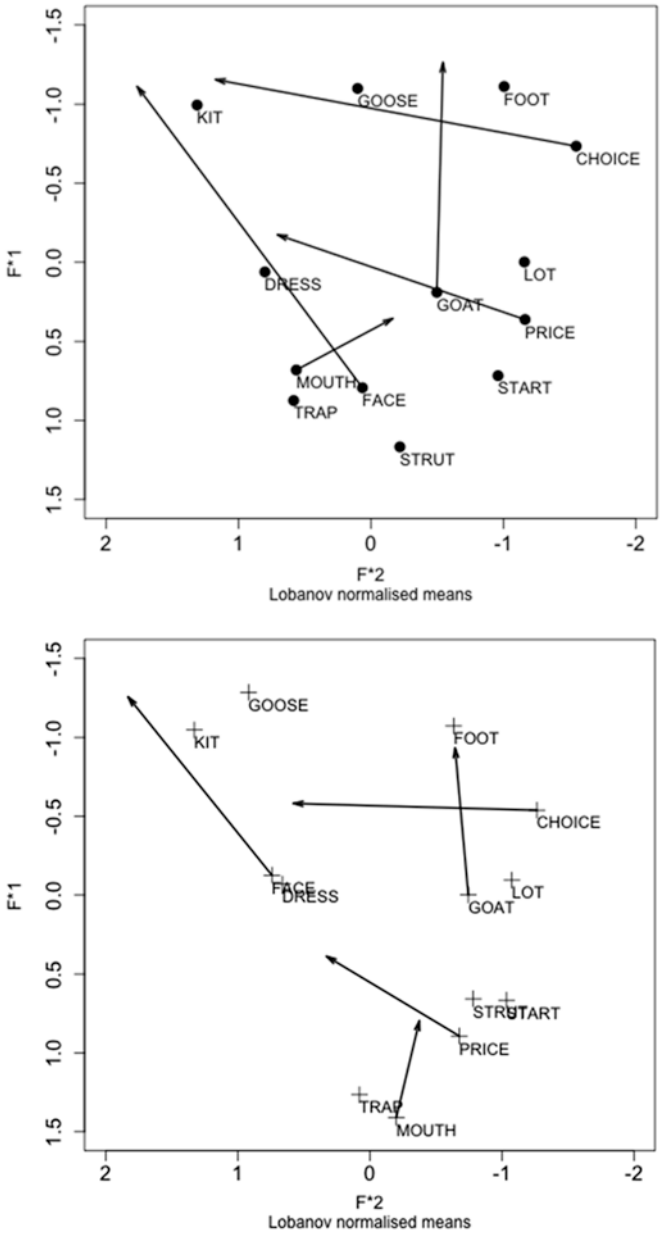

Fig. 8.3 Vowel system in Hackney, old speakers (filled circle) and young speakers (cross)

