**The post-racial,
non-rhotic,
inner city,
Th-fronting,
cross cultural,
dipthong shifting,
multi-ethnic,
L-vocalisation,
K-backing
fusion of
language.**

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With special thanks to Jonathon Green, Tony Thorne, Paul Kerswill, the reseidents of Tower Hamlets, Louis Barber-Cruz, Ben Wright and Sam Thompsett, Joe Pochodzaj, Adrian Shaughnessy and Jeff Willis.

Christ Nott (MA RCA) (MISTD)
Graphic Design & Communication

2013

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Evolution

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Community

Behaviour

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How are societies/communities moulded by the language that they speak?

Introduction

Multicultural London English: Innovation Starts Inner City: A Post-racial Fusion of Language

There is a 'new' title for the voice of the multiethnic, multilingual inner city sound of London; MLE (Multicultural London English) which is fast becoming the vernacular English of London, it cuts across ethnicity and race and people of all backgrounds share a repertoire which they can draw on in different ways.

However there are two sides to this difficult social subject. Violent riots broke out in Britain August 2011, researchers examined the messages relayed by rioters over social media. What they found was a heavy use of MLE and with Britain already being very class and accent conscious MLE was thrown into the spotlight, implementing it with the 'underclass' communities in and around London. The riots made MLE a real part of the public discourse.

Lindsay Johns, a self-defined hiphop intellectual, argues that the youths he mentors in London are trapped – linguistically, educationally, socially – by "ghetto grammar" and cannot "code switch" their way out. He describes a key issue from a linguistic point of view: "the inability of some young people to navigate between different languages, dialects or registers of speech." Lindsay's fear is that young people who cannot do so may be psychologically trapped with a restrictive language that is more for performance than reflection.

Through documentation, analysis and publishing I aim to show how (through visual, oral and written communication) language plays a huge role in our society.

Society affects language - Language affects society.

a reaction?

a revolution?

Society affects language.

Gregory Dean in Marketing Philosophy, Marketing Strategy

Language is an evolution of culture, and cultures are geographically bound. Therefore, language is a unique representation of culture in a specific time and location. Language is mostly thought of as spoken words with inflection, tone, and pronunciation linked to a country, state, or region. Variations of language within the same culture are separated by a historical timeline. Hath, henceforth, and hither were commonplace in a Shakespearean play. These words would disrupt and confuse a conversation in a modern day culture.

From Old English through Middle English and into Modern English, sometimes referred to as the Queen's English, cultural changes influenced language. Alterations of dialect, such as pronunciation, were a direct result of the separation of societies into culturally common groups. The wealthy were educated and pronounced every word with accuracy. The lower class societies could not afford books or to properly educate their youth. As a result, a variation of the language was evolved—influenced by culture. While the words were identical, the pronunciations were radically different. History can have an intense effect on language (Ellis-Christensen, 2009).

Over the past 1000 years, England has hosted many cultural changes with accompanying languages.

From cultures, through societies, and down to individual neighborhoods, language is altered and molded to be unique. Words are pronounced differently and new words are formed as a way to express independence from other cultures. Society affects language. Social boundaries are blurred as schools host multilingual classrooms (Budach & Rampton, 2008). People from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds find common ground by developing a language unique to their social environment. A variation of language is created by the melting pot of several cultures proving once again that our cultural background forges our language.

Every country has a rich history of language and culture. As long as cultures change and societies are born, language will be as unique and versatile. While the base language for each country can be linked to a culture, societies and even neighborhoods can be responsible for the many variations of a single language. Words, expressions, and non-verbal communication are all part of the language with which we communicate. Our cultural background affects our gestures and reactions as much as our dialect and inflection. Communication is defined as, "Any process in which people share information, ideas, and feelings" (Hybels & Weaver III, 2007). Not only is language influenced by culture, but communication in general.


One

The Back-ground

Brief history on the rise of MLE

A brief look at some of the factors that have helped to make MLE what it is today, focusing on how much of an impact black culture has on the UK.

Smiley Culture
The Rise?

David Victor Emmanuel, born in 1963 and raised in Stockwell, South London. Prior to his recording career he worked as a DJ with many of London's reggae sound systems, most often with the Saxon Studio International system, where he met and worked with a number of other reggae artists, including Maxi Priest, Papa Levi and Tippa Irie.

Signed to the London based reggae record label, Fashion Records, his first single "Cockney Translation" (1984) was a Jamaican's guide to the East End dialect – "Cockneys have names like Terry, Arfur and Del Boy/ We have names like Winston, Lloyd and Leroy." The song mixed cockney dialect with London's version of Jamaican patois, translating between the two. Simon Reynolds has often cited this song in his writings, arguing that it presaged the creation of a new hybrid accent in which white East Londoners would adopt many terms of black origin. This could be seen as the early stages of what would become Multicultural London English.

Hebdige (1990: 50-1) suggested that far from representing a commercial 'novelty', 'Cockney Translation' pointed up an important social one :

Smiley Culture was the beginning of a new generation of young black British MCs who spoke their way into a new sound and a new identity. "Cockney Translation" is about this process. [...] In the record, Smiley Culture seems to be two separate people. Although he is a Londoner he is also a black Londoner. He isn't a white, working-class cockney. But he isn't a rootsy Jamaican "yardy" either. He can speak both languages — Jamaican patois and cockney rhyming slang-but he doesn't fully belong in either camp. [...] He hops back and forth between the two roles when he needs to in order to keep out of trouble and earn a living.

Cockney

11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1,
It's I Smiley Cuulture with the mike in a me hand
Me come to teach you right and not the wrong
In a de Cockney Translation

Cockney's not a Language it is only a slang
And was originated yah so inna England
The first place it was used was over East London
It was respect for the different style pronunciation
But it wasn't really used by any and any man
Me say strictly con-man also the villain
But through me full up of lyrics and education
Right here now you a go get a little translation

Cockney have name like Terry, Arthur and del-boy
We have name like Winston, Lloyd and Leroy
We bawl out YOW! While cockneys say OI!
What cockney call a Jack's we call a Blue Bwoy
Say cockney have mates while we have spar
Cockneylive in a drum while we live in a yard
Say we nyam while cockney gwt capture
Cockney say guv'nor. We say Big Bout ya

In a de Cockney Translation!
In a de Cockney Translation!

Well watch a man
The translation of cockney to understand is easy
So long as you don't deaf and you listen me keenly
You should pick it up likea youth who find some money
Go tell it to your friends also your family
No matter if a English or a Yardy
Ca' you never when them might buck up a cockney
Remember warm dem dem deh man dem don't easy
Dem no fire sling shot a me say strictly double B
Dem run protection racket and control 'nuff C.I.D.

Say cockney fire shooter, We bus' gun
Cockney say tea leaf, We say sticks man
You know dem have wedge while we have corn
Say cockney say be first, my son! We just say Gwan!
Cockney say grass, We say outformer man
When dem talk 'bout iron dem really meam batty man
Rope chain and choparita me say cockney call tom
Say cockney say Old Bill, We dutty Babylon

In a de Cockney Translation!
In a de Cockney Translation!

Smiley

Traslation

Well watch a man
Slam bam
Jah man
Hear dam
Fashion
Smiley
Culture
Origiantion

But first let me tell you more about the cockney
Who live comfortably and have yacht by the sea
And when it come to money most of then have plenty
But where dum spend it? In de bookie
Lose it all on the dogs or on the gee gees
Or paying off fe dem bribes to the Sweeney
So dem nah go do no time fe no armed robbery
Or catching antthing that fell off the back of a lorry

Slam bam
Jah man
Hear dem
Fashion
Me strong
Me long
Me at the mike stand
More time
In a dance
Me chat
'Pon a sound

But sometimes me shake out and leave me home town
And that's when me travel a East London
Where I have to speak as a different man
So that the cockney can understand
So black man and white man hear dem fashion

Cockney say scarper, We say scatter
Cockney say rabbit, We chatter
We say bleach, Cockney Knackered!
Cockney say triffic, We say waaacked!

Cockney say blokes, We say guys
Cockney say Alright? We say Ites!
we say pants, Cockney say strides

Sweet as a nut
just level vibes. Seen?

Culture

Smiley Culture was seemingly the first songwriter to combine black and white slang. Yet there is still no suggestion of crossover. His whole point is difference, even if, if Hebdige's analysis is correct, Smiley Culture is demonstrating that one person can use both vocabularies as and when required. His delivery accentuated the very different speech rhythms of his two groups and as the singer pointed out, it was meant as a social tourist guide or, more practically, a survival mechanism.

Jonathon Green

Terry

Arthur

Del-boy

Winston

Lloyd

Leroy

GRIME
The New Sound

Friday night at Pals Bar & Brasserie in Croydon. A battle cry curdles through the venue. 'You doan wanna war wid whoo? War wid mweee!' MC D Double E lurches towards the crowd as he hits the mic. Bodies surge back towards him, smashing a low glass border in front of the DJ booth. Only minutes before office workers performed boozy slow dances around this suburban pub to chart hits. Now the energy in the room has turned. It's getting grime-y.

The crowd, now overwhelmingly young, black and male, is clued in and keyed up by the maddening noise blasting out of the PA - a mash of shuddering sub-bass, clattering beats and queasy synth-lines. D Double's microphone is feeding back like crazy. The shards of glass that have fallen inside the booth rattle in sympathy with the grinding percussive rhythm. This relentless assault and battery only serves to inflame the audience further. Hands primed like guns are thrust in the air to bust off imaginary shots in appreciation. Cigarette lighters and illuminated mobile phones are brandished like beacons. A mosh pit forms towards the edge of the dancefloor and several alarmed security guards wade in to break it up. But before they can the DJ, Danny Weed, spins back the track and kills the sound.

Chris Campion

Grime emerged from the inner city ghetto's of London (it has been said that it originated from Bow, East London but it is hard to pin point exactly where it was born) with its origins on UK pirate radio stations, such as Rinse FM, Deja Vu Fm, Freeze 92.7 & MajorFm. com were essential to the evolution of the genre. At this point the style was known by number of names, including "8-bar" (meaning 8 bar verse patterns), "Nu Shape" (which encouraged more complexed 16 bar and 32 bar verse patterns), "Sublow" (a reference to the very low bassline frequencies, often around 40 Hz), as well as "Eskibeat", a term applied specifically to a style initially developed by Wiley and his collaborators, incorporating dance and electro elements. This indicated the movement of UK Garage away from its House influences towards darker themes and sounds. Among the first tracks to be labelled "Grime" as a genre in itself were 'Eskimo' by Wiley and "Pulse X" by Musical Mob. Dizzee Rascal and Wiley are said to be among the first to bring the genre to the attention of the mainstream media in 2003-4.

Grime received exposure from television stations including Channel U (now known as Channel AKA), Logan Sama's show on London station Kiss FM, BBC Radio 1Xtra and various internet sources.

Grime, however, is a cross-pollinated genre, taking influences from a variety of different cultural styles as well as musical ones and is therefore still in many respects considered to be underground music, even after mainstream exposure.

It existed in a largely informal economy in which most artists made their debuts on independently-produced CD mixtapes.

Artists also received a lot of help from Pirates radio stations which kept the public up to date with the music.

Although Grime is recognised as a creative and innovative musical style, there are two sides to it's core, the genre comes with a lot of baggage.

While the government offers one point of view, the artists and listeners offer another. In an article by Jeff Chang in The Village Voice, Dizzee Rascal's often violent and sexual lyrics are heralded as "capturing, encapsulating, and preserving" the life that he and his peers live on the streets every day.

We've all grown up with a negative attitude forever, like we've just had a negative attitude, you get aressted, you get what I'm saying all that builds up and it makes you angry and cold hearted, and you think fuck everyone let me just concentrate on what I'm doing and not get involved in everyones dramas.

Wiley
(Roll Deep)

Anger, aggression and violence are only a few of the labels associated with Grime, it's lyrics, it's head on battles, it's heavy use of terms for killing, shooting and drugs, all participate in giving grime it's negative perceptions. Former minister Kim Howells made a statement in 2006 that Grime artists were helping to create a culture "where killing is almost a fashion accessory."

Grime is a major part of Multicultural London Englishes language develpoment, Grime broadcasts this language into the public sphere, thus making it more accessible, which in turn helps its migration and longevity.

MC's express themselves on the beats, talk about the their life, it's like our form of poetry.

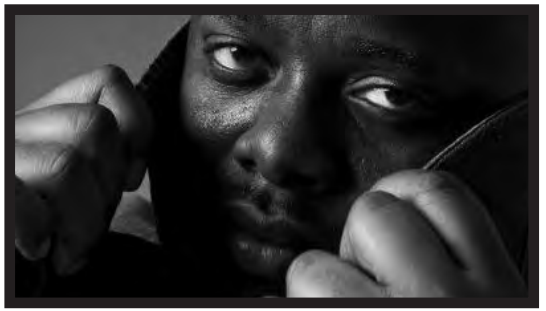
Terror Danjah (N.A.S.T.Y)

Grime has done a lot since Dizzee Rascal's Boy in Da Corner kicked in the doors of the mainstream a full 10 years ago. It rebuilt the concept of the British rapper from scratch, it has created megastars and restructured the British pop industry by allowing the children of a few square miles of London's council estates past the velvet rope and into the world of hyper-celebrity. Yet grime as music remains bizarrely indeterminate, and if you ask any five people in grime what it actually is, you will get six conflicting answers. Somehow, with labels such as Butterz, Hyperdub, Hardrive and Rinse taking its instrumentals to ever-bigger audiences, grime has avoided the ruts into which underground genres tend to settle.

Grime has always defined itself by its refusal of definition. It's a coming-of-age tale involving friendships, rivalry, violence, police persecution, the absorption of the scene's biggest names into the showbiz world, getting eclipsed by the sound's suburban first cousin, dubstep, and subtle but powerful changes to British cultural identity.

Grime watch: a decade of birth and renewal by Joe Muggs The Guardian.

"capturing, encapsulating, preserving"



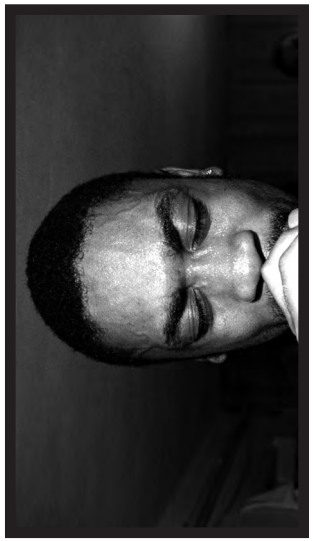
Terror Danjah

MLE

One

The Background

Grime



Wiley

Mr Wong

Ghettz

Scratchy

Crazy Titch

Bruza

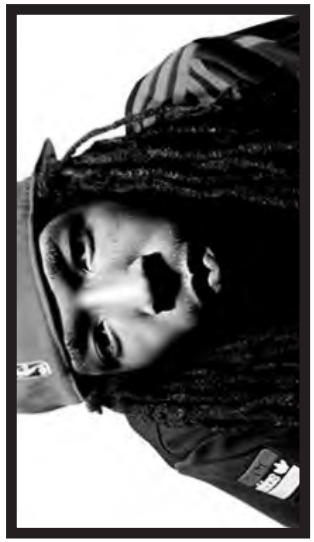
Dizzee Rascal

Kano

D Double E

Bashy

Nu Brand Flexx



Jammer

Daviche

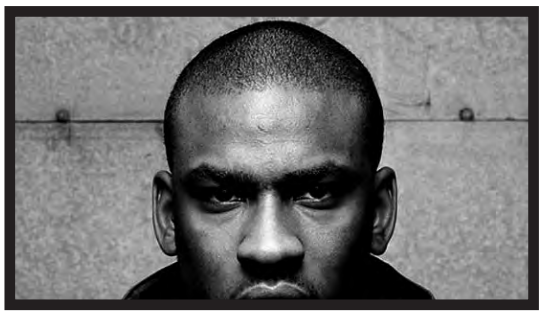
Footsie

Jendor

J2K

Big Narstie

P Money



Skepta

Trim

Big H

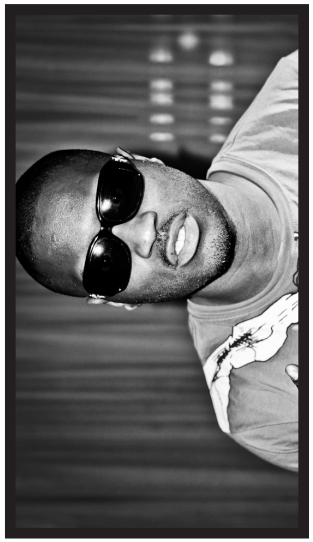
Durrty Goodz

Fumin

Lady Fury

Ozzie B

JME



Lethal Bizzle

Terror Danjah

I SAW YOU THAT TIME

YOU GOT BEAT BLACK AND BLUE THAT TIME

ON THE MIC YOU GOT SLUED THAT TIME

I'M ON THE STAGE YOU GOT BOOED THAT TIME.

Crazy Titch
I Can See You

BARE PEOPLE THINK
THEY'RE HEAVY LIKE METAL

SAY THEY'VE GOT DOUGH
BUT THEY AIN'T GOT A
SHEKEL

SEEN A BIG GASH THAT
LOOKS EFFED LIKE ETHEL

THEM MCS BETTER HIDE
BEFORE I SWITCH LIKE
JEKYLL

COOL AND SECKLE

D Double E
Frontline

I'LL RUN UP IN YOUR YARD
LIKE FEDS

AND LICK OUT HEAD BACK

EITHER YOUR MARGER,
SKINNY OR HENCH

MY FOUR FIVE BULLETS IS
WEDGE

ITS PAIN AND RAGE I'M VEX.

Big Narstie
100 Bars of Pain

YOU DON'T WANNA BRING
ARMSHOUSE

I'LL BRING ARMSHOUSE TO
YOUR MUM'S HOUSE

YOU DON'T WANNA BRING
NO BEEF

BRING SOME BEEF YOU'LL
LOOSE SOME TEETH

Demon
Pow! (Forward Riddim)

ROCKING WALLABIES LIKE
THE WU-TANG CLAN MAN

DEM WANNA PLAYA-HATE
US 'COS WE'RE NANG

MONITOR OUR LYRICS AND
RUNNING BARE SCAM

SEE MAN ON ROAD AND
YOU WANNA GET PRANG

More Fire Crew
Oi

I'M NOT THESE OTHER RAPPERS GASSIN' IN THE BOOTH

SOME MANDEM MOVING LIKE FASSIES TOWARD THE YOUTH

I JUST LET 'EM BUILD THE BEATS THE RASTA MAN SALUTE

CAUSE WHAT THEY GIVE ME'S FRESH LIKE A BAG OF FRUITS

THEY'VE GOT ME FEELING BLESSED LIKE I'VE WRAPPED A ZOOT

Durrty Goodz
Gunshot

I'M A WARHEAD, GUNSHOTS MY FIRST NAME

I KEEP THE STEAL PALMS, CLAP, WHEN THERE'S REAL ARMS

I WILL MURK MAN AND STILL STAY CHILL CALM

Big H
Practice Hours 2
Freestyle

Black culture has been dominant in what you call the 'counter culture' since WWII I would suggest, I think it its quite logical that beacuse its 'cool', well if you push cool out and say its rebellious, angry or whatever, or if you want to push it in the other direction well its creative, it makes music etc.

Whatever it is, that culture has been the one that has appealed to young people in my generation, in the generation before mine and I think in all generations, particularly those who want to move outside and would class themselves with a very small r, in my case as rebellious.

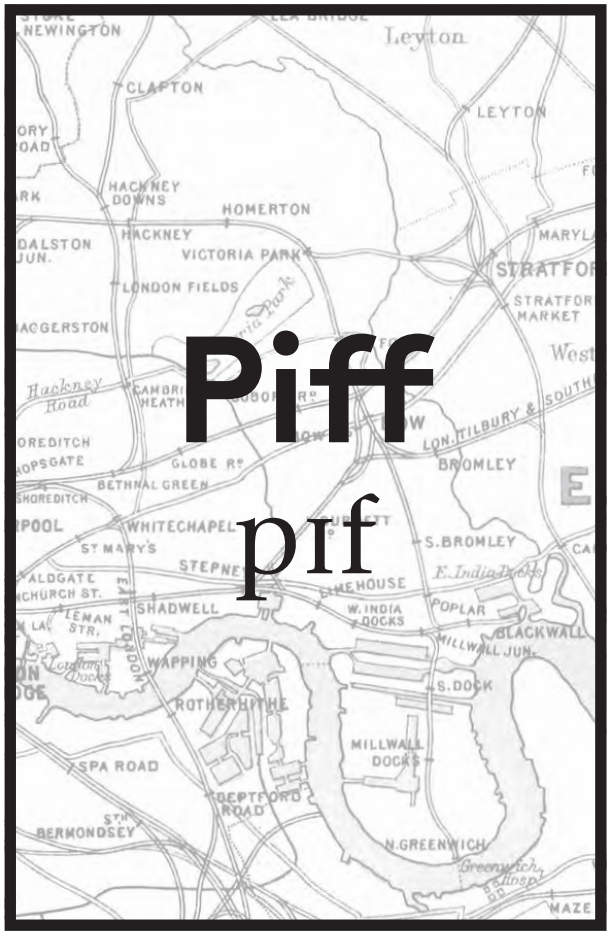
r

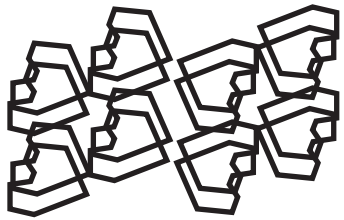
So why is Black culture so popular in the UK? Speaking for black speech there are many reasons. For hundreds of years the UK has been a melting pot for a wide assortment of cultures. After WWII Britain needed help to boost its economy, there were no longer enough hands to keep up with the pace of Britains advances, the government at the time started to look outside of the UK for assistance, the leading choice was the population of the islands of the West Indies. With them came the Caribbean languages, Jamaican patois and the begginings of what has now been coined 'MLE' was in it's infancy.

Music has and is continuing to play a huge role in colouring the inner city sound of London, from reggae to punk and two tone to grime they have all emerged from the amalgamation of cultures in and around the cities of the UK.

With technologial advances like the interent, television and radio certain aspects of black culture have been glamourised, be it by dripping in gold, owning flash cars and living a gangster lifestyle are some of the factors deeming it to be 'cool'.

To comment on what Jonathon has stated 'cool' and rebelliousness go hand in hand, creating a want in the young and impressionable.





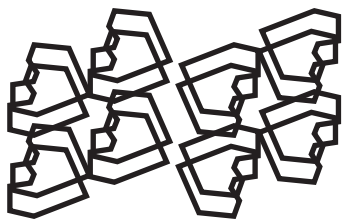
This is Piff!

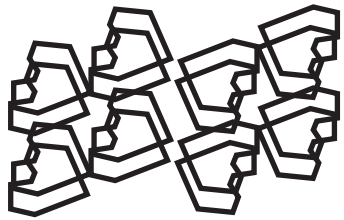
Oh my days! you are looking Piff today!

Oi, is that the Piff?!

Piff
[pif]

- **Attractive, above average, a strong strain of cannabis.**





Them ends are Raggo

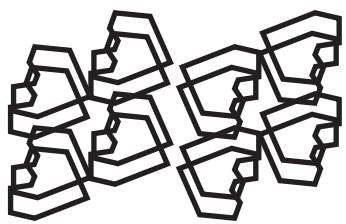
He's some Raggo Breh

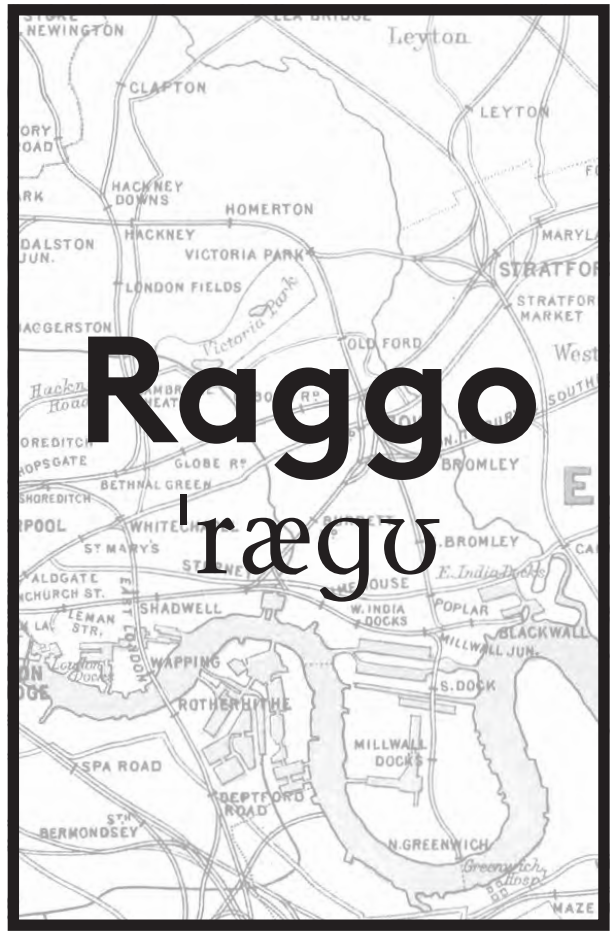
Naa that's Raggo

Raggo
[Ragow]

•

Extreme, out of control, bad



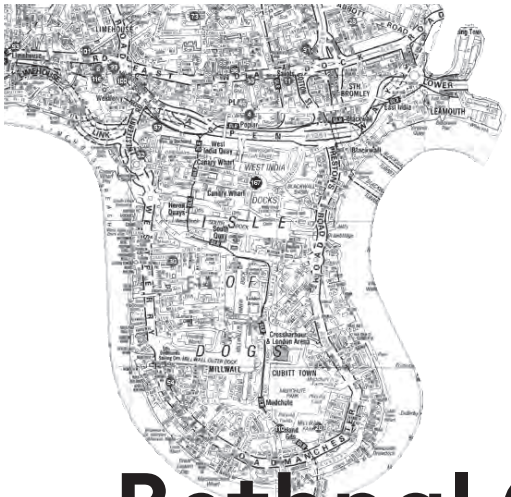



Two

The Place

Sense of place: Tower Hamlets

A photographic documentation of Tower Hamlets. From Bethnal Green to Whitechapel and everything inbetween.



Bethnal Green

-

Bow

-

Mile End

Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets is an Inner London borough at the heart of London's East End. Hackney lies to the north of the borough while the River Lee forms the boundary with the London Borough of Newham to the east. The boroughs of Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich lie to the south, across the Thames.

It was formed in 1965 as an amalgamation of the former metropolitan boroughs of Stepney, Poplar and Bethnal Green. The population of Tower Hamlets, in line with the rest of inner London, fell from 490,000 before the Second World War to around 140,000 in 1981. The population today stands at around 254,000.

One of the defining features of the area over time has been the way in which it has been an entry point into the UK for generations of migrants. Significant numbers of Huguenot refugees, Ashkenazi Jews, Irish weavers and, in the 20th Century, Bangladeshis have made their home in Tower Hamlets.

Tower Hamlets has one of the largest Bangladeshi communities in the country, at 81,000 or 32% of the population. The proportion of people who describe themselves as White British is 31%, which is low even for London.

Tower Hamlets has the second highest unemployment rate in London. Every ward has a higher proportion of people claiming out of work benefits than the London average. Problems are by no means confined to the economic - Tower Hamlets also has very high rates of long term illness and premature death.

Yet this is only half the picture. Tower Hamlets also has some of the highest paid people in London, working in the financial district of Canary Wharf, which has European headquarters for HSBC, Citibank and Barclays. The proportion of jobs in Tower Hamlets that are low paid is one of the smallest in the capital.


1-6 ACKROYD DRIVE
citywatch
WARNING
citi


NO BALL GAMES

The Place

Tower Hamlets


NEW TANDOORI


HSBC
citi


Stroudley Walk
as it could look from
here
SUPERSTORE


UKPC
NO UNAUTHORISED PARKING
NO BALL GAMES


BOW PFC
EAST INDIA
SERVICE
WASH & DRY YOUR DUVET HERE
SHIRT
SERVICE
SERVICE
WASHES


ILMA SUPERSTORE
RESH HALAL MEAT, FISH, POULTRY – FRUIT, VEG, & GROCERS
Tel:020 8980 5671
28A
OFF LICENCE
Bow Beauty
Salon
CLEANING

Tower Hamlets has the highest rate of child poverty in London. It is the second most deprived borough in London and is the third most deprived area nationally.

Children in Low Income Families	79%	
Breakdown of Children in Low Income Families	**In Work**	**Out of Work**
	27%	53%
Rannk of Local Authority	3	
Out of 354 - where 1 is the most deprived borough in England		
Number of Deprived Wards in the Borough	53 (out of 159)	

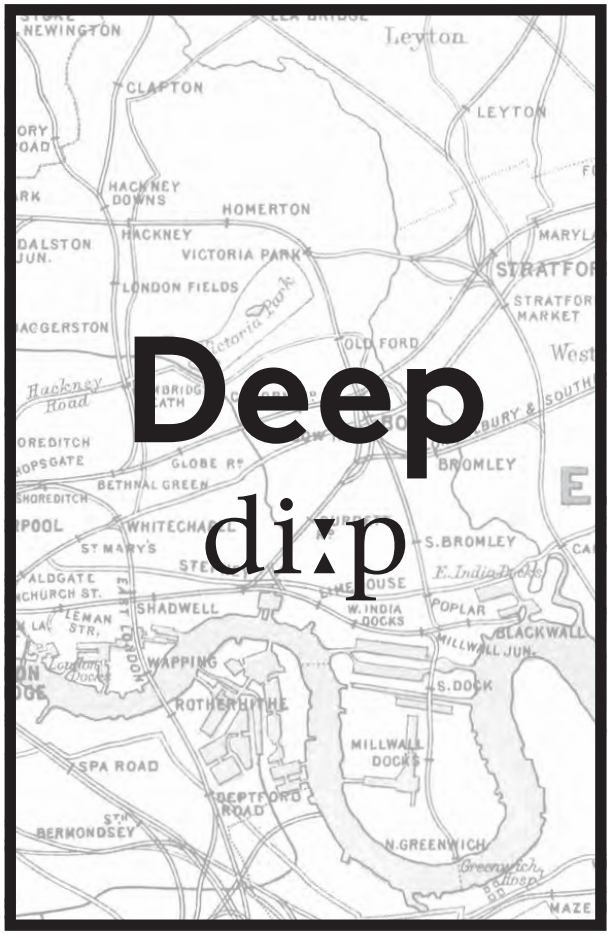
Poplar - Stepney - Whitechapel

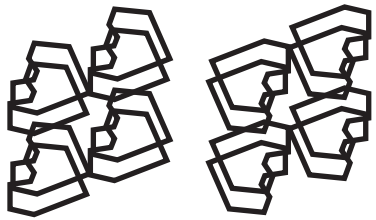
The advertisement of mental poverty?

Slang and the Dictionary, Tony Thorne

Most of us think that we recognise slang when we hear it or see it, but exactly how slang is defined and which terms should or should not be listed under that heading continue to be the subject of debate in the bar-room as much as in the classroom or university seminar. To arrive at a working definition of slang the first edition of the Bloomsbury Dictionary of Contemporary Slang approached the phenomenon from two slightly different angles. Firstly, slang is a style category within the language which occupies an extreme position on the spectrum of formality. Slang is at the end of the line; it lies beyond mere informality or colloquialism, where language is considered too racy, raffish, novel or unsavoury for use in conversation with strangers … So slang enforces intimacy. It often performs an important social function which is to include into or exclude from the intimate circle, using forms of language through which speakers identify with or function within social sub-groups, ranging from surfers, schoolchildren and yuppies, to criminals, drinkers and fornicators. These remain the essential features of slang at the end of the 1990s, although its extreme informality may now seem less shocking than it used to, and its users now include ravers, rappers and net-heads along with the miscreants traditionally cited.

There are other characteristics which have been used to delimit slang, but these may often be the result of prejudice and misunderstanding and not percipience. Slang has been referred to again and again as 'illegitimate', 'low and disreputable' and condemned by serious writers as 'a sign and a cause of mental atrophy' (Oliver Wendell Holmes), 'the advertisement of mental poverty' (James C. Fernal). Its in-built unorthodoxy has led to the assumption that slang in all its incarnations (metaphors, euphemisms, taboo words, catchphrases, nicknames, abbreviations and the rest) is somehow inherently substandard and unwholesome. But linguists and lexicographers cannot (or at least, should not) stigmatise words in the way that society may stigmatise the users of those words and, looked at objectively, slang is no more reprehensible than poetry, with which it has much in common in its creative playing with the conventions and mechanisms of language, its manipulation of metonymy, synechdoche, irony, its wit and inventiveness. In understanding this, and also that slang is a natural product of those 'processes eternally active in language', Walt Whitman was ahead of his time.





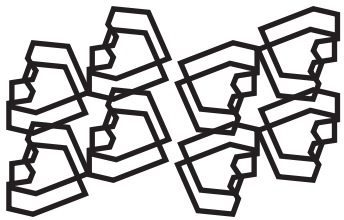
Deep
[deep]

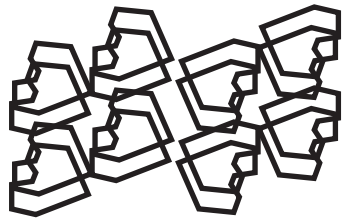
- **Mean, out of order or Good, above average or a number of people.**

That was Deep man, proper out of order!

This tune is Deep!

Them mana rollin' 9 man Deep!





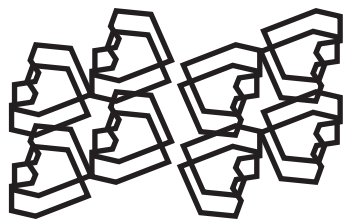
Oi that is Peng!

This spaghetti bolognaise is Peng!

He/she is well Peng!

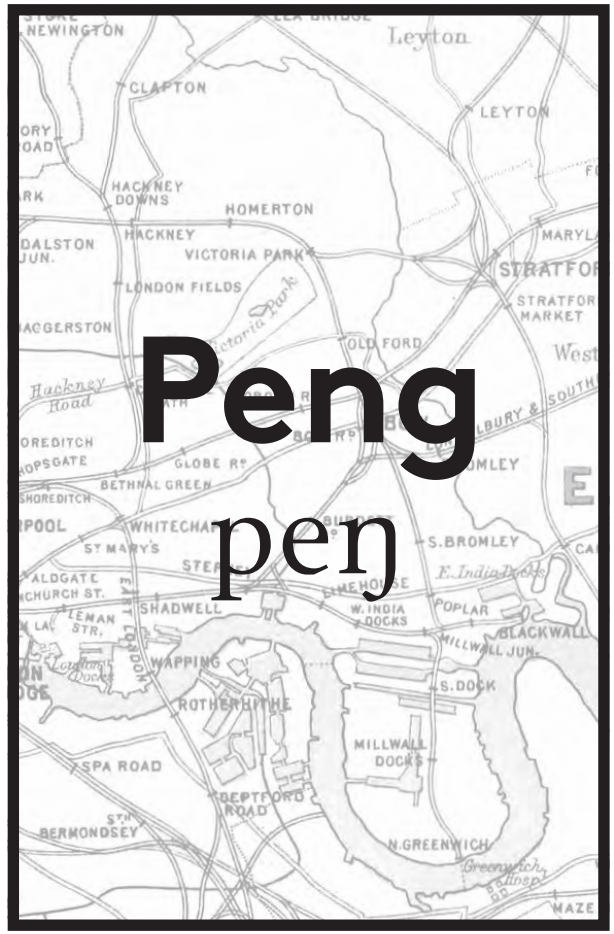
Peng
[peng]

- **Attractive, High quality, anything positive.**



The Place

Tower Hamlets




Three

The Experts

A *conversation* with Tony Thorne

Tony Thorne is a British author, linguist and lexicographer specialising in slang, jargon and cultural history. He is a leading authority on language change and language usage in the UK and across the anglosphere.

Slang is just one part of a very complex system of signs, a kind of semiotic repertoire that people have, young people esspecially like to play with it. It goes along with accessories, dress, even the way you stand, the way you gesture, the way you cut your hair all these sorts of things. It's all part of self presentation and performing your identity.

It's above all by the way you speak – by the way you pronounce the words of English, by the rhythms, the rises and falls of your voice (your stress, pitch and tone - ie your accent), and by your overall fluency or lack of it - whether in conversation or public speaking - that other people will judge you.

Do you think accents can affect the way people perceive others? How?

It's above all by the way you speak – by the way you pronounce the words of English, by the rhythms, the rises and falls of your voice (your stress, pitch and tone – ie your accent), and by your overall fluency or lack of it – whether in conversation or public speaking - that other people will judge you.

Just recently accent and pronunciation have emerged as a hot topic, part of our own increasing sensitivity to how we project ourselves, and of the drive by marketing and branding specialists to analyse the components of consumer identities in finer and finer detail.

At the time of writing there have been two more surveys into accents and attitudes towards them published within a week of one another; one, curiously enough, by an online casino group, the other, equally curiously, by a garden design company. Each has been publicised at length in the national media and, even more tellingly, has provoked heated public discussion on letters pages and websites.

People are acutely aware of, feel very strongly about their own and others' voices. They're keen to learn more about the processes involved in enunciating, pronouncing and articulating and keen to debate the social effects of the sequences of sounds produced.

Does speaking an urban dialect place you under the umbrella of 'the working class'?

I think the label 'working class' is outdated and doesn't relate clearly to the youth-oriented vernaculars that are significant today. A more controversial label is 'underclass' which can be and sometimes is applied to so-called chavs, gang members, the jobless and homeless and others. If you look at the actual terms used by the public and press to refer to urban dialects they include, for example, 'ghetto-speak', which certainly implies a subordinate, excluded group and 'Jafaican' which ridicules the speakers. Urban dialects are certainly –and probably understandably - identified with the street, the gang and perhaps the playground, and not with family life, school or work, therefore they are likely to be perceived as substandard and their users perceived as belonging to a marginal or underprivileged community.

Do you think the use of 'rough language' can encourage bad behaviour?

I don't think that the relationship between the language of sex, drugs and violence and the activities themselves is a perfectly straightforward one, but it must be significant that many of the teenage schoolkids that I have interviewed are very familiar with slang terms for stabbing, shooting, physically aggressing, humiliating, hating females, discriminating against minorities, taking illicit drugs and alcohol and engaging in sex. These terms are not just understood but have symbolic importance as they are fashionable and prestigious. It disturbs me that teenagers greet one another, for example, by saying 'Braap!' which imitates the sound of automatic gunfire. Slang is also by definition used particularly to talk about transgressive behaviour and about activities which speakers either want to keep secret or for which there may not be an adequate vocabulary in standard language. Slang is not only used for communication purposes –to exchange data - but for social purposes to reinforce relationships: solidarity, belonging, membership of an in-group, and to exclude outsiders. This means that sometimes it is used in different ways from normal language - words and phrases may be repeated, chanted, used ungrammatically, used like slogans, for example. This can seem alien and suggest – wrongly - that the language is crude, impoverished or deficient.