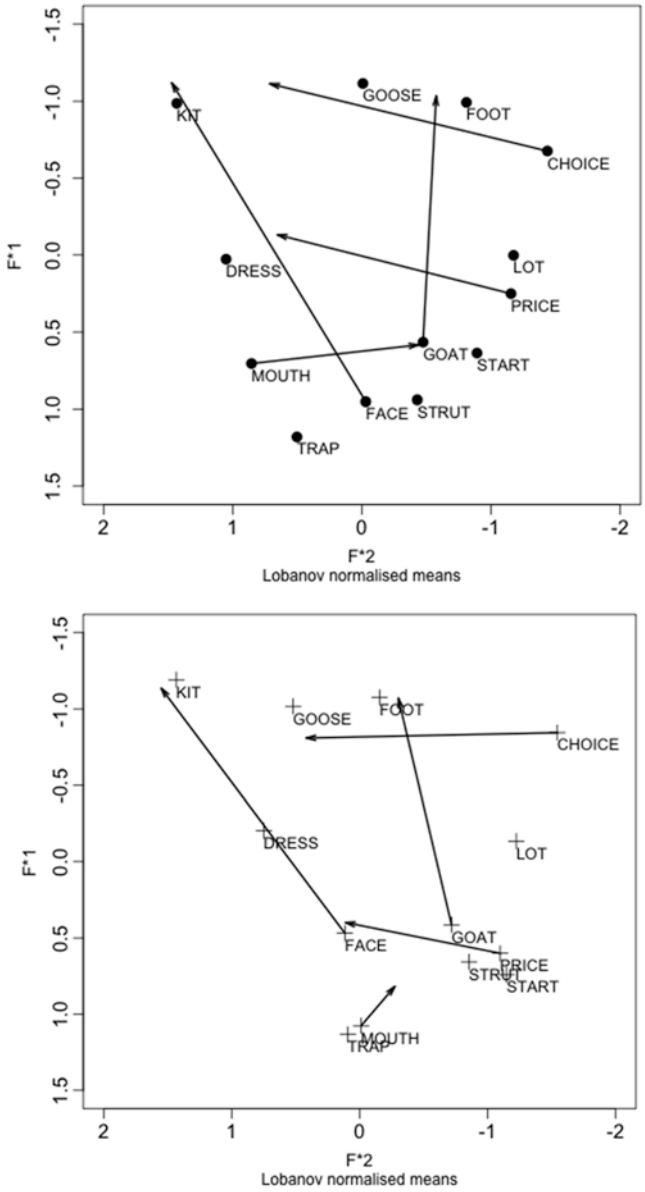

Fig. 8.4 Vowel system in Havering, old speakers (filled circle) and young speakers (cross)

FACE compared to Anglos. For this vowel, the friendship network exerts an additional effect: Anglos in dense networks have a more raised FACE compared to Anglos who are not in such networks. Two other diphthongs display ethnic differentiation. The non-Anglos in Hackney, shown in Fig. 8.5, are in the lead in fronting and lowering for PRICE and they have a more raised GOAT compared to Anglo speakers.

Taken together, the findings indicate that non-Anglos are innovative when it comes to vowel change processes. As the Anglo speakers in dense multicultural friendship networks have intermediate qualities for some vowels, the results document and support the findings of Fox (2015) regarding the role that friendship networks play in the adoption of innovative vowel variants.

A number of consonantal features were also examined auditorily. These features were analysed in word-initial position. For H-dropping, the young speakers have less H-dropping than the elderly speakers: 20.8% vs. 44.4%. This is part of a general process of H-reinstatement in south-eastern British English (Cheshire et al. 2005). In addition, the non-Anglo speakers in Hackney have less H-dropping than the Anglos, 18.0 vs. 3.9%. There were no gender and friendship network effects (Cheshire et al. 2008). In Havering, the young speakers have slightly more H-dropping than the elderly speakers. DH-stopping, [d] in words like *this* and *that*, which is a traditional Cockney feature (Wells 1982), appears to have been reallocated as an ethnic marker. There is more DH-stopping in Hackney than Havering, and there is more DH-stopping among the non-Anglos than the Anglo speakers. However, the Anglos in largely Anglo networks had more DH-stopping than the Anglos in multicultural networks, demonstrating that it is a traditional Cockney feature as well. As DH-stopping is additionally found in contact varieties of English such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Jamaican English, the reason for its reallocation to an ethnic marker may be found there. A feature that has previously not been documented is the backing of /k/ (*K-backing*) word-initially in front of non-high stressed back vowels (STRUT, START, LOT and THOUGHT). The backed /k/ is found in both Hackney and Havering, but more so in Hackney than in Havering. There are small differences between ethnic groups, but the most backed variant [q] was found less often among