So nonstandard language such as slang or youth-identified vernacular is certainly part of a repertoire of performance, a pattern of behaviour which can include rebelliousness, anti-social attitudes, educational failure and even violence, crime and prejudice. It also plays an important part, though, in bonding, belonging, play and pleasure and identity-building.

'Bad' behaviour will always generate related language, and it's possible that familiarity with this language may tempt some otherwise innocent individuals to take part in the behaviour it refers to. This could be true for young people who hear jeering at ginger-haired people and join in or for older speakers such as university students who, constantly hearing the dozens of words for 'drunk' used on campus, might be less resistant to the attractions of communal intoxication. However, most of the young people who have told me about transgressive language don't seem to be indulging in transgressive behaviour and seem to understand the deliberately over-stated, sensationalist, mock-celebratory, symbolic role of this kind of terminology.

Is MLE a recognition of cross cultural integration? Do you think it could be a celebrated part of cultural identity?

Yes, in its place, MLE is a very interesting example of multiethnic communication and forms part of the multilingualism and multiculturalism that is increasingly being seen in the UK as something to examine, promote and celebrate, not merely treat with suspicion. I think it should be studied in schools rather than being banned.

Is language and word choice an important part of someone's identity?

Certainly! There is a consensus as to the principal functions of language such as slang in socialising processes and social interactions. The ability to understand and deploy slang is an important symbolic element in the construction and negotiation of individual and group identities, enabling bonding, affiliation and expressions of solidarity and engagement. It performs the important function for an in-group of providing a criterion for inclusion of members and exclusion of outsiders. It is at the same time a means (primarily but not only for younger speakers) of signalling 'coolness' and indulging in playfulness.

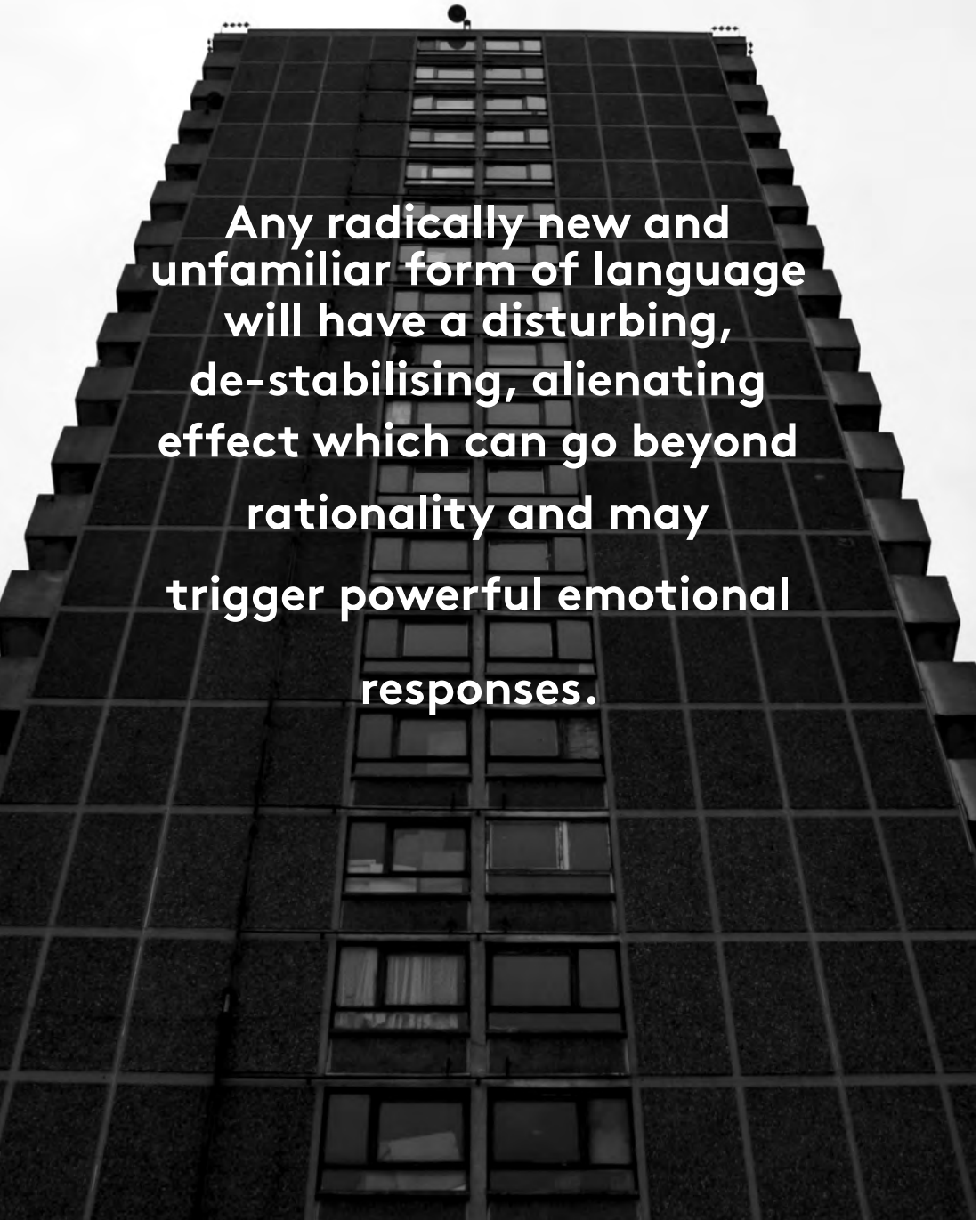
The slang vocabulary may be part of a self-referential system of signs, a semiotic repertoire of self-presentation or stylisation which can also include dress and accessorising, body-decoration, gesture, physical stance, etc. It therefore functions not only as a lexicon or linguistic resource but on an ideological level of affect (ie feelings, emotions), belief, etc.

MLE is seen as its own dialect or 'Multiethnolect' if you will, how do you think this shared dialect emerged?

I'm not personally sure if it is really a 'dialect' the word is a rather problematical one being sometimes very restrictive, sometimes fuzzy or elastic. It is a vocabulary and a phonological tendency which is hard to delimit exactly. It has obviously emerged as a shared form of communication usable for a speech community of widely differing backgrounds. It may turn out in the longer term to be, more than anything, a new accent, replacing local accents like 'Cockney' or more widespread ones like 'Estuary' and RP.

Is this evolution of the English language a good thing?

Linguists would probably avoid making this kind of value judgement about



language change of any kind. Looking at the question less pedantically it could be said that any linguistic innovation is interesting, therefore 'good' if it contributes to expanding and enriching a language rather than limiting it or simply feeding into it a new lexicon of discrimination, violence, etc.

There seems to be a vast amount of expression and emotion use in the MLE dialect, why do you think this is?

I don't think we can demonstrate objectively or scientifically that MLE involves more 'expressive' or 'emotional' expression than standard English – or than, for example, poetic or literary language. Those words are not terms easily usable by linguistics. But what we can say is that MLE vocabulary tends to be concentrated on activities which may involve strong feelings among its users: social stress, embarrassment, shame, jealousy, criticism of others, showing off, dating, romance, sex, violence, states of intoxication, etc. It is to talk about these particular facets of life that the language has been evolved, so it is likely to be used often perhaps in more forceful, emotive, provocative or argumentative ways than textbook or teacher's or parental English.

Is technology playing an important role in the evolution of certain Languages?

Technology mainly influences the sort of abbreviated codes used in electronic communications like texting, messaging and online, typically on social networking sites. These abbreviations and acronyms worry some people who think that their use is subverting correct English. Experts are divided on the issue, some pointing out that young people who use abbreviated codes and internet slang are often among the best communicators, the most literate of their peer-group or generation. Other educationalists, for example, have shown that text-speak and abbreviations are infiltrating formal writing and speech and that some young people are no longer aware of appropriate or correct usage.

Why do you think MLE has been so stigmatised by the press and RP speakers of the English language?

It is commonly identified with antisocial activities and gang crime, for example. It is also seen by many (mainly non-specialists) as symptomatic of a decline in public literacy and a flight from traditional notions of correct usage and strict observance of recognised standards. For older people especially, any radically new and unfamiliar form of language will have a disturbing, de-stabilising, alienating effect which can go beyond rationality and may trigger powerful emotional responses.

Can people's negative views on what MLE stands for become redeemable in the foreseeable future? (post riot etc)

I think if public debates, media attention and school teaching policy shifts towards seeing MLE as an interesting part of multiculturalism and linguistic diversity (see above) instead of something threatening and impoverished, a healthier public awareness will follow. Nevertheless, we can't completely ignore the very real links between some of this language and problematical behaviour.

The Follow up conversation

I wonder if you cauld talk more about this idea of 'underclass'?

I think one of the important things from me as a linguist, as a kind of professional linguist is that I have to hold two opposing concepts in my mind at the same time and I don't think that's a bad thing, I think that most people that are into any kind of philosophy or thinking have to cope with paradoxes, but I think there are two different things happening in slang especially in multiethnic youth language.

One: is that from a language point of view this language is fascinating and its doing things with the possibilities of English, the technical possibilities and the rhetorical possibilities of English which you know the same sort of thing that poetry and literature do, its innovating and its creative and its dynamic as a variety of language. So from a linguist point of view there's nothing deficient or defective about it, quite the reverse, it's a kind of very dynamic area of language to study and I'm always amazed that more linguists are not interested in it but you can see why they're not interested because of the other fact that I have to hold in my mind.

I've tended over the last few years to kind of celebrate it, defend it, describe it in positive terms but I can completely understand why old aged pensioners, parents, teachers, law enforcement agents, youth workers can be worried about it because it is a symbol, it's a very audible visible symbol of anti social behaviour, breakdown in social cohesion, it symbolises these things to these people and as a linguist I cant dismiss that side of it, you know the kind of emotional reactions people have to this kind of language but that's where I think the under class thing comes in or working class which I don't like.

I always remember I used it interview chavs and I remember talking to chavs you know people who would use the word about themselves and saying you know do you consider yourself working class? And I remember one of them saying 'we don't fucking work.' It's a kind of out-dated label for me which applies to the old fashioned proletariat like factory workers but I think under class or marginal underclass is what I think some people identify this kind of language with and of course its absolutely true. I interview people from street gangs, well not very often manage to get among street gangs for obvious reasons but I do sometimes but more often talking to the kids who are their brothers and sisters, or who go to school with them and who hang out with them in these areas, the kids who tell me about their language and you know the kind of people that Lindsay johns has been working with.

I think for them what he says is probably true that they are deprived verbally, intellectually and again linguists talk about literacy, literacy is the key word, because literacy is just reading it's the whole way of being able to understand and use language and I think those kids probably are 'ghettoised' and the language is reinforcing for them their 'ghettoisation' because it marks them out against mainstream society but they're a small minority, most kids who use slang are perfectly able to code switch.

Most of the kids I've interviewed over the years very often the ones who are interested in slang and I usually have to kind of activate them they often haven't thought about it, they use it they play with it and some of them are interested in it but they often haven't been able to talk to a teacher or a linguist about it and when I kind of activate them, the ones who are into slang are often most articulate and definitely not the intellectually deficient ones.

So again there is nothing inherently bad about slang and you know all the clichés, the jargon that we use like 'appropriacy' which is a horrible word, it's a word that linguists invented that didn't exist before, it should be appropriateness. Appropriacy – simply using the right language in the right context, and code switching, code switching is a lot of different things it can be just jumbling up different languages in the same sentence, like Indians have been doing for years, using bits of Hindi and bits of English in the same sentence but code switching can also be switching from formal to informal English, like when you go into a job interview... and most of the young people I've worked with are pretty good at this even if they don't know what it's called, I have to tell them what linguists call it – 'code switching' and 'appropriacy' and they understand that its common sense that you don't use slang in a job interview.

So on the one hand I'm not trying to play down the kind of controversial social issues but on the other hand slang is just one part of a very complex system of signs, a kind of semiotic repertoire that people have, and especially young people like to play with, it goes along with accessories, dress, even the way you stand, the way you gesture, the way you cut your hair all these sorts of things, its all part of self presentation and its all part of performance, performing your identity.

I don't link this jargon very much but that's the jargon that people are using, so slang or language is one part of that and I think it's really interesting. I have just been preparing some stuff on pronunciation and I wasn't aware myself how much an issue this has become with ordinary people, you can see it online and in discussions, people in general, not just young people but adults are becoming very much more self aware of how they project themselves and you can see this, its from consumerism, consumerism capitalism, because marketing now profiles people in a very very exact way, trying to drill down into this data mining etc. The people are much more aware of how they present themselves socially and psychologically and language is a really crucial part of that, maybe the most crucial, even if you were naked and your hairs been shaved you still speak and people will still judge you by how you speak so its an absolutely crucial part of that whole repertoire of self presentation.

There's a couple of other things, although I'm a kind of academic or semi academic I also have a kind of suspicious hostile attitude in many ways to academic theory because often it abstracts things which are possible to understand purely by common sense via observation. Just a couple of other terms you should be aware of one is 'enregisterment' it's a horrible word, its another one that's been inadequately translated from French, its from French literary theory. Enregisterment is actually how you project your identity into an existing image, which is created mainly by language, by discourse, language and image, It's to do with modern ideas of rhetoric and performance.

Another word is 'stylisation' in its theoretical from not just stylishness, but adopting a discourse and an image within in an existing stylistic repertoire but that's what's happening, those are the highly theoretical ways of talking about this if you want to mention them in passing. Enregisterment is a recent concept, its one of these concepts that's made far to difficult by the language used by academics, like in acting

and performing they use these words deliberately in obscure ways, that's what its all about. The other thing is People have talked about MLE as a dialect, the word dialect itself is a kind of loose term in linguistics the reason is that Paul Kerswill for example is a dialectician, that's his area, so he's approaching it from a dialect perspective and as I also said I suspect that MLE in the way Pauls talking about it is more likely to have a long term impact on the language 'if it does' is to early say, its more likely to be like estuary, its more likely to be a phonological change and a change in accent and intonation you can already hear this.

I was in an insurance company the other day and there was a young guy, I don't know what his ethnicity was but he was explaining insurance to an old aged pensioner, he had this accent, 'you noe lyke he talked lyke that' but it was fine because he was highly educated, she understood what he was saying, she had a London accent he had this accent and you could hear the differences, but as far as the vocabulary which I'm into, I study lexis in the widest sense but suspect a lot of the lexis, common sense reasons is about dating, sex, violence things that you're not likely to take into an insurance company, so I think that the lexis of MLE may not persist so much into adult life, so it may still be a sign like other youth slangs in the past have been of a kind of phase but again there's this whole question of youth, even really old people like me who are baby boomers from the sixties we still identify psychologically with an idea of youth even if chronologically there's no way we can claim to be young but were not ready if you like to embrace the traditional ideas of phases of growing up, this applies again to language. Among my friends I probably do use kind of embarrassing dated slang from our student days like 'far out' and things like that.

There's this whole question of how far the division of youth and age has blurred now, and that also could mean that MLE may persist. Ben Rampton who works at kings college who done all this work on crossing, he has written at least one article where he is trying to claim that he's detected signs of what he calls 'urban heteroglossia' or 'urban vernaculars' he's seen signs of older people in their thirties still using it. This is a conversational analysis that he does, there are possibilities that it isn't just a phase of adolescence, this sort of language maybe something more than that, again you come up against this barrier how can you have MLE if your talking about insurance details it just isn't an appropriate 'register' another word that linguists use it's the wrong 'register' because insurance is technical register, legal register and formal register and MLE isn't, its none of those things. This is again why it can be identified with all those marginal, antisocial, casual areas of life that older people don't want to take seriously.

Its interesting also that I live in teddington which is near Richmond and I've got a nephew that lives in Richmond who comes from a very rich family, he talks like this, he's never been near a ghetto in his life. But also you're right it's very much a badge associated with a certain age group, a certain milieu. Its like when parents try to imitate teenage slang, its embarrassing, it doesn't work.

I have a lot foreign students who come to London and they want to learn this especially Germans and Scandinavians because they speak very good English but you cant do it, its very difficult if your not actually part of that culture, you can imitate if your British and adept.

Adults don’t seem don’t seem to be using slang as much as they used to, they tend to use kind of media language that they’ve got from the daily mail or the telegraph or from watching reality tv shows. They don’t seem to be originating interesting slang, the police still use it, criminals still use it, I’ve interviewed London criminals and the ones over the age of thirty are still using a very kind of archaic London working class, real working class criminal slang they’re not using MLE because they are too old, so there is a generation gap.

I have a real problem with the term 'Jafaican' as it labels people who speak in this way as fake. Why has this term become so fixed to this way of speaking?

It started out as a genuine piece of slang itself from the same time as wigger but I think the fact is that its purely journalistic, it’s a term that the tabloids have got hold of like a dog with a bone and I don’t like it at all. I’ve spent a lot of time looking at online discussions about this and the other thing that’s its often called is ‘ghetto-speak’ that’s what a lot of adults who are very hostile to it call it, the other thing of course is that language does raise very strong emotions its quite amazing, you may have seen some of these discussions older people just get really really irate about this kind of language, obviously there’s something deeper, they feel threatened by it I think. It’s their own identity’s being threatened, what they think they understand.

The other big thing I think the answer to everything is to teach about it, to discuss it, in a way that’s what Lindsay johns is doing with those kids he’s mentoring, he tries to teach them to learn fancy words, first sight I thought this is a bit ridiculous, if they are in the ghetto what are they going to do with words like ‘ubiquitous’ and ‘ephemeral’ which are two of the words he made them learn, I can see what he’s doing. I’ve always found it really good to discuss this language with people who use it or don’t use it, again its common sense, instead of banning it or disapproving it if you treat it as a kind of case study for analysis then everybody learns more and get more relaxed about it, other people like Dan Clayton and st francis Xavier college, he had a blog called SFX, Dan was one of the people who when this was still very controversial was teaching about this, he and I both found that it was a really good way of teaching people about language and communication and semiotics and also a way of getting them to objectify the way they use language so they weren’t feeling unsure or paranoid about the language they use.

There are a couple of amusing things you may be aware of, there are lists of granny slang which have been published partly as a joke as a guide for young people, on words like bloomers and half cut these are words that grannies use that young people hear, apparently to some young people are as weird as slang is to older people. You know the group Saga who deal with over fifties insurance and holidays, they have a app which is supposed to teach pensioners what young people are talking. Its basically a list of teen slang terms and MLE. So this idea of an intergenerational gulf of language and intergenerational misunderstanding

There is a cosensus as to the principal functions of language such as slang in socialising processes and social interactions. The ability to understand and deploy slang is an important symbolic element in the construction and negotiation of individual and group identities, enabling bonding, affiliation and expressions of solidarity and engagement. It performs the important function for an in group of providing a criterion for inclusion of members and exclusion of outsiders. It is at the same time a means (primarily but not only for younger speakers) of signalling 'coolness' and indulging in playfulness. It functions not only as a lexicon or linguistic resource but on an ideological level of affect (ie feelings, emotions), belief, etc.

Togetherness and a need for a sense of belonging has been part of what it is to be human since the dawn of our time. Anything that functions to create unified expression through behaviour, speech and image are essential parts of this. Slang is an expression of these factors which signifies what it is to be affiliated with an in group or social circle.

Socialising

Symbolic

Identity

Affiliation

Solidarity

Inclusion

Exclusion

Affect

Register

In linguistics, a register is a variety of a language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting. For example, when speaking in a formal setting, an English speaker may be more likely to adhere more closely to prescribed grammar, pronounce words ending in -ing with a velar nasal instead of an alveolar nasal (e.g. "walking", not "walkin'"), choose more formal words (e.g. father vs. dad, child vs. kid, etc.), and refrain from using contractions such as ain't, than when speaking in an informal setting.

*bench-level register
Register of terms used in applications-oriented as opposed to theoretical or academic levels of language.

*dialect register
Register that is specific to a dialect.

*facetious register
Register related to an expression that is intended to be clever and funny but that is really silly and annoying.

*formal register
Register used in a formal setting.

*in house register
Register of terms that are company-specific and not readily recognized outside this environment.

*ironic register
Register for irony.

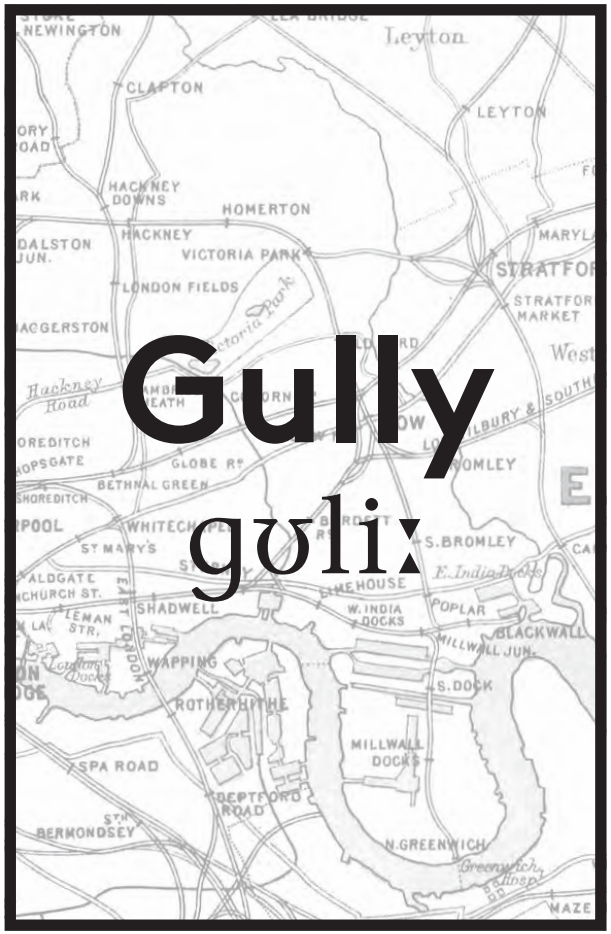
*neutral register
The register appropriate to general texts or discourse.

*slang register
An extremely informal register of a word, term, or text that is used in spoken and everyday language and less commonly in documents.

*taboo register
Register that expresses a situation that people avoid because it is extremely offensive or embarrassing.

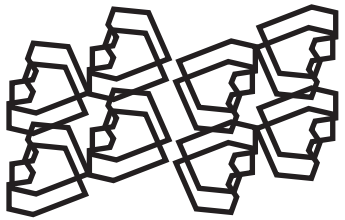
*technical register
The register appropriate to scientific texts or special languages.

*vulgar register
Register of a term or text type that can be characterized as profane or socially unacceptable.



Gully

gʊlɪː



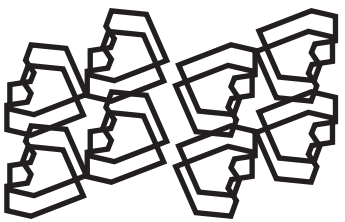
You ain't Gully!

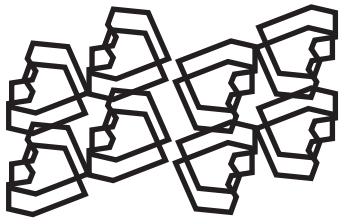
Yeah man that's Gully!

Them ends are Gully don't be rollin' through there!

Gully
[guhl-ee]

- **Rough, cool, a positive.**





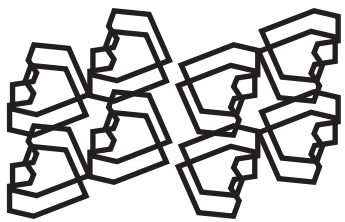
Mad Peak!

Nah man that was Peak!

Peak times!

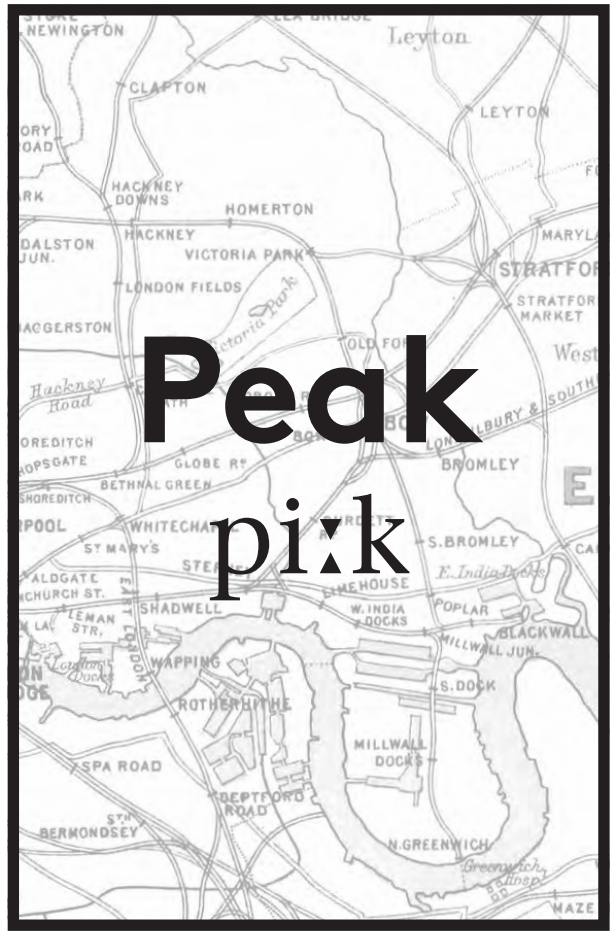
Peak
[peek]

- **Bad luck/situation, above your comfort zone, crazy.**



The Experts

Tony Thorne




Four

The Articles

A collection of sources

A collection of articles, press and internet sources, followed by selected quotes, highlighting the overall media perception of MLE.

Articles

Jafaican: "Ali G Would Understand it Perfectly"

http://bridgingtheunbridgeable.com/tag/multicultural-london-english/

In recent years, linguists across Europe have described new language varieties spoken by young people living in multicultural and multilingual communities of large cities. In Germany the variety is referred to as Kiezdeutsch ("neighbourhood German"), in Norway as kebabnorsk ("kebab Norwegian"), in the Netherlands as straattaal ("street language"). Professor Paul Kerswill gave a talk yesterday at Lancaster University on the UK print media representations of the London multiethnolect, Jafaican ("fake Jamaican"). The innovative features of Jafaican include, most prominently, pronunciation, vocabulary and non-standard spelling. A stereotypical utterance thus produced by a speaker of Jafaican would be, "Raaass man, me gwan me yard see me babymother/babyfather", or in plain English, "I'm off home to my better half".

According to Kerswill, there are two sides of the coin when it comes to media reception of Jafaican. The variety is often stigmatised and related to "bad social practices", such as teenage abortions, stabbings and gun crime. David Starkey (in)famously related Jafaican to the 2011 riots, and, more generally, to the violent, nihilistic gangster youth culture on the rise. Right-wing populists even warn of the "dangers" of Jafaican as a potential replacement of its native British counterpart, Cockney.

More positively, many describe Jafaican as a product of natural language change, and even as cool, contemporary and classless. The London-based magazine, Time Out, humorously included Jafaican among the three dialects of London English (next to Estuarine and Mockney). The TripLingo app, a tool for deciphering slang in a number of languages, included Jafaican in the TripLingo (2012 Olympics) UK edition.

Although speakers of Jafaican have little awareness of the impact of their variety and of its exact place among the London speech communities, Jafaican seems to be opening a range of discourses. How do people establish relationships between language and social practices? What is the nature of the "backwash effect" of minority languages on the majority language? And, more generally, what is the future of multicultural language varieties? Kerswill's research doubtlessly provides plenty food for thought.

Posted on January 25, 2013 by Morana Lukač

Cockneys Have Become First British Group to be Ethnically Cleansed

http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/cockneys-have-become-first-british-group-be-ethnically-cleansed

The Cockney culture and language has been ethnically cleansed from London's East End as mass Third World immigration has pushed white people into minority status and destroyed the world-famous accent. According to an analysis of demographic figures — which are already several years out of date — white British people make up as less than 40 percent of the population in the areas of London traditionally associated with Cockneys.

Furthermore, the world famous Cockney accent and rhyming slang has already been completely replaced amongst the younger age groups in the region as they form the overwhelming majority of that population. True Cockney, a dialect more than 500 years old, is now spoken only by the elderly in London and will, a study recently showed, be completely extinct within 30 years. Cockney is being replaced by what is politely called "Multicultural London English" or LME for short. LME is also known as "Jafaican" which is a combination of Jamacian, African and Asian.

Traditionally, people born within earshot of the bells of the church of St. Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside, London, were classified as true Cockneys. The original bells of the church, named the "Bow Bells" after the stone arches, or 'bows,' of a church, called St Mary de Arcubus which was built on the site following the Norman Conquest of 1091.

Richard Wittington became Mayor of London in 1392, and legend has it that he returned to London when he heard the Bow Bells as he was about to leave the city. One of the earliest written references of the bells dates back to 1469, when it was recorded that they were rung a 9pm every evening. The first written reference to an association between the people living in the area and the bells dates to 1600, when the poem 'The letting of humours blood in the head-vaine' by Samuel Rowland appeared. The line in question read "I scorne ... To let a Bowe-bell Cockney put me downe."

The original bells were destroyed along with the building in the Great Fire of London of 1666, and have been recast twice since then, the last time in 1956. Apart from the world famous accent, which foreigners still strongly identify with England and London, other aspects of Cockney culture have become icons in their own right.

The 'Pearly Kings and Queens' for example, became tourist attractions. They originated amongst market costermongers who decorated their clothes with pearl buttons to differentiate themselves from regular traders.

The 'kings' were elected from within those traders to protect their rights from marketplace rivals, but by the second half of the 20th century, the Pearly Kings and Queens had assumed a more symbolic and charitable role, devoting their time to raising funds for good works. Nowadays, Pearly Kings and Queens are increasingly rare sights, even in tourist-drenched London.

Cockney characters were so powerful that they found their way into major entertainment works, varying from 19th century music hall performers such as Marie Lloyd and Albert Chevalier to major fiction works such as Bill Sykes (from Dickens's 'Oliver Twist'), Eliza Doolittle (George Bernard Shaw's 'Pygmalion') and others.

The traditional areas in which the Cockney culture originated was the areas of Bethnal Green, Whitechapel, Hackney (which includes Hoxton and Shoreditch), Blackwall, Bow, Bow Common, Bromley-by-Bow, Cambridge Heath, Canary Wharf, Cubitt Town, Docklands, East Smithfield, Fish Island, Globe Town, Isle of Dogs, Leamouth, Limehouse, Mile End, Millwall, Old Ford, Poplar, Ratcliff, St George in the East, Shadwell, Spitalfields, Stepney, and Wapping. Almost all of these areas today fall under the reach of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which according to the 2001 census, had a white British population of 42.9 percent.In the intervening ten years, the white British population has dropped dramatically through a process of white flight and mass Third World immigration, with current estimates claiming that whites no make up less than one-third of the population.

According to the study "Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety," by Sociolinguistics Professor Paul Kerswill at Lancaster University, this demographic change will cause the Cockney accent to disappear from London's streets within 30 years. "Cockney in the East End is now transforming itself into Multicultural London English, a new, melting-pot mixture of all those people living here who learnt English as a second language," Prof Kerswill was quoted as saying.

So ends 500 years of history, culture and tradition: wiped out by less than 30 years of mass immigration. The evidence is clear: mass immigration will lead to the ethnic cleansing of Britain's indigenous peoples.

The Cockney's fate is the same one awaiting all of Britain, and indeed, of Europe, unless the insanity and unfairness of current immigration trends are not only halted, but reversed. May we pray that the Cockneys are the last victims of this evil process.

‘Jafaican’ May be Cool, But it Sounds Ridiculous

http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/edwest/100091088/jafaican-may-be-cool-but-it-sounds-ridiculous/

By Ed West Politics Last updated: June 7th, 2011

I was surprised a few years ago to hear an acquaintance more Left-wing than me (admittedly that’s not saying much) saying he was moving out of London because he’d just had kids and “didn’t want them growing up talking like Ali G”.

And Paul Weller said the same thing in an interview with the Telegraph a few years later, about his choice of school for his kids, although perhaps having mixed-race children made him feel bolder about facing any accusation of racism.

And I don’t think an aversion to Jafaican (fake Jamaican), which according to the Sunday Times (£, obviously) will have completely replaced Cockney by 2030, is racial. The West Indian accent from which it came is fairly pleasant, nice enough for various drink makers to use it to flog us their products. However, its by-product is rather unpleasant, sinister, idiotic and absurd.

Imagine that an Englishman were to start speaking in an inexplicable French or German accent – people would probably take the trouble to wind down their car windows to shout abuse at him. Yet enough people talk with an affected West Indian accent for it to become an accent, Jafaican, partly thanks to Radio One’s Tim Westwood, and despite the Sacha Baron-Cohen character, Ali G, mocking the phenomenon.

It’s unusual for a small minority to actually change a city’s accent, in this case one that is supposed to date back to the time of Chaucer (although how similar a cokenay of that time would have sounded to modern-day cockneys is hard to know). The only previous British accent to have been significantly changed by immigration is Scouse, which took on a distinctive Irish sound in the late 19th-century, but the Irish made up well over of a third of the city. West Indians are barely 10 per cent of the London population.

Multiculturalism probably played a part. Jafaican’s rise may have been accelerated by the 1975 Bullock Report into education, “A Language for Life”, which heralded the start of multiculturalism in the classroom. It recommended that “No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, and the curriculum should reflect those aspects of his life”, and recommended that teachers were expected to have an understanding of Creole dialect “and a positive and sympathetic attitude towards it”.

Never mind that speaking Creole would not have been much of an advantage for a young black kid trying to get on in London; there seems to have been a general approach in teaching that accents were authentic and should not be ironed out.

And the replacement of Cockney with Jafaican may reflect something more profound. Accents and fashions display underlying insecurities and cultural aspirations; the rise of Received Pronunciation reflected a desire by the lower-middle class and provincials to embrace the values, lifestyles and habits of the British upper-middle class. In London the adoption of Jafaican, even among the privately-educated, reflects both a lack of confidence in British cultural values and an aspiration towards some form of ghetto authenticity.

Anyway, what are house prices in North Yorkshire like at the moment?

Multicultural London 'Oo'

http://dialectblog.com/2011/11/03/multicultural-london-oo/

Posted on November 3, 2011 by Ben Trawick-Smith

One of English's most rapidly evolving dialects is what is known as Multicultural London English (MLE). In a nutshell, MLE is a 'young' dialect (one might mark the birthday cutoff at 1970) that incorporates elements of Caribbean English and other 'non-native' influences. Although it is associated with Britons of African descent, it is spoken by inner-city Londoners of many ethnicities.

In some ways, MLE reverses the direction London English has been traveling for the past century. For an idea of what I'm talking about, watch this interview with hip hop artist Dizzee Rascal, a well-known speaker of MLE:

There is something clearly 'London' about this young man's speech, yet he hardly speaks 'classic Cockney.' What is striking here are the diphthongs:

*In Cockney, the vowel in 'face' shifts toward the /ai/ in 'price.' In MLE, this vowel is the opposite: it's more of a monophthong or close diphthong (IPA [e] or [ei]).
*In Cockney, the vowel in 'price' shifts toward the /oy/ in 'choice.' In MLE, the vowel becomes more of a monophthong, as in American Southern or some Northern English accents: (IPA [a:]).

*In Cockney, the vowel in 'goat' moves towared the /au/ in 'mouth.' In MLE, this vowel is more of a monophthong or close diphthong (IPA [o] or [ou]).

Yet in one respect, Multicultural London English does not reverse Cockney trends. That would be in regards to words like 'goose,' 'food' and 'you,' which in most London accents is pronounced with a central or nearly front vowel. Not only does MLE participate in this forward shift, it actually seems to push this vowel further front than other types of London English (as per the study cited below).

Why is this vowel so typically 'London' when most other vowels of MLE are different from Cockney? Linguist Jenny Cheshire (et al.) explored this question in her Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: The emergence of Multicultural London English*. She found that MLE speakers seem to acquire many features of this dialect very early on in their childhood, the one exception being the fronting of 'goose,' which appears to slowly emerge during adolescence.

Remarkably, something similar is happening 5400 miles away. Linguist Carmen Fought found that speakers of Chicano English in California** (that is, English spoken by Mexican-Americans) also participates in the fronting of 'goose' typical of other Californians. As is the case with MLE, this is notable for how it goes against the dialect's 'non-native' influence: the Spanish language typically has only a fully back /u/ sound.

So why is this one sound pronounced so 'locally' in these ethnolects?

*Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S., & Torgersen, E. (2011). Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: The emergence of Multicultural London English. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 15, 151-196.

**Fought, C. (1999). A majority sound change in a minority community: /u/-fronting in Chicano English. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 3, 5-23.

Multicultural London English is Not "Jafaican"

http://dialectblog.com/2011/06/08/jafaican/

Posted on June 8, 2011 by Ben Trawick-Smith

The Telegraph's Ed West recently published an editorial titled Jafaican may be cool but it sounds ridiculous, that I find appalling. I respect West for having politics different from my own, but that's no excuse for slandering a legitimate dialect of English in such a shoddy, clueless manner.

Jafaican is slang for Multicultural London English, a dialect spoken in the inner city of London which has a fair amount of Carribean influence thanks to the city's West Indian population. The accompanying accent is marked by vowels that are more "conservative" than those in Cockney or other types of London English.* This makes "Jafaican" speakers coincidentally sound more like Northern English accents to my American ears, although I admit this is totally impressionistic.

Let's get right to the meat of West's piece, though, with this paragraph:

And I don't think an aversion to Jafaican (fake Jamaican), which according to the Sunday Times (£, obviously) will have completely replaced Cockney by 2030, is racial. The West Indian accent from which it came is fairly pleasant, nice enough for various drink makers to use it to flog us their products. However, its by-product is rather unpleasant, sinister, idiotic and absurd.

Anybody who appears to only associate Carribean English with cheerful Jamaican bartenders doesn't strike me as the best source of sociolinguistic commentary. But that doesn't stop West, who summarizes his thesis thus:

... the rise of Received Pronunciation reflected a desire by the lower-middle class and provincials to embrace the values, lifestyles and habits of the British upper-middle class. In London the adoption of Jafaican, even among the privately-educated, reflects both a lack of confidence in British cultural values and an aspiration towards some form of ghetto authenticity.

West's argument, such as it is, is that there is something troubling about such a small "minority" (West Indians) wielding a powerful influence over London's dialect. Of course, Cockney itself was most likely influenced by such minorities, but I'll let that quibble slide for now. What's more troubling is that West implies that one non-standard dialect of English (Cockney) is authentically British, while relegating another non-standard dialect of English (Multicultural London English) to some kind of "semi-foreign" status. Which is frankly xenophobic hypocrisy.

Furthermore, West doesn't expand upon his specific objections to "Jafaican." Does he have a problem with how West Indians have impacted the pronunciation of English in London? If so, I hate to break it to him, but pronunciation in London English has been known to change over the past thousand years. Even the most conservative of Cockney is quite different in 2011 than it would have been in Dicken's time.

On the other hand, if West objects to Multicultural London English from a prescripitivist grammarian standpoint, then why does Cockney = good, while Jafaican = bad? Cockney ain't no model of standard grammar. (Not that there's anything wrong with that.)