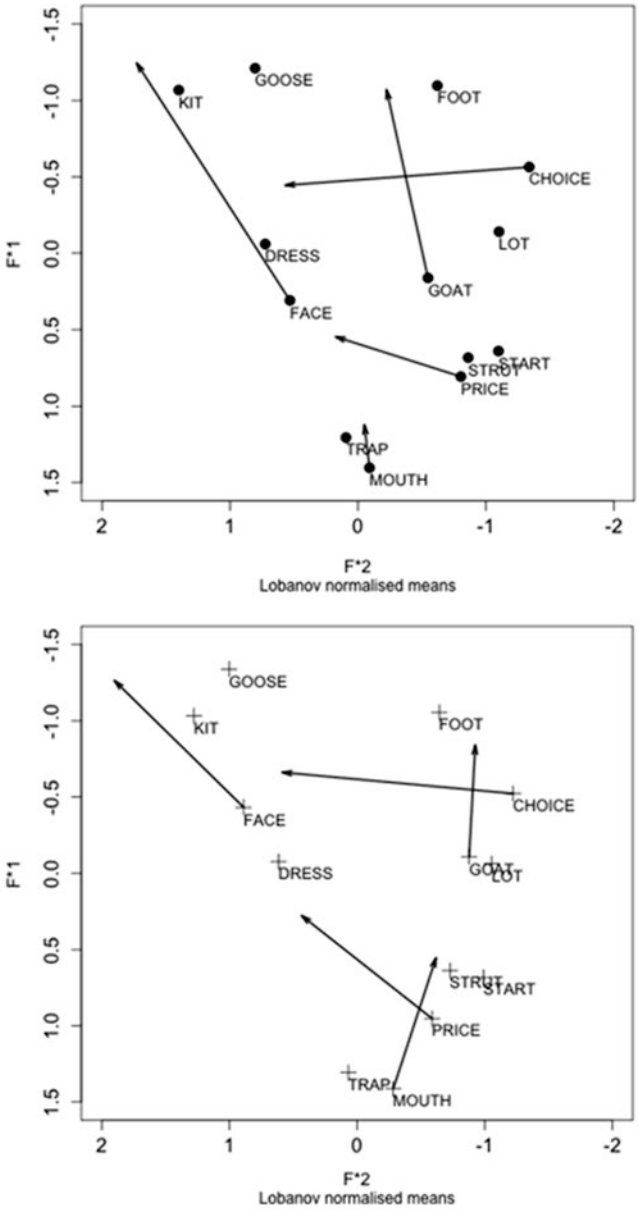

Fig. 8.5 Hackney Anglo (filled circle) and non-Anglo speakers (cross)

the female speakers and the Anglo speakers who were not in dense multicultural friendship network (Cheshire et al. 2008).

For morphological and syntactic variables, we observed processes of levelling as well as innovation. The process of reallocation in the use of indefinite articles is similar to that observed for H-reinstatement, which in turn leads to levelling of the paradigm. The use of *a* instead of *an* in front of vowel sounds is a traditional dialect form in British English, but is also found in contact varieties like AAVE. Age, ethnicity and friendship network had effects on levelling of the indefinite article paradigm. Non-Anglo speakers, male speakers and speakers in Hackney, including Anglos in multicultural friendship groups, used more *a* in front of vowel sounds. There was little use of *a* in front of vowel sounds in Havering (Gabrielatos et al. 2010). For past tense BE, there is both levelling and innovation. Britain (2002b) identifies two broad patterns of non-standard past BE. The first is variable levelling to *was* across person, number and polarity, for example *you* ***was*** *a defender* or *we* ***wasn't*** *allowed to wear hats.* The second pattern is variable levelling to *was* in clauses with positive contexts, as in *you* ***was*** *a defender*, but variable levelling to *weren't* in clauses with negative contexts, as in *I* ***weren't*** *talking to you.* In Havering we find levelling to a *was/weren't* system in line with many other urban accents in the UK, but in Hackney, we find the *was/wasn't* pattern competing with the *was/weren't* pattern. Specifically, it is the speakers of black and Afro-Caribbean background who lead in levelling to *wasn't* in negative polarity, which means they could be following the *was/wasn't* system in line with many other contact varieties around the world, a system which Chambers (1995: 242) calls a 'vernacular primitive'. This leads to Hackney diverging from the rest of the south east. There was also an effect of friendship network on past tense BE: speakers in multi-ethnic networks, including Anglo speakers, tended to favour levelling to *was* in positive polarity and levelling to *wasn't* in negative polarity contexts. This pattern was most frequent with non-Anglo speakers in Hackney (Cheshire and Fox 2009; Cheshire et al. 2011: 182), which means that speakers in multicultural friendship networks are in the lead in innovation of the past tense BE paradigm (Cheshire and Fox 2009).