Perhaps I'm misinterpreting West's point, though, which is that in the "old days" the lower-classes strove "upward" toward RP, whereas now they stive "downward" toward these Caribbean-influenced varieties. But "covert prestige" dialects (i.e. dialects that are technically lower on the social scale but adopted by higher classes for a variety of reasons) are nothing new. Let's not pretend that middle-class young men trying to sound like they grew up working-class is a recent phenomenon.

So, then, West objects to this specific dialect of English for reasons that are unclear. This isn't a writer bravely fighting against an increasingly "PC" world. It's just an ignorant rant.

*The details are as follows, for those with a bit more knowledge of phonetics: the GOAT set is further back and sometimes more monopthongal in quality than in Cockney, the STRUT vowes is also more back, the onglide of KITE fronter and possibly more monophthongal as well, the FACE dipthong is closer, the MOUTH dipthong often becomes a centralized monopthong, but, going in the opposite direction from these pronunciations, the GOOSE vowel is often FRONTER than other London accents.

Starkey's "Norman Tebbit Moment"

http://englishlangsfx.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/multicultural%20London%20English

Amid the horrific mayhem and destruction of last week's riots, there were a few moments of grim irony - David Cameron deriding the violence of the British underclass shortly before "declaring war" on gang culture, a Labour MP criticising looters for their "naked greed" having made a claim on his parliamentary expenses the year before for an £8,865 flatscreen TV, Nick Clegg propping up a government who he'd previously warned the public about as being likely to cause riots on the streets - but surely the most bizarre moment of all was historian and TV pundit, David Starkey's appearance on Newsnight last Friday in which he blamed the riots on white people turning black, before clumsily reading out the text of a BBM he said represented the broken English of a looter.

Many media commentators struggled to find the right words to describe what was going on. Were the people smashing up shops and lobbing bricks at the police protesters or looters, scum or terrorists? The Guardian wasn't sure. Were these disturbances race riots, London riots, British riots or English riots? The BBC settled for England riots, which strikes me as odd, given that England weren't even playing. Were the young people using the term feds to describe the police showing the influence of US hip hop and mimicking the antics of the LA rioters back in the early 1990s? The BBC News magazine reflected on these issues and even got some linguists and lexicographers to comment, making it a more informative and nuanced discussion than many others.

But let's go back to David Starkey and his rant on Newsnight. Back in 1996, the linguist Jean Aitchison delivered a series of lectures for the BBC on language (which can be read here or listened to here) in which she talked about the worries that exist for many people about how language changes. In one example, she quoted the then Conservative Minister Norman Tebbit making a direct link between language use and crime:

"If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people turn up filthy … at school … all those things tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards then there's no imperative to stay out of crime."

So, in David Starkey's diatribe against "Jafaican" I think we have this generation's Tebbit moment. Let's look more closely at what Starkey said and unpick why it's not only racist and wrongheaded but linguistically suspect too. The Independent quotes Starkey's words as follows:

"I think what this week has shown is that profound changes have happened. There has been a profound cultural change. I have just been re-reading Enoch Powell. His prophecy was absolutely right in one sense: the Tiber didn't foam with blood, but flames lambent wrapped around Tottenham, wrapped around Clapham.

"But it wasn't intercommunal violence; this was where he was completely wrong. What has happened is that the substantial section of the chavs that you [Mr Jones] wrote about have become black. The whites have become black.

"A particular sort of violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture has become the fashion. Black and white, boy and girl operate in this language together, this language, which is wholly false, which is this Jamaican patois that has intruded in England. This is why so many of us have this sense of literally a foreign country.

"Listen to David Lammy, an archetypal successful black man. If you turn the screen off, so you were listening to him on radio, you would think he was white." What strikes me as so twisted is Starkey's leap from the assertion that "the whites have become black" to the apparent linking of "blackness" to "violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture". At that point in his argument, he makes no attempt to draw a distinction between skin colour and culture. Later, he offers some (feeble) attempts at mitigation, perhaps when he tries to argue that not all black people - David Lammy, for example - "sound black", but it's still a reductive and idiotic argument. Why? Because in Starkey's mind black = "violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture". And your degree of blackness can be identified by the way you talk…

From a linguistic standpoint, his assertion that the "Jamaican patois" that has "intruded in England" and is used by young people involved in the riots is "wholly false" smacks of desperation. As one Twitter user @vivmondo wittily put it, "Asking David Starkey for his views on youth culture is a little like asking Lady Sovereign for her views on Elizabethan shipping law" but even so he goes ahead and gives us the benefits of his massive knowledge. And that's before he launches into his freestyle, which has been remixed for your pleasure and delight in the You Tube clip here.

As Geoff Pullum explains on Language Log, Starkey's views about the insidious influence of Jamaican patois on the native language are ill-informed and wide of the mark. What Starkey quotes in his poorly performed rap is nothing like Jamaican patois and much closer to Multicultural London English (MLE, MEYD or what some dubiously call "Jafaican").

Even Katherine Birbalsingh (who normally gets my goat about as much as Toby Young and Richard Littlejohn) gets

it right when she says that the language Starkey is talking about is "a kind of fusion of many cultures, including Cockney East End speech. One can also hear some Jamaican influence, general working-class London influence and so on. Does Starkey really believe that Jamaicans go around saying "innit"? "Innit" has a Cockney glottal stop in it! Interestingly, this accent not only is not Jamaican, but neither is it in American gangster culture. What MTV rapper sounds like our kids?".

In yesterday's Evening Standard, Sam Leith made a slightly different point about the language of Starkey's rant. Annoyingly, he insists on calling the variety of English in question as "Jafaican" with all its connotations of affectation and mimicry, when any good language student knows that what is emerging in London and has been developing for well over two decades is an organic form of language that has its roots in a range of different varieties brought together by contact in urban areas. He can be forgiven though as he's not a linguist and doesn't claim to be an expert on language. Plus he makes some good points elsewhere.

Discussing Starkey's claim that "so many of us have this sense of literally a foreign country" he agreed that "(Starkey) touches an anxiety more people feel than admit to" before going on to say "it's actually a class and generational anxiety. It finds its most poisonous outlet in fears about race" and concluding by saying "Prof Starkey defended his position by saying that in times like this, "plain speaking" is needed. No. Careful, precise speaking is needed".

Wise words indeed, and all the wiser because Leith - and Birbalsingh - notice that the people who use the language Starkey so derided are actually all around us: they are our students, our own children, us, our communities, not some alien race. To mark them out as a separate group because of their "wholly false" language use is to misunderstand and misrepresent both young people and the ways in which language works.

Our New Multiethnolect

http://phonetic-blog.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/our-new-multiethnolect.html

Wednesday, 23 March 2011

In connection with its ongoing exhibition Evolving English the British Library is holding a series of 'events'.

Yesterday's was a lunch-time lecture by Paul Kerswill on the subject of Multicultural London English (this blog, 02 July 2010, 25 Mar 2008 and 16 Nov 2006). I am gratified to say that the event was sold out, but less happy to report that many people had to be turned away.

In his lecture, richly illustrated by sound clips, Paul showed how traditional Cockney, once upon a time centred on inner eastern areas of London such as Bethnal Green, has now moved out to the outer suburbs (his team had studied Havering, on the Essex borders). In inner areas (his team had studied Hackney) the incomers who replaced the white working class had in many cases more than one variety in their repertoire, being able to switch, for example, between Cockney and Jamaican.

(We can illustrate this with the 1984 hit Cockney Translation by the late Smiley Culture, sung in Jamaican Creole but explaining words and usages from Cockney — as Paul pointed out, with no reference at all to Standard English.) me come to teach you right and not the wrong ina di Cockney Translation Cockney's not a language, it is only a slang an was originated yaso [= here] ina Englan'...

For today's teenagers, though, this has given way to a new local multiethnic speech variety shared by adolescents of all different ethnic origins. It is sometimes referred to as 'Jafaican', though Paul's team prefer their term Multicultural London English.

To illustrate the point, Paul played us sound clips of four Hackney adolescents talking, and challenged us to guess the ethnicity of the speakers. They did indeed all sound much the same. Yet one was self-described as Bengali, one as White British, one as Black British Caribbean, and one as Turkish. (I did get two out of four correct, but that may just have been by lucky chance.)

We can illustrate this new variety by this clip of Dizzee Rascal being interviewed by Jeremy Paxman just after Obama's election. You can hear all sorts of 'Cockney' features in his speech (t glottalling, l vocalization and so on) but also plenty of features foreign to traditional Cockney (unshifted FACE and PRICE diphthongs, 'man').

Henry Hitchings: English Still Stands Tall in Multicultural London

http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/henry-hitchings-english-still-stands-tall-in-multicultural-london-8474568.html

31 January 2013

Statistics from the 2011 census, released yesterday, reveal that 1.7 million Londoners don't speak English as their main language. That's 22 per cent. In some boroughs, the proportion is much higher: in Newham it rises to 41 per cent.

These figures outstrip those in other parts of the country: in the North- East, for instance, only three per cent have a first language other than English. Alarmists see the general pattern as evidence of the erosion of both the English language and British identity. In London, so the argument goes, that process is already far advanced.

This underestimates the robustness of English — and of British culture. It also loses sight of London's capacity for cultural cross-pollination, highlighted in this paper's weekly series, A World City in 20 Objects (see Page 45 today), which celebrates the treasures of the British Museum.

In any case, the figures strike me as unsurprising. Or rather, if they afford any surprise, it's in seeming quite low. And while the census may provide ample material for headlines, it becomes a lot more interesting when examined closely. Thus I note that in Southwark, where I live, Vietnamese is the main language of 937 people, Tamil of 181, Slovenian of 34, and "gypsy/traveller languages" of seven.

Nationally, the most common first languages, aside from English and Welsh, are Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati and French, in that order. The absence of Chinese from the list looks odd but has to do with its many distinct dialects. It will surely not astonish alert Londoners that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has the highest percentage of residents whose main language is French, or that Ealing leads the way in Polish-speakers.

It's worth noting that many of those who don't have English as their main language are proficient or competent at speaking it. After all, London attracts large numbers of polyglot professionals. Meanwhile, those who don't speak English are often eager to learn it. The trouble is, unless they are of school age, their opportunities to do so are limited and mostly expensive.

What does all this mean for English? We may imagine that it heralds a huge influx of words from other cultures. The language has long been promiscuous, and over the past 1,500 years it has absorbed words from more than 300 other tongues. But today English draws comparatively little from other languages. New words come about mainly through creative use of existing resources.

From time to time a vogue word is seized on by journalists as a sign that English is accommodating items from the languages of fairly recent immigrants. A few years ago it was "nang", a synonym for "good" apparently popularised by London's Bengalis. I don't get the impression it caught on. As for words adopted from Polish, the more obvious ones, such as the dance known as a mazurka, are far from new.

Yet there are palpable changes afoot. Teenagers who have never been anywhere near the Caribbean pepper their talk with snippets of Jamaican patois. This isn't a trivial detail. It may mark the emergence of a new Multicultural London English. Here, as in the census, we see a city shaped by a host of influences — their effects tantalisingly unpredictable.

Is MLE That Slang Stuff What Chavz Speak?

http://www.thesceptic.co.uk/is-mle-that-slang-stuff-what-chavz-speak/

This article was written on 25 Feb 2013

And here we see the native speakers of MLE. A very peculiar species indeed, often a nocturnal breed they venture out under the blanket of darkness to forage, they are very sociable creatures and chatter away into the early hours of the morning. However, do not be fooled as this greeting often does not stretch to members of other species and often the MLE's can become hostile and aggressive, even using tools to protect their territory. You can just imagine it can't you. Pure ignorance will drive language prejudice to this sort of level; Bono will be holding fundraising events to send them warm clothes in no time. I mean for christ sake, give it a couple of years and David Attenborough's soothing tones will be narrating a strange hooded creature graffitiing shop windows and then scuttling into the darkness. Ridiculous. For those who have no idea what an "MLE" is, it isn't a new species uncovered on the Galapagos, nor is it a previously undiscovered tribe in New Guinea, it is in fact merely speakers of multicultural London English, better know as "Jafaican" or even "that slang what pikeys speak".

Personally I have no problem with MLE, perhaps because of my age (18 if you're interested), which means I have grown up around MLE speakers and interacted with them frequently, which perhaps an older generation may not have. However, I have my sneaking suspicions that my lack of prejudice may be due to slightly more than a mere age gap, to take just one example from many, the famous linguist Paul Kerswill holds the view that MLE is a vital part of integration for ethnic groups, and guess what, he isn't 18. In my eyes this leaves only one possible explanation for such a strong hateful prejudice and here it is: these people, the language Fascists (although I think they prefer 'Prescriptivists'?), they have – where logical, open-minded human beings have a brain – a lump of coal, or perhaps more relevantly; a lump of white coal.

Ok, so I'm not suggesting that the whole prejudice is based around race, but lets look at the facts for a second, first of all the name is a slight giveaway; MULTICULTURAL London English, however more importantly is the nature of the language. It's no secret that it grew from immigration and was born from a mash up of various ethnicities, culture and obviously language. The accent, the spelling, the vocabulary, all the product of a merging of cultures, and people hate this? What happens when a Lion and a Tiger mate and the infamous Liger is brought into this world? Do we say "what the fuck is that?! Go and get my gun!" Or do we nurture it and become enchanted by it and learn to appreciate how special it is and how amazing a uniting of two utterly different cultures is?

What really riles me is how completely ignorant some people are towards the importance of MLE on a larger scale, rather than what is just at the end of their nose. It seems that the idea of MLE being more than merely a language evades the majority of the population, the idea of it being an invaluable tool to gain respect within a dangerous gang, is about as feasible to the general public as one day going to take your trousers out of your wardrobe and falling headfirst into Narnia. This idea of language being a tool to gain opportunity has been so distorted that it is made to seem only applicable to Standard English. But it isn't. Find yourself in the 'wrong' neighbourhood in inner-city London and you can find yourself in a very dangerous environment, the stomping grounds of violent gangs. And their weapon of choice? Language. This, known as covert prestige, is where the use of slang and non Standard English gives you the respect of your peers, a place where the winners of rap battles are held in high esteem. A perfect example of the intricacy and spontaneity and ultimately the power of language. But does MLE gain the creditability it deserves as such a diverse and powerful form of language? Does it fuck.

I really want to be annoyed at the ignorance of the judgmental members of our society that surround us, in fact, I actively try my best to hate them. Yet unfortunately I can't, because let's face it, the only thing worse than a racist, prejudiced language Hitler is a white middle class schoolboy from Oxford saying "safe blud". Everybody knows exactly what I mean, we can all picture the young Stephen Fry we saw last week prancing down the street, silver spoon hanging out of his mouth, and we can also picture little Stephen then meeting his mates and after quickly whipping away the spoon and deepening his voice to that of someone who has hit puberty, something incredible happens... "safe man, whats gwarnin". I hate it. I actually hate it, I genuinely believe that room 101 would not be big enough for the amount of hate I have for people who pretend to speak MLE.

I made my Dad a coffee the other day and I said "it's a mocha", he replied with a chuckle, "I won't mock it if you don't". The cringe that shuddered through me at that moment is the exact feeling that resonates inside me every single time I hear someone fake MLE. This is the reasoning behind why I can't detest people who hate Multicultural London English, it's because I believe the general hate for it is not based on a discrimination of race, nor is it the hatred of a new language form that is not accepted, it's the hate of white, middle class schoolchildren pretending that they're Ali G. And frankly, if that was what MLE was I would hate MLE too, but it isn't, so everyone who thinks they hate MLE: why not educate yourselves and create informed opinions rather than rolling around in a huge pile of ignorance and then walking around all day smelling of prejudice.

What "Multicultural London English" Sounds Like

http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/003024.html

A couple of days ago, I posted about "Multicultural London English", discussed in the press as "Jafaican" (or sometimes "Jafaikan"). None of the stories included any sound clips, and so I asked for suggestions about how to find something more authentic than Ali G, my only previous point of reference for this way of talking.

Abnu from Wordlab recommended Apache Indian's recent remake of Desmond Dekker's great 1969 reggae hit Israelites. "Apache Indian" is the stage name of Steven Kapur, who was born in Birmingham of East Indian ethnic background, and has pioneered what his website calls the "fusion of Reggae, Raggamuffin, Hip Hop and Bhangra". As this audio sample indicates, Apache's performance dialect (at least in this example) is transparently "fake Jamaican", and therefore the term "Jafaican" is a reasonable description. But he started out in Birmingham, and so this seems to be part of a broader cultural fusion that is not limited to London. (Dekker's original might be the most prolific source of mondegreens ever, by the way.)

Jennifer Tillotson sent a recorded passage from a BBC Radio 4 interview with some London-area schoolgirls about female violence. She explained that she lives "at the other end of the country" and therefore "know little of how the youth down there speak nowadays".

However, I had to hit the record button when I heard these North London girls being interviewed by BBC Radio 4. I have no idea what their ethnic background is, but that's kind of the point, innit!

These young women (for example here) aren't speaking Jamaican, fake or otherwise, but they aren't speaking Cockney either. So I'm guessing that these are some variants of the "multicutural London English" that Sue Fox and her colleagues are talking about. (I'll freely admit ignorance of British dialectology; if you can characterize these accents more accurately, please let me know. The whole passage is available as a 3MB mp3 file here. I don't know when this segment was broadcast; if I find out, I'll substitute a link to the Radio 4 archives.)

Steve from Languagehat wrote to register a complaint about that phrase "multicultural London English":

Do you really think that's a better term? To me it sounds dry and misleading: what on earth does "multicultural" mean in a linguistic sense? "Jafaican" may be too narrow, but it's punchy and memorable and at least gives a nod in a meaningful direction. Steve's got a point. But if the sociolinguists' claims are correct, the emerging dialect is a blend of West Indian English, East Indian English, and some other things as well, all grafted onto a Cockney and/or Estuary-English substrate. "Multicultural" is an plausible mnemonic for that kind of masala. The trouble with "Jafaican" is that it seems to have started life as a sort of British version of "wigger": that is, a somewhat insulting way to refer to the culture of white or asian kids who decide to act (and talk) black.

Thus "Jafaican" isn't a reasonable term for the young Cockneys from Tower Hamlets that (according to Sue Fox) are starting to copy some vowel features and some lexical items from neighboring Bangladeshis. On her account, at least as filtered through the news stories, there are no Jamaicans, fake or otherwise, anywhere in that particular picture. And likewise, the speech of the girls in that BBC 4 interview is not "fake Jamaican", even if some Jamaican features are in the mix.

Still, I have to agree with Steve "Multicultural London English" is about as unlikely to become a popular piece of terminology as "African-American Vernacular English" was. And "Jafaican" feels like a lexicographical winner, even if it's misleading. Update: David Donnell writes:

Thanks for contextualizing this dialect for me.

For the past year or so I've been enjoying a CD called "Arular", by the artist M.I.A. (real name Maya Arulpragasam). Apparently the CD has won a number of awards and is fairly widely known by now.

M.I.A. is a young Londoner, originally from Sri Lanka, with family members who are/were Tamil Tigers, anti-gov't rebels back in the old country. (My wife is a South African with Sri Lankan roots, so we had some "cultural" interest in the artist.) It is precisely the lingo that I find so engaging, and "Multicultural London English" or "Jafaican" would seem to describe the dialect pretty well. Listen to, for example, "Pull Up the People".

Another interesting case -- linguistically. In other dimensions, though I don't know much about the who-done-what-to-whom in Sri Lanka, it's hard for me to get enthusiastic about a London-based artist who features a bundle of dynamite with a lit fuse on her web site. The content of "Pull Up the People" promotes the volatile metaphor of adolescent anger = religiously-inspired bombings = ecstatic music. With all respect to David, to multicultural London youth, and to the Tamils in Sri Lanka, this is topical and edgy, but isn't it also a little, you know, immoral?

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Slang tang
That's the that M.I.A. Thang
I got the bombs to make you blow
I got the beats to make you bang

Yeah me got god, and me got you
Everyday thinkin bout how me get through
Everything i own is on i.O.U.
But i'm here bringing y'all something new

You no like the people
They no like you
Then they go set it off with a big boom
Every gun in a battle is a son and daughter too
Why you wanna talk about who done who?
What you wanna talk about?

Slang tang
That's the that m.I.A. Thang
I got the bombs to make you blow
I got the beats to make you bang

Pull up the people, pull up the poor...
I'm a fighter, fighter god
I'm a soldier on that road
I'm a fighter, a nice nice fighter
I'm a soldier on that road

Bring me the reaper
Bring me a lawyer
I'll fight i'll take 'em on
You treat me like a killer
I ain't never hate ya
I'm a soldier on that road

I'm a fighter, fighter
God i'm a soldier on that road
I'm a fighter, a nice nice fighter
I'm a soldier on that road

From The Mouths of Teens

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/from-the-mouths-of-teens-422688.html

SUNDAY 05 NOVEMBER 2006

A 'perfect storm' of conditions has seen teen slang from inner-city London spread across the country. But where does this new language originate from? And, if you can't stop kids from speaking it, is there any way to decipher what the words mean?

At the back of a London bus, two teenagers are engaged in animated conversation. "Safe, man," says one. "Dis my yard. It's, laahhhk, nang, innit? What endz you from? You're looking buff in them low batties."

"Check the creps," says the other. "My bluds say the skets round here are nuff deep."

"Wasteman," responds the first, with alacrity. "You just begging now." The pair exit the vehicle, to blank stares of incomprehension. Later, this dialogue is related to Gus, a 13-year-old who attends an inner London comprehensive; he wastes no time in decoding it.

''Safe just means hi,'' he says briskly. "Your yard is like your home, where you're from. Nang just means good. Your endz is your neighbourhood. Buff is, like, attractive. Low batties are trousers that hang really low on your waist. Creps are trainers. Bluds are your mates. Skets are sort of slutty girls. Nuff means very. Deep is the same as harsh or out of order. Wasteman is what you say to someone when you're fed up with them. And begging," he concludes, with a flourish, "means chatting rubbish."

There's more: butters means ugly, hype is excitement, bare is a lot, cotching is hanging around, and allow it is a plea to leave something or someone alone. "Everyone in my school speaks like this," says Gus, a little wearily. "It's because you hear the cool kids saying these words and then you have to do it too. You've got to know them all and you've got to keep up. Nobody wants to be uncool," he adds, with a shudder. "That's, like…"

Sick?

"No, sick is good," he says patiently. "I guess it would just be, you know, deep."

Gus and his ilk have been caught up in an emerging linguistic phenomenon. Researchers have found that, while most traditional cockney speech patterns have followed traditional cockneys as they've migrated out to Essex and Kent and other points beyond the M25, teenagers in inner London, one of the world's most ethnically diverse areas, are forging a separate multi-ethnic youth-speak based on common culture rather than ethnic or social background. Multiculturalism may have become a political hot potato for everyone from Daily Mail leader writers to Trevor Phillips, but anyone passing a metropolitan playground will realise that, linguistically at least, the melting-pot patois is already a reality from Tooting to Tower Hamlets.

"It is likely that young people have been growing up in London exposed to a mixture of second-language English and varieties of English from other parts of the world, as well as local London English, and that this new variety has emerged from that mix," says Sue Fox, a language expert from London University's Queen Mary College, who's in the middle of a three-year project called Linguistics Innovators: The Language of Adolescents in London, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Fox and her colleagues have studied the speech patterns of a sample of teenagers across the capital. "One of our most interesting findings," she says, "was that we'd have groups of students from white Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, along with those of Arab, South American, Ghanaian and Portuguese descent, and they all spoke with the same dialect. But those who use it most strongly are those of second or third generation immigrant background, followed by white boys of London origin and then white girls of London origin."

The dialect is heavy with Jamaican and Afro-Caribbean inflections; words are clipped, as opposed to the cockney tendency to stretch vowels (thus face becomes fehs, as in "look a' mi fehs"), and certain words - creps, blud (thought to relate to blood, as in brother) and sket, are Jamaican in origin. This has led some in the media to invoke Ali G and Radio 1 DJ and "wigga" Tim Westwood, and dub the patois Jafaican, though Fox points out that Indian, West African, and even Australian slang (nang is an Aussie term, as is dag, meaning uncool) are just as much in evidence, as are new variants - saying raaait in lieu of right, for instance - whose origin remains obscure.

"The term Jafaican gives the impression that there's something fake about the dialect, which we would (omega) refute," she says. "As one young girl who lives in outer London said of her eight-year-old cousin who lives in inner London, 'People say he speaks like a black boy, but he just speaks like a London boy.' The message is that people are beginning to sound the same regardless of their colour or ethnic background. So we prefer to use the term Multicultural London English (MLE). It's perhaps not as catchy," she says, "but it comes closer to what we're trying to describe."

In the half-century since teenagers first came of socio-cultural age as a distinct demographic, their relationship to the rest of society can be described as a tense stand-off punctuated by howls of hormonal turbulence. "Don't laugh

at a youth for his affectations," said the US essayist Logan Pearsall Smith. "He is only trying on one face after another, to find a face of his own." Over the years, the faces have included provocations ranging from skinheads to hoodies, but the advent of MLE is believed to mark the first time that teenagers have consciously used language to stake out their own territory ("I can't understand a word he's saying sometimes," bemoans Gus's mother, in perfect following-the-script style). Professor Paul Kerswill of Lancaster University, who is leading the Linguistics Innovators study, believes it's no accident that teenagers should be the early adopters of MLE.

"Adolescence is the life stage at which people most willingly take on new visible or audible symbols of group identification," he says. " Thus, fashions specific to this age group change rapidly. Fashion and music often go together, and these in turn are often associated with social class and ethnicity. The same is true of language. It's most obviously observable in terms of slang and new ways of expressing themselves, such as the substitute of 'I'm, like' for 'I said' or 'I thought' a few years ago." (This was the most blatant manifestation of Rising-Interrogative Valley-Girl speak - as in "I'm, like, so over him? But he's, like, totally bugging me?" - that was the preferred lingua franca among teenage girls before the rise of MLE). "What we're seeing with MLE is qualitatively different," continues Kerswill. "It's a real dialect rather than simply a mode of speech, and there's already evidence that it's spreading to other multicultural cities like Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester. It'll become more mainstream through force of numbers and continued migration, and because it's considered cool."

Kerswill and his fellow researchers believe a "perfect storm" of circumstances has arisen to ensure the rapid dissemination of MLE: a nexus of immigration, population mobility, and a wave of successful London garage stars (and MLE speakers) such as Lady Sovereign and Dizzee Rascal. The face of MLE could well be MIA, a Sri Lankan-born rapper raised on an estate in Hounslow, west London; her single Galang contains the refrain "London calling, speak the slang now".

"You can hear this music on a national basis," says (omega) G Money, a DJ at 1Xtra, the BBC's urban radio station. "It's not something you have to search for on the pirate networks any more. And it's definitely having an influence. I was in Watford recently and the kids there were no different to the ones you see in London. They all dress the same and they all speak the same."

The rise of MLE is happening at a time when Kerswill and his team are seeing a general trend across the UK toward dialect levelling - the process whereby people in different parts of the country sound more and more like each other as their local accents and dialects die out and everyone, from the Prime Minister downwards, speaks a form of elided-vowel Estuary English. " Dialect levelling is strongest in new towns such as Milton Keynes" says Kerswill. "Local accents - what we call dialect solidarity - tend to s urvive in close-knit communities, most of which are working class. It's interesting, for example, that Liverpool seems to be getting more scouse. Population make-up would be a factor, as well as what some linguists would call 'neighbour opposition' with its arch-rival Manchester. It's a question of identity."

Kerswill believes that levellings versus solidarities will have a bearing on the future of MLE. Concerns have already been raised about its ubiquity, with the Lilian Baylis School in Kennington, South London, banning the patois as part of a government pilot project to improve results. "We're not trying to devalue it," says Gary Phillips, the school's head. " We're trying to teach the kids that its time and place is not in the standard English world of formal essays or debates."

But the crunch for MLE could come when its adherents move out of their close-knit teen community and enter the dialect-levelling world of adulthood.

"We don't quite know whether kids will un-acquire MLE as fast as they've picked it up," concedes Kerswill. "The indications are that it depends very much on people's social networks and aspirations. Those who go into university or highly-paid jobs will change their speech. Those who remain where they are will most likely retain a lot of it. Most people are doubtless somewhere in the middle, and will change to some extent. But that will open the way for MLE to lead to changes in the English language in its spoken form, at least. One conclusion that we have definitely drawn from this study," he concludes, "is that English is one of the most dynamically protean of all languages."

Back at the sharp end of the socio-linguistic coal-face, Gus would have to agree. "The words change all the time," he says wearily. " It's, like," (even in his out-of-school Standard English, he pronounces this "laaahhhkk") "you have to learn a whole new vocabulary every few months just to keep on top of it. It's like, just recently, swag now means bad."

And that's not nang?

"Allow it," he proclaims, switching effortlessly into standard MLE. "It's all getting bare swag."

Riots, Language and Britain's Globalized Underclass

http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/riots-language-and-britain's-globalized-underclass

Garry Robson
YaleGlobal, 22 December 2011

London dialect exposes odd couple – Britain's accelerating globalization and decreasing social mobility

LONDON: In the aftermath of the English riots of August this year, mainstream media analysts pored over the rioters' language, with special attention to social-media exchanges. There are precedents for this preoccupation with forms of speech as social markers, with British society being acutely class and accent conscious, but on this occasion, something more troubling was going on than the usual fun and games with language and social stereotypes.

A sense that a socially excluded underclass has become worryingly entrenched and that the language spoken by many of the young rioters, largely drawn from London's marginalized social housing projects, was somehow implicated. The emergence of this dialect, called Multicultural London English, or MLE, by sociolinguists and "Jafaican" by the popular media may offer insights into the accelerating globalization of Britain, the globalization of British English and decreasing social mobility.

In the days after the trouble, many commentators noted the confluence of violent destruction, nihilistic materialism and MLE. The Guardian, for example, presented an array of exhortations to riot culled from texts on Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger, including "the riots have begun ... mandem [a group of boys/young men] pullin out bats n pitbulls everywere. Join in!" and "what ever ends [neighborhoods] your from put your ballys [balaclava, bandana, face covering] on link up and cause havic."

In a live televised debate, Professor Richard Starkey, specialist in Tudor England and celebrity historian, offered an account of a white underclass that has "become black" in the context of a "violent, destructive and nihilistic gangster culture." This "blackening" of white youth is most visible, he argued, through the extensive use of a Jamaican patois "intruded" into Britain. His comments drew a firestorm of criticism from liberal commentators and politicians, with leader of the New Labour opposition party, Ed Miliband, asserting that such comments were "absolutely outrageous" in the 21st century. There were numerous calls for sanctions. But his description of the "patois" as Jamaican was erroneous, for the dialect he referred to is homegrown and British. Yet while Starkey was undeniably wide off the mark on a few points, he articulated the concerns of many and drew attention to a language spoken by many on London streets, one that is a direct consequence of cultural globalization.

As far back as 2001, research by educationalists found that more than 300 languages and dialects were being spoken by children and teenagers in London's schools, and MLE has emerged from this this exceptionally diverse linguistic environment. More recent research, led by Paul Kerswill at Lancaster University and Jenny Cheshire at Queen Mary, University of London, claims that the new speech form is spoken in more or less the same way by young people of diverse ethnic backgrounds; this is not mere slang, but a dialect, or "multiethnolect," that emerges out of a multicultural sphere of everyday, shared, lived experiences and negotiations. MLE derives, it's suggested, from four main sources: Caribbean Creoles, most notably Jamaican a cornerstone of London street speech for decades and the reason why many non-speakers label it as "black"; former colonial forms of English, such as those of South Asia and West Africa; Cockney, the fading dialect of the London working class; and "learner varieties," unguided second-language acquisition through friendship groups.

All of this, of course, has reignited a popular British debate about the "dumbing down" of English. But this time round, in the aftermath of riots, the stakes are high. Arguments about the coarsening of language and imprisoning effects of "restricted" language codes are emerging from unlikely sources. For example Lindsay Johns, a self-defined hiphop intellectual, argues that the youths he mentors in south London are trapped – linguistically, educationally, socially by "ghetto grammar" and cannot "code switch" their way out. He describes a key issue from a linguistic point of view: the inability of some young people to navigate between different languages, dialects or registers of speech. Lindsay's fear is that young people who cannot do so may be psychologically trapped with a restrictive language that is more for performance than reflection.

The areas of London from which MLE emerged appear, over the last decade or so, to have contracted as neighborhood affiliations intensify and the emergence of gangs represents a new hyper-territorialism at the heart of one of the world's great global cities. John Pitts' work on "reluctant gangsters" argues that it is increasingly difficult for young people to opt out of these street-level affiliations. One ray of good news is that these tiny neighborhood identifications are post-racial; the "end" matters in the capital's patchwork culture more than ethnicity.

But this convergence among young Londoners on MLE could represent a double-restriction of urban space and the mind. And such restrictions are taking place against a backdrop of crisis for disadvantaged youth: The official unemployment rate for British youth is 20 percent, functional illiteracy among teens is at 17 percent, and the country has one of the lowest social mobility rates in Europe, according to an OECD 2010 study.

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Many accounts of this crisis do not encompass its many dimensions, constrained as they are by political correctness and liberal orthodoxies around race and racism. A contemporary source of such constraints was the flawed but influential 1999 Macpherson Report on institutional racism, the simplifications and illogicalities of which were matched only by the dogmatic fervor with which the New Labour government implemented its recommendations throughout the 2000s. But Gus John, the Guyanan-born writer and activist who has worked in Afro-Caribbean community empowerment and British education for decades, recently said what white, liberally minded sociolinguists do not say aloud: that much of the dysfunction and pain experienced by the underclass is, to a significant extent, generated from within its own patterns of culture.

John's voice amounts to a cry of despair that demands recognition of the problem's true scale, which does not sit well with the conventional wisdom routinely employed, that minorities are passive victims of institutional racism and top-down social injustices. Earlier in the year, before the riots, John called for a "peoples' inquiry" into murders in

the African community, enabled by guns and knives. The role of language and its brutalization was front and center: "No 'black talk', street language or slang should contain nonchalant sayings like 'he was duppied', meaning that he was shot or stabbed to death; or he 'got a wig', meaning that he was shot in the head. All of that represents a measure of brutality and barbarism that dehumanizes not just the perpetrators but the entire community and society."

Great Britain has a challenge in mainstreaming a globalized, multiethnic underclass, coherent enough to produce a genuine multiculture, but largely immobilized in increasingly territorial and socially dysfunctional neighborhoods. Ending an entrenched, nihilistic youth culture is not easy—and more difficult if those tackling the problem cannot move beyond the narrative that suggests the suffering and social pathologies of the underclass are entirely somebody else's doing. This would require an end to the condescending pretense that MLE is anything more than a rudimentary, limiting form of street speech. Left unchecked, MLE can only perpetuate the entrapment of its speakers in increasingly primitive "ends."

England riots: What's The Meaning of The Words Behind The Chaos?

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-14506159

From shot 29-year-old Mark Duggan referring to the police as "feds" to the nuanced use of the word "community", the language of the riots and the response can tell us something.

It may have been England that was shaken by violence, looting and disorder.

But many of the terms used by its perpetrators came from a very different place altogether - and, due to coverage of the rioting, they have found a wider audience than ever before.

"If you see a fed... SHOOT!" read one message circulated on BlackBerry Messenger, imploring readers to riot.

Another, widely reported in the aftermath of the chaos, urged everyone to "up and roll to Tottenham [expletive] the 5-0". There were myriad references as well to the "po po".

Mark Duggan, whose fatal shooting by police sparked the violence, himself sent a text message shortly before his death which read: "The feds are following me."

All these terms used to express antipathy towards the police share a common feature - all are derived from the inner cities of the US, not of the UK.

To outsiders, it appeared incongruous that these terms were commonly used by youngsters who were straight out of comprehensive, not Compton.

But when politicians and pundits used such terms to argue that the pernicious influence of hip hop and rap was responsible for fuelling the riots, they themselves ended up using vernacular gleaned from their box sets of The Wire.

When Michael Gove, the education secretary, discussed the possible causes of the disorder, he attacked the instant gratification of "gangsta" culture. Reporters transcribed the word as it might appear on the lyric sheet of a Dr Dre CD, instead of "gangster", as once would have been expected when deployed by an Aberdonian Tory MP who represents a constituency in Surrey.

However, Jennifer Blake, a youth worker who runs the Safe and Sound anti-gang project in Peckham, south London, says such commentators miss the point.

The Wire included terms "po-po" and "5-0"

"When kids talk about the feds, it's obvious that they're not talking about the FBI," she says. "They know that's not how things work over here. It's like a code - politicians and the media don't understand." She highlights home-grown phrases like "bully van", meaning police van, and "shank", meaning knife, as evidence that UK street culture is not just passively replicating the language of the US inner cities.

Indeed, Jonathon Green, author of the Chambers Slang Dictionary, points out that many of the messages which circulated during the riots included non-US phrases. These included exhortations to defend one's "yard" - used in its Jamaican-derived sense, meaning home - or one's "end", a home-grown term referring to an area of a city.

Exclusive blend

All, he says, are examples of Multicultural London English (MLE), a dialect identified among young people in the capital which blends the phonetics and vocabulary of such diverse influences as West Indian, south Asian and traditional cockney. He says the use of "feds" to mean the UK constabulary dates back no further than 1997, and the English deployment of "po po" - which originated in Los Angeles during the 1980s - is even more recent. Such Americanisms, Green says, have to be understood in this context, at least within London where the riots began.

The Sopranos series regularly used the term "feds"

"It's an ironical use," he says. "Obviously there's been an increased Americanisation of our language since the war, but MLE doesn't just come from one source. It just so happens that rap music has lots of terms for the police." Of course, the language of certain rappers has been adopted far more widely than just among the inner city youths who form their target audience.

Professor Gus John of the Institute of Education, University of London, has long worked with young people associated with gangs and has studied changes in language within England's multi-ethnic communities. He argues that such terminology has the function of setting its users apart from the mainstream.

"It has its own resonance. It's also exclusive, it becomes an internal language to people who share particular lifestyles. That's part of its potency.

"The fact that it is internal, the fact it is not commonly used by everybody, helps to define the group."

Opponents of the rioters have their own terminology Certainly, those who know little of hip hop culture, and would themselves reject violence and rioting, might have their own nicknames for the police, such as Old Bill or Peelers.

And among those attempting to speak for the majority

appalled by the disorder, one word was regularly repeated. Tottenham's MP David Lammy spoke of "a mood of anxiety in the local community". Sikhs who gathered in west London to guard against looters said they were "here to defend our temple and our community". Richard Mannington Bowes, who died trying to prevent looting, was quickly hailed as a "hero of the community".

The "community", it appeared, was everything and everyone that did not include the rioters.

Indeed, the focus on "gangsta" terminology tells us just as much about the media as it does about the perpetrators of disorder, suggests lexicographer Susie Dent.

"I think journalists have adopted it because it distils the mood and the type of person perceived to be behind the past few days, and also because there's been a distinct uncertainty, almost nervousness, about what to call the perpetrators," she says.

"Are they rioters, which implies a political objection, looters, which doesn't, or vandals, etc? It's interesting too that a lot of the people cleaning up embraced the Sun's 'scum' so readily, a reflexive response of anger."

Whether it comes from the criminals themselves or the law-abiding majority, the words used to describe England's riots tells us much about the society that produced them.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that far more than language divides the two sides.