For discourse markers, there is considerably more variation in the use of quotatives among young speakers than among old speakers. While the

old speakers overwhelmingly use *say* and the zero quotative to introduce reported speech, the young speakers use *say*, *go*, *be like*, the zero quotative and others. In Hackney there is also a new quotative *this is* + *speaker*. Examples are: *this is them 'what area are you from what part'?* and *this is my mum 'what are you doing? I was in the queue before you'*. The source of the expression is unknown and cannot be traced to a particular language, but it is likely that the form originated due to language contact since it occurs among *ethnic minority* speakers in the Bergen Corpus of London Teenage Language (COLT) and also in the speech of London Jamaicans in the 1980s (see Fox 2012: 246 for further details). It is used more often by female speakers, favoured in first person contexts and also favoured in the conversational historical present tense, and in these respects, it runs parallel with *be like* in its earliest forms. An examination of the contexts in which it occurs shows that *this is* + *speaker* is used in narratives of personal experience which are *performed* (Wolfson 1978). Furthermore, it appears to fulfil the function of highlighting a particularly dramatic peak in the performing of a story (Fox 2012).

A similar functional innovation is seen for the use of pragmatic markers. While there are some differences in frequency of use of particular pragmatic markers between male and female speakers, the raw frequencies vary little between inner and outer city and between ethnic groups. Male speakers regardless of ethnicity appear to prefer the pragmatic markers with the overall highest frequencies, *innit* and *yeah*, while the female speakers show more variation (Torgersen et al. 2011). However, *innit* in Hackney is being used in a way that is not observed in Havering, such as outside of the canonical tag position of negative tags (Pichler 2016: 60), and it is the female speakers who are in the lead in this functional innovation (Pichler 2013: 207). A differentiation between Hackney and Havering is observed for the emerging pragmatic marker *you get me* in Hackney. It is found among male speakers, non-Anglos and Anglos in multicultural friendship networks. Specifically, the non-use of *you get me* is predicted by a low friendship network score for Anglos (Torgersen et al. 2011).

Functional innovation was documented also for relative pronouns. As seen for pragmatic markers, there is similar overall frequency of *who* in Hackney and Havering; however, it has taken on a new function in

Hackney. In one particular group (the young speakers in Hackney), a new pattern emerges that connects the use of the relativiser *who* to topicality in restrictive relative clauses, such as *my medium brother who moved to Antigua* (Cheshire et al. 2013a: 64). The results show that the use of topic marker *who* is led by the non-Anglo speakers, like other innovative forms in Multicultural London English (MLE) (Cheshire et al. 2011). There is a clear correlation between using *who* as a topic marker and speaking a language other than English (Cheshire et al. 2013a: 72).

There were some social effects on prosody documented for speech timing and voice quality. A so-called *syllable-timed rhythm* is a feature of contact varieties of English such as Singapore English (Deterding 2001) and AAVE (Thomas and Carter 2006). The term *syllable-timed rhythm* is controversial (Arvaniti 2009), but what we can observe is a reduced difference in duration between long and short vowels and stressed and unstressed vowels which in turn has an effect on the durational relationship between types of vowels. In Hackney, monophthongal diphthongs (in particular FACE and GOAT) are shorter and schwa is longer (Torgersen and Szakay 2012). The monophthongal diphthongs are also found in other (contact) varieties of English, such as Jamaican English (Wassink 2001) and African English (Hoffmann 2011). The result is a more *syllable-timed rhythm* as measured by nPVI, which is a formula for calculating the relationship between pairs of segments, such as vowels, in adjacent syllables (Grabe and Low 2002). Non-Anglo speakers are more syllable timed than Anglo speakers and male speakers are more syllable timed than female speakers. In Havering a more *stress-timed rhythm* in line with British English was found (Torgersen and Szakay 2012).