“Crappy Patois”

http://englishlangsfx.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/multicultural%20London%20English

Yesterday’s Evening Standard carried an op-ed by Henry Hitchings on the nature of changing London English. It’s partly a response to Charles Moore’s attack on changing English in the Telegraph and partly an advertisement for Hitchings’ new book, which we mentioned on here yesterday.

Interestingly, Hitchings makes much of what linguists have called Multicultural London English, Multi-ethnic Youth Dialect, or what some journalists have called “Jafaican”, which, as Hitchings points out, tends to cast it as an affectation or a fake dialect, rather than “ an authentic, organic variety of English and it looks likely to become more prevalent”. We’ve featured MEYD and MLE here on many occasions and if you click on the tabs at the bottom of this post you’ll get some links to the research done by Sue Fox, Paul Kerswill, Jenny Cheshire (and others) into this fascinating area of sociolinguistics.

Sadly, anything about language change tends to aggravate those who see all change as a foul corruption of our beautiful tongue, or even (in the case of the Evening Standard article), deranged anti-Jamaican troglodytes who argue (or sneer, perhaps more accurately) that it’s a “crappy patois” “derived from some of the most pointless countries in the world”, and speaking it is likely to limit young people’s life chances. Well, yes, but only if they speak it as their only variety, which is generally not the case, as Hitchings is at pains to point out. But why let a bit of reasoned argument get in the way of a good dose of prejudice?

Word on The Street in London

http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/word-on-the-street-in-london-6487089.html

Even Professor Henry Higgins — rarely lost for words — would be dumbfounded. New research shows that the cockney dialect he battled so hard to beat out of Eliza Doolittle in My Fair Lady will disappear from London's streets within a generation.

As its traditional speakers emigrate to Essex and Hertfordshire, the 650-year-old accent is dying off in London, to be replaced by multicultural London English, heavily influenced by West Indian patois, Bangladeshi and remnants of old cockney. The dialect won't die off altogether. It will survive in the descendants of those Home Counties émigrés.

You can hear it happening today: teenagers in Essex speak like Henry Cooper and Barbara Windsor; in Lambeth, they are more likely to sound like Ali G.

As cockney makes its way out of London, Kings Place, the arts centre in King's Cross, is building up a vocal time capsule of the old dialect, asking Londoners to talk to their grandparents and contribute cockney poetry and phrases to an archive (kingsplace.co.uk/celebrate-cockney) for performance at a future spoken word event.

Paul Kerswill, Professor of Sociolinguistics at Lancaster University, the man behind the research, will next year publish his findings in Multicultural London English: the Emergence, Acquisition and Diffusion of a New Variety. "In much of the East End of London, the cockney dialect that we hear now spoken by older people will have disappeared within another generation," says Professor Kerswill. "People in their forties will be the last generation to speak it and it will be gone within 30 years. Since the 1950s and the New Town movement, more affluent east Londoners moved out of the capital and into Essex and Hertfordshire, especially to places like Romford, Southend and Hemel Hempstead, and they took their accent with them.

"Cockney in the East End is now transforming itself into multicultural London English, a new, melting-pot mixture of all those people living here who learned English as a second language. Ever since the 1960s, these areas of London have become home to immigrants from the West Indies, the Indian subcontinent and many other places, from South America and Africa to Central Asia and the Far East. Some of these people spoke the kind of English typical of their original countries. Others couldn't speak English, so children were speaking their native language at home but were learning English at school.

"This means that children were no longer learning their English dialect from local cockney speakers but from older teenagers, who themselves had developed their English in the linguistic melting pot. Out of all this, the new English which we call multicultural London English emerged, and this is the sound of inner-city London we hear today."

This hybrid, known in slang terms as "Jafaican", is a mixture of cockney, Bangladeshi and West Indian. Its leading fictional exponent is Ali G; a genuine user is Dizzee Rascal, the 24-year-old rapper, born in Bow, and a supporter of the cockney football team, West Ham.

When Jafaican finally supplants cockney across London, the curtain will fall on an ancient story. The earliest recorded use of the word is in 1362, in William Langland's The Vision of William Concerning Piers Plowman. Then cockney meant a small misshapen egg, from the Middle English coken (of cocks) and ey (egg): "a cock's egg".

Soon after, in Geoffrey Chaucer's Reeve's Tale, he uses "cokenay" to mean "a child tenderly brought up, an effeminate fellow, a milksop". By 1521, it was being used by people in the country to tease effeminate urban types or to mean a young male prostitute.

It remained a term of abuse in the early 19th century, when a group of poets, including John Keats and Shelley, were dismissed as the Cockney School. The term was used in Blackwood's Magazine in 1817 to attack the poets' use of cockney rhyming styles and idioms.

Among those abused, though, cockney was adopted as a badge of pride — thus the attempt to limit the number of cockneys, through the legend that true cockneys are born only within the sound of Bow Bells; the ones that peal every 15 minutes from Sir Christopher Wren's 1680 church, St Mary-le-Bow, on Cheapside. In fact, Bow Bells cockneys are not that exclusive a bunch. Research has shown that, without the background noise of modern London, the bells could once be heard as far as Canning Town (six miles east), Haringey (five miles north), Lambeth (three miles south) and Westbourne Green (four miles west).

Those cockneys who have moved far from London can also now download a recording of Bow Bells (from the Kings Place website) to play at the birth of their descendants — their babies will at least be virtual cockneys.

It'll be a bloomin' shame, though, when the last real cockneys leave London. Unlike Henry Higgins, we'll no longer "hear them down in Soho Square, dropping h's everywhere".

»

THE WORDS COCKNEY GLOSSARY

You're 'aving a laugh — I don't believe you
Geezer — likeable fellow
Mate — all-purpose sentence-closer Know what I mean? —
Do you agree with me?
China — cockney rhyming slang, from "China plate": "mate"

JAFAICAN GLOSSARY

Buff — attractive
Axe — instead of "ask"
Creps — trainers
Endz — area, estate, neighbourhood
Low batties — trousers that hang low on the waist
Skets — derogatory term for loose girls
Bitch — girlfriend
Nang — good (as in "rah, das 'nuff nang!")
Sick — good
Hype — hype things up, increase status
Jamming — hanging around

Begging — talking rubbish
Chat — talk back, contradict
Bare — very, a lot
Nuff — really, very
Innit? — sentence-closer, seeking agreement The past tense of "to be" becomes "I was, you was, he was" etc, and "I weren't, you weren't, he weren't".

THE PEOPLE SURVIVING COCKNEYS

Michael Caine Guy Ritchie (but there's more than a hint of mockney in the Hatfield-born public school boy and baronet's stepson) Mad Frankie Fraser (the Lambeth-born, 86-year-old gangland enforcer of the Kray era) Henry Cooper Barbara Windsor

JAFAICANS

Dizzee Rascal Tim Westwood, the hip hop DJ (and the son of the former Bishop of Peterborough — perhaps a touch of JaFakean there, the new incarnation of Mockney?) Ms Dynamite N-Dubz Ali G

Multicultural London English Part 1

http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/multicultural-london-english-part-1.html

SUNDAY 05 NOVEMBER 2006

The term Multicultural London English (MLE) has emerged in recent years and is used to describe the distinctive range of language features used in multiethnic areas of London. Researchers Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen link the emergence of MLE with large-scale post-war immigration from developing countries. In this situation children of immigrants often shift rapidly to the majority language (in this case London English). However, majority-language speakers may be in the minority (for example, many inner London Cockney speakers moved to outer London areas in the post-war period) or there may not be much social integration between immigrant and indigenous populations (also the case in London during the first waves of immigration) and so the availability of local, native models of the majority language to the second-language learners is weakened. This means that the majority language may be acquired from other second-language speakers in what is known as a 'group second language acquisition' setting. In London, the researchers argue that many immigrants and subsequently their children may have acquired their London English in an unguided and informal way, mainly through friendship or kinship groups of other second-language learners.

The researchers therefore see language contact (where two or more languages come together) as an important determining factor in the emergence of MLE. They do not claim that there is direct transfer from any one language in particular but rather that it is the language contact situation itself that has led to linguistic innovations. The way that they conceptualise this is by reference to a language 'feature pool' which is produced from the range of different input varieties and from which speakers select different combinations of features, sometimes modifying them into new structures in the process. In the inner London area investigated in the MLE studies the input varieties consist (among others) of African Englishes, Afro-Caribbean English, Indian English and a range of interlanguage varieties which are spoken alongside traditional London English. The range of features in the pool therefore allows a great deal of scope for innovation and restructuring in inner London.

The researchers draw on two large-scale sociolinguistic studies in their report. In the first project Linguistic Innovators: the English of Adolescents in London an area of inner London (the borough of Hackney) was compared to an area of outer London (the borough of Havering) and focused primarily on adolescents aged 17-19, although elderly speakers aged 70-86 were also recorded. The second project Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety focused on Hackney again but also areas close by in the boroughs of Islington and Haringey (collectively referred to as 'north London'). The age range for this study was much wider and consisted of recordings from speakers aged 4-5, 8-9, 12-13, 16-19, c.25 as well as some of the children's caregivers. Each project recorded approximately between 120 -130 individuals. The adolescents (16-19 year-olds) were recorded in the Further Education colleges that they attended while the younger children were recorded in their schools or youth clubs (and sometimes at home). The caregivers and the elderly participants were mainly recorded in their homes.

Keep an eye on the next few postings – we'll be taking a look at some of the main findings of these projects!

Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S. and Torgersen, E. 2011. Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: the Emergence of Multicultural London English. Journal of Sociolinguistics 15/2: 151-196.

Multicultural London English Part 2

http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/multicultural-london-english-part-1.html

Thursday, 1 December 2011

This is me 'I'm from Hackney'

Researchers Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen report the use of a new quotative expression to introduce reported speech in spoken discourse. Of course, speakers use a variety of forms to introduce dialogue; the verbs SAY (e.g. she said 'let's go to the cinema'), GO (e.g. he went 'let's go to the cinema') and THINK (e.g. I thought 'Oh no, not the cinema again') are among the most common introducers. In recent years there has also been an explosion in English varieties around the world in the use of BE LIKE (e.g. they were like 'Oh, we love the cinema'). However, in inner London, the researchers have also discovered the use of the expression this is + speaker such as those given in the examples below.

this is them 'what area are you from?' this is me 'I'm from Hackney'

'This is my mum 'what are you doing?'

Although the new form only accounts for a small number of the quotatives found in the London data it is nevertheless used frequently enough in young people's speech generally for it to have been noticed by non-linguists. For example, you can hear it being used in this comedy sketch from the Armstrong and Miller show. The researchers found that the expression this is + speaker is used by adolescents and also by children as young as eight years old but none of the adults in their study used it. This points to the feature as being a fairly recent innovation but in fact there is some evidence to suggest that it has existed in the 'feature pool' (see our previous post) for some time; Mark Sebba found three examples in his recordings of London Jamaicans made in the 1980s and there are also examples in the Corpus of London Teenage Speech (COLT) recorded in the 1990s. The researchers say that in language contact situations such as that which exists in London, features which have been in existence for some time (but have perhaps been used infrequently) may get picked up from the feature pool causing the frequency of its use to increase. This seems to be a possibility for the increase in the use of this is + speaker.

Another interesting finding is that there is a difference in the way that the different age groups use this feature. The 12-13 year-olds and the 16-19 year-olds use this is + speaker almost exclusively to introduce reported direct speech (e.g. this is her 'that was my sister'). However, the 8-9 year-olds use it to introduce both direct speech and non-lexicalised sound and gesture (e.g. this is me <followed by an action>). This function allows the young children to 'perform' the actions in the way in which they actually occurred. Furthermore, the 8-9 year-olds also use this is + speaker with non-quotative functions (e.g. he's sitting on a chair this is him like he's drunk or something) to describe someone's state, feeling, action, gesture or expression.

The researchers state that the use of this is + speaker is in its early stages and that, so far, it is confined to inner London. Whether it is a short-lived phenomenon or whether it will continue to increase in frequency and spread to other regions remains to be seen. Comments welcome on the use of or further development of this fascinating language feature!

Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S. and Torgersen, E. 2011. Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: the Emergence of Multicultural London English. Journal of Sociolinguistics 15/2: 151-196.

Multicultural London English Part 3

http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/multicultural-london-english-part-1.html

Monday, 5 December 2011

I was, you was, they was, we was ... wasn't we?

Researchers Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen report on the use of past BE forms (i.e. was/were) in London. Although the standard English forms are was with first and third singular subjects (I was, he/she was, negative wasn't) and were with all other subjects (you were, we were, they were, negative weren't), it is well known that the pattern varies considerably around the English-speaking world. There are predominantly two patterns which involve non-standard forms. These patterns are both variable i.e. the non-standard forms occur alongside the standard forms:

1. Variable use of was with all subjects in positive contexts (e.g. I was but also we was, you was) and wasn't with all subjects in negative contexts (e.g. I wasn't but also they wasn't, you wasn't)

2. Variable use of was with all subjects in positive contexts (e.g. I was but also we was, you was) but weren't with all subjects in negative contexts (e.g. we weren't but also I weren't, she/he weren't) Although the first pattern is the most common throughout the English-speaking world, it is the second pattern (i.e. was/weren't) which is the most common in Britain (note, though, another pattern in north-west England) so that many people in Britain today will say things like we was busy; she weren't at home; he was angry, weren't he? (You might remember the FT article on Lord Alan Sugar's use of you was).

In their first study of London English Linguistic Innovators: the English of Adolescents in London the researchers found that adolescents in outer London (the borough of Havering) conformed to the expected non-standard British was/weren't pattern but in inner London (the borough of Hackney) they found that the use of was in positive contexts was increasing but that there was competition between the two non-standard negative forms of wasn't and weren't.

The researchers give the language contact situation in London as a likely explanation for this competition. Many speakers in London come from linguistic backgrounds where the dominant pattern is was/wasn't e.g. English Creole-influenced varieties, second-language varieties such as African and Indian English as well as interlanguage (or learner) varieties and this competes with the local vernacular variety which tended to favour a was/weren't pattern. In the second study Multicultural London English: the emergence, acquisition and diffusion of a new variety the researchers looked to see whether one of these patterns was winning out among younger children but it seems that, for the time being at least, the two patterns exist alongside each other. The researchers focus on a newcomer to London to try to predict future trends in the use of this feature. They examine the speech of a 12 year-old Albanian girl who lived in London between the ages of 4 and 7, then returned to Albania until she was 11, after which she returned to live permanently in London. She uses non-standard was in positive contexts almost all of the time and her few instances of negative past tense forms are all non-standard wasn't. Perhaps this suggests that the trend is moving towards a was/wasn't pattern in the multiethnic areas of inner London but we will have to wait and see.

Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S. and Torgersen, E. 2011. Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: the Emergence of Multicultural London English. Journal of Sociolinguistics 15/2: 151-196.

Multicultural London English Part 4

http://linguistics-research-digest.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/multicultural-london-english-part-1.html

Thursday, 8 December 2011

A apple, a orange and a change of rule

Researchers Jenny Cheshire, Paul Kerswill, Sue Fox and Eivind Torgersen report on the use of the indefinite article (a/an) and the definite article (the) before words beginning with a vowel. In standard English the forms are roughly a and thuh before a consonant e.g. a pear, 'thuh' pear, and an and thee before a vowel e.g. an apple, 'thee' apple. Older speakers in London conform to this standard English pattern. However, some recent studies have shown that young people in London are not varying their use of the article forms but are using the pre-consonant forms in both contexts i.e. a pear but also a apple and 'thuh' pear but also 'thuh' apple.

The results from the Multicultural London English study confirm this trend. There are, however, interesting differences between the 'Anglo' speakers (the term used for speakers of British origin whose families had lived in the area for two or more generations and roughly equivalent to 'white British') and 'non-Anglo' speakers (speakers whose families were of more recent immigrant background). For the Anglos there is a decrease in frequency of the new forms as they get older and the researchers say that this is due to them being exposed to more competition from the input they receive – the newer forms used by their non-Anglo peers against the standard forms of their caregivers (the Anglo caregivers hardly ever used the new forms). On the other hand, the non-Anglos of all ages have very high frequency rates for the new forms and this is consistent with other studies of contact varieties of English around the world, e.g. South African English, Singapore English and African American Vernacular English.

The researchers state that this is another feature of language change which has probably come about due to the language contact situation in London. The clear patterns shown by the results of this study suggest that the dominant variants in the 'feature pool' (see previous post Multicultural London English - part 1) are a and thuh which are used by the majority of the non-Anglo speakers. The evidence that these forms are influencing the speech of the Anglos is shown in the fact that the young Anglos use the new forms much more than their caregivers.

Cheshire, J., Kerswill, P., Fox, S. and Torgersen, E. 2011. Contact, the feature pool and the speech community: the Emergence of Multicultural London English. Journal of Sociolinguistics 15/2: 151-196.

The English Slanguage

http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/features/3039887/The-English-slanguage.html

By PAUL KERSWILL, Professor of Sociolinguistics at Lancaster University
Last Updated: 05th July 2010

YOU'LL never Adam and Eve it – the Cockney accent is leaving its traditional London home and is now more likely to be heard in Essex and Hertfordshire. In its place is a new dialect, Jafaican, with its roots in the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent – rapper Dizzee Rascal is one well-known speaker. Its growth is part of a dramatic change in dialects and accents across Britain. Here language expert Paul Kerswill tells how the map of spoken English is being redrawn.

COCKNEYS used to be born within the sound of Bow Bells — the bells of St Mary-le-Bow in the City of London. You won't hear Cockney from residents there now, though you will still hear it in the East End.

However, increasingly in the East End, you will hear a new dialect spoken by youngsters of all ethnic backgrounds. They call it slang, some commentators call it Jafaican and linguists like myself call it multicultural London English. Its most famous speaker is probably Dizzee Rascal, who has become the emblem of this new way of talking. Talking point ... Newcastle accent is holding its own. The East End has always been heavily influenced by influxes of immigrants — French Huguenots, Jews, West Indians and more recently Bangladeshis.

As new people move in, so the more affluent move out. That has always happened but it has accelerated over the past 20 to 30 years. Up to 60 per cent of young people in the East End have parents who do not speak British English but rather speak Jamaican or Indian or some other form of English.

Children learn from older children as well as from their parents. Typically when families move, parents keep their accent but children adapt to fit in with their new friends.

Inner-city English, particularly in London's East End, has been transformed by immigrants from South America, the West Indies, Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, Arab countries, West Africa — everywhere, almost.

The result is this new dialect as spoken by Dizzee Rascal. The word "face" is spoken by traditional Cockneys as "fice", while the new Cockneys say "fehs" with what sounds like a more northern accent.

Signs The phrase "go home" is spoken by traditional Cockneys in a much broader way than most people but the new way is to say something like "goh hohm".

At the moment this is confined to people in their late teens and early 20s. Will they still talk this way when they are in their 30s and 40s? It's too early to say but the signs are that they will.

Accents are constantly changing and the fact is that today if you want to hear what most people would regard as Cockney, you are better off going to Southend or the new town of Hemel Hempstead, both places where lots of Londoners have moved to, rather than the East End.

Exception ... Liverpool accent has become stronger

Over Britain as a whole, dialects are levelling out — differences are disappearing. Some say this is due to TV but a stronger influence is greater mobility. In the south-east, stretching from Southampton in the south and west to Ipswich in the north and east, it is becoming increasingly hard to tell where people are from. In the north there has also been some levelling but the difference in accent between someone from Newcastle and someone from Sunderland is more marked than the difference between people from Southampton and Portsmouth.

The big exception to this levelling is Liverpool. Like London, it has had large influxes of immigrants, mostly black. But the Liverpudlian accent has become stronger rather than weaker — for example in the way "water" is pronounced like "waser" and "hat" becomes "has".

Language is constantly evolving. One of the interesting things about the new East End accent is that it is a sign of racial integration.

The dialect says nothing about your ethnic background as it is spoken by young people of all colours and religions. One things is for sure. English as we know it will continue to change, whether we like it or not.

From Cockney to Jafaican: 'Jafaican' is Less Irritating Than Fake American

http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/8868281/slanging-match/

Julie Bindel 23 March 2013

My mother always had a keen ear for slang and lazy pronunciation when I was growing up. Because my siblings and I were working class and attended an absolutely dreadful school in the North-east in the 1960s and 1970s, my parents made sure we were as educated as we possibly could be in manners.

My father, a proud northerner, has always taken umbrage at what he calls 'Cockney' (in reality just phrases popular among Londoners such as 'at the end of the day', 'basically' and 'strike a light'.) Over the past decade, however, the Cockney of my generation has been replaced with the street slang known as 'Jafaican', a form of patois picked up by black yout' in London and eventually by kids from pretty much all ethnic and social backgrounds in towns and cities throughout the UK.

Like all such trends, Jafaican has been picked up by the middle-class, middle-aged and well-educated as well as teenagers. Indeed, it has been suggested by experts in linguistics and dialect that Jafaican will have completely replaced Cockney by 2030, and there have been attempts to argue that the appropriation of such slang by posh folk reflects both a lack of confidence in British cultural values and a crush on ghetto authenticity. Remember David Starkey, for example, causing a kerfuffle for claiming that white working-class people are 'becoming black'?

The yout' appear to be selective as to when they use street slang. My neighbour, a black teenager with aspiring, well–spoken parents, gives it large with the, 'Hey blad, you looking buff in dem low batties' (My friend, those trousers that are hanging impossibly down below your backside held up by who-knows-what and showing your under-crackers look really nice on you), and 'Check dis' da Feds are in I's yard' (Listen to me my friends, the police are in my house) when outside hangin' with his homies, but at home sounds as middle-class as you like. And I have never seen a police car outside his home.

I was chillin' in me yard recently with a nice glass of wine when a young man came to the door to sell me some tea towels. 'Dees nang good [brilliant quality] sistah,' he said to me with no shame (I don't mean the slang — anyone who has bought such produce from the cold-callers will know that they absorb so little that if I committed a murder and tried to mop up the blood with one, no DNA would be found on it). I told him politely and in good English to sling his hook and he shouted over his shoulder, 'Deep rude. Dat was deep.'

Anyway, you get the picture. I am pretty fluent these days in Jafaican and often translate for my dad during visits. When he buys his newspaper or puts a bet on and gets a 'Safe man. Thanks blad' (Thank you my blood brother) the old man sometimes even attempts a high five.

And it's still not as annoying as Amerifaican. The British have been stealing words from the US for well over 200 years. They say tomay'oh and we say tomato but nonetheless we say 'movies' as often as 'film' and say that telephone numbers are 'busy' rather than 'engaged'. Such bastardisations are nothing compared to the horror of recent imports, however, such as 'Can I get?' to mean 'May I have?' The most recent time I challenged someone on this phrase, by stating loudly in a queue that 'The barista will "get" your spoilt child's babyccino, not you!' resulted in a lifetime ban from Crouch End Starbucks. I don't care. The coffee's awful.

Just like Jafaican, Amerifaican has been popularised by young urban Brits and passed on to the older middle classes, mainly these days via Twitter. So 'that's my bad' (That is my fault) is used to apologise for anything from gunning down an innocent passer-by to ordering Chardonnay instead of Chablis (the latter being a greater crime in my book). While Jafaican was often accompanied by the kissing of teeth and flicking of fingers, Ali G-style, Amerifaican requires a curious expression, rising intonation in the right place and lots of 'likes'. For example, 'It was, like, my bad that I gotten to forget to order the takeout. But I said I would touch base with her at the, like, candy store [Londis].'

Amerifaicans, I am calling you out (telling you off in a pompous and entitled manner) for saying 'I'm good' when what you mean is 'I'm well'. Then there is 'two-time' and 'three-time' instead of double or triple, and one of my biggest irritants, using 24/7 rather than '24 hours, seven days a week' or simply 'all day, every day'. The growing habit of using 100 per cent plus (I guarantee 150 per cent...!) is Amerifaican, and it annoys the hell outta me. Since when did a hair fringe become 'bangs'? I heard this in a hair salon in Cork for heaven's sake, uttered by a middle-aged Irish woman. Is nowhere exempt?

London English...From Cockneys to Jafaicans

http://www.stgeorges.co.uk/blog/london-english-from-cockneys-to-jafaicans/

Posted on November 3, 2011 by Ben Trawick-Smith

If you thought Standard English was difficult, you might like to try your hand at the latest London English dialect, 'Jafaican', or to give it its more academic sounding title, Multicultural London English (MLE). This dialect is now quite embedded and widespread in Inner London, mostly among young people. It has been strongly influenced by Jamaican but with undertones of West African and Indian thrown in..

It is often called 'Jafaican' meaning 'fake Jamaican', suggesting that it is largely spoken by white kids trying to be cool. However, this is unfair and inaccurate, as in reality, young people from all backgrounds growing up in Inner London have been exposed to the mixture of second-language English and local London English that has resulted in this new dialect of MLE. If you wanted a quick and amusing reference to MLE then you could do worse than check out the comic actor Sacha Baron Cohen's comic creation, Ali G, who delivers his comic routines in a colourful version of the dialect.

In some London boroughs, for example, MLE has taken over from Cockney, the prevailing London accent for many generations, as inner-city white youths picked up the speech patterns of their black and Asian classmates. Not that surprising when you consider that four out of ten London residents are now from ethnic minority backgrounds.

To get a feel for this new version of London English, compare the following snippets of speech shown in both MLE and Standard English.

MLE (Jafaican) Safe, man. You lookin buff in dem low batties. Dey's sick, man. Me? I'm just jammin wid me bruds. Dis my yard, innit? Is nang, you get me? No? What ends you from then?

Standard English Hi man. You're looking good in those trousers. They're good man. Me? I'm just hanging out with my mates (friends). This is my home, isn't it? It's cool, you understand? No? What neighbourhood are you from?

Jafaican: The Emergence of Multicultural London English

http://www.coventgardenmemories.org.uk/page_id__67_path__0p29p35p.aspx

By Nigel T Espey

Cockney, Queen's English, Estuary English; with the variety of accents existing in the British Isles, some having developed only boroughs away from each other, it should come as no surprise that accents are adjusting to suit the times.

A recent materialization of this adaptation is Multicultural London English (MLE), an accent that draws its myriad intonations not only from Cockney, but also from the parlance of the Caribbean, South Asia and West Africa.

Having emerged in the late 20th century, MLE - or "Jafaican" as it is often mockingly referred to - is the territory of younger generations, primarily in the East End. It is an interesting chimera of a dialect, incorporating not just words from other languages, but different pronunciations of English from the people who speak those other languages. This is why it is typically confused for lacklustre attempts of white London youth to mimic Jamaican accents. Hence: "Jafaican."

In reality however, MLE has been found to be an earnest product of a multicultural setting. Youngsters pick it up, not because they think it is "cool," but because they are exposed to a variety of different accents and pronunciation that are naturally internalized to adapt to a changing cultural setting.

Hence: the strange pronunciations of "home" and "food" as "hawm" and "fiyd," but elements of the old Cockney still remain, for instance "pound" as "paand." Further, words from other languages entirely, such as "nang," which means "good" in Bangladeshi, are adopted as well, making the whole thing, when assembled into one sentence, nigh incomprehensible beyond inner-city London.

This linguistic obscurity was brought under public scrutiny after the 2011 England Riots. Rioters and anti-rioting communities were able to mobilize through text messages that, when intercepted, weren't readily understandable. This is because they were offshoots of MLE, utilizing esoteric terms to refer to things like the police ("feds," "po po"), and homes ("yards"). Both violent rioters and the communities that tried to counter them used terms learned from American popular culture and Jamaican offshoots of MLE, which brought attention to MLE's use. Did it encourage violence? Was it overtaking traditional English? Questions like these were part of the reason why debates arose questioning the state of London accents today.

MLE has spread at what some people consider to be an alarming rate, overtaking Cockney in its traditional boroughs (where it has moved to places like Essex and Hertfordshire). In 2010, professor of sociolinguistics at Lancaster University, Paul Kerswill, estimated that Cockney would be completely gone within thirty years. Perhaps then it should come as no surprise that there have been several efforts to preserve Cockney, with people proudly claiming it as part of their heritage and organizations planning events in celebration of it.

However, dissenters claim that MLE is not uprooting Cockney, but rather is emerging from it, as if the two are adjacent steps in an evolutionary sequence. This vein of thought posits that Cockney is not threatened by MLE, but is rather part of its rebirth into a changing cultural climate. Both arguments boil down to a matter of opinion. But whichever way MLE is interpreted, it is now an undeniable part of London's linguistic landscape.

Language Can't Stay Still - Just Listen to London

http://www.standard.co.uk/news/language-cant-stay-still--just-listen-to-london-6561903.html

01 February 2011

Yesterday, while getting a haircut, I fell into conversation with the customer in the chair next to mine. An Albanian, he was complaining that "no one in London speaks good English these days". I asked what he regarded as good English, and he surprised me by replying "like on EastEnders - all that old-fashioned cockney".

Previous generations felt that cockney, for all its effusive lack of inhibition, was not something to which one should aspire. But now that cockney is losing ground, it is becoming an object of nostalgia. And it really is losing ground. Linguists estimate that it may disappear within 30 years. It is being supplanted by what they call Multicultural London English, which you may know by the catchy yet misleading name Jafaican.

Multicultural London English is easily recognised by features such as the use of tag questions - "innit" or "is it" - which certainly aren't invitations for a response. Infused with Afro-Caribbean seasoning, it is employed by (mostly young) Londoners of every imaginable background. Critics maintain that it is phoney - "Jafaican" implies this - but it is an authentic, organic variety of English and it looks likely to become more prevalent.

This is only one of the many different forms of the language that can be heard in London today. Although we tend to talk about English as if it is something monolithic, there are numerous Englishes. Tune into the conversations happening around you in a café or on the Tube, and you'll make out a mosaic of variants.

One reason for this is the large number of other languages spoken by Londoners - at least 300. Among the more prominent of these are Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu and Gujarati, as well as Caribbean creole, Cantonese, Polish, Arabic, Tagalog and Greek. On a recent hour-long bus journey, I heard Russian, Portuguese, Turkish and Yoruba. As passengers flitted between native and adopted languages, it was clear these had become intertwined.

English has prospered through assimilating terms from other languages, and engagement - in London and beyond - with speakers of foreign languages has enabled this, while also propagating hybrids such as Hinglish (a blend of Hindi and English).

London English has long been wildly diverse. In the 14th century, Geoffrey Chaucer absorbed words of French and Italian origin; recycling them was a way to make his writing appear more dignified. Today the multiplicity of tongues on our streets means scope for cross-pollination is much greater. We find it convenient to think of there being a single, fixed English, but daily experience confirms that ours is a boisterous parliament of tongues. In examining this subject I take a descriptive view - trying to observe and report what is happening to English. Just yesterday Charles Moore in the Daily Telegraph condemned this as "anarchic".

A descriptive approach to language change does not eclipse the cogent arguments for teaching in schools a standard form of written English. But the spoken language will always be elastic. It is the spoken language that is the great driver of change, and in London scarcely a day goes by without our noticing some addition or adjustment. This can be disconcerting, but English draws strength from being mobile and protean.

Henry Hitchings's new book The Language Wars: A History of Proper English is published by John Murray.

Death of a Dialect

http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/death-of-a-dialect-20100913-158hi.html

September 13, 2010

A 600-year-old accent synonymous with London's petty crims and barrow boys is on the verge of extinction. KEITH AUSTIN celebrates its long, colourful life.

It's an uncomfortable feeling, knowing you are one of the last of your kind. Did the final few dodos experience this sort of Darwinian dread? Is the ocean deep awash with whale song along the lines of "Mate, give it 30 years and that's our hopping pot*"?

Those are the emotions conjured up by the news that cockney will be brown bread** within a generation. According to Paul Kerswill, a professor of sociolinguistics at Lancaster University, the more than 600-year-old dialect will soon succumb to "Jafaican" – a peculiar hybrid of London, West Indian and Bengali accents – and disappear completely. As a cockney born in Bethnal Green and bred in the streets and alleyways of those hamlets – Hackney, Poplar, Limehouse, Stepney, Bow, Millwall, Whitechapel, etc – east of the Tower of London, the news doesn't evoke so much surprise as a great sadness. From Chaucer to Shakespeare to Dickens to Arthur Daley to Ray Winstone, the cockney accent has been proudly synonymous with London.

No longer, it seems. "People in their 40s will be the last generation to speak it and it will be gone in 30 years," Kerswill said, pointing out that since the 1960s east London has become home to immigrants from the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent and the cockney dialect has been dying off as traditional speakers move out of the area. "Cockney in the East End," he reported, "is now transforming itself into Multicultural London English, a new, melting-pot mixture of all those people living here who learnt English as a second language."

It seems that the schoolyard has done what centuries of official opprobrium and insult were unable to do. In 1791, John Walker, in his Critical Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language, pronounced cockney "barbarous", "offensive" and "disgusting".

Walker, in particular, was like a rat up a drainpipe when it came to rubbishing the dialect: "art" for "heart", "firty" for "thirty", "fahsn" for "thousand", "bovver" for "bother"? What were they thinking, muvver? Why didn't they learn no better from their betters in the City of London? And what he didn't say about the crime of the double-negative ain't worth mentioning.

So great was the hatred of the language of the East End (a place, it was said, as unexplored as Timbuktu) that even John Keats wasn't immune; his rhyming of "fauns" and "thorns" (the then rule of speech said that the "r" in thorns had to be pronounced) led Blackwood Magazine to state that he didn't have enough learning to distinguish between "the written language of Englishmen and the spoken jargon of cockneys".

Is this it, then? Is this really the death of the glottal stop and the dropped aitch? Must we vale the vocalisation of the dark L (as in "miwk" instead of "miLk"?) Is it time to doff the titfer^ to mark the passing of rhyming slang?
I bloody well hope not. I love my accent. I love the dialect. I love its long history. I love its playfulness. I love its bloody-mindedness, its innuendo. I love that it loves words. I bloody well love its casual profanity. I love that it is irredeemably magpie-minded and gleefully stole from Yiddish, German, Indian, Romany and French.

In the best-selling 1986 book The Story of English, the authors recall the words of local writer and historian Robert Barltrop in his book The Muvver Tongue: "If there's anything that distinguishes the cockney, it's his sheer enjoyment of words. He loves to stand them on end and make them jump through hoops and turn circles . . . there's nothing better to a cockney than to talk – to talk enjoyably, to talk colourfully, to use wonderful phrases. That's cockney."

Of course, as a saucepan*** in east London, it never occurred to me that I even had an accent. Cockney wasn't just a state of mind; in those days it was a geographical construct, too. We rarely left east London, except for two weeks in August to go on holiday to the south coast. To his dying day, my father refused to venture much outside London in general and Tower Hamlets in particular.

An interest in my own accent was galvanised early on by the chance discovery in a bookshop of Cockney Past and Present – A Short History of the Dialect of London, by one William Matthews. A whole hardback book dedicated to cockney? Surely not.

I couldn't afford it, of course, but serendipitously won an English prize at my grammar school shortly afterwards that consisted of a book of my choice. And still have it today. In the flyleaf is a sticker: "Parmiter's School Form IIIL prize awarded to K R Austin . . . 25th October 1972." I was 14. My copy is the reprint of the 1938 original in which Matthews wrote that of all the non-standard forms of English, cockney was the most generally despised despite being "the characteristic speech of the greatest city of the greatest empire that the world has known".

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He went on: "Cockney is such a pariah that not even the philologists have a good word for it . . . they deny it the status of a dialect and describe it as a vulgar speech based on error and misunderstanding . . . the feeling of inferiority induced by the attacks of businessmen and schoolteachers makes the cockney ashamed of his dialect . . . the time soon comes when he finds that business advancement and social respectability are incompatible with a cockney accent." Certainly, it was – and, to a certain extent, still is – seen as the language of the uneducated, the stupid, the criminal and the poor.

It wasn't all bad news, though: "Year in and year out," Matthews added, "the cockney dialect has enriched Standard English, not with the frozen words of scholarship and science, but with words rich in personality, words informed by mockery, optimism, cynicism, humour."

And remember, he was writing that in 1938, more than 30 years before the arrival of the character of Arthur Daley, whose cadences and use of the language made Minder such a joy. Not for nothing did Guy Ritchie set Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels and Snatch in east London. And try to imagine, if you will, Del Boy from TV's Only Fools and Horses delivering the line "Rodney, you plonker" in Jafaican.

My first real, continued experience of accents other than my own came when I stopped working at the local pie, mash and jellied eels shop (yes, I'm a complete cliche) and joined the East London Advertiser, the local newspaper. There I came into contact with the middle-classes. And, apart from a dodgy accent, they were just like us!

Of course, this lulled me into a false sense of security. For the next few years I worked on local newspapers in and around London, before finally joining The Sunday Times and its staff of hideously well-educated university graduates. It was soon explained to me that I could have a successful career there if only . . . if only . . . look, had I ever thought about taking elocution lessons? It was delicately put, to be sure, but there it was. I was a good enough journalist but my accent was going to hold me back.

The managing editor of news at that time was Roy Greenslade, who is now media commentator for The Guardian and professor of journalism at London's City University. Originally from east London's Dagenham, Greenslade says he didn't make a conscious effort to shed his "cockneyish accent" and only really hears the difference when taking part in the annual Dagenham County High School old boys' cricket match.

"So why did I change my accent, albeit unconsciously?" he says today. "Probably to fit in. Possibly to get ahead. There's no doubt that, in the course of my lifetime, received pronunciation, which has itself changed over time, has been adopted by more and more people as the old working-class majority has been transformed into a middle-class majority."

Greenslade, it must be pointed out, wasn't one of those who suggested an accent change for me and it didn't, as it turned out, hold me back. I was lucky, I think, looking back. It was a time when regional accents were gradually becoming more accepted and acceptable.

That said, even today you would be hard-pressed to find someone with a cockney accent reading the news or presenting anything other than a comedy or light-hearted talk show. It is far too intimately connected to the language of the streets, to the barrow boys, the dodgy geezers, the criminal underworld.

Indeed, on the few occasions I have had the misfortune to hear myself interviewed on radio, I wouldn't trust myself as far as I could throw me. Keep your hands in your sky rockets^^ and check your wallets when he's gone, would be my advice.

But let us not mourn cockney's passing; let's rather celebrate its long and colourful life – no paean without gain? George Bernard Shaw, for instance, was a big fan. In 1899, in his play Captain Brassbound's Conversion (a forerunner to the much better known Pygmalion), he wrote: "I should say that in England he who bothers about his hs is a fool, and he who ridicules a dropped h is a snob . . . the London language would be poorer without it."

It was the language of the Londoners in Graham Swift's 1996 Booker Prize-winning novel Last Orders and the 2001 film version starring Michael Caine ("I'm every bourgeois nightmare – a cockney with intelligence and a million dollars"), Ray Winstone and Bob Hoskins. It could also be said to be the main "character" in Will Self's dazzling Book of Dave, an epic novel that bobs back and forth between the life of cockney cabbie Dave Rudman and an imagined world in the future when Dave's demented scribblings have been unearthed and turned into Holy Scripture. A world where everybody either speaks Mokni (Inglish dialect) or Arpee, the "sophisticated" language of court.

Charles Dickens dived headfirst into the sea of language in the working-class districts around the Tower and surfaced with Oliver Twist, Fagin, the Artful Dodger and Bill Sikes. Jack London (The People of the Abyss) and even Herman Melville (Omoo) also did their bit to bring spoken cockney to the wider world.

Though let's once and for all put to rest the idea that Sam Weller, in Pickwick Papers, is your archetypal cockney. He's more of a figment of Dickens's imagination than a true cockney. Ditto that dancing dunce Bert, chim-chimmeny-chim-chim-cherooing along the rooftops just to entertain that minx Mary Poppins. What she saw in him and his atrocious accent, gord knows.

The end is nigh, then, and has been nigh for some time. I have four nieces and nephews, aged 14 to 25, who were born in east London, have lived in east London all their lives and all employ the awful (to these 52-year-old ears, at least) "Jafaican" accent that is seeing off my beloved cockney. But is it such a bad thing? Noted linguist David Crystal, in his book By Hook or By Crook, says there are more than 350 "language communities" in London today: "And when people from these ethnic backgrounds speak English their accents inevitably reflect features of their mother tongues." And, he later adds, "the old ways of speaking are being replaced by new ones. The many mixed accents and new urban accents are proof of that."

He also has a champion in Self, who says he is "no great sentimentalist when it comes to language – indeed, its ever-protean character is for me the most beguiling thing". And he adds: "The spread of the Jafaican accent is not only inevitable – inner London now has a 25 per cent ethnic minority population [and] in some boroughs the percentage is far higher – but actually a source of delight: traditional cockney linguistic inventiveness crossed with several other equally vibrant languages and patois, what could be finer?" It remains to be seen whether Jafaican will have the same life, the same joie de vivre, the same longevity, as true cockney. Surely there are only so many ways you can say "innit".

But, it could be worse; I could have been born in Birmingham.

Jafaican and Tikkiny Drown Out The East End's Cockney Twang

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/jafaican-and-tikkiny-drown-out-the-east-ends-cockney-twang-8050897.html

TUESDAY 11 APRIL 2006

The fading call of the old cockney sparrow is due in part to immigration to an area synonymous with new arrivals to Britain, according to Sue Fox of London University's Queen Mary College. It is also caused by the post-war exodus from east London of the traditional white working-class to the lush green pastures of Basildon and Harlow.

The result is the growing influence of words like nang, nuff and diss, which while they may leave the average middle-class observer baffled, are forming an accepted code among the new generation of real-life East Enders. It is also causing the virtual disappearance among London teenagers of speech patterns dating back to the Victorian period and before.

The phenomenon, which has been variously described as "Jafaican" - a combination of Caribbean and African or Tikkiny, in honour of the influence of Bengali in areas such as Tower Hamlets, is more properly referred to as "multicultural London English".

"We have got young people from many different ethnic backgrounds and have found that it is this blend that is responsible for the change. It is a move away from the traditional cockney speech form which was previously used by working-class Londoners," said Ms Fox.

But far from being an affectation by white children emulating what they regard as their "cooler" ethnic minority friends, or a response to the speech patterns used by popular television characters, such as Ali G, pictured above, it is a genuine linguistic trend.

"There is a certain amount of affectation in terms of vocabulary but in terms of accent we cannot claim the media has any influence. What we are finding is an accent used by people of all ethnic backgrounds," she said.

Ms Fox gathered evidence of the new accent during interviews and observation of 16- to 19-year-olds, many of them second or third-generation immigrants, at a further education college in east London. She believes the findings have important ramifications not just for the accent in the capital but for the supposed "levelling" of traditional accents around Britain.

The key change in east London is the disappearance of the diphthong - a long vowel sound which changes mid pronunciation from an "a" to an "i'', for example - as in the cockney "faice" for face. It has been replaced by a shorter vowel sound producing a word sounding like "fehs". "T-glottaling" - the swallowing of the "t" sound in words such as butter is less pronounced, the research found. The dropping of "h" - a common sign of what some have seen as a growing trend towards so-called "Estuary English" was also not as prevalent as expected.

Intriguingly it is boys rather than girls who are leading the change. The children are thought to be picking up the new way of speaking after they have left the direct influence of the family, starting at secondary school. Ms Fox plans to continue her research by observing the way that the youngsters' accents change over time as they leave school and go to work, and on the influence that American rap music is having on speech patterns.

David Roberts of the Queen's English Society said the move was part of the general development of language and should not be regarded as inferior to other codes so long as it was readily understandable to others. "The only purpose of language is to convey thoughts from inside one person's head to another as accurately and comprehensively as possible. Language must be able to adapt. If it hadn't we would all be addressing each other as thou and thee. You cannot put constraints on the development of language."

And as for that other celebrated East End linguistic export - cockney rhyming slang, Ms Fox believes that it is distinctly less authentic than the new multicultural code. "I'm not sure it ever was in everyday use - a lot of it came from the music hall."

How to speak Jafaican

*** Creps training shoes**
*** Yard home**
*** Yoot child/children**
*** Blud/bredren/bruv mate**
*** Nang good (as in: "Rah, das nuff nang!" meaning "Wow, that's really good!")**
*** Ends area**
*** Low batties low-slung trousers**
*** Skets "loose" girls**
*** Bitch girlfriend**
*** Sick good**
*** Bare very, a lot (as in: "I'm bare hungry")**
*** Jamming hanging around**
*** Begging chatting rubbish**
*** Chat talk back/contradict (as in: "Don't chat to me!")**
*** Nuff really, very**
*** Diss to disrespect**

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice

http://www.standard.co.uk/news/ghetto-grammar-robs-the-young-of-a-proper-voice-6433284.html

16 August 2011

In the wake of the riots, last Thursday evening, there was only one topic of conversation among the young people I mentor in Peckham. Thankfully, none of my mentees were involved in the disturbances. Yet almost all told me they had received the mass BBM broadcasts, written in street slang, inviting them to join in the thuggery.

The English language is an incredibly rich inheritance. Yet it is being squandered by so many young people of all races and backgrounds. Across London and other cities it is increasingly fashionable for them to speak in an inarticulate slang full of vacuous words such as "innit" and wilful distortions like "arks" for "ask" or tedious double negatives.

It's not a question of being a staunch lexical purist. It's about our attitude to young people and how we educate them. Language is power. The ability for young people to communicate articulately and intelligently is of huge importance, not only for themselves but also for the way in which they are perceived by others.

Their educational opportunities and job prospects are all directly affected by the way they choose to speak. Moreover, the more we are unable to express our feelings through words, the more frustrated we get. For young men and women in the inner-city, that can only be a dangerous thing.

So in my mentoring work I have zero tolerance towards inchoate street slang. As I constantly tell these young people, words are the best weapon you can have in your mental arsenal. Each week in Peckham we have a vocabulary slot, where we teach five new words. Be it ubiquitous, judicious, sardonic, ephemeral or plethora, we teach these young people words which can assist them, be it in GCSE English essays or everyday conversation.

Young people speaking street patois is a spectacular own goal. True, the patois limits their conversation to a select coterie of other young people, making it hard to penetrate if you don't know the lingo. But in so doing, young people are effectively rendering themselves unintelligible to - and often unemployable by - mainstream adult society. This is really why street slang is anathema to me: it is reckless self-sabotage. Some educators take a position of cultural relativism. They assert the legitimacy and value of street talk, or at the very least, the importance of teaching young people to "code switch" - how to differentiate in which milieu it is socially acceptable.

I have no time for such an approach. In my experience, young people find it very hard to code switch. Text-speak, poor grammar and street patois routinely pervade the essays I set them, let alone their conversations with me.

Acceptance of "ghetto grammar" amounts to a betrayal of young people, trapping them in stereotypes. The young people I mentor are not stupid - yet their street slang makes them sound stupid and uneducated.

The better they speak, the more others - especially in positions of authority - will be inclined to take them seriously. Embracing street slang leads to disenfranchisement, marginalisation and ultimately the dole queue. Embracing "proper English" unlocks an intellectual feast.

But to help them do so, we must confront this insulting and demeaning acceptance of street slang. We owe it to them: as adults, we do have a duty of linguistic care.

Saying no to 'Gizit' is Plain Prejudice

http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/saying-no-to-gizit-is-plain-prejudice-8488358.html?origin=internalSearch

Julia Snell
Sunday 10 February 2013

A war on dialect will quash curiosity and ideas

Sociolinguists have been fighting dialect prejudice since the 1960s, but negative and uninformed views about non-standard English are regaining currency in media and educational debates. Most recently, Carol Walker, headteacher of a Teesside primary school, wrote a letter to parents asking that they help tackle the "problem" posed by their children's use of local dialect by correcting certain words, phrases and pronunciations associated with Teesside (including "gizit ere" and "yous").

Naturally, I support the school's aim of teaching pupils to use written standard English so that they can progress in future education and employment. However, focusing on speech will not improve their writing. There are three reasons why the methods advocated in this letter are unhelpful and damaging.

First, the letter seems to assume that to teach standard English it is necessary to erase features of the local dialect. As a native of Teesside, I recognise several of the so-called "problem" words and phrases. I still use them, as well as standard English; they're part of the repertoire of linguistic forms and meanings I and, as my academic research shows, primary school children in Teesside draw upon.

For example, like me, the children I worked with sometimes used the banned "gizit". This is a condensed form of "give us it" (it's a normal process in informal speech that when talk speeds up sounds get left out). The use of the plural pronoun "us" instead of singular "me" is common not only in Teesside but in dialects across the English-speaking world, making a command less demanding. The letter states that children should say, "Please give me it" as an alternative, but such commands are quite risky, since they can sound impolite.

I find children use "give us it" with friends as a way of softening the command, by appealing to group solidarity. The same children use "give me it" and other "standard" alternatives such as "Can I have it?" and "I need it". It depended on context. Clearly, they had command of both standard and non-standard forms, using them discerningly. Second, the letter is wrong on a number of points. It says that children should not say "yous" because "you is NEVER plural". This is simply incorrect: "you" is used for both second person singular and plural in standard English, but historically, "you" was the plural form while "thou" was singular. Many languages still differentiate between second person singular and plural (e.g. tu and vous in French).

Standard English no longer makes this distinction, but many dialects of English, including Teesside, Newcastle and Liverpool, as well as Irish English, use "yous" to fill the gap. US English has also developed similar strategies, using forms such as "y'all" and "yinz" for second person plural.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, to learn and develop, children must participate actively in classroom discussion; they must think out loud, answer and ask questions, and challenge each other's and their teachers' ideas. When teachers focus exclusively on the form of this talk rather than the substance, children may simply remain silent in order to avoid the shame of speaking "incorrectly", and miss the interactions crucial to learning.

Ultimately, it is not the presence or absence of non-standard forms in children's speech that raise educational issues; rather, picking on non-standard voices risks marginalising some children, and may make them less confident at school. Silencing pupils' voices, even with the best intentions, is just not acceptable.

Articles

So what do the media and press say about MLE? Where do they place the dialect? Is it acceptable? Is it stigmatized? Should it be celebrated? What do you think?

How do people establish relationships between language and social practices? What is the nature of the "backwash effect" of minority languages on the majority language? And, more generally, what is the future of multicultural language varieties?

Jafaican: "Ali G Would Understand it Perfectly *p.134-135*

The replacement of Cockney with Jafaican may reflect something more profound. Accents and fashions display underlying insecurities and cultural aspirations; the rise of Received Pronunciation reflected a desire by the lower-middle class and provincials to embrace the values, lifestyles and habits of the British upper-middle class. In London the adoption of Jafaican, even among the privately-educated, reflects both a lack of confidence in British cultural values and an aspiration towards some form of ghetto authenticity.

'Jafaican' May be Cool, But it Sounds Ridiculous *p. 138-139*

I don't think an aversion to Jafaican (fake Jamaican), which according to the Sunday Times (£, obviously) will have completely replaced Cockney by 2030, is racial. The West Indian accent from which it came is fairly pleasant, nice enough for various drink makers to use it to flog us their products. However, its by-product is rather unpleasant, sinister, idiotic and absurd.

Multicultural London English is Not "Jafaican" *p.142-143*

"But it wasn't intercommunal violence; this was where he was completely wrong. What has happened is that the substantial section of the chavs that you [Mr Jones] wrote about have become black. The whites have become black.

"A particular sort of violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture has become the fashion. Black and white, boy and girl operate in this language together, this language, which is wholly false, which is this Jamaican patois that has intruded in England. This is why so many of us have this sense of literally a foreign country.

"Listen to David Lammy, an archetypal successful black man. If you turn the screen off, so you were listening to him on radio, you would think he was white."

Starkey's "Norman Tebbit Moment" *p.144-147*

Notice that the people who use the language Starkey so derided are actually all around us: they are our students, our own children, us, our communities, not some alien race. To mark them out as a separate group because of their "wholly false" language use is to misunderstand and misrepresent both young people and the ways in which language works.

Starkey's "Norman Tebbit Moment" *p.144-147*

In one example, she quoted the then Conservative Minister Norman Tebbit making a direct link between language use and crime:

"If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people turn up filthy … at school … all those things tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards then there's no imperative to stay out of crime."

Starkey's "Norman Tebbit Moment" *p.144-147*

Perhaps I'm misinterpreting West's point, though, which is that in the "old days" the lower-classes strove "upward" toward RP, whereas now they stive "downward" toward these Caribbean-influenced varieties. But "covert prestige" dialects (i.e. dialects that are technically lower on the social scale but adopted by higher classes for a variety of reasons) are nothing new. Let's not pretend that middle-class young men trying to sound like they grew up working-class is a recent phenomenon.

Multicultural London English is Not "Jafaican" *p.142-143*

What strikes me as so twisted is Starkey's leap from the assertion that "the whites have become black" to the apparent linking of "blackness" to "violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture". At that point in his argument, he makes no attempt to draw a distinction between skin colour and culture. Later, he offers some (feeble) attempts at mitigation, perhaps when he tries to argue that not all black people - David Lammy, for example - "sound black", but it's still a reductive and idiotic argument. Why? Because in Starkey's mind black = "violent, destructive, nihilistic gangster culture". And your degree of blackness can be identified by the way you talk…

Starkey's "Norman Tebbit Moment" *p.144-147*

As one Twitter user @vivmondo wittily put it, "Asking David Starkey for his views on youth culture is a little like asking Lady Sovereign for her views on Elizabethan shipping law" but even so he goes ahead and gives us the benefits of his massive knowledge.

Starkey's "Norman Tebbit Moment" *p.144-147*

Sadly, anything about language change tends to aggravate those who see all change as a foul corruption of our beautiful tongue, or even (in the case of the Evening Standard article), deranged anti-Jamaican troglodytes who argue (or sneer, perhaps more accurately) that it's a "crappy patois" "derived from some of the most pointless countries in the world", and speaking it is likely to limit young people's life chances. Well, yes, but only if they speak it as their only variety, which is generally not the case, as Hitchings is at pains to point out. But why let a bit of reasoned argument get in the way of a good dose of prejudice?

"Crappy Patois" *p.170-171*

Such terminology has the function of setting its users apart from the mainstream. It has its own resonance. It's also exclusive, it becomes an internal language to people who share particular lifestyles. That's part of its potency. The fact that it is internal, the fact it is not commonly used by everybody, helps to define the group."

England Riots: What's The Meaning of The Words Behind The Chaos? *p.166-169*

Indeed, the focus on "gangsta" terminology tells us just as much about the media as it does about the perpetrators of disorder.

"I think journalists have adopted it because it distils the mood and the type of person perceived to be behind the past few days, and also because there's been a distinct uncertainty, almost nervousness, about what to call the perpetrators," she says.

"Are they rioters, which implies a political objection, looters, which doesn't, or vandals, etc? It's interesting too that a lot of the people cleaning up embraced the Sun's 'scum' so readily, a reflexive response of anger."

England Riots: What's The Meaning of The Words Behind The Chaos? *p.166-169*

"Was that we'd have groups of students from white Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, along with those of Arab, South American, Ghanaian and Portuguese descent, and they all spoke with the same dialect. But those who use it most strongly are those of second or third generation immigrant background, followed by white boys of London origin and then white girls of London origin."

From the Mouths of Teens *p.158-161*

"It is likely that young people have been growing up in London exposed to a mixture of second-language English and varieties of English from other parts of the world, as well as local London English, and that this new variety has emerged from that mix,"

From the Mouths of Teens *p.158-161*

"The term Jafaican gives the impression that there's something fake about the dialect, which we would (omega) refute," she says. "As one young girl who lives in outer London said of her eight-year-old cousin who lives in inner London, 'People say he speaks like a black boy, but he just speaks like a London boy.' The message is that people are beginning to sound the same regardless of their colour or ethnic background. So we prefer to use the term Multicultural London English (MLE). It's perhaps not as catchy," she says, "but it comes closer to what we're trying to describe."

From the Mouths of Teens *p.158-161*

In the half-century since teenagers first came of socio-cultural age as a distinct demographic, their relationship to the rest of society can be described as a tense stand-off punctuated by howls of hormonal turbulence. "Don't laugh at a youth for his affectations," said the US essayist Logan Pearsall Smith. "He is only trying on one face after another, to find a face of his own." Over the years, the faces have included provocations ranging from skinheads to hoodies, but the advent of MLE is believed to mark the first time that teenagers have consciously used language to stake out their own territory.

From the Mouths of Teens *p.158-161*

It's interesting, for example, that Liverpool seems to be getting more scouse. Population make-up would be a factor, as well as what some linguists would call 'neighbour opposition' with its arch-rival Manchester. It's a question of identity."

From The Mouths of the Teens *p.158-161*

English is one of the most dynamically protean of all languages.

From The Mouths of the Teens *p.158-161*

"The words change all the time," he says wearily. " It's, like," (even in his out-of-school Standard English, he pronounces this "laaahhhkk") "you have to learn a whole new vocabulary every few months just to keep on top of it. It's like, just recently, swag now means bad."

From The Mouths of the Teens *p.158-161*

The trouble with "Jafaican" is that it seems to have started life as a sort of British version of "wigger": that is, a somewhat insulting way to refer to the culture of white or asian kids who decide to act (and talk) black. Thus "Jafaican" isn't a reasonable term for the young Cockneys from Tower Hamlets that (according to Sue Fox) are starting to copy some vowel features and some lexical items from neighboring Bangladeshis.

What "Multicultural London English" sounds like *p.154-157*

"Adolescence is the life stage at which people most willingly take on new visible or audible symbols of group identification," he says. " Thus, fashions specific to this age group change rapidly. Fashion and music often go together, and these in turn are often associated with social class and ethnicity. The same is true of language. It's most obviously observable in terms of slang and new ways of expressing themselves, such as the substitute of 'I'm, like' for 'I said' or 'I thought' a few years ago."

From The Mouths of the Teens *p.158-161*

"It's a real dialect rather than simply a mode of speech, and there's already evidence that it's spreading to other multicultural cities like Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester. It'll become more mainstream through force of numbers and continued migration, and because it's considered cool."

From The Mouths of the Teens *p.158-161*

A "perfect storm" of circumstances has arisen to ensure the rapid dissemination of MLE: a nexus of immigration, population mobility, and a wave of successful London garage stars (and MLE speakers) such as Lady Sovereign and Dizzee Rascal.

Starkey's Norman Tebbit Moment *p.158-161*

Over Britain as a whole, dialects are levelling out — differences are disappearing. Some say this is due to TV but a stronger influence is greater mobility. In the south-east, stretching from Southampton in the south and west to Ipswich in the north and east, it is becoming increasingly hard to tell where people are from.

The English Slanguage *p.184-185*

However, I had to hit the record button when I heard these North London girls being interviewed by BBC Radio 4. I have no idea what their ethnic background is, but that's kind of the point, innit!

What "Multicultural London English" sounds like *p.154-157*

Do you really think that's a better term? To me it sounds dry and misleading: what on earth does "multicultural" mean in a linguistic sense? "Jafaican" may be too narrow, but it's punchy and memorable and at least gives a nod in a meaningful direction.

What "Multicultural London English" sounds like *p.154-157*

Language is constantly evolving. One of the interesting things about the new East End accent is that it is a sign of racial integration. The dialect says nothing about your ethnic background as it is spoken by young people of all colours and religions. One things is for sure. English as we know it will continue to change, whether we like it or not.

The English Slanguage *p.184-185*

Still, I have to agree with Steve "Multicultural London English" is about as unlikely to become a popular piece of terminology as "African-American Vernacular English" was. And "Jafaican" feels like a lexicographical winner, even if it's misleading.

What "Multicultural London English" sounds like *p.154-157*

Statistics from the 2011 census, released yesterday, reveal that 1.7 million Londoners don't speak English as their main language. That's 22 per cent. In some boroughs, the proportion is much higher: in Newham it rises to 41 per cent. These figures outstrip those in other parts of the country: in the North-East, for instance, only three per cent have a first language other than English. Alarmists see the general pattern as evidence of the erosion of both the English language and British identity. In London, so the argument goes, that process is already far advanced.

Henry Hitchings: English Still Stands Tall in Multicultural London *p.150-151*

Yet there are palpable changes afoot. Teenagers who have never been anywhere near the Caribbean pepper their talk with snippets of Jamaican patois. This isn't a trivial detail. It may mark the emergence of a new Multicultural London English. Here, as in the census, we see a city shaped by a host of influences — their effects tantalisingly unpredictable.

Henry Hitchings: English Still Stands Tall in Multicultural London *p.150-151*

Nationally, the most common first languages, aside from English and Welsh, are Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati and French, in that order. The absence of Chinese from the list looks odd but has to do with its many distinct dialects. It will surely not astonish alert Londoners that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has the highest percentage of residents whose main language is French, or that Ealing leads the way in Polish-speakers.

Henry Hitchings: English Still Stands Tall in Multicultural London *p.150-151*

What does all this mean for English? We may imagine that it heralds a huge influx of words from other cultures. The language has long been promiscuous, and over the past 1,500 years it has absorbed words from more than 300 other tongues. But today English draws comparatively little from other languages. New words come about mainly through creative use of existing resources.

Henry Hitchings: English Still Stands Tall in Multicultural London *p.150-151*

The Cockney culture and language has been ethnically cleansed from London's East End as mass Third World immigration has pushed white people into minority status and destroyed the world-famous accent

Cockneys Have Become First British Group to be Ethnically Cleansed *p.136-137*

Cockney is being replaced by what is politely called "Multicultural London English" or LME for short. LME is also known as "Jafaican" which is a combination of Jamacian, African and Asian.

Cockneys Have Become First British Group to be Ethnically Cleansed *p.136-137*

"Cockney in the East End is now transforming itself into Multicultural London English, a new, melting-pot mixture of all those people living here who learnt English as a second language," Prof Kerswill was quoted as saying. So ends 500 years of history, culture and tradition: wiped out by less than 30 years of mass immigration. The evidence is clear: mass immigration will lead to the ethnic cleansing of Britain's indigenous peoples.

Cockneys Have Become First British Group to be Ethnically Cleansed *p.136-137*

The Cockney's fate is the same one awaiting all of Britain, and indeed, of Europe, unless the insanity and unfairness of current immigration trends are not only halted, but reversed. May we pray that the Cockneys are the last victims of this evil process.

Cockneys Have Become First British Group to be Ethnically Cleansed *p.136-137*

The dialect won't die off altogether. It will survive in the descendants of those Home Counties émigrés. You can hear it happening today: teenagers in Essex speak like Henry Cooper and Barbara Windsor; in Lambeth, they are more likely to sound like Ali G.

Word on The Street in London *p.172-175*

"In much of the East End of London, the cockney dialect that we hear now spoken by older people will have disappeared within another generation," says Professor Kerswill. "People in their forties will be the last generation to speak it and it will be gone within 30 years. Since the 1950s and the New Town movement, more affluent east Londoners moved out of the capital and into Essex and Hertfordshire, especially to places like Romford, Southend and Hemel Hempstead, and they took their accent with them.

Word on The Street in London *p.172-175*

Even Professor Henry Higgins — rarely lost for words — would be dumbfounded. New research shows that the cockney dialect he battled so hard to beat out of Eliza Doolittle in My Fair Lady will disappear from London's streets within a generation.

Cockneys Have Become First British Group to be Ethnically Cleansed *p.136-137*

There is something clearly 'London' about this young man's speech, yet he hardly speaks 'classic Cockney.' What is striking here are the diphthongs:

*In Cockney, the vowel in 'face' shifts toward the /ai/ in 'price.' In MLE, this vowel is the opposite: it's more of a monophthong or close diphthong (IPA [e] or [ei]).

*In Cockney, the vowel in 'price' shifts toward the /oy/ in 'choice.' In MLE, the vowel becomes more of a monophthong, as in American Southern or some Northern English accents: (IPA [a:]).

*In Cockney, the vowel in 'goat' moves towared the /au/ in 'mouth.' In MLE, this vowel is more of a monophthong or close diphthong (IPA [o] or [ou]).

Multicultural London 'Oo' *p.140-141*

It is often called 'Jafaican' meaning 'fake Jamaican', suggesting that it is largely spoken by white kids trying to be cool. However, this is unfair and inaccurate, as in reality, young people from all backgrounds growing up in Inner London have been exposed to the mixture of second-language English and local London English that has resulted in this new dialect of MLE.

London English...From Cockneys to Jafaicans *p.188-189*

"This means that children were no longer learning their English dialect from local cockney speakers but from older teenagers, who themselves had developed their English in the linguistic melting pot. Out of all this, the new English which we call multicultural London English emerged, and this is the sound of inner-city London we hear today."

Word on The Street in London *p.172-175*

Cockney was adopted as a badge of pride thus the attempt to limit the number of cockneys, through the legend that true cockneys are born only within the sound of Bow Bells; the ones that peal every 15 minutes from Sir Christopher Wren's 1680 church, St Mary-le-Bow, on Cheapside.

Word on The Street in London *p.172-175*

Like all such trends, Jafaican has been picked up by the middle-class, middle-aged and well-educated as well as teenagers. Indeed, it has been suggested by experts in linguistics and dialect that Jafaican will have completely replaced Cockney by 2030, and there have been attempts to argue that the appropriation of such slang by posh folk reflects both a lack of confidence in British cultural values and a crush on ghetto authenticity. Remember David Starkey, for example, causing a kerfuffle for claiming that white working-class people are 'becoming black'?

From Cockney to Jafaican 'Jafaican' is Less Irritating Than Fake American *p.186-187*

The yout' appear to be selective as to when they use street slang. My neighbour, a black teenager with aspiring, well–spoken parents, gives it large with the, 'Hey blad, you looking buff in dem low batties' (My friend, those trousers that are hanging impossibly down below your backside held up by who-knows-what and showing your under-crackers look really nice on you), and 'Check dis' da Feds are in I's yard' (Listen to me my friends, the police are in my house) when outside hangin' with his homies, but at home sounds as middle-class as you like. And I have never seen a police car outside his home.

From Cockney to Jafaican 'Jafaican' is Less Irritating Than Fake American *p.186-187*

I was chillin' in me yard recently with a nice glass of wine when a young man came to the door to sell me some tea towels. 'Dees nang good [brilliant quality] sistah,' he said to me with no shame (I don't mean the slang — anyone who has bought such produce from the cold-callers will know that they absorb so little that if I committed a murder and tried to mop up the blood with one, no DNA would be found on it). I told him politely and in good English to sling his hook and he shouted over his shoulder, 'Deep rude. Dat was deep.'

From Cockney to Jafaican 'Jafaican' is Less Irritating Than Fake American *p.186-187*

However, dissenters claim that MLE is not uprooting Cockney, but rather is emerging from it, as if the two are adjacent steps in an evolutionary sequence. This vein of thought posits that Cockney is not threatened by MLE, is rather part of its rebirth into a changing cultural climate. Both arguments boil down to a matter of opinion. Whichever way MLE is interpreted, it is now an undeniable part of London's linguistic landscape.

Jafaican: The Emergence of Multicultural London English *p.190-191*

Yesterday, while getting a haircut, I fell into conversation with the customer in the chair next to mine. An Albanian, he was complaining that "no one in London speaks good English these days". I asked what he regarded as good English, and he surprised me by replying "like on EastEnders - all that old-fashioned cockney".

Language Can't Stay Still - Just Listen to London *p.192-193*

Multicultural London English is easily recognised by features such as the use of tag questions - "innit" or "is it" - which certainly aren't invitations for a response. Infused with Afro-Caribbean seasoning, it is employed by (mostly young) Londoners of every imaginable background. Critics maintain that it is phoney - "Jafaican" implies this - but it is an authentic, organic variety of English and it looks likely to become more prevalent.

Language Can't Stay Still - Just Listen to London *p.192-193*

Having emerged in the late 20th century, MLE - or "Jafaican" as it is often mockingly referred to - is the territory of younger generations, primarily in the East End. It is an interesting chimera of a dialect, incorporating not just words from other languages, but different pronunciations of English from the people who speak those other languages. This is why it is typically confused for lacklustre attempts of white London youth to mimic Jamaican accents. Hence: "Jafaican."

Jafaican: The Emergence of Multicultural London English *p.190-191*

This linguistic obscurity was brought under public scrutiny after the 2011 England Riots. Rioters and anti-rioting communities were able to mobilize through text messages that, when intercepted, weren't readily understandable. This is because they were offshoots of MLE, utilizing esoteric terms to refer to things like the police ("feds," "po po"), and homes ("yards"). Both violent rioters and the communities that tried to counter them used terms learned from American popular culture and Jamaican offshoots of MLE, which brought attention to MLE's use.

Jafaican: The Emergence of Multicultural London English *p.190-191*

One reason for this is the large number of other languages spoken by Londoners - at least 300. Among the more prominent of these are Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu and Gujarati, as well as Caribbean creole, Cantonese, Polish, Arabic, Tagalog and Greek. On a recent hour-long bus journey, I heard Russian, Portuguese, Turkish and Yoruba. As passengers flitted between native and adopted languages, it was clear these had become intertwined.

Language Can't Stay Still - Just Listen to London *p.192-193*

In the 14th century, Geoffrey Chaucer absorbed words of French and Italian origin; recycling them was a way to make his writing appear more dignified. Today the multiplicity of tongues on our streets means scope for cross-pollination is much greater.

Language Can't Stay Still - Just Listen to London *p.192-193*

But the spoken language will always be elastic. It is the spoken language that is the great driver of change, and in London scarcely a day goes by without our noticing some addition or adjustment. This can be disconcerting, but English draws strength from being mobile and protean.

Language Can't Stay Still - Just Listen to London *p.192-193*

It's an uncomfortable feeling, knowing you are one of the last of your kind. Did the final few dodos experience this sort of Darwinian dread? Is the ocean deep awash with whale song along the lines of "Mate, give it 30 years and that's our hopping pot"?

Death of a Dialect *p.194-199*

The end is nigh, then, and has been nigh for some time. I have four nieces and nephews, aged 14 to 25, who were born in east London, have lived in east London all their lives and all employ the awful (to these 52-year-old ears, at least) "Jafaican" accent that is seeing off my beloved cockney. But is it such a bad thing?

Death of a Dialect *p.194-199*

Noted linguist David Crystal, in his book By Hook or By Crook, says there are more than 350 "language communities" in London today: "And when people from these ethnic backgrounds speak English their accents inevitably reflect features of their mother tongues." And, he later adds, "the old ways of speaking are being replaced by new ones. The many mixed accents and new urban accents are proof of that."

Death of a Dialect *p.194-199*

"The spread of the Jafaican accent is not only inevitable – inner London now has a 25 per cent ethnic minority population [and] in some boroughs the percentage is far higher – but actually a source of delight: traditional cockney linguistic inventiveness crossed with several other equally vibrant languages and patois, what could be finer?" It remains to be seen whether Jafaican will have the same life, the same joie de vivre, the same longevity, as true cockney. Surely there are only so many ways you can say "innit".

Death of a Dialect *p.194-199*

The fading call of the old cockney sparrow is due in part to immigration to an area synonymous with new arrivals to Britain, according to Sue Fox of London University's Queen Mary College. It is also caused by the post-war exodus from east London of the traditional white working-class to the lush green pastures of Basildon and Harlow.

Jafaican and Tikkiny Drown Out The East End's Cockney Twang *p.200-201*

The result is the growing influence of words like nang, nuff and diss, which while they may leave the average middle-class observer baffled, are forming an accepted code among the new generation of real-life East Enders. It is also causing the virtual disappearance among London teenagers of speech patterns dating back to the Victorian period and before.

Jafaican and Tikkiny Drown Out The East End's Cockney Twang *p.200-201*

The key change in east London is the disappearance of the diphthong - a long vowel sound which changes mid pronunciation from an "a" to an "i", for example - as in the cockney "faice" for face. It has been replaced by a shorter vowel sound producing a word sounding like "fehs". "T-glottaling" - the swallowing of the "t" sound in words such as butter is less pronounced, the research found. The dropping of "h" - a common sign of what some have seen as a growing trend towards so-called "Estuary English" was also not as prevalent as expected.

Jafaican and Tikkiny Drown Out The East End's Cockney Twang *p.200-201*

Intriguingly it is boys rather than girls who are leading the change. The children are thought to be picking up the new way of speaking after they have left the direct influence of the family, starting at secondary school. Ms Fox plans to continue her research by observing the way that the youngsters' accents change over time as they leave school and go to work, and on the influence that American rap music is having on speech patterns.

Jafaican and Tikkiny Drown Out The East End's Cockney Twang *p.200-201*

David Roberts of the Queen's English Society said the move was part of the general development of language and should not be regarded as inferior to other codes so long as it was readily understandable to others. "The only purpose of language is to convey thoughts from inside one person's head to another as accurately and comprehensively as possible. Language must be able to adapt. If it hadn't we would all be addressing each other as thou and thee. You cannot put constraints on the development of language."

Jafaican and Tikkiny Drown Out The East End's Cockney Twang *p.136-137*

The English language is an incredibly rich inheritance. Yet it is being squandered by so many young people of all races and backgrounds. Across London and other cities it is increasingly fashionable for them to speak in an inarticulate slang full of vacuous words such as "innit" and wilful distortions like "arks" for "ask" or tedious double negatives.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

It's not a question of being a staunch lexical purist. It's about our attitude to young people and how we educate them. Language is power. The ability for young people to communicate articulately and intelligently is of huge importance, not only for themselves but also for the way in which they are perceived by others.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

Moreover, the more we are unable to express our feelings through words, the more frustrated we get. For young men and women in the inner-city, that can only be a dangerous thing.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

Young people speaking street patois is a spectacular own goal. True, the patois limits their conversation to a select coterie of other young people, making it hard to penetrate if you don't know the lingo. But in so doing, young people are effectively rendering themselves unintelligible to - and often unemployable by - mainstream adult society. This is really why street slang is anathema to me: it is reckless self-sabotage.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

Acceptance of "ghetto grammar" amounts to a betrayal of young people, trapping them in stereotypes. The young people I mentor are not stupid - yet their street slang makes them sound stupid and uneducated.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

The better they speak, the more others - especially in positions of authority - will be inclined to take them seriously. Embracing street slang leads to disenfranchisement, marginalisation and ultimately the dole queue. Embracing "proper English" unlocks an intellectual feast.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

Moving forwards, what needs to change? Firstly, I think our attitude to youth and with it young people urgently needs re-visioning in this country. Post-riots, all we have seemed to do is listen even more assiduously to young people's grievances and then duly base policy around placating them and their teenage whims and caprices. In all honesty, what does a 14 year old from Peckham or Croydon know about the world? Truth to tell, not much, save how to poke someone on Facebook, download illegal music from the web and play Call of Duty: Black Ops to a high level.

The London riots one year on: What still needs to change if we are avoid a repeat of last year

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2184359/London-riots-year-What-needs-change--.html

Very soon, if not already, many young people will be wholly unable to go for a college, university or job interview with any real chance of success, because many of them are functionally illiterate and unable to string a sentence together or make themselves understood in proper English, without resorting to text speak, street patois, ghetto grammar or inane filler words such as "like", "basically" or "you get me?" – all words and phrases which make them sound utterly moronic.

The London riots one year on: What still needs to change if we are avoid a repeat of last year

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2184359/London-riots-year-What-needs-change--.html

But to help them do so, we must confront this insulting and demeaning acceptance of street slang. We owe it to them: as adults, we do have a duty of linguistic care.

Ghetto Grammar Robs The Young of a Proper Voice *p.202-203*

Moreover, let us once and for all bury the pathetic, fallacious and quite frankly dangerous assertion (so beloved of liberals) that the riots were "political", or overt, conscious political statements by the teenage underclass. No they weren't. Kids with no knowledge whatsoever of Mark Duggan went looting in other parts of London and other parts of the country simply because they could, because they were bored, because they wanted the thrill derived from violence and robbery, together with a new flat screen TV and a brand new pair of trainers into the bargain, and thought they could get away it with it, not because of any deeply held ideological or political convictions.

The London riots one year on: What still needs to change if we are avoid a repeat of last year

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2184359/London-riots-year-What-needs-change--.html

Young people across the country need to be taught that language is power and that a proper command of standard English is essential if they wish to ameliorate their educational and job prospects. They also need to be shown that if they want to succeed in modern Britain, they need to be able to confound, not conform to stereotypes. People in power (namely adults) will (not unreasonably) judge them on the way they walk, talk and dress – in short, the way they present themselves to the outside world. High time, therefore, for young people to be encouraged to get rid of the hoodies and the baggy jeans hanging down their bums!

The London riots one year on: What still needs to change if we are avoid a repeat of last year *http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2184359/London-riots-year-What-needs-change--.html*

Nowadays, young people are growing up in an MTV Base “3 minute attention span” society where the very act of reading a book - an act which for thousands of years has formed the fundamental basis of our civilization, as a conduit to knowledge, wisdom and erudition, plus access to other worlds of the imagination, not to mention the best that has been thought and written in human history - is considered to be a “long ting” (time consuming, in street parlance, therefore highly unattractive).

The London riots one year on: What still needs to change if we are avoid a repeat of last year *http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2184359/London-riots-year-What-needs-change--.html*

Sociolinguists have been fighting dialect prejudice since the 1960s, but negative and uninformed views about non-standard English are regaining currency in media and educational debates. Most recently, Carol Walker, headteacher of a Teesside primary school, wrote a letter to parents asking that they help tackle the "problem" posed by their children's use of local dialect by correcting certain words, phrases and pronunciations associated with Teesside (including "gizit ere" and "yous").

Saying no to 'Gizit' is Plain Prejudice *p.204-205*

Ultimately, it is not the presence or absence of non-standard forms in children's speech that raise educational issues; rather, picking on non-standard voices risks marginalising some children, and may make them less confident at school. Silencing pupils' voices, even with the best intentions, is just not acceptable.

Saying no to 'Gizit' is Plain Prejudice *p.204-205*

It seems that the overall media perception of this dialect is still not looked upon as 'acceptable'. To the average person it is still firmly attached to anti social behaviour, crime and violence. This accent is here to stay, more and more people are being born into this speech pattern and it will only continue to evolve, you can fully understand why it has such a negative perception, however people cannot and should not judge a person purely on the way they sound as this is no longer just slang, it is a fully fledged accent.

What

Multiethnolect?

Urban
heteroglossia?