Sociolinguistic effects have also been found for voice quality, namely fundamental frequency, creakiness and breathiness. Szakay and Torgersen (2015) found that phonation and fundamental frequency differed significantly between Hackney and Havering, where Hackney speech is lower in fundamental frequency, yet more breathy. A low fundamental frequency is also reported to be a feature of AAVE, together with more breathiness for male speakers (Thomas 2007). Overall, the Hackney males are breathier than the Hackney female speakers. In particular, the female Anglo speakers in Hackney exhibited the creakiest phonation of all the speaker groups. The Havering results show a more traditional pat-

tern, with female speech being more breathy, and male speech being more creaky (Szakay and Torgersen 2015).

In a perception test, listeners in London correctly identified inner and outer city London English speakers (Torgersen 2012). An important finding is that speakers' ethnic background as Anglo or non-Anglo does not appear to have an impact on the identification of speakers' geographical location: inner city voices might therefore be more ethnically neutral than outer city speakers. Conversely, Havering Anglo voices were correctly identified as *white* and these voices had a strong geographical marking. *Multicultural voices*, including speakers from Birmingham with Afro-Caribbean background, were identified as coming from London, which means that such voices are associated with well-known multicultural areas. For the listeners, Birmingham may not have been such an area.

To sum up, changes in inner London English are more advanced than those for the same linguistic features in outer London. Examples are the short vowel TRAP and STRUT and long vowel GOOSE. The diphthong shift reversal is also more advanced, but must be seen together with the monophthongal qualities. H-reinstatement is near-categorical. Other changes show that inner London is diverging from outer London. These include past tense BE levelling to a *was/wasn't* system, indefinite article paradigm levelling, having the most extreme variant for K-backing, DH-stopping, use of the *this is me* quotative and the *you get me* pragmatic marker. There is also functional innovation in inner London: *who* as topic marker and functional innovation for *innit*. In terms of suprasegmentals/prosody, there is more *syllable-timed* rhythm in inner London, and phonation in inner London also differs from the traditional British pattern. Overall, the findings for inner London show similarities with other contact varieties of English.

The innovations discussed in this section constitute what we have called Multicultural London English. We found that there were differences between the inner and outer city in the use of these innovations, they were restricted to inner London and that membership in a multicultural friendship network was central to the use of these innovations. However, it is difficult to generalise these results to other areas of London, bearing in mind that only one part of inner London was investigated and the study was also limited to one age group of young speakers. The sec-

ond project, *Multicultural London English* (MLE), therefore aimed to address these limitations.

The Multicultural London English Study

The objective for this study was to investigate acquisition of MLE by younger children and to investigate whether the variety is spoken outside of Hackney by speakers of different ethnicities than those recorded for the Linguistic Innovators study. Data came from different age groups, from four-year-olds to speakers in their mid-20s, where the latter group was interviewed to examine if MLE features are maintained into adulthood. In addition, the parents of the youngest children were recorded to examine linguistic transmission, the passing-on of linguistic features from one generation to the next. Again, speakers were divided into two broad ethnic groups, Anglos and non-Anglos. The data collection was carried out in 2008 and, in total, 127 speakers were interviewed. The dataset consisted of 726,240 words in total, excluding the fieldworkers' contributions. The localities are shown in Fig. 8.6.

For vowels, a comparison of vowel qualities of children and caregivers (Cheshire et al. 2011) show that even the youngest children had different vowel qualities than their parents, suggesting that MLE features are acquired early. The process of incrementation, where children advance the variants produced by their caregivers (Labov 2007), was documented for only one vowel feature: GOOSE-fronting. The teenagers had the most fronted qualities, which suggests that MLE is acquired in full only in teenage years. The speakers in their 20s did not have a full set of MLE vowel features. It might be that some of the features are diffusing more quickly than others and that the teenagers are the earliest adopters of linguistic innovations. Adult speakers have either traditional Cockney vowel qualities, such as shifted diphthongs, or qualities typical of varieties from outside the UK, such as a back GOOSE vowel (Cheshire et al. 2011).

While the Linguistic Innovators project only included two age groups, the sample in the MLE project allowed for investigation of changes in apparent time across several age groups. We will now examine whether there is more evidence of incrementation in our MLE data other than for

Fig. 8.6 Localities in the MLE project

fronting of the GOOSE vowel (Cheshire et al. 2011). Previously, incrementation has, for example, been shown for the *be like* quotative in data from Toronto, as there was an increased frequency in the use of *be like* across apparent time (Tagliamonte and D'Arcy 2009).

Grammatical variables show similar findings as in the Linguistic Innovators study. For past tense BE, there is levelling of the paradigm in positive polarity to *was,* and for indefinite and definite articles, a reduction of paradigm to *a* and /ðə/ in front of both vowel and consonant sounds. Such simplification is observed in creole and learner varieties of English (Cheshire et al. 2013b). The quotative *be like* is used more often by the younger speakers than the caregivers, (Cheshire et al. 2011). This is another example of incrementation, and the frequency distribution of *be like* has an *adolescent peak* with the teenagers being the highest users of this feature, just as we noted for GOOSE-fronting. The dataset also reveal further developments. A new pronoun, *man*, used by male teenagers of

mainly, but not exclusively, non-Anglo background has been documented and it is used for a variety of rhetorical functions such as distance and reduction of confrontation and face threat (Cheshire 2013). The new quotative *this is + speaker* is also used by all young speaker groups, but with functional innovation. In addition to its quotative use, it is also used for non-quotative functions among the youngest speakers to indicate reported actions, gestures and feelings (Cheshire et al. 2011; Kerswill et al. 2013), such as *this is her she get in trouble she get in trouble*, *this is him in the water <sound effect>* and *this is me I'm scared I'm like this*. The speakers in these examples are eight-year-old boys with non-Anglo background.

The Linguistic Innovators data revealed a reduction in H-dropping when we compared the young speakers to the old speakers. In the MLE dataset as a whole, we had similar results, but the overall differences between the different ages and also between ethnic groups were small. However, while there are only minor differences between Anglo and non-Anglo speakers within the young age groups, the difference between the Anglo caregivers, with 37.5% H-dropping, and non-Anglo caregivers, with 6.7% H-dropping, is large. If we consider all the young speakers, the Anglo speakers had 7.6% and non-Anglo speakers 5.2% H-dropping. Overall, though, including the caregivers, there is 8.5% H-dropping for Anglo speakers and 5.6% for non-Anglo speakers. Although not significant, there are differences between all young speakers (four-year-olds to young adults) with 5.8% H-dropping compared to caregivers with 18.2% and an increase in H-dropping in the expected direction from the youngest to the oldest speakers. The differentiation according to age is shown in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 H-dropping across age groups

	[0] in %	[h] in %
4-year-olds	3.6	96.4
8-year-olds	3.2	96.8
12-year-olds	6.6	93.4
Teenagers	7.3	92.7
Young adults	10.5	89.5
Caregivers	18.2	81.2