Youth
vernacular?

call

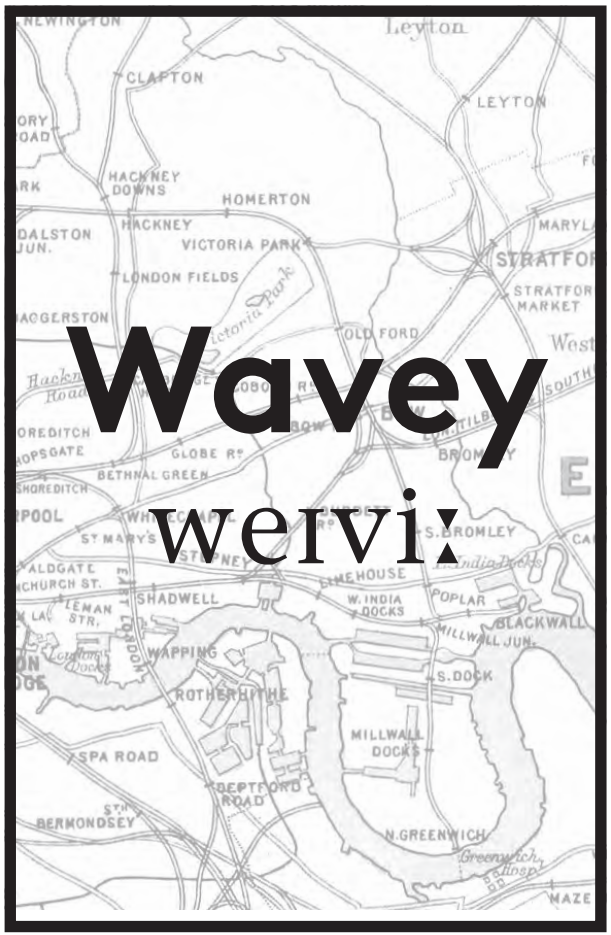
do you

Multiethnolect?

Urban
heteroglossia?

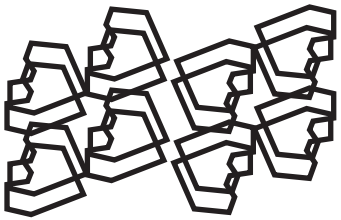
Youth
vernacular?

it?



Wavey

weivi:



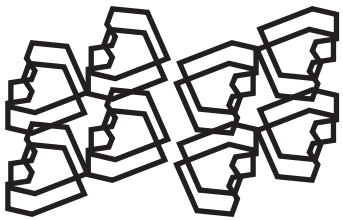
Yo you man are Wavey!

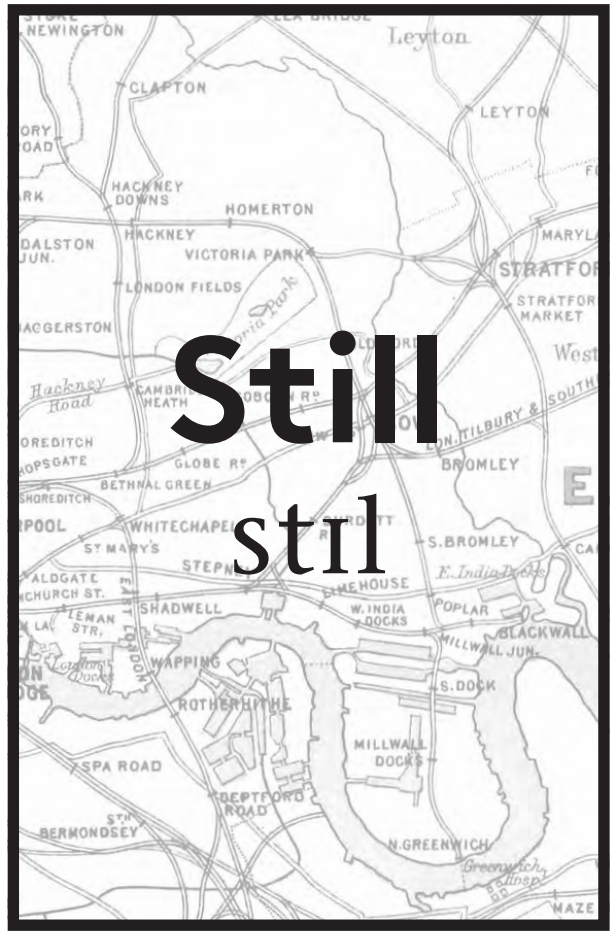
You on getting Wavey?

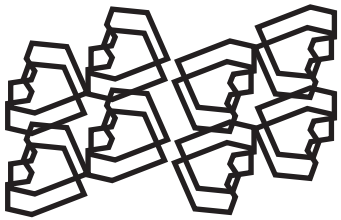
I am so Waved right now!

Wavey/Waved
[wey-vee]

- **Drunk, under the influence, complete opposite of sober.**







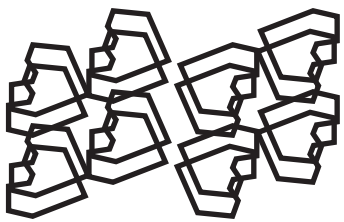
Yeah feeling this, Still.

You get me, Still.

Yeah, Still.

Still
[stihl]

- **To end a sentence, validate your point.**



Five

The Experts

A *conversation* with Jonathon Green

Jonathon Green is a British lexicographer of slang and writer on the history of alternative cultures. Jonathon Green is often referred to as the English-speaking world's leading lexicographer of slang, and has even been described as 'The most-acclaimed British lexicographer since Johnson'.

MLE has been stigmatized because slang has always been stigmatized, it always will be. To an extent it frightens people, it comes from the gutter, it's the voice of the gutter or to go up a few inches it's the voice of the street. I think people are frightened becuase it is seen as "corrupting our children" thats always going to be the case and always has been the case.

I think the interesting thing about MLE is that people are thinking that it is going to have a much longer lasting affect than previous slangs, to me it's just part of slang and it's current iteration, it's the current public face of young people. 'Young peoples slang is always where its at anyway'.

How do you think societies and communities are moulded by the languages that are spoken?

I can only speak for slang and in a way you could equate slang with jargon, not the obfuscatory language but the language of in groups, be they lawyers be they dope dealers be they lexicographers, is it cuts in both directions, which is that on the one hand you're keeping other people out and on the other you're also creating this self affirmatory vocabulary, that if you know it then you're part of the group and so on, and that obviously goes for slang.

The great difference though chronologically is that when you look back to the very first slang collections, back in the 16th century you're looking at short glossaries of criminal slang and those are very much outside the mainstream world, but if you then cut by five hundred years to world in which we have the internet and social media and so on and so forth, the chance of slang to stay reasonably isolated is much much less I would suggest. My own example is I look back to the sixties when I was for the sake of argument a 'hippie' although I loath the phrase, I worked on something called the underground press, Oz magazine, International times and so on and so forth...

But what we didn't realize because the communications were not the same, was that the language that we were using 'groovy', 'heavy', 'bag', 'cool' and 'out of sight' with exceptions for certain words for drugs, what we were actually talking was 1930's American black slang, the difference now is that people in their teens and early twenties I would suggest largely speak two thousand and thirteen's American black slang, but they know it, and the gap between it being coined and being disseminated around the world really, not just primarily English speaking countries. I'm in France and I think they use a lot of it here as well, the gap is almost invisible.

I think yes, there still is however an extent to which the slang you use reflects the world in which you exist and that is undoubtedly true of MLE but the problem is that because of this speed of communication, I'm not so much thinking about MLE although I'm sure its true, your also getting guys from Eaton calling their girlfriend their 'hoe' or their 'bitch' which is really not how it started off, so its cross classes is what I mean.

My youngest son lives off hackney road and he's thirty and people have said to me 'is Gabriel black?' oh no, He's white half jewish.

Do you think the UK is class conscious?

Does the pope shit in the woods is the bear a catholic basically, do we need to go further. The UK is screamingly fucking class conscious and I think one thing in all seriousness worth bearing in mind is that the great thing about slang in a way takes us back to our Eatonians calling their girlfriends their bitch, is the fact

that slang unlike most language comes from the bottom up you don't really get middle class slang you don't really get upper class slang, you get a few things and if you look back in a book in around 1909 by a man called Redding Ware which is called 'Passing English to the Victorian Era' there's a certain amount of terms he uses which have in brackets the labels of society but for everyone of those there's a thousand for street language and that's absolutely true about slang.

One of my theories is that the tradition of people arriving in the east end has been basically to pick up to one extent or another a degree of London slang and I thinks its interesting what your saying about the people in Epsom is also very true about the people who are moving to Spitalfieds and so on, middle class people, richer than middle class people but they're talking MLE because its like adopting the current form of east end slang and to me its just the same that has happened with immigrants, with the Jews with I guess to an extent the Bengalis and so on and so forth.

Well its my theory and its undoubtedly true, this same son of mine went to Westminster school for Christ's sake, its changed enormously, well I mean I'm sixty five on Saturday and a lot of this shits changed, as it should.

Do you think accents can affect the way people perceive others? How?

Its not really my neck of the woods, again yes undoubtedly so, I to me have a pretty neutral middle class accent, but I remember once being told 'you'd have been really good on radio 4, but not any longer, you sound too middle class', middle class yes but nothing else. Its interesting because there was an article I was reading on a blog called Spitalfields life, and its just this guy who's set himself the target of doing ten thousand interviews of people in Spitalfields, one a day for twenty seven years or whatever, but he does it, its amazing, it absolutely fucking amazing, he does it! There's a woman there and she's French, tell a lie its in Rachel Lichtenstein's book called 'On Brick lane', and there's a woman there and she says 'I always dealt with people in exactly the same way because I don't know the difference between them on the basis of accent', and I think that's true of all of us, as I say I'm in France and I can tell if somebody comes from the south I guess because they have longer vowels and shit, and I can tell when somebody's speaks a very pure French basically because its easier to understand, because it more like the stuff you learnt at school years ago, but basically I haven't got a clue when push comes to shove and the same in the States, well I vaguely know if somebody's from the south but I know when's somebody's from New York, but I don't really know the difference between California and say Illinois, and so on... but in England I think it totally has that affect, the interesting thing with MLE is that it does have this, I guess you can call it, 'black' accent and that's what's been adopted by white people of all sorts of classes and indeed I would suggest by brown people, and what's interesting as a slang lexicographer is the fact that the Asian community who are now in their third and fourth generation, third generation probably because they came a bit later than the west Indian ones, the young people, and its in that book Londonstani, they're all talking basically 'black', they're not talking and indigenous Asian type slang, I think that exists but I think its in the Asian languages which no one translates, unless I've really seriously missed something, which is quite possible because the gap between me and the people who coin this stuff is enormous, and gets bigger, they stay the age of sixteen to twenty and I get older.

I went to talk to some young people at a sixth form college in Plaistow the other day and that was great and very fascinating, and as I say they were all young but on the whole there were a lot of Asian kids, when talking about slang, which we were, they were all talking about MLE, well they didn't call it MLE, they just call it slang but there was no sense that there was something separate coming out of the Asian community.

(talking about the fact that the accent sounds 'black')

Well I think its what I say a bit about in my essay which is that its 'cool' in the same way even if we didn't know it back in the sixties, how the Rolling Stones were recycling black music from the states we were recycling, not being the creative's in that way but we were recycling the language. Black culture has been dominant in what you call the 'counter culture' since world war two I would suggest, and more and more so, so it doesn't particularly surprise me, I think its quite logical that because its cool, well if you want to push cool out and say its rebellious, angry or whatever, or if you want to push it in the other direction well its creative, it makes music etc whatever it is, that culture has been the one that has appealed to young people in my generation, in the generation before mine and I think in all generations, particularly those who want to move outside and would class themselves with a very small 'r' in my case as rebellious.

Does speaking an urban dialect place you under the umbrella of 'the working class'?

I guess so I mean I talk a couple sentences about 'Mockney' and I guess that's the same thing, Mick Jagger standing up on stage going 'you don't wana see mi traazers fall down' etc etc it was there then. When I was doing a book called 'Days in the Life', which is an oral history of the Sixties in London, what interested me was all these rock and roll people all turned out to be extremely smart and attended public schools at Oxford but they'd long since made sure that no one realized. So its there, I don't know its not a way I've gone, but its undoubtedly there, I guess its got to yeah, the definition of urban, I guess does semi synonymies the phrase 'working class' it does not mean upper middle class, that's what I would assume.

Do you think the use of 'rough language' can encourage bad behaviour?

I would rather die than say that that is true. Well there's a line in Thackeray back in the mid nineteenth century and he talks about somebody basically stopping talking posh as it were and talking in rough truthful language, and I think that's what slang is, my feeling on slang is that its not rough, its human and it deals with the sides of humanity that's not the nicest sides but of the most honest and truthful, and they may not be politically correct and they may in one or another definiton of the word rough, be rough, they may run parallel to bad behaviour but then you get into sociology and I'm not sociologist, the books that I read if you were to be in this room and look around the shelves you'll see hundreds of noir fiction which as it were are about bad behaviour, and they're full of slang because that's what I'm searching for, I think perhaps its likely someone involved in criminality and in violence which are not the same things will use slang, yes, but I don't think the using of the slang, and if people do say that and indeed they do, because that's what came out of the riots which I presume is what you're thinking about, and what was his name the idiot David Starky, well that well just knee jerk stupid scapegoating he got his headlines, its what he's in the business for, for as far as I can see.

Is MLE a recognition of cross cultural integration? Do you think it could be a celebrated part of cultural identity?

I think the likes of you and I who are standing to one side and studying it, yes, whether the people I met down in Plaistow even thought about such things I wouldn't be so sure, I'm very keen to go back and talk to them and do a questionnaire etc but I'm waiting to get the go ahead, teachers of course are keen, the kids couldn't give a fuck. But I think its very interesting what's happened I think its extremely interesting and I think I probably lay it out better in my essay in a way and I'm sure Tony Thorne has given you some good stuff on this, Tony is much more of an expert on this than I am, it was interesting for me to do the research for the essay because it taught me a lot, and there's a lot more there and it moves on.

As I say the people who talk it see it as the slang they use and one of the things that I think was interesting that someone

else found out was that at the moment we talk slang when we get older we'll stop talking slang and we'll talk Mockney, but it was interesting that that was the line that was drawn, but I think yeah it undoubtedly it can be celebrated indeed and it's the sort of antithesis of the question before, quite who will do the celebrating I'm not sure I mean maybe its done by a sort of by product of grime or something like that, in musical lyrics but I'm not sure to what extent people are saying, 'look cross cultural integration', these are things that as it were come from above or however you want to see it, but you have to be looking at it rather than in the middle of it.

Is language and word choice an important part of someone's identity?

Again I don't know to what extent its conscious, if on the level of presenting yourself and identifying yourself with a given group, yes its very important and I think what people do is code switch as I guess you'd agree, I mean you talk in different ways at school, to your parents, to your mates and one I has I guess multiple identities, but undoubtedly yes language and word choice is, and I think this is true, I'm not a linguist and I'm frightened to sort of dip my toe in this particular bath because its much more subtle and whatever else and there's a lot more to be said about it than I probably can, all I can say again is one of the ways on which the books that I read, if it's a book by for example Irvin Welsh particularly in the two books that I think are the good ones which are 'Trainspotting' and the prequel to Trainspotting 'Skag Boys' and they are dense with slang, a lot of what those books are about is using the language to create the people, so yes I think its absolutely true, and I see it in book after book after book, and I mean its always been there, even if the creative person who's doing the writing is not themselves a slang user, they use it and this goes back to the sixteenth-seventh century, to provide authenticity 'I am going to show you a criminal on stage or in my book, or where ever it might be so I will give them some language that makes you aware that they are what they are' but the trouble with the early stuff is that often it sounds like somebody's looked up the dictionary and they shove 20 consecutive words of slang in some criminals mouth and it sounds like a thesaurus, but that's how it works. As I say I think language and identity is such a big subject that I think that's about the best shot for me.

MLE is seen as its own dialect or 'Multiethnolect' if you will, how do you think this shared dialect emerged?

Its to do with immigration its to do with mixing of black, white and brown, and its arrived, its not very old, as we know, its not really even a decade old. But it's the language that has come out of this mixing of young people, and you did not get in the fifties when there are a substantial amount of West Indians here but if they are using this language its very much by themselves, and there weren't any kids its kids that seem to make the difference, again I would suggest its this concept, of speaking black being cool, the words themselves in MLE are a mixture of Caribbean, mainly Jamaican, Hip Hop, American, Grime, good old Cockney and some inventions, its always very difficult with slang of any sort to say where did it come from? I mean some slangs like rhyming slang allegedly evolved because there was a need for them, because by about 1820 the slang that was being used by criminals had been sused out by the authorities, well there weren't police till 1829, but by the authorities, and rhyming slang was invented mainly by costermongers probably but no ones sure, it may have been Irish navies or all sorts of people, to make deliberate code that the authorities couldn't understand, I would imagine that they cracked it pretty damn quickly, and rhyming slang in my opinion is about as secret as black cab, its like a tourist thing as far as I can see, and in a world of in which Posh and Becks mean sex, is possibly a world I'm not that keen on.

I think its always difficult in slang, as it always has a basic desire to be secret and as I explained right at the beginning, five hundred years ago it undoubtedly was secret but in the last 50, well certainly in the last 20 that secrecy has become harder and harder to maintain. I think there's quite a lot of words in MLE that are not accessible to the middle classes and to people of my age and indeed younger, but its possible to find out much much more easily and I don't just mean by looking in my dictionaries, but its possible to find out because there is an interest in it, there is a general use of it, there is as ever this desire to use it for authenticity and so on, so its much more accessible.

But quite where words come from I'm not sure, in the end I suppose the Jamaican stuff probably comes from people using a subset of their parents slang. I mean I know myself with Yiddish which my parents didn't really use, but they used a certain amount that obviously they picked up from their parents, who would have spoken it all the time, so you filter out all the stuff you need, so by my generation for me anyway, I never use it at all except really in the context that's much more general slang, certainly not in a sort of Jewish Yiddish environment, again its one of these linguistic things and where slang comes from has always been a problem, as I said there is an element in which it is consciously created but if you look at slang, what slangs about is themes its about these human themes which are dope, sex and rock and roll, violence, racist and nationalist abuse, person to person abuse, men bigging themselves up, men putting down women, so on and so forth and people mad calling people ugly, drunkenness, drugs and so on, these are all the things that standard English, (standard English coined the word for drunk probably in the 16th century) Slang has 3000 synonyms and one of the reasons that they keep emerging is that there is a residual not very real desire to be secret, so you keep inventing a new word, be it for fucking be it for drinking be it for smoking dope be it for injecting heroin, what ever it might be and that just keeps going on, but those themes you can see in the 16th century and they keep coming.

Is this evolution of the English language a good thing?

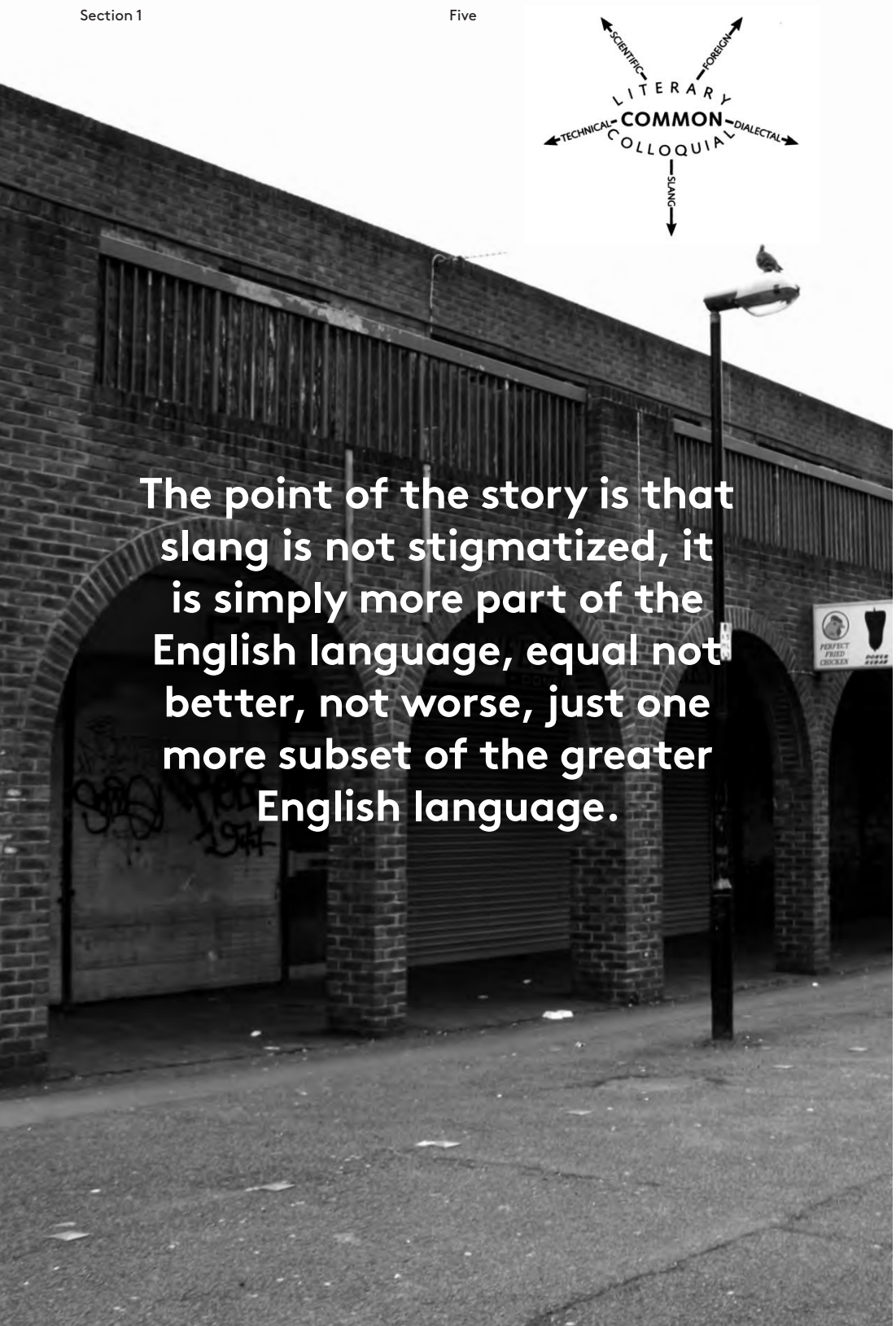
YES! It is, and there's certainly nothing we can do about it, there's a very good book by my friend called Henry Hitchins called the 'Language Wars' which is basically about those who want to lay down the law and those who say there is no law you just got to go with the with language, that's the difference between prescriptivist lexicography laying down the law and descriptive which is just saying well this is how it is, anyway its not so much whether the evolution is a good thing or not its what happens as the great American comedian Lenny Bruce said that, 'everybody wants what should be but all there is is what is' we have to live with what is, and I obviously as a slang lexicographer find that very acceptable.

There seems to be a vast amount of expression and emotion use in the MLE dialect, why do you think this is?

I'm not sure, to what extent its got more than any other sub set of slang I wouldn't be so sure again the answer is themes, It provides a linguistic arena for putting people down and for expressing ones feelings so on and so forth, standard English while it provides these things it doesn't provide so wide a lexis/vocabulary, but I mean I'm not sure myself, perhaps I don't know so much about it, I'm not sure whether its exceptionally expressive or emotional, to be honest. But I would be the first to be corrected.

Is technology playing an important role in the evolution of certain Languages?

I've always been somebody rightly or wrongly who's never put things like texting slang into my dictionaries, the reason for that is because its technologically orientated and created, a lot of its to do with Twitter and having 140 characters, well even that you can go over now I believe, and the principle of phones when you have to have 160 or whatever it was characters for text messages and all that stuffs gone, technology does supply a roll but I'm not sure that the language that it creates lasts that long, well there is certain things like LOL being the obvious one which ended up in the OED which of course is a badge of acceptance, yes it has undoubtedly played its role but whether that role is lasting. This speed



of technological advance as such that nobody can find a place to put their feet down, without the ground rocking, so I'm not sure if technology has that much to do with MLE anyway, I think MLE is much more of a social thing, alright well if you say that Grime has helped spread MLE around the place then yes the technology of mix tapes or whatever it might be, people putting out stuff not with or with mainstream company's, on that level technology has helped. The spread of slang and its inability to keep a secret has been undoubtedly to do with this vast and accessible technology we now have, but I don't think it plays a huge role with MLE.

Why do you think MLE has been so stigmatised by the press and RP speakers of the English language?

MLE has been stigmatized because slang has always been stigmatized, it always will be. To an extent it frightens people, it comes from the gutter, it's the voice of the gutter, or to go up a few inches it's from the street. We go back to 'does rough language promote rough behaviour some people think that it does, I say as I explained that it exists in parallel, I'm not sure whether MLE is stigmatized outside of David Starkey and in the media context of the riots, to what extent really it gets stigmatized, a lot of people don't even know that it exists, but RP people are if they're so inclined will always stigmatize slang, they don't like It, it doesn't affect them I don't know what their problem is, there's a very famous, well famous in lexicography land, diagram, that sir James Murray editor of the OED, created around when the book came out in 1928, it's a very simple picture and what it is is an oval with the words English language in it, coming from it are lines and there's technology, received pronunciation, dialect, and there's slang and one or two others, but the point of the story is that slang is not stigmatized, it is simply more part of the English language, equal not better, not worse just one more subset of the greater English language, and this is something that critics of slang will not except, but its true. To bring it back to that is as valid as the collection of the English language, and indeed the American language, the Australian and the other English speaking languages I've included, its different, its undoubtedly different, they have words that we don't use, I have words that they don't, but the bottom line is that its all part of English, so stigmatizing it basically is in the eye of the beholder.

Can peoples negative views on what MLE stands for become redeemable in the foreseeable future? (post riot etc)

My own feeling is that it doesn't matter if they have negative views its their problem, they'll either grow up or they wont, its not relevant, its always a great problem, one of my problems is that people think that interiority of slang is the obscenities, which there are technically only about thirteen everything else is synonyms and rhyming slang, well rhyming slang is basically a London dialect and as I say there aren't that many obscenities, all the dirty words are in slang but slang is not always classed as dirty words.

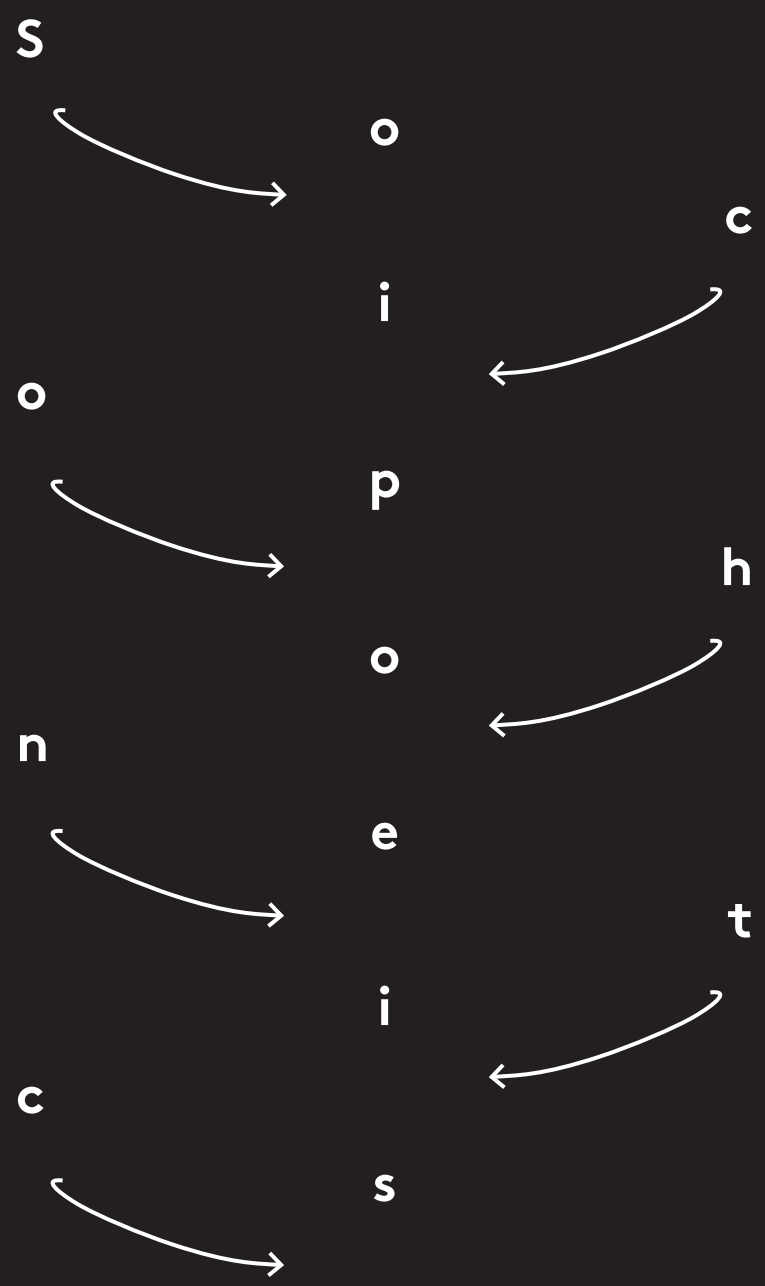
Redeemable I don't know what your saying there in what your research has found, again people get older MLE will spread, I think people are frightened because it is seen as 'corrupting our children', and that's always going to be the case and always has been the case, but I think we will manage perfectly well. I think we are very class bound I think Americans that claim they're not class bound are talking shit because in fact they are it just works differently, I think the difference there is that your allowed to move up and down in classes, French are very, very class bound, although strangely enough there seems to be a difference socially, I'm not sure what and not expert and shouldn't even go there. The thing about England of course and France for that matter and probably all of Europe is the class is based on land, and titles and so on and so forth, where as in America, is based on having enough money and that's what defines your class, if your fantastically fuck off rich it doesn't matter where you came from, a saint to the gods and in England you can hope that you're still lord somebody even if you're shit poor, you're still lord somebody.

There's no illusions in saying that MLE is not an upper middle class speech pattern, although it is used and therefore by definition its going to be seen as threatening to middle class parents who hear their children speaking in this way, but children have got their own lives to lead they're going to lead they're own lives, and I also think there is a degree of sensible code switching where by when your going for your job interview, you will change the language that you speak, I think those who don't do that there are probably other reasons, that they're locked into speaking MLE and this can obviously be a problem, but here there are psychological reasons and so on, but its not the language itself, the language is an indicator, but its not the cause, that's my theory. So I don't think it's a matter of redeemable, I think its not so much MLE per say its that slang, being what I call 'counter language' is therefore unnerving, and people who do not want to tolerate slang find it frightening, and react as people do to frightening things accordingly but I really do think the equation of MLE and the riots was a complete red herring.

I think the interesting thing about MLE is that what people are thinking is that it is going to have a much longer lasting affect than previous slangs, to me its just part of slang and it's the current iteration, it's the current public face of young people. 'Young peoples slang is always where its at anyway' and that's always going to be the case and what will be happening in 20 years I don't know but I will bet my life on the fact that it will still be talking about sex, it will still be talking about intoxication, and it will still be talking about insults, etc and so on...

My feeling on slang is that its not rough, its human and it deals with the sides of humanity that's not the nicest sides but of the most honest and truthful. 'Everybody wants what should be but all there is is what is' and obviously I as a slang lexicographer find that very acceptable.

‘He had strayed from conventional language into rough, truthful speech’.
Anthony Trollope The Eustace Diamonds (1871)

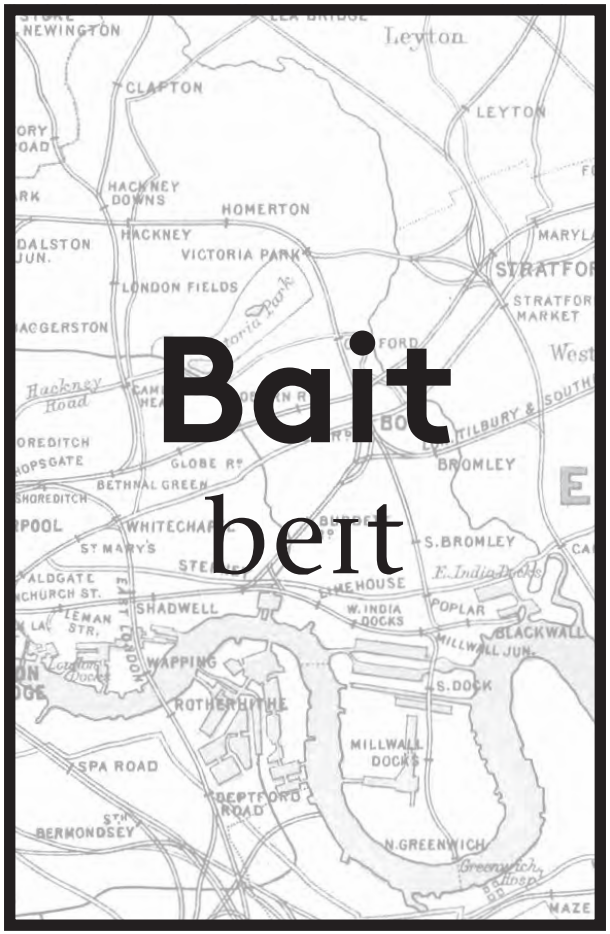


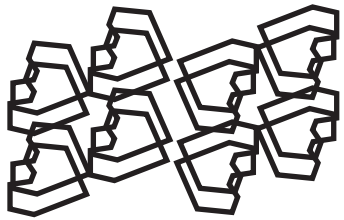
Sociophonetics

Paul Foulkes defines sociophonetics as such, "the interrelationships between phonetic/phonological form and social factors such as speaking style and the background of the speaker, but with a particular interest in explaining the origins and transmission of linguistic change." (Foulkes,2005). Conceptually, sociophonetics spans a linguistic hierarchy from micro to macro; with the micro being those minute – sometimes imperceptable – units of sound and their properties (the phonetic) and the macro encompassing those overarching social aims we have and the reasons why we communicate (the sociolinguistic).

Kim Witten

"The interrelationships between phonetic/phonological form and social factors such as speaking style and the background of the speaker, but with a particular interest in explaining the origins and transmission of linguistic change."





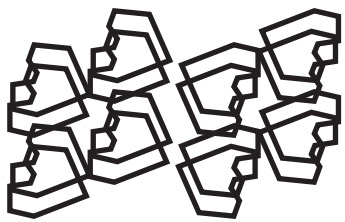
Stop being so Bait!

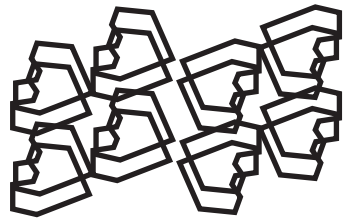
He's Bait bruv!

Man got Baited init.

Bait/ed
[beyt]

- **Obvious, to be found out, a sheep(follower).**





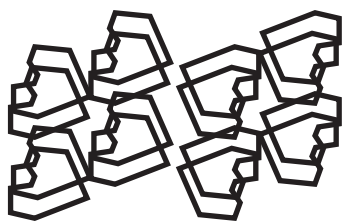
He's a Gas man.

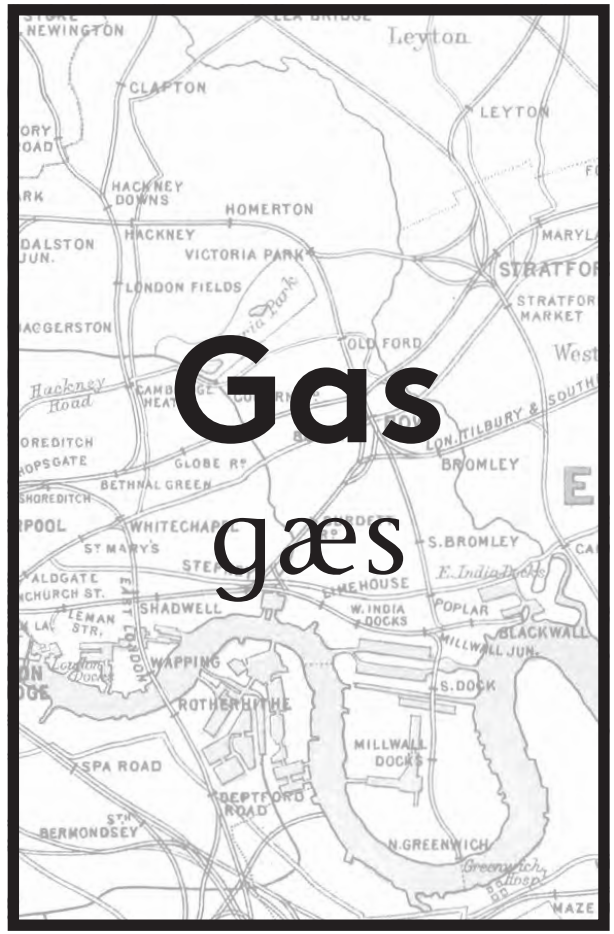
That guy is gassed up.

Stop chatting Gas!

Gas/sed
[gas]

- **Talking rubbish, untrue or false bravado.**






Six

The Essays

A collection of short essays from Tony Thorne & Jonathon Green

Essays focusing on slang, sociability and language change in the United Kingdom.

Slang Style-Shifting And Sociability

Tony Thorne

Encounters with what is loosely called 'slang' in speech or in print are ubiquitous. In the UK 'well-brought-up' speakers move easily in and out of slang in conversation and the previous reluctance by the print and broadcast media to admit slang terms has given way to a tendency to embrace and in some cases to celebrate this extremely informal level of lexis. Interest in collecting and analysing slang is keen especially among adolescent learners, but in Britain, as opposed to the US and certain European countries, teachers and academics have hitherto paid it little or no attention. Although there may be valid reasons for this - it is obvious that the study of non-standard varieties of language is of little use in teaching communication skills or preparing for examinations - we should remind ourselves that any disapproval of slang can only be a social and not a linguistic judgement. Indeed, there are grounds for seeing slang, diffuse and ill-defined as it is as a category, as a particularly interesting aspect of language, both formally in that it mobilises all the morphological and metaphorical possibilities of English (Eble 1996 25-60) - rather as poetry does, but without the dimension of allusiveness and ambiguity - and functionally in that it often occurs in association with heightened self-consciousness and charged social interactions. Lexical innovation is also, of course, a function of cultural change, notoriously raising problems of decoding by 'non-natives' (and some natives, too), but worthy of attention for that very reason, especially for working or trainee teachers and translators.

An obvious reason for choosing to concentrate on slang is that it is itself a controversial and spectacular social phenomenon, an 'exotic' aspect of an otherwise predictable language environment. An even better reason is that it is a variety which belongs (to a varying degree - of course some young people are quite innocent of non-standard usages) to young people themselves. The recorded slangs of the past have been quite rightly characterised by Halliday in terms of 'antilanguages', the secretive codes of transgressive or deviant subcultures - criminals, beggars, travelling entertainers - with their salient features of relexicalisation and overlexicalisation (Halliday 1978). Later sociolinguists have focused on the role of adolescent slangs in the construction of social identity, among for example street gangs or high school students (Labov 1982, Eckert 1989), showing how acceptance into and exclusion from peer-groups is mediated by slang nomenclature and terminology.