The Linguistic Innovators data also revealed a new variant, backed /k/, which was only used by the young speakers. We here present the results for the most backed variant [q], a uvular stop. In the MLE dataset as a whole, there is 7.5% K-backing for Anglo speakers and 19.6% for non-Anglo speakers, demonstrating an ethnic differentiation for this consonant variable, a clearer differentiation than in the Linguistic Innovators study. In the Linguistic Innovators study, we showed that K-backing was a feature of young people's speech only. However, even though there are again large differences between age groups with a significant effect of age, the four-year-olds only have a very small amount of K-backing. Older age groups have more K-backing than the youngest speakers, but the young adults have less K-backing than the teenagers. This is a process of incrementation, but it also resembles the adolescent peak discussed by, for example, Tagliamonte and D'Arcy (2009) for *be like*, where they argue that the peak they observe (the adolescent speakers have a higher frequency of *be like* than the youngest speakers) supports Labov's (2001) claim that such a peak is a requirement of a change in progress. However, because the youngest children aged four have less K-backing than the caregivers, transmission from parents/caregivers resulting in incrementation is unlikely. A more likely explanation is a change in progress with diffusion through dialect contact. Labov (2007) has argued that transmission of linguistic features from parents to children is completely separate from diffusion of features through language and dialect contact. Table 8.4 presents the increase in K-backing with increased age. It is possible that children encounter the backed /k/ variants in peer groups and then the variants increase in frequency as friendship networks become

Table 8.4 K-backing across age groups

	[q] in %	[k] in %
4-year-olds	1.0	99.0
8-year-olds	7.2	92.8
12-year-olds	18.0	82.0
Teenagers	40.2	59.8
Young adults	24.0	76.0
Caregivers	8.3	91.7

Table 8.5 K-backing across ethnic groups and age

	[q] in %	[q] in %
	Anglo	Non-Anglo
4-year-olds	0	1.0
8-year-olds	1.6	9.1
12-year-olds	13.4	21.8
Teenagers	9.5	47.8
Young adults	1.2	36.2
Caregivers	5.7	9.3

more diverse in teenage years, or just that the teenagers are faster in taking up this innovation, as we have suggested for the MLE vowel features.

For the non-Anglo speakers this is even more so, and as we have shown earlier, the non-Anglo speakers have a higher proportion of MLE variants than the Anglo speakers. The ethnic differentiation together with more K-backing with increased age is shown in Table 8.5.

The non-Anglo speakers have more K-backing in all age groups. Cheshire et al. (2008) list K-backing as one of the innovative features in MLE, and the MLE study shows that this is one of the features the speakers acquire early. To our knowledge, the use of backed /k/ has not previously been reported in other varieties of English. It is therefore difficult to explain its existence in London English. It may be that it is a feature of language contact that has lain dormant in the *feature pool* (Mufwene 2001) and has subsequently been picked up initially by non-Anglos during a process of group second language learning (Winford 2003). However, we cannot discount the possibility that this is simply an innovation that has arisen in inner London and which is diffusing to outer London areas.

Conclusion

In the Linguistic Innovators study, we found that it was particular types of speakers who had the full set of MLE features. These speakers represented different ethnicities, but they were all members of high-density multicultural friendship networks, and they were subsequently identified as being the linguistic innovators (Cheshire et al. 2008). The MLE project

did not explicitly seek to identify linguistic innovators, but we have documented that the highest users of MLE features, for example extreme GOOSE-fronting, backed /k/, the pronoun *man* and levelling to *was/wasn't*, are among the teenage non-Anglo speakers (Cheshire et al. 2011; Cheshire 2013). It seems likely, then, that the innovations arise among speakers in the teenage non-Anglo group and that the innovative features then spread to other members of the friendship networks and into the wider community. The fact that we find these innovations among younger speakers may also indicate that they are transmitted from older to younger siblings and through peer interactions rather than from their caregivers, many of who do not have English as their first language and, in many cases, are not proficient in English. In other words, the teenagers become the linguistic role models for the younger generations.

We have shown that the local innovative features in London, unlike the global innovations such as GOOSE-fronting and the quotative *be like*, have other frequency distributions than those predicted by a model of incrementation. To fully understand the complex processes of language variation and change in London (and indeed other multicultural metropolises), we need to take into account the sociohistorical context in which a variety occurs, changes in demography and effects of immigration and other social variables like composition of friendship network and degree of social interaction among different ethnic groups and individual speakers, in addition to the usual social variables such as speaker ethnicity and age.

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