Researchers into adolescent language usage have tended to concentrate on the links between language and hierarchies, status and deployment of social capital. More recently, however, some specialists have started to look at such 'carnivalesque' manifestations as profaning, mischief, banter and teasing, the borrowing of ethnically marked codes to signal empathy and solidarity in 'crossing' (Rampton 1995), and anticipated a change of emphasis in Bernstein's words 'from the dominance of adult-imposed and regulated rituals to dominance of rituals generated and regulated by youth' (Bernstein, cited in Rampton 2003). None of these studies has taken slang into account although there has been a plea,

It mobilises all the morphological and metaphorical possibilities of English

again by Rampton, for more attention to 'the social symbolic aspects of formulaic language'.

Eble, in the only book-length study in recent times devoted to North American campus slang, has shown that the slang of middle-class college students is more complex and less a product of alienation than has been assumed in the past (Eble 1996). Her recordings of interactions reveal, too, that the selective and conscious use of slang itself is only part of a broader repertoire of style-shifting in conversation, not primarily to enforce opposition to authority, secretiveness or social discrimination, but often for the purposes of bonding and 'sociability' through playfulness.

Eble's tally of student slang, collected at Chapel Hill, North Carolina since 1979, prompted the compiling of a similar database at King's College London. A crude categorisation of the London data (as in the American survey largely donated by students rather than recorded in the field) by semantic clusters gives a picture of student preoccupations that can be compared with the US findings (Thorne 2004 forthcoming). Interpretation is problematical - for example, the large number of terms for intoxication do not prove that London students are necessarily drunkards, but suggest that they do enjoy talking about excessive behaviour.

Tentative insights from the lexicology have been bolstered by analysis of conversations in which slang is used extensively. This also shows in many cases that speakers are operating not as deficient or restricted linguists but as empowered actors, not exactly, in Claire Kramsch's phrase, the 'heteroglossic narrators' of recent myth, but enabled to vary their language strategies just as they use assemblage and bricolage in their presentations of self through dress, stance, gesture and accessorising.

By bringing the study of slang into the classroom and helping students to reflect upon their own language practices - especially on how they are potentially or actually able to style-shift and thereby play with identities - we can sensitise them to issues of register, appropriacy and semantic complexity. At a deeper level we can explore together what Bhabha calls the 'social process of enunciation' (Bhabha 1992, cited in Kramsch 1997) and bring into play students' values, feelings and allegiances.

If we turn from the mainly monolingual, although multi-ethnic environment of the London campus to that of the international learner, there seem to me to be potential experiential links which suggest themselves in terms of Byram and Zarates' notion of the intercultural learner (1994) and more especially Kramsch's promotion of the 'third space' or 'third place', a metaphorical or actual setting in which language learners move beyond appropriation or assimilation and explore the actual boundaries between themselves and others, and begin to focus less on the formal features of language and more on the ludic, aesthetic or affective qualities of encounters across languages and cultures (Kramsch 1997). It has been proposed that there are certain boundary activities, including for instance pastiche, re-telling of stories and code-mixing, etc, that are especially useful in this context. To these I would modestly suggest that we could usefully add a number of slang-based activities.

Of course slang itself has gone global; there are now local hybrids, often incorporating English lexis alongside the pervasive effects of dominant inner-circle varieties such as the high school argot propagated by Hollywood movies and TV soaps, and the black street codes of rap and hip-hop. Authenticity - not just a concept among analysts but an emblematic term for members of subcultures - is complicated by the development in the media and in literature of pseudo-slangs (a phenomenon that goes back at least as far as Raymond Chandler and P.G. Wodehouse). So-called virtual or electronic literacies developing for the Internet, email or text messaging have generated new slangs and an enormous proliferation of websites designed to celebrate or decode them.

Looking at young peoples' small-culture codes, whether these be wide-ranging alternative lexicons or the narrower hobbyist (surfboarding, DJ-ing) or media-influenced (pop music and fashion) or technological (email, text-messaging, internet) vocabularies that shade into jargon, revalues young people as expert linguists and their own experiences as worthwhile and meaningful. In nearly all cultures there are examples of this expertise, sometimes also involving catchphrases, media quotes, one-liners, jokes and puns. Language crossing is also a feature of many slangs, bringing into play the question of linguistic imperialism (I recall lessons looking at Franglais, Chinglish and Spanglish, and, in Slovenia, debating the borrowing of 'cool'.)

Published materials presenting English slang to international students have generally been limited to glossaries; a recent exception being the listening material prepared by Beglar and Murray (2002). Expertise in slang incidentally is not a requirement of the teacher: definitions, usage guidance and even etymologies can be provided by reference materials or come from students themselves. In the classroom I have used componential and cultural analysis of slang keywords, comparison and contrast of slang vocabularies from various languages and regions, critical reading of slang in the media and literature and scripting of slang-rich interactions. Outside the classroom, students have carried out surveys and ethnographies to observe slang usage and uncover attitudes to it held by different speech communities.

Halliday suggested that 'a study of sociolinguistic pathology may lead to additional insight into the social semiotic' (Halliday 1978). I should emphasise that focusing in this way on stigmatised or taboo language, if it is culturally permissible at all, does not, in my experience, restrict learners' ability to operate with privileged varieties (whether 'British English' or EIL); it does not, as some fear, subvert standard usage or devalue it in the eyes of young people but rather the opposite. It helps language users to objectify the way that spoken varieties can be fitted to contexts and enriches their sense of the possibilities of lexical variety.

The idea of the adolescent as the master or mistress of his or her subcultural identity and owner of his or her idiolect and sociolect is not new, nor is the notion of the intercultural learner as a bilingual or multilingual actor consciously operating across boundaries. What is still

lacking, however, are materials which set out the kind of 'boundary activities' that teachers can draw upon in order to activate third places and empower learners. I have suggested that slang is worthy of the attention of linguists in its own right, but further that, as an exciting and controversial form of language which belongs to young people and to youth culture, it is a valuable entry-point into discussion of sociocultural issues, whether in a monolingual or multilingual setting. Using or talking about slang is only one of many experiences which can be mobilised 'at the boundaries' in this way, and as a final cri de coeur I would add that whether or not we are interested in slang per se, the urgent need is for practical, usable methods and materials - whether developed and exchanged informally or published commercially which will help the teaching of language-and-culture in the global classroom to catch up with and profit from a decade or more of theory.

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Diction Addiction

Jonathon Green

Kanye West, whose rocketing status in the world of rap has in the last two years made him one of its best- known stars, should know. If Black America's primary contribution to the world is its music - its sportsmen tend to be found in America-only competitions, for all that some declare themselves 'world series' - then coming up fast is an equal predominence, at least in the world of slang, of black speech. Where he is less accurate, however, is in the suggestion that it is only in the era of hip-hop and its successor rap, in other words over the last two and a half decades, that such a linguistic invasion has taken place. It is true, undoubtedly so, that the extent of the crossover has never been so marked, and that it is not just an 'American addiction' but an international one: the world's anglophone white young certainly copy their black American peers, but the language is also adopted, and modified, by those for whom English is not a first language. And the phenomenon - working class black to middle class white - has been at the heart of the development of the slang vocabulary for at least three quarters of a century.

In many ways the moving out of black slang from the ghetto reflects the emergence of the wider slang lexicon from what, until the last few decades, and certainly since World War II, was far more of a hidden, generally secret and even subversive language than it can claim to be today. That said, slang, which might be termed a 'counter-language' has traditionally emerged from what might be seen as 'counter' cultures: criminals, whose language formed the first ever slang 'dictionaries' (properly glossaries) of the mid-16th century, sporting men and sporting women, to use one literal and one euphemistic description, those who took part in the culture of 'recreational' drugs (or at least those which are taken in non-pharmaceutical contexts), and the teenager, who existed as a passage of years, but not as a social phenomenon, until the word, and the styles, travelled round the world subsequent to 1945. And alongside all these: the language of America's working-class blacks. Neither egregiously criminal, drug-taking nor young, the role of blacks in US society ensured that their language, and certainly their slang, remained quite apart, even exotic. The first attempt at a dictionary of American slang, George Washington Matsell's _Vocabulum_ (1859), has no discernible black influences.

In fairness, it was little more than a plagiarism of Pierce Egan's 1823 revision of Captain Grose's unassailably British slang collection of 1785. But the truly homegrown American efforts that began to emerge in the 20th century are barely better. Today's slang dictionary has thousands of terms marked 'US Black', and thousands more that have crossed over so successfully as to have become quite mainstream, i.e. white. But such lexicographers as Jackson and Hellyer (1914) or Maurice Wessen (1934) seem, deliberately or otherwise, to overlook this fecund source. As for Britain's own Eric Partridge, he had the excuse, at least in his early editions, the first of which was published in 1937, of dealing with English English only, and thus with a country in which the black population had yet, in any influential numbers, to arrive. But even in his last, posthumous, edition (1984) it might as well be that the country whose slang he aimed to codify

This black diction has become America's addiction.

Kanye West

had never gained its substantial West Indian population, nor indeed such writers as Sam Selvon or, albeit as an informed and friendly observer, Colin MacInnes.

Unsurprisingly, since it is the popularity of black music that begun the process of bringing the two cultures closer together, it is the music that drives the taking up of the language. The language that accrued to the new, all- black creation of jazz leads the way . Nonetheless, if the best of the music was undoubtedly black, the word itself seems not to have been. It appears that the origins of jazz do not in fact lie not in the French _jaser_, to gossip, as was sometime believed; nor indeed can one accept the suggestion of the _American Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology_ which in 1927 revealed in deeply scandalised tones that not only was the word originally Black, but that it meant to fuck. The mavens of the American Dialect Society, led by Prof. Gerald Cohen, seem to have pinned it down to, unlikely though it may immediately appear, the language of baseball, where jazz was synonymous with _vim_ and _pep_ and first appears c. 1913 in the writing of the pleasingly named 'Scoop' Gleason, covering baseball for the _San Francisco Bulletin_. Even so, it would appear that there is a sexual underpinning: _jazz_ links to _jism_, meaning semen and thus the 'pep/vim' use is cognate with another 'semen' word that can mean energy and 'go': _spunk_.

The language of jazz musicians, and even more so of their successors who played swing, inevitably, or so it now appears, rubbed off on the increasing numbers of white fans. Such terms as _daddy-o_, _jam_ or _gutbucket_ may have started life in the relatively closed confines of a jazz or swing band, but moved out to colonise the wider world. In time it would even reach such as Princess Margaret, who managed, even if 20 years late, to use 'alligator', a swing fan, as in 'See you later…' (itself the basis of an eponymous pop song by the prototype rock 'n' roller, Bill Haley and in truth the most likely place that HRH had found it). Some had even existed before. 'Groovy' a jazz word long before it was taken up by the hippies of the 1960s, had, in the late 19th century, meant conservative, in other words 'stuck in a groove'. Its espousal by the hippies lends any attempt to use it today a pleasing irony: so irredeemably locked into the Sixties does it remain that for today's young, sneering at their parents' pleasures, 'groovy' is categorised once more as 'groovy', mode of 1895. Cool, which has lasted the course, and threatens never to disappear as one generation picks it up from the predecessor, had also existed outside the simple description of temperature. It referred to money, as early as 1728 in such phrases as a 'cool thousand'. And while cool was surely diffused through the prism of black music, it had been used as a congratulatory epithet long since.

As well as the music, the world of drugs, with its consciously and indeed neccesarily secretive lexicon, was also a multicultural phenomenon. Heroin or cocaine performed their dangerously seductive magic irrespective of skin tone; even if like cannabis the 'major narcotics' were pilloried as a black drug, thus giving US anti-drug legislation of the

1920s and 1930s no small taint of racism (the same racism permeates Britain's contemporary lawmaking, even if the villain was yellow - the 'heathen Chinee' - rather than black). Targeted by the law, drug users were rendered de facto criminals, and as much as any _yegg_ or _peterman_, they needed a closed terminology.

While the ages of its leaders Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady and Jack Kerouac (who may have become an early idol of the countercultural young but was always at pains both to deny his divinity and excoriate his acolytes) - hardly render the Beat movement a 'teen cult', the Beats' role as what Norman Mailer would later apostrophise as 'white negroes', made for a close identification with Black culture, or at least what was perceived as an innate alienation from 'whitebread', 'straight' America. Beat vocabulary took on board Black slang without mediation. Terms such as _pad_, _hip_ and _the scene_ were simply adopted wholesale and entered, if not mainstream slang, then a highly influential subsection of the white slang lexis. And as Beat widened its appeal, and became what the San Francisco columnist Herb Caen derided as the mass-market 'Beatniks' in fairness, still the first popular example of alienated teens as counter-culturalists - the language spread yet further.

As Beatnik transmogrified into hippie, and the census of countercultural youth notched up ever higher numbers, so too did the users of what had once been exclusively Black slang. Whether the love 'n' peace generation of the Sixties realised that they were spouting a language that had once belonged to junkies and jazzers is debatable. Like the music they loved, plucked so often from black origins but all too rarely acknowledged as such, they didn't bother with the source. One need look no further than the origins of the word _hippie_ itself. While by the later 1960s it had become indelibly associated with the world of beads and bells and psychedelic drugs, and all the popular marketing that went with the movement, hippie, to a cool 1950s black speaker was definitely a put-down. It was the antithesis of the desirable role of the hipster, and meant one was in fact _not_ hip, however hard they were trying. Terry Southern's short story 'You're Too Hip, Baby' (1963) epitomises the type, even if not every hippie, desperate to make the grade, found themself, like Southern's hapless academic, beaten to death even as they sought to ingratiate themselves with their newly acquired slang and ill- assimilated Ginsberg verses. That said, there was a parallel use even in the Fifties, and it was that use - a sophisticated, 'hip' person - that reached the forefront a decade later as the hippie became as cool as the hipster before him.

Since the Sixties the process has simply intensified. The basic difference being as much as anything the absolute primacy of rap slang and the culture that accompanies in both black and white youth culture. This was not so of previous versions of black slang, but it is so now. While Kanye West, tongue presumably in cheek, has suggested that the white middle classes ought to offer all new black terminology a grace period of twelve months before adopting it for their own uses, the speed of information flow renders any such pause impossible. Nor does it sound that

strange any longer; even if the idea of some privileged public schoolboy calling his equally privileged girlfriend his 'ho', leaves one lost between tears and mocking hilarity. If it once took decades for a black term fully to permeate white culture, it now takes days, or certainly weeks. And while it would be foolish to equate drugs and rap, the drug culture, still a minority interest in the Sixties and then very much opposed to such 'hard' varieties such as heroin or cocaine, has exploded throughout society. Thus too the language that accompanies it. The proliferation of drugs, notably crack cocaine, resembles in its linguistic offshoots a lengthy war: one may not wish to see either war or crack addiction prolonged, and in either case there is no doubt of the grim cost in human life, but both are remarkably productive of new slang. Indeed the world of drugs is now one of the main creators of slang; at risk of cynicism, today's mini-wars seriously fail the slang lexicographer: with nary a trench or dugout between them, they're are too brief to throw up the kind of wide-ranging language that emerged from the last century's two world wars. A certain sugaring of euphemistic jargon, but little else. As is so often the case, one can only blame the selfish duumvirate of Bush and what the French call his _caniche_, his poodle, Blair.

In the UK, of course, there is an extra additive: the language of the second generation of immigrants from the West Indies. (There should, too, be some degree of linguistic input from the young Asian community, but while their music - Bhangra - has made some inroads - it would seem that there exists insufficient slang, at least in English, to make a real impression.) Like American blacks the first immigrants pretty much kept their slang to themselves, and in any case it is often hard to distinguish from island patois. The new generation is less constrained. The language of 'grime', most easily, if inaccurately, described as British hiphop (other names include one-step and esky - referring, inevitably, to 'cool') and of UK garage (definitely pronounced 'garridge' and another US import) blends West Indian patois, Cockney, and US Black slang to create its own subset. American West Indians have had less of an impact, even if baby-mother, the woman, to whom one is not married, who bears your child (there is also baby-father) seems to have made the leap.

Eric Partridge, publishing his first edition in 1937 could, as noted, offer nothing but English slang, and forget that of America. World War II put paid to that, and the ever accelerating Americanization of popular culture has merely accelerated the process. In the same way, if early American slang dictionaries could ignore the nation's black population, contemporary works, on either side of the Atlantic, would be foolish, and half-finished to follow suit. Purely English, purely white working class slang has been in decline for a while. Its Cockney rhyming version as much of a London tourist attraction, and as fading, as Routemaster buses and unarmed bobbies. The middle class, on the whole, don't create slang. The actual black ghetto, for all the rappers' material success, remains far more of a world apart. Slang has needed such 'alien' worlds for its finest, sustained production. The white assumption of such language may well

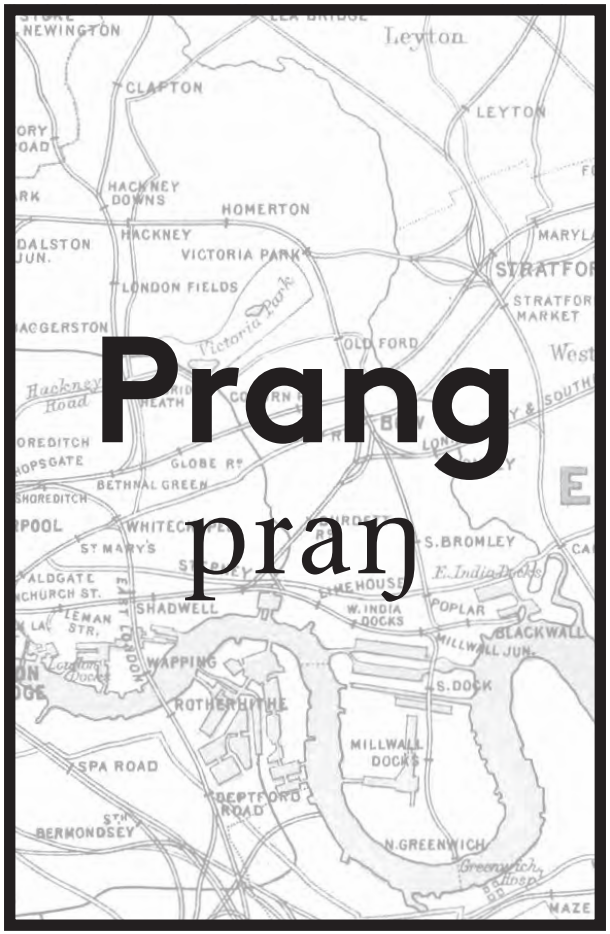
be a form of linguistic voyeurism, but like the more traditional form, it's something the devotees can't resist.

Six months or so ago the press and media were touting a brand new linguistic phenomenon: _Jafaikan_. Jafaikan, it was claimed, was a blend of 'Jamaican', 'African' and 'Asian' and represented for popular consumption what its academic discoverers termed Multicultural London English (MLE), in other words the indigenous speech of young, often but not invariably black or brown Londoners. Close. Well close-ish… but definitely no dictionary entry. The actuality of jafaikan is that while it is indeed a blend, and one of the terms is certainly Jamaican, the other is 'fake'. Fake as in not Jamaican but wanting to pose as such. The black-on-black equivalent of rap's _wigga_ (a white boy playing at ghetto black), or _wanksta_, (any boy playing at being a gangsta) Jafaikan is most usually applied to those whose Caribbean roots lie in one of the other islands, but it can equally be applied to anyone, black or Asian who wants to hide their middle-class trappings and come on like they stepped out of the gritty streets of Bob Marley's Trenchtown. But a subset of contemporary British slang? the language of young London? As MLE speakers have it, that's so _ bait_. Or as everyone might say, 'bullshit'. Though MLE does exist. The first modern Black immigrants (Black Britons can be found in the early 18th century and indeed earlier) arrived in the 1950s and while they continued to speak patois (their hometown dialects and slang) among themselves, it remained essentially invisible. A decade later and things were changing as young whites started to dance to bluebeat and ska. But it was the reggae explosion of the Seventies that watered the first shoots of the future MLE. Anyone who knew Bob Marley's lyrics soon knew _Babylon_, the Rastaman term for the police in particular and the 'downpressing' Western society in general. Other terms would follow, even if they still sounded strange on white lips. The last decade, however, as the grandchildren of those first immigrants grew up,. and London began producing its homegrown rivals to US rap, has seen MLE truly taken off. Words such as bait (absurd), bare (lots of), creps (trainers), murk (to beat or kill) and armshouse (a fight with guns) are up and running hard. If as yet the Asian constituent remains relatively minimal, that may change. However Caribbean patois remains based in English and the transfer to the streets of London is far simpler than that of Urdu or Hindi. Either way, there's plenty more to come.

Code-Switching

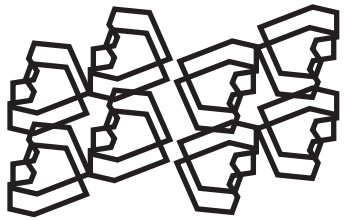
In linguistics, code-switching is switching between two or more languages, or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation. Multilinguals (people who speak more than one language) sometimes use elements of multiple languages in conversing with each other. Thus, code-switching is the use of more than one linguistic variety in a manner consistent with the syntax and phonology of each variety.

Code-Switching



Prang

pran



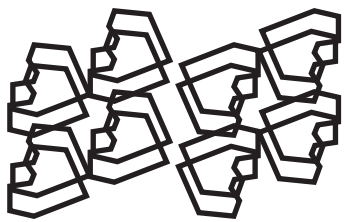
Man was Pranging out.

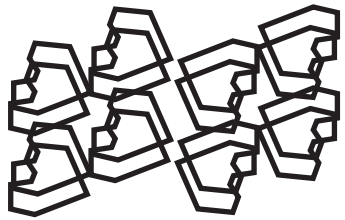
Just do it dont be Prang.

Them man are Prang!

Prang/ing
[prang]

- **Scared, threatened**





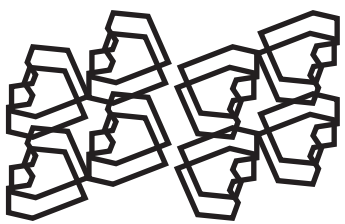
Going on Darkside.

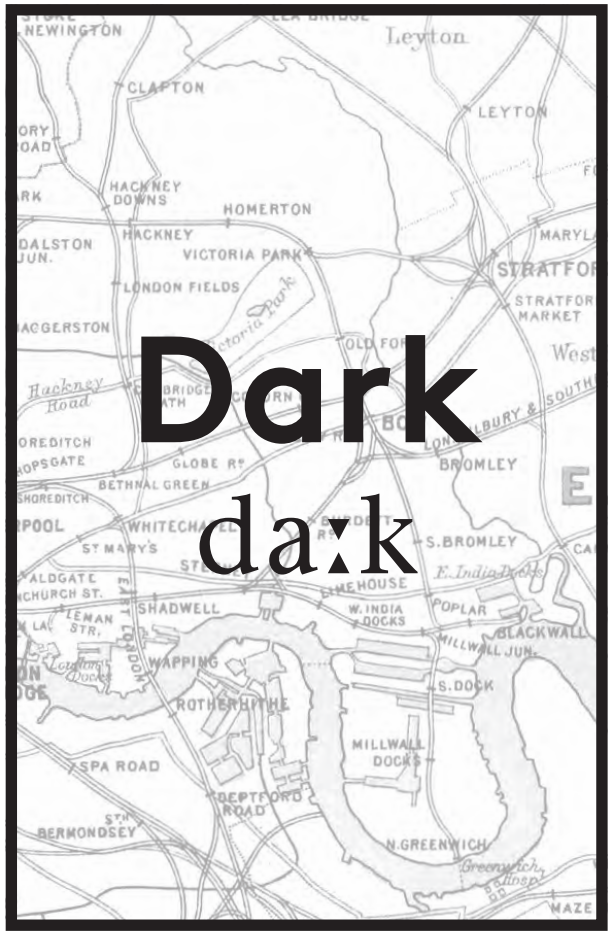
That was a Dark move.

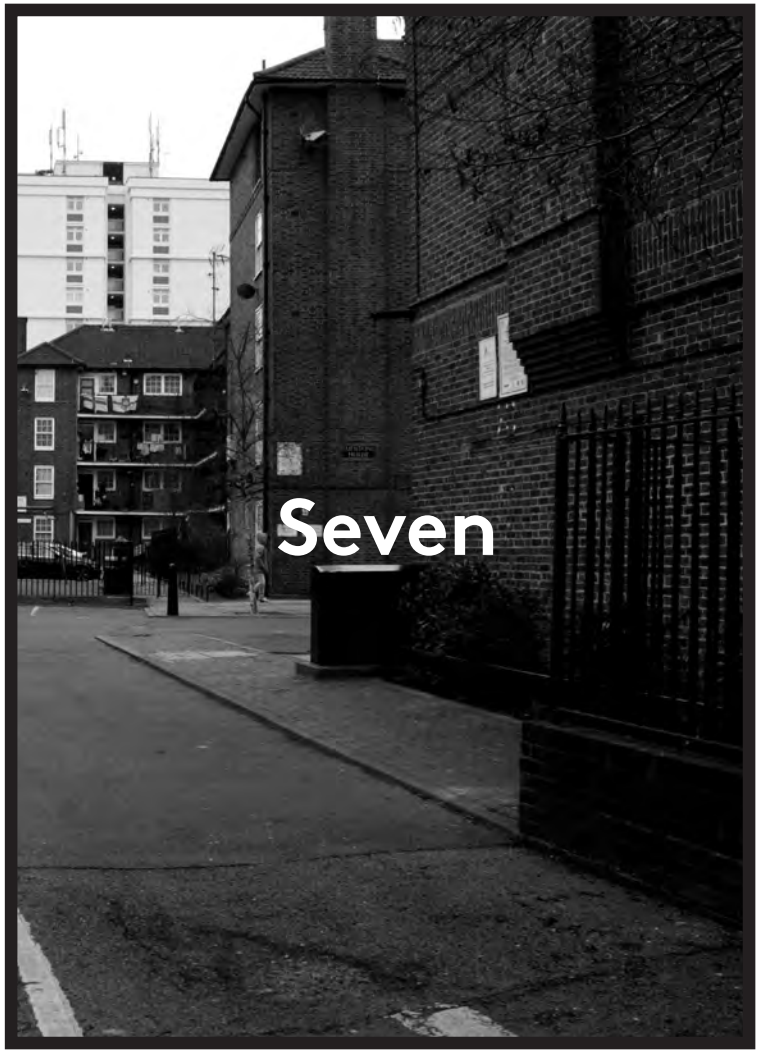
Yeah I Darked her.

Dark/side/ed
[dahrk]

- **Out of order, bad move, mean.**






Seven

The People

Conversations with residents of Tower Hamlets

A selection of interviews with residents of Tower Hamlets. Focused questions were asked to locals of all ages.

It's the same language but it's a different accent so it's just, I don't know man, the different colours of English init.

E3

And if your mums OK bruv you can talk slang with your mum as well dyuknowha'imean

» Are you from Tower Hamlets? «

Yes

» What area? «

Bangcroft road, Mile end.

» How long have you lived there for? «

Uhm about I would say, I lived in mile end all my life nearly.

» Can you tell me 3 - 5 words to describe the area? «

Unique, nice community, err changed a lot obviously, lovely place to live, beautiful people, and err well people around you its like diversity init, all sorts of people live round here.

» How do you feel about the area? «

You know what, like, since I grow up in this area its a lot better then how it used to be so, it feels more comfortable because there's less like crimes and that dyuknowha'imean, its not as bad as it used to be people dyuknowha'imean are like trying to sort their life's out, yeah.

» What do you do in your spare time around there? «

Depends who you are, well normally you'd just go play football dyuknowha'imean, lots of football pitches round here, yeah man, it just depends init, when your chilling with your boys you can do all sorts.

» Can you tell if someone is local by the way they speak? «

Probably, yeah, arr, its probably the way they dress you know, yeah trust me, its like a lot of the, even the people from Stepney and the people from mile end the dress code is a lot different and the way they'd talk you can tell as well, yeah so you can tell roughly, its not its not a major difference. You will see it as Asian, an when I'm talking to them I can really tell init, like, the area where he's really from, you grow up and there's a bit of different accent init.

» How would you describe your accent? «

I don't even know man, (laughs) I wouldn't even know, I don't know Asian?, Asian accent.

» What do you think influenced your accent to sound the way it does? «

Depends how I'm talking you know, depends who I'm talking to dyuknowha'imean, really and truly. If I'm talking to my friends I'll be

talking different, but if I'm talking to an older and more respectful person, obviously you talking different, you won't really use certain words or nothing and that. So it depends who your talking to dyuknowha'imean, its obvious if your talking to an older person you get a bit more respectful and a bit more calm, it's a lot different depending on who you are talking to.

» What do you think makes your accent different from someone who doesn't live in London/the area? «

Yeah, what is my accent a lot different to people that don't live in London?

» Well I don't know that's what I'm wondering? Do you think there's a difference between people that live in London and people that don't? «

Yeah yeah, yous different you can tell mate, its, I don't know, its just the people who live, it's the community init, the people the way they talk, ahh I cant describe it, its like people up norf, they got different accent of talking, dyuknowha'imean and if I go from there to London to there I will get... it's the same language but it's a different accent so its just, I don't know man the different colours of English init. (laughs)

» Do you think accents can effect the way people percieve others? «

Yeah, yeahyeahyeah, definitely, err, If I go from here to norf, certain people might take me, they might like my accent, but certain people they would think ahh hes a London boy, east London boy, dyuknowha'imean, stereotypical people, people don't people don't live here all they got is picture in their head about east London, same old thing, crimes going on left right and centre, you live here, I live here, I now how it is, you know yuknowha'imean, It is a lot different bruv you can walk down this road anytime you want at night bruv I will walk down this road two three o'clock at night nothing happens to me, I don't see no crimes, Its just one or two that happen every here and there everywhere dyuknowha'imean, we all have one or two bad people, dyuknowha'imean. So yeah you can definitely.

» Would you say you speak any slang? What words? «

Yeah cos err I grew up in I wont say it, its like, staying with friends init in east London so we all talk slang but I wont I wont say I talk proper slang, but yeah we do talk slang a bit of here and there, well if I'm talking to my friend I will talk slang.

» What words would you say? «

Like what you sayin b? err I don't even know (laughs) it depends what I'm talking about you know, yeah bruv there's a lot of words man you can twist around yeah you wont get a clue is said, especially if selling

drugs you know, there's a lot of codes to it, but yeah bruv you do talk slang if your with your friends and if your mums ok bruv you can talk slang with your mum as well dyuknowha'imean it depend how you say it (laughs) you might get beaten as well

» Do you think the way people sound in london has changed? «

I don't think so, I think people like the way they talk, I like the way I talk, I don't see a problem with it, but I don't think I'm going to get a job if I talk that in the interview they don't want to give me a job definitely (laughs)

» Can you speak any other languages? «

I can speak Punjabi, Indi, and English yeah that's about it. I can understand ordu and obviously I can understand bits and bobs of angoru but yeah that about it, Arabic I can read it dyuknowha'imean but I cant really speak it init absolutely, but we read Qaran and that's all Arabic, so you can read it but I wont really fluently speak it dyuknowha'imean because I wont really know what's going on but yeah I understand bits and bobs of languages.

I think people like the way they talk, I like the way I talk, I don't see a problem with it, but I don't think I'm going to get a job if I talk that in the interview they don't want to give me a job definitely.

It's generation init.
Generation.

E2

No they just talk crap don't they I don't understand what they're saying

» Are you from East London? «

Yes

» What area? «

Bethnal Green

» How long have you lived there for? «

Forever, yeah.

» Can you tell me 3 - 5 words to describe the area? «

Ahhhh I don't know. I don't know, yeah it's cool, it's alright.

» How do you feel about the area? «

Erm yeah I got to move from here so I'm hoping they'll still put me round here, its what you're used to init.

» What do you do in your spare time around there? «

Don't know really take them park erm yeah just chill out none bothers you

» Can you tell if someone is local by the way they speak? «

Now its strange you should say that cos, erm yeah you can tell but then err got a mate next door, she's from Coventry but now she's been here two years now if you spoke to her you wouldn't even know she's from Coventry.

» How would you describe your accent? «

I don't know its what im used to init

» What do you think influenced your accent to sound the way it does? «

No, all these youngsters are changing all the youngsters round here are changing round here they've made their own language int they.

» How do you think that happened? «

I haven't got a clue, naa I don't know.

» Do you think accents can effect the way people percieve others? «

Yeah definitely yeah, well because if they get like, if your outa London and then you go, like you visit outa London to other people, then they

probably think well like your from London like take a bad look on ya for some strange reason.

» Would you say you speak any slang? What words? «

Naaa naaa that's man thing init! (laughs)

» Do you think the way people sound in london has changed? «

Only from the youngsters nowadays yeah, not the older people. Not the oldsters.

» What have you noticed about them that's changed? «

It would be, its generation init, Generation. You can't grow up round here and then get to a certain age and change like when your in your thirties or something, but the younger group, yeah they're brought up around different friends and stuff int they.

» Do you think there's a sound to their voice? «

No they just talk crap don't they I don't understand what they're saying (laughs)

» Can you speak any other languages? «

Nah nahh (laughs)

Got a mate next door, she's from Coventry but now she's been here two years now if you spoke to her you wouldn't even know she's from Coventry

Now you doubt'a leave anything lying around 'nick ya eyelashes y'knowha'mean.

E1

I guarantee you walk along that Betnal Green road there, see I'm saying it wrong 'Betnal Green' its Beffnal Green.

» Are you from East London? «

Yep

What area? «

Well I was born in Stepney and I live in Betnal Green

» How long have you lived there for? «

Probably about twenty odd years.

» Can you tell me 3 - 5 words to describe the area? «

Three words? Yeah, well I can give you two - Run Down, well ya know they're not doing a lot for the area plus they're getting too many people here ya know, it's a dropping pot, east London was always known for it, no matter immigrants ya had coming over it was always a dropping pot east end ya know and then they congregated here ya know, goes back years.

» How do you feel about the area? «

The areas all right but as I say its getting too run down your getting too many immigrants in here y'knowha'mean.

Well its not a bad area don't get me wrong its still a good area but its like anything else, people you get to know that's your crowd y'knowha'mean its like anything else.

I'm just sayin like you know the areas changed, y'knowha'mean it has changed wi'out a doubt. Well you go back 18 sumink no people who came in ere ya russians, they all set up in ere, ya chinse all set up in Limehouse y'knowha'mean, and then you get ya jewish population they'll come back settled round ere opened factories and everything else den you got ya French Im going back years now, you got your French yougonaughts they was always pesterd in france cos of religion so they all came over ere, a lot of em came over ere and set up weaving up in spitalfields, y'knowha'mean that's why they call it weavers fields.

The East end was a dropping off point.

» What do you do in your spare time around there? «

Well I know what I do I do this (allotment) and I train boxing.

» Can you tell if someone is local by the way they speak? «

Yeah without a doubt, well you get what I call the 'originals' that's your Cockneys y'knowha'mean like I am, y'knowha'mean and you'd probably

notice it if you got talking to me for a little while I come out with a lot of these slang words y'knowha'mean sort of err and that is how you tell.

» What sort of words? «

Well ya know, its just cockney slang of the top of your head like ya know 'your boat race' 'your plates if meat' your boat race ya face ya plates a meat ya feet.

» How would you describe your accent? «

Cockney

» What do you think influenced your accent to sound the way it does? «

I should imagine it does influence for job employment, cos they don't wanna hear a lot of lazy talk I spose, youknowimean sort of err cockney talk I like you know, when you work in an office you've got to be rather posh int ya.

» What do you think makes your accent different from someone who doesnt live in London/the area? «

Well it's like anything else you get ya irish, ya Scottish, welsh all got their own lingos you know their own accents youknowimean.

» Do you think accents can effect the way people percieve others? «

Yeah I mean, you go up norf there they don't like the London sound youknowimean and we go up there and its virtually the same like its because we cant pick their speech up properly, I mean that fella over there you speak to ol fred over there you wouldn't understand a word he was sayin youknowimean he's brogue Irish you know, its hard to catch anything what he's sayin.

» Do you think the way people sound in london has changed? «

Well they are because you know there's a lota mixture now knowha'mean as I said you got a lot of your Indians now y'knowha'mean sort of err you know, you got all ya Bosnians coming over here now, I guarantee you walk along that Betnal Green road there, see I'm saying it wrong 'Betnal green' its Beffnal Green, you know we more or less shorten our words really, you know, but you walk along there you'll see a white face you can tell but you cant tell whether they're foreign y'knowha'mean ya Bosnians or sumink like that.

» Do you think there's sound to the voice now? «

Well they have int they, they got a voice of their own haven't they like, you know where ever they come from they're talking broken English alf'em, so you know you can tell it.

» Do you think there's a difference in the way the youth sound now? «

Well when I was a kid like you know, everyone was neighbourly y'knowha'mean youd go out and leave the door open like you know, now you doubt'a leave anything lying around 'nick ya eyelashes y'knowha'mean. Well a lot of the kids are using their 'yeah man' 'no man' and all that 'yeah' like, a lot of the kids are doing that, den again it's the, you see the Indian yoofs now theyre copying the black boys in their dress and everything else in their sayings in walk everything y'knowha'mean.

» Can you speak any other languages? «

Err I would swear (laughs)

But if you're a stranger to this area I'm just giving you a little word of advise bit a little bit careful when coming home of a night na mean.

Three words? Yeah, well I can give you two - Run Down, well ya know they're not doing a lot for the area plus they're getting too many people here ya know, it's a dropping pot, east London was always known for it

I don’t think it really makes a difference on someone’s accent cos they’re still a person aint they really.

E2

I fink it has, cos I fink now people are trying to make it more they're own fing, I don't know, adding their own little twist to it.

» Are you from East London? «

Yes I'm from East London

» Where area? How long have you lived there for? «

Well I used to live in Bethnal Green Roman road but I moved to Aldgate east bout 2 years ago.

Pretty much all my life really since I was a baby we've lived round here because we used to live in Paddington and then we moved here when I was like 6 months.

» Can you tell me 3 - 5 words to describe the area? «

Three to five words erm its quite difficult let me fink I fink it's aah don't know, I don't know how to say it, what do you mean? I'll say its got a mixture of people, people from all different backgrounds, at times it can be rough, it's a nice neighborhood cos everyone kinda knows everyone in one way or another so in that sense its nice but it does have its good and bad days like all areas do.

» What do you do in your spare time around there? «

Round here do you know what there's not that much to do cos there used to be a lot of youth clubs but fink there isn't many left that's why a lot of kids tend to hang around on the street or in peoples blocks n in the park and then obviously a lot of them don't have money an don't work that's where they hang, obviously if your working it's a lot more, you've got more opportunities and go out with your friends, you could go cinema go have a drink in the bar or fings like that but other than that that's what they do, just stick around hanging about in peoples doorways causing trouble some a them so...

» Can you tell if someone is local by the way they speak? «

You can do yeah, yeah sometimes you can tell by how they look or even how they're dressed as well like you can tell they're not from the area and when you've grown up as well I fink well you pretty much see like similar faces all the time and then you see like one out of the ordinary you know like they're not from there.

I think times it can be their accent or how they talk, cos obviously sometimes when you talk in certain slang around here a lot of the youngsters do speak slang and where they sometimes don't pick up on it, they don't understand you can tell that they're not from around here, so they tend to ask questions or what does that mean? Or what's that or and then you think aa I thought you'd know and kind of realize actually they're not from around here.

» How would you describe your accent? «

My accent I think is just east end cockney like that's what it is yeah, that's what I get told quite a lot.

» What do you think influenced your accent to sound the way it does? «

I think just growing up around in the actual east end just living around here growing up its just natural, you just pick it up.

» What do you think makes your accent different from someone who doesn't live in London/the area? «

I don't know I think its, well I find the way I personally speak I kind of tend to long my words its more like, sometimes its got a lot of slang, where as other people I fink they're English is more punctual ify'knowha'mean its more direct.

» Do you think accents can effect the way people perceive others? «

I think for me personally it doesn't for some people it can do, but that's just personally down to their own choice, I don't think it really makes a difference on someone's accent cos they're still a person aint they really, everyone's got differences ent they, it depends where your from as well.

» Would you say you speak any slang? «

I think I do sometimes but obviously when I'm at work it's a lot more professional you kind of adapt to the environment. Obviously in work I can't be using certain words cos its not really professional, but when I'm out of work and I'm around like the area and see my friends, I do tend to speak slang now and then.

» What words would you say? «

There could be loads like I'm sure that you've probably heard them like already they're quite common like 'peng' 'piff' there's loads 'blud' 'wha gwarn' but I don't really use that kind of slang.

» Do you think the way people sound in London has changed? «

I fink it has, cos I fink now people are trying to make it more they're own fing, I don't know, adding their own little twist to it. Its not kept to its original form or anything, cos I think the original form is cockney like the east end like you know cockney accent.

» What do you think it would be now? «

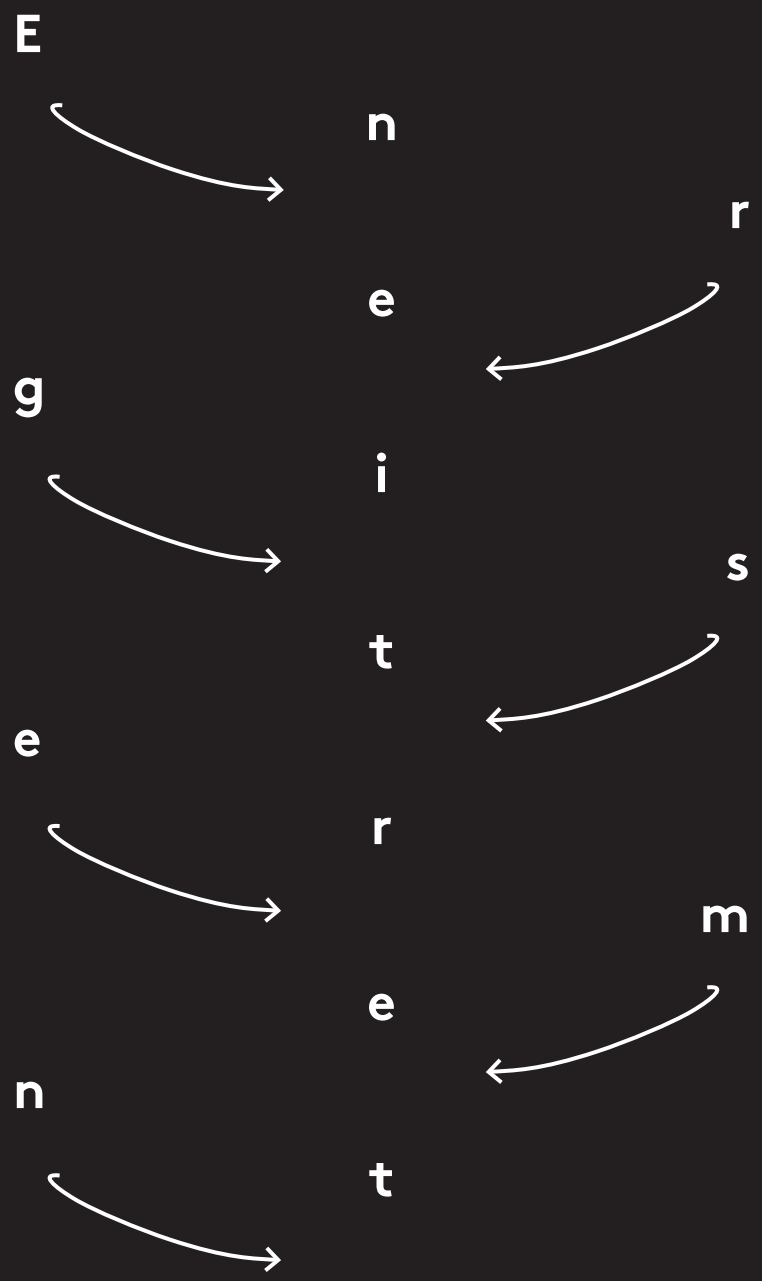
Ahh I don't know now they've probably just modernized it up you know.

» Can you speak any other languages? «

I can speak Bengali.

I think I do sometimes but obviously when I'm at work it's a lot more professional you kind of adapt to the environment. Obviously in work I can't be using certain words cos its not really professional, but when I'm out of work and I'm around like the area and see my friends, I do tend to speak slang now and then.

It's, I don’t know, it's just the people who live here, it’s the community init.

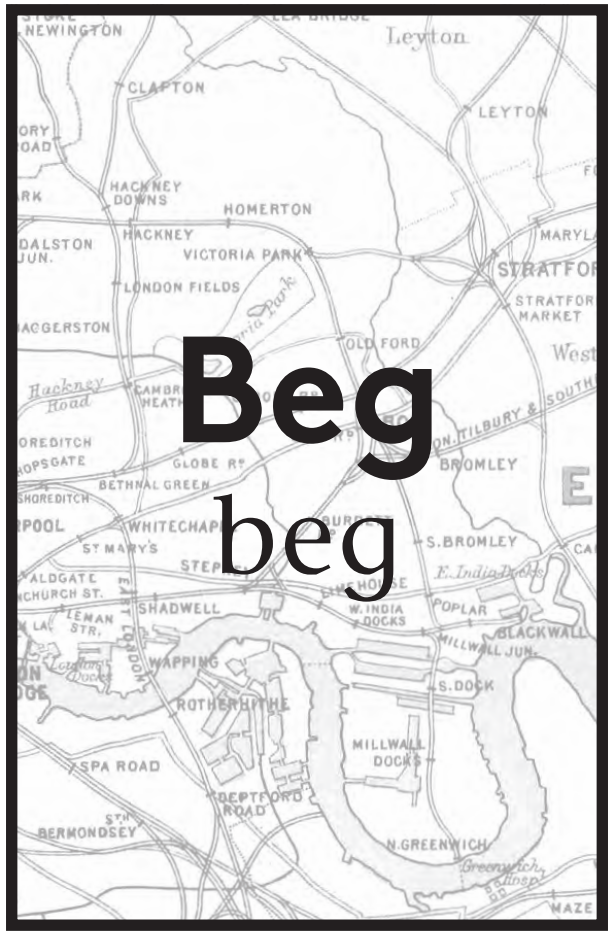


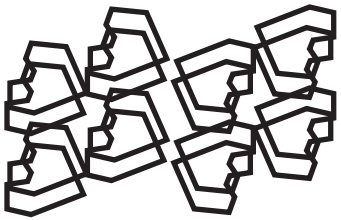
Enregisterment

In his 2003 paper, The social life cultural value, Asif Agha introduced the concept of 'enregisterment' as "processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms." (Agha, 2003). In a later paper he modifies the definition slightly, as such, "processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users." (Agha, 2005). For those of us who are familiar with Internet speech communities, we might recognize this process in the way memes are spread, and how the words or phrases that make up those memes take on special meanings and associations within social circles.

Kim Witten

"Processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users."





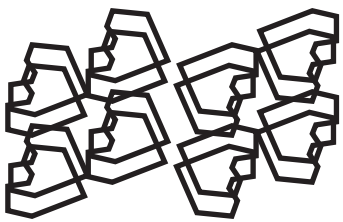
What a Beg!

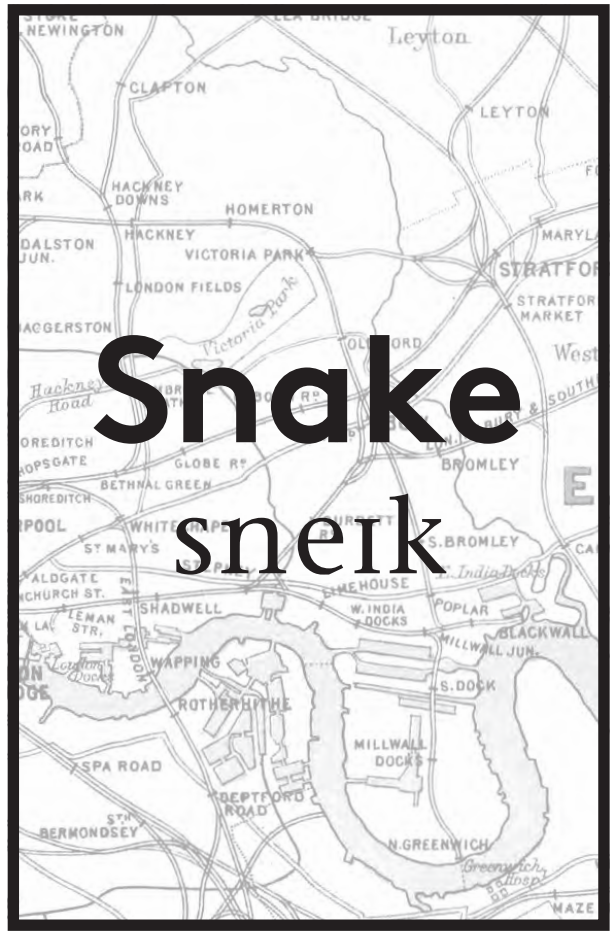
Nah he's a Beg bruv!

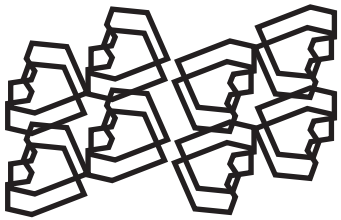
I Beg you pass me that

Beg
[beg]

- **Wanabe, try hard or please.**







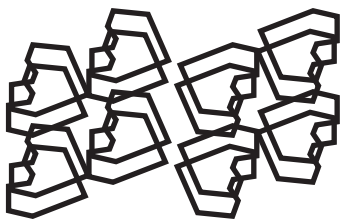
What a Snake!

You proper Snaked man last night.

Dont be talkinf to him, he's a Snake.

Snake
[sneyk]

- **Untrustworthy, Disloyal stabbed in the back.**




Eight

The Experts

A *conversation* with Paul Kerswill

Paul Kerswill works in sociolinguistics, specifically language variation and change. He is one of the first dialectitians to coin the term Multicultural London English. He has taught and given lectures by invitation in eighteen countries on five continents, and has been an advisor on urban dialectology projects in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Thailand, Japan and the UK.

We have the lowest upward social mobility of any developed nation. We think it's OK to vilify and lampoon people with non-RP accents in the media, and that's tantamount to telling people the culture, including value systems, they were brought up in is of no value.

It's above all by the way you speak – by the way you pronounce the words of English, by the rhythms, the rises and falls of your voice (your stress, pitch and tone - ie your accent), and by your overall fluency or lack of it - whether in conversation or public speaking - that other people will judge you.

How do you think societies and communities are moulded by the languages that are spoken?

This is too big a question for a one-liner! Suffice to say it's a two-way street.

Do you think the UK is class conscious?

In that we talk about it a lot, then we are. We have the lowest upward social mobility of any developed nation. We think it's OK to vilify and lampoon people with non-RP accents in the media, and that's tantamount to telling people the culture, including value systems, they were brought up in is of no value.

Do you think accents can effect the way people perceive others? How?

Yes. Loads of research on this by Giles, Coupland and others since the 1970s.

Does speaking an urban dialect place you under the umbrella of 'the working class'?

Identifiable accents or dialects tend to be spoken by people who are not middle class, so to that extent, yes. But it's not a necessary thing – it doesn't work in Switzerland or Norway, nor to the same extent in southern Germany and a good deal of Italy.

Do you think the use of 'rough language' can encourage bad behaviour?

If you mean by 'rough language' a lot of swearing and slang, then it might well go with it. But it doesn't necessarily encourage it unless the language is itself violent and accompanied by violence. This would be the film censors' argument. If it's a question of a local accent or dialect which is different from Standard English or RP, then most emphatically no.

Is MLE a recognition of cross cultural integration? Do you think it could be a celebrated part of cultural identity?

I would like it to be. Young Londoners share more than that which divides them. Their language is heard by other people as 'talking black', and it's not just slang that gives this percept, but pronunciation. But the stigma against MLE is so strong (I believe) that there needs to be a good deal more social change before it can be publicly celebrated. Instead, it has what sociolinguists call 'covert prestige' – speakers see it as part of their identity and community belonging. But this cultural capital, expressed through the use of slang and an association with music, isn't the sort that middle-class society places any value on.

Is language and word choice an important part of someones identity?

Yes.

MLE is seen as its own dialect or 'Multiethnolect' if you will, how do you think this shared dialect emerged?

Through contact between speakers of Asian, African, Caribbean and other Englishes, as well as people learning English. We mustn't forget the strong contribution of Cockney to the mix, and also Standard English through the school. Children don't necessarily have English as a first language at home, and instead acquire it outside the home, which they do very successfully. The local Cockney accent isn't as prominent as before, so kids automatically come up with a new accent.

Is this evolution of the English language a good thing?

I don't put a value judgement on it. It's a natural consequence. It is a 'good thing' if it symbolises shared values, which is part of the way towards integration.

Is technology playing an important role in the evolution of certain Languages?

Yes, certainly for the spread of slang, but not pronunciation. There are now communities of online language users who share lots of features, but who have never met each other, and who never will.

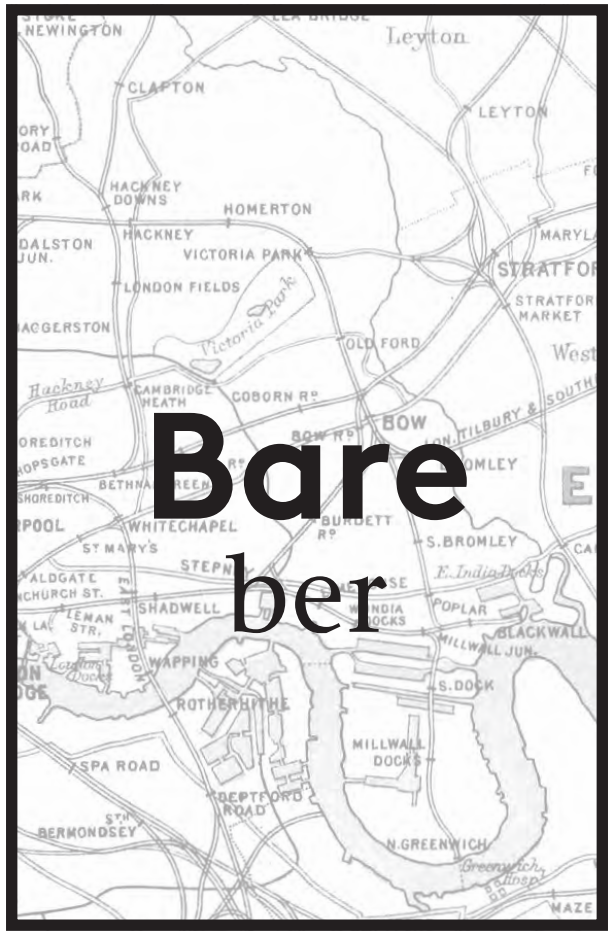
Why do you think MLE has been so stigmatised by the press and RP speakers of the English language?

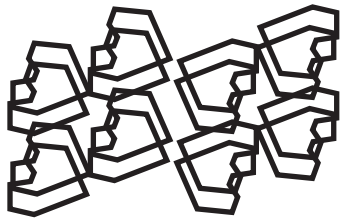
I think I've answered that above!

Can peoples negative views on what MLE stands for become redeemable in the foreseeable future? (post riot etc)

I wish this could be so, but I'm not optimistic.

Young Londoners share more than that which divides them. Their language is heard by other people as ‘talking black’, and it’s not just slang that gives this percept, but pronunciation. But the stigma against MLE is so strong (I believe) that there needs to be a good deal more social change before it can be publicly celebrated.





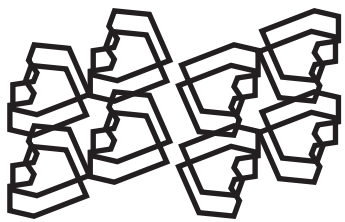
He's Bare annoying!

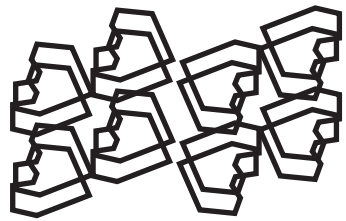
There's Bare people in there!

I got Bare money!

Bare
[bair]

- **A lot, many, very.**





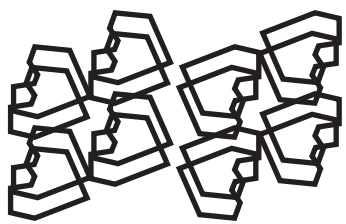
That boy is a Chief!

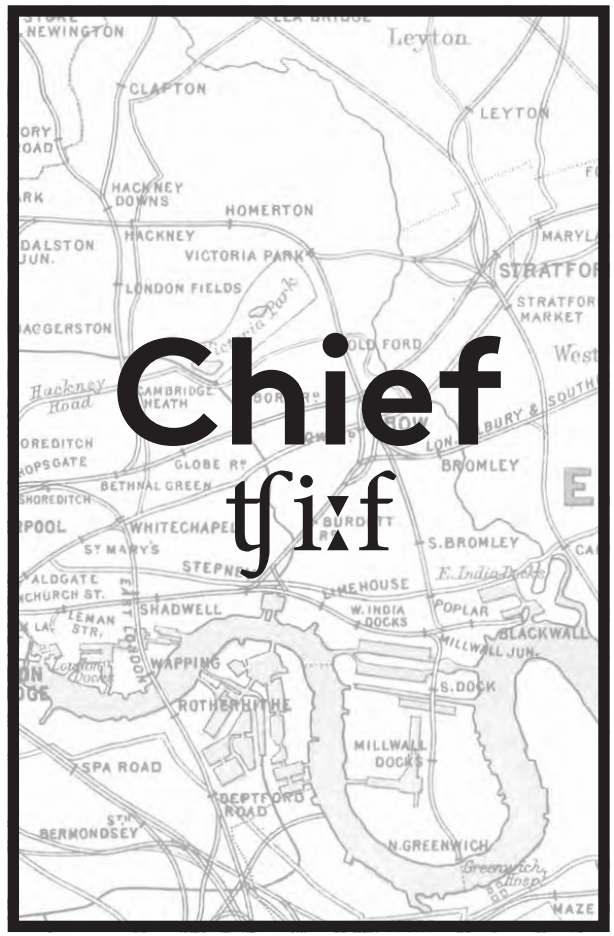
That guy is a straight up Chief!

Going on like some sorta Chief!

Chief
[cheef]

- **Derogatory term, person of low status.**





Nine

Linguistics

A deeper level of understanding

A look into the linguistic variations of MLE with concluding remarks from the essay: *Ethnicity, friendship network and social practices as the motor of dialect change: linguistic innovation in London*. *By* Jenny Cheshire, Sue Fox, Paul Kerswill & Eivind Torgersen

Joe Brown and The Bruvvers

Fir ˈθərti: ‘ee
free ˈθri:
fevehrz ˈfeðərz

↷ˈθɪŋz Fings Ain’t Wot They Used T’ Be

Th-fronting

Th-fronting refers to the pronunciation of the English “th” as “f” or “v”. When th-fronting is applied, /θ/ becomes /f/ (for example, three is pronounced as free) and /ð/ becomes /v/ (for example, bathe is pronounced as bave).

The use of the labiodental fricatives [f] and [v] for the dental fricatives [θ] and [ð]. It is commonly associated with Cockney, but it was noted in Yorkshire speech in 1876. It has recently been noted as spreading through non-standard accents in England (cf. Trudgill 1988, 43).

Although th-fronting is found occasionally in the middle and upper (middle) class English accents as well, there is still a marked social difference between working and middle class speakers. Th-fronting is regarded as a ‘boundary marker’ between Cockney and Estuary English, as depicted in the first descriptions of the latter form of English and confirmed by a phonetic study conducted by researcher Ulrike Altendorf.

Nevertheless, Altendorf points out that th-fronting is found occasionally in middle class (Estuary) speech as well and concludes that “it is currently making its way into the middle class English accent and thus into Estuary English”.

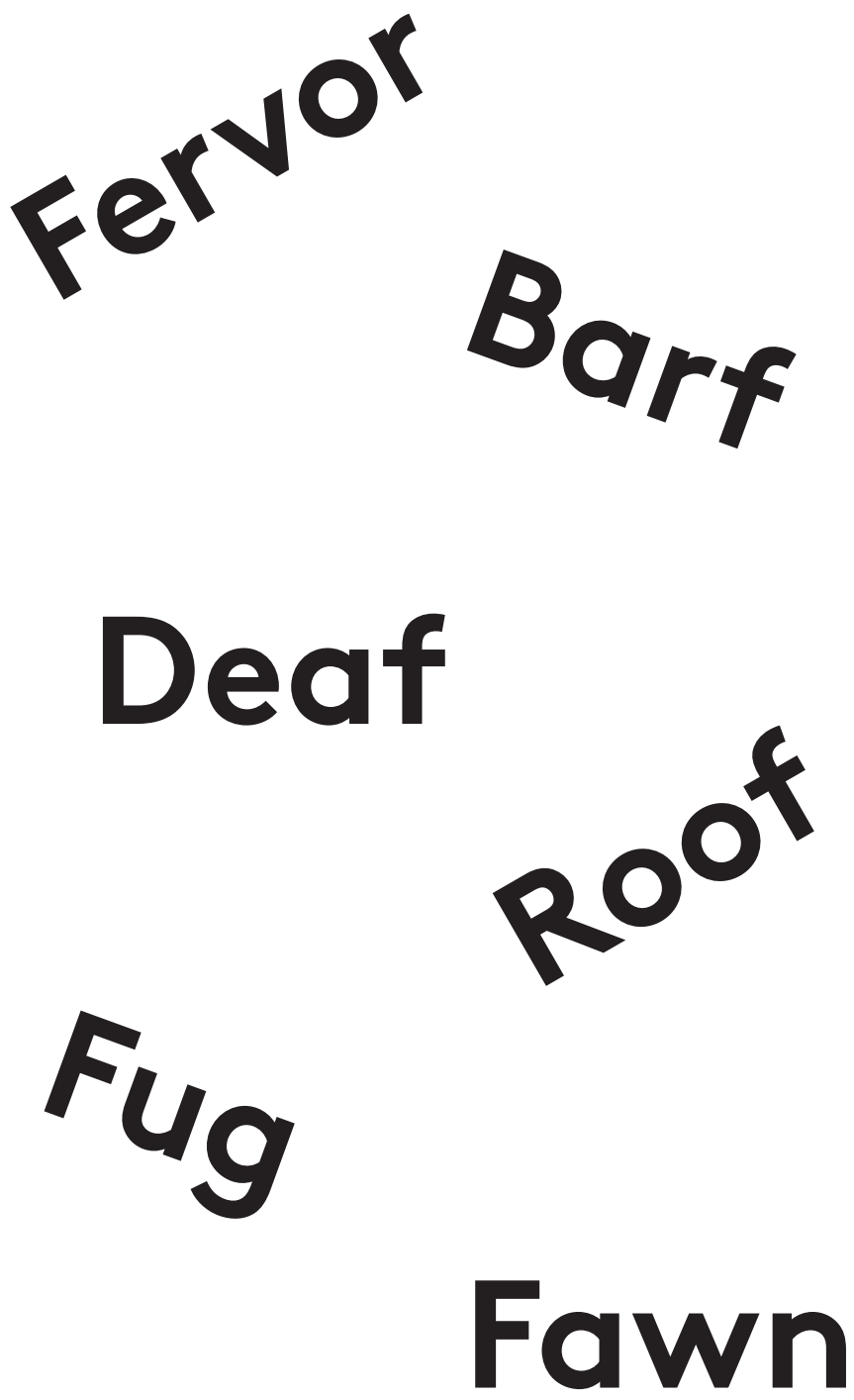
In popular music, the singer Joe Brown’s 1960s backing band was christened The Bruvvers (that is, “the brothers” with th-fronting). The 1960 musical Fings Ain’t Wot They Used T’Be was stated to be a Cockney Comedy.

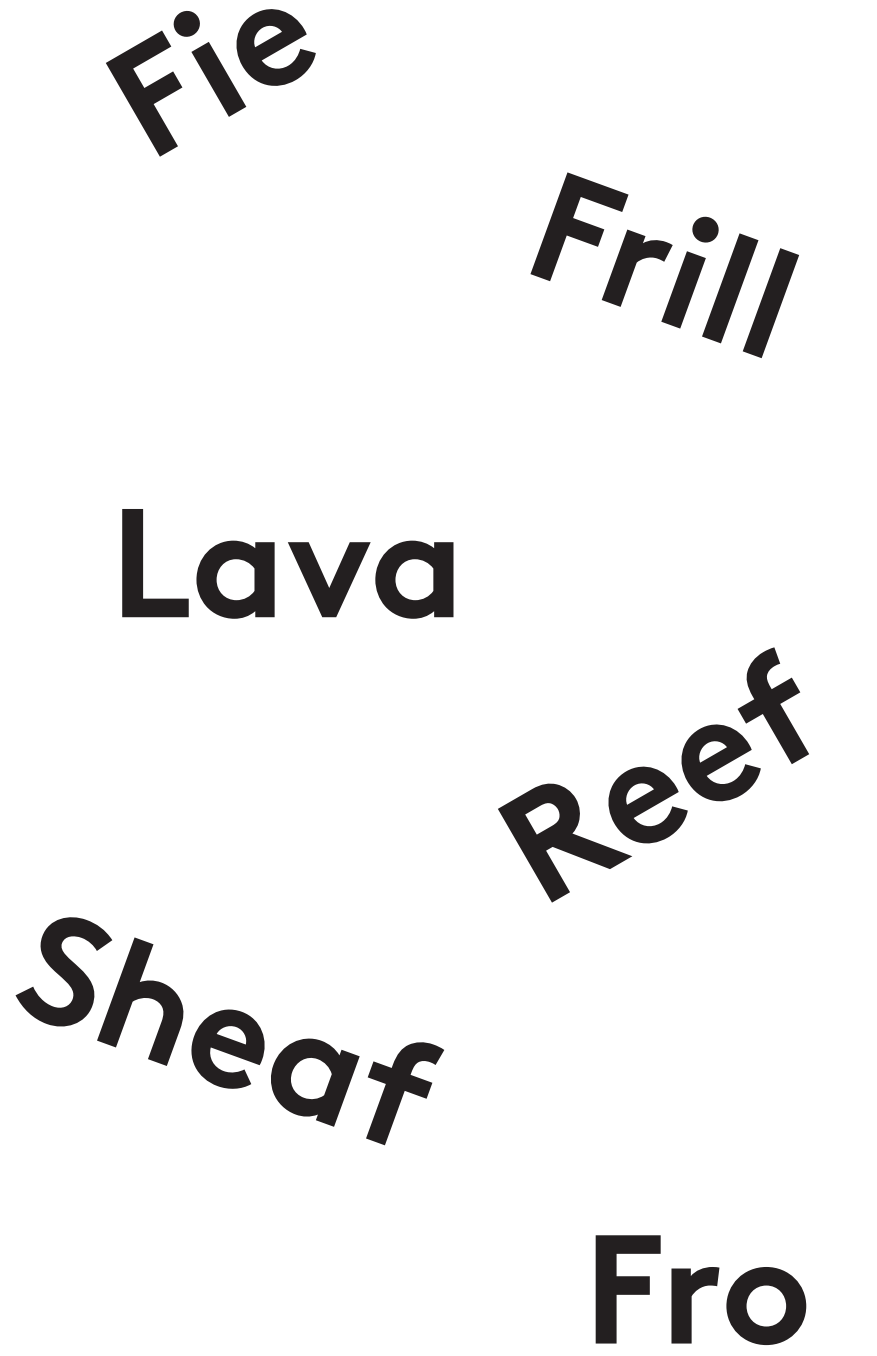
Taken from the essay - ***Ethnicity, friendship network and social practices as the motor of dialect change: linguistic innovation in London By Jenny Cheshire, Sue Fox, Paul Kerswill & Eivind Torgersen***

Not surprisingly, we find a massive difference between the young and old speakers in Hackney in their use of [f] for /θ/. The elderly speakers are less likely than the young speakers to have word-initial TH-fronting.

Word-initial TH- fronting amongst the young speakers is high: 86.5%, and there are small, sometimes significant differences between the groups. The Anglos are more likely to have TH-fronting than the non-Anglos, 89.7% vs. 84.1%. Other than this, there are small and insignificant differences between the groups of young speakers with regard to ethnicity. However, amongst the groups of Anglo speakers, the Anglo speakers with a non-Anglo network have more TH-fronting that the Anglo speakers with an Anglo network, 91.3% vs. 84.7%. The Anglo speakers with a non-Anglo network are significantly different from the non-Anglo speakers, but the Anglo speakers with an Anglo network are not. We also found other variants used amongst some of the non-Anglo speakers.

[th] for word-initial /θ/ is regarded as a feature of Asian, Afro-Caribbean and L2 Englishes (Khan 2006; Sebba 1993). Two female Bangladeshi speakers have an equal amount of [th] and [f], and four male speakers with West-Indian, Indian, and Ghanaian backgrounds had a few tokens of [th] each. For the male speakers [th] typically occurs in a handful of lexical items, including ëthiefí (tief being a well-established loan from creole ñ Hewitt 1986: 130) and ëthingí. One female West-Indian speaker had an idiosyncratic use of an unaspirated [t] for /θ/ near-categorically.


Fervor
Barf
Deaf
Roof
Fug
Fawn


Fie
Frill
Lava
Reef
Sheaf
Fro

Butter

a

Rhotic
Pronunciation: /ˈrəʊtɪk/

Definition of rhotic

adjective
Phonetics

Relating to or denoting a dialect or variety of English (e.g. in America and SW England) in which r is pronounced before a consonant (as in hard) and at the ends of words (as in far)

Non-Rhotic
Pronunciation: /ˈrəʊtɪk/

Definition of non-rhotic

adjective
Phonetics

Relating to or denoting a dialect of English (such as Standard British English) in which r is pronounced in prevocalic position only.

Rhotic & Non-Rhotic

English pronunciation can be divided into two main accent groups: a rhotic speaker pronounces a rhotic consonant in words like hard and butter; a non-rhotic speaker does not. That is, rhotic speakers pronounce /θ/ (English R) in nearly all positions of a word, while non-rhotic speakers pronounce /θ/ only if it is followed by a vowel sound in the same phrase or prosodic unit. Therefore, when pronounced by a non-rhotic speaker, the word butter would sound like butta / bθtə/ to a rhotic speaker.

Non-rhoticity is featured in many accents in England (including "Received Pronunciation"), Australia, New Zealand, Jamaica, small pockets in India and surrounding areas, the New England region of the United States, notably Boston, among others, and can be a feature in small pockets in Atlantic Canada, particularly Lunenburg English.

Butta

er

EUW?

ELL?

L-vocalisation

Listen to a three-year-old say "doll," and it will probably sound like "dow." Along the same lines, a young child's "trouble" becomes "trubbow," "fall" becomes "foe," "bell" becomes "bew." Or so it sounds to the average listener. This is what is called L-vocalization, the tendency to turn the letter l at the end of words into some type of "w" or "oo" sound.

Of course, this quirk isn't confined to children. Many adult accents of English use l-vocalization, perhaps the most famous being Cockney.

But to refer to l-vocalization as a Cockney feature would be inaccurate. It's become widespread in the UK, even making headway into speakers of Received Pronunciation (Standard British).

L-vocalization occurs in English because of something called the dark L. In many accents, the "l" in light and the "l" in bell are in not fact the same. The l that appears after vowels is velarized, meaning the tongue very slightly lifts toward the velum (the rear part of the roof of your mouth). Impressionistically speaking, this gives the dark L a "heavy" sound.

In accents with l-vocalization, what happens is that the actual "l" itself disappears, leaving only the sound created by the lifting of the tongue toward the velum. Depending on how rounded the lips are, this creates sounds such as w, oo, oh or any number of other variations.

L

W

OO

Taken from the essay - *Ethnicity, friendship network and social practices as the motor of dialect change: linguistic innovation in London By Jenny Cheshire, Sue Fox, Paul Kerswill & Eivind Torgersen*

K-backing

Back /k/ was analysed in word-initial position in front of non-high back vowels (STRUT, START, LOT and THOUGHT). Examples are cousin, car, cot, caught. The variants [kñ] and [q], which are auditorily relatively easy to perceive, were coded asëbackí.

The feature was not used by elderly speakers at all. There is a small difference between the ethnic groups in their use of the back variants. The average frequency amongst the Anglo speakers is 70.2% and amongst the non-Anglos 65.0%, a difference which is not significantly different. The young female speakers are less likely to use the most back variants than the male speakers. Although ethnicity does not show up as a significant factor, there is a main effect of friendship network and this is due to Anglo speakers with an Anglo network being less likely to use the back variants. The Anglo speakers with a non-Anglo network were not significantly different from the non-Anglo speakers.

Dipthong shift

A diphthong is when two adjacent vowels come together to form a single vowel with two distinct elements. The vowel sound in the word "fight" is a diphthong, because you start with the vowel sound from "fa" and end up higher up in the mouth making the vowel sound from "feet." English is full of diphthongs—the sentence "no highway cowboys" contains five distinct diphthongs. Note, however, the distinction between a diphthong and a situation where two vowels each retain their own full effect; the word "neon," for instance, contains two separate syllables because the "e" and the "o" do not form a diphthong.

Similarly, a triphthong contains three vowel sounds all coming together to form one, as in the British pronunciation of the word "hour." In this case, the first vowel is serving as the syllable's nucleus, though there are languages where the second vowel does so and others where the third vowel does. There is some disagreement about whether the middle sound of a word like "layer" should be considered a triphthong, or two distinct vowel sounds (one being a diphthong). One of the reasons that English is tough for foreign learners is the relatively small extent of vowel movement—essentially, we slur our vowels together.

Goat

Price

Face

Recent years have seen changes in the diphthong system in accents in south-east England, including London. The diphthongs are becoming less shifted and are acquiring RP-like qualities (Kerswill & Williams 2005). In inner London, this diphthong shift ëreversalí (see Kerswill, Torgersen & Fox 2008 for further discussion of this concept) is particularly dramatic, with the young non-Anglo speakers leading the change, followed by the Anglo speakers with non-Anglo friendship networks. As an example, consider a young speaker in Hackney, Zack, who has the emerging system. He is an Anglo speaker with a largely non-Anglo friendship network.

There is fronting of PRICE, raising of the onsets of FACE and GOAT and also backing of GOAT. There is also backing and lowering of MOUTH. In total, there is dramatic diphthong shift reversal, coupled with very short trajectories, indicating near-monophthongal qualities. Zack has the most raised FACE, and amongst the most raised GOAT, fronted GOOSE and fronted PRICE of all the young speakers in Hackney. He is also amongst the speakers with the shortest trajectories, as measured by Euclidean distance. In general, it is the male non-Anglo speakers who are in the lead in diphthong shift reversal.

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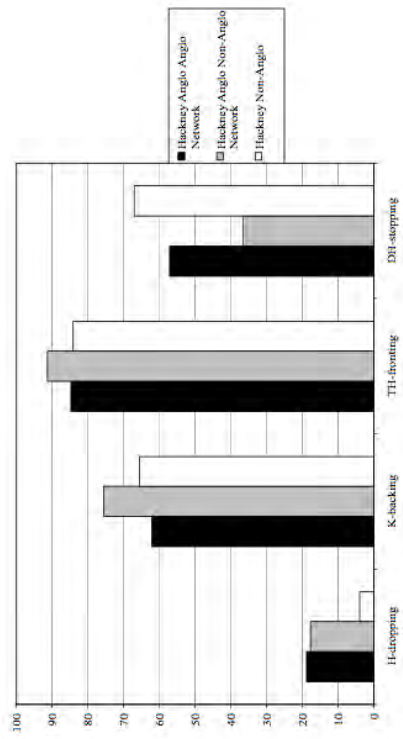
The figures show, first, that Hackney has a high percentage use of these features (counting the loss of H-dropping as a feature). Two of these can be regarded as ënewí in the sense of not being part of the traditional description of Cockney: loss of H-dropping and K-backing, while a third, DH-stopping, is a recessive old feature now reinforced by minority ethnic speech. Second, it is the non-Anglo speakers who use two out of three of the ëinnovativeí features more than the Anglo speakers. The difference between Anglo and non-Anglo speakers in Hackney is small, at least for K-backing, but there are significant differences for H-dropping, TH-fronting and DH- stopping

Figure 11 shows the distribution of the consonant features by ethnicity and, for the Anglo speakers, for type of friendship network. There are significant effects of friendship network for K-backing (Anglo speakers with an Anglo network have less use of the most back variant [q]), TH-fronting (Anglo speakers with a non-Anglo network have more) and DH-stopping (Anglo speakers with a non-Anglo network have less). The patterns are, however, varied. The fact that K-backing is greater for those with non-Anglo networks suggests that it may partly be an ethnic marker. This would be in line with the fact that its frequency in the largely mono-ethnic borough of Havering is much lower at 50.6%. However, this explanation does not work for TH- fronting, which is

well established throughout the south of England, and is equally frequent in Havering (83.1%). DH-stopping is, as we have pointed out, an older Cockney feature, and this may explain its high use amongst those with Anglo networks ñ though this is not reflected in the Havering score for this variable of

30.0%. Presumably it is reinforced in Hackney by the high frequencies amongst Afro- Caribbean speakers.

fig.11



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Final Discussion

As we have stated, the seven speakers are all members of multi-ethnic friendship groups, a fact which seems crucial in this case of intense dialect/language contact. The fact that the groups are multi-ethnic probably allows for ëcrossingí (Rampton 1995) and stylised speech to take place. That is to say, membership of a multi-ethnic friendship group probably allows a speaker to use language features associated with a particular social or ethnic group to which he/she does not belong. If the innovations are arising amongst the non-Anglo group then the contact with other ethnic groups within the friendship network allows the innovations to be taken up. Even if some of these types of speech performance start in a conscious way, it seems likely that as time goes on and the contact between the different ethnic groups intensifies, these innovations will lead to changes in the quasi-permanent phonologies and grammars of our speakers (ëpost-vernacular reorganizationí, in Labovís terms (2001b: 85)). As one of our seven linguistic innovators aptly puts it:

"When you hang around with someone things of that person will get stuck to you and things of you get stuck to him do you get me now?"

(Dom, Hackney)

Why, though, do these speakers seem to be ahead of the others in the use of innovations? We mentioned earlier that they belong to large friendship groups, and so the question arises as to why these particular speakers, and maybe not others, seem sanctioned to use the innovations? The notion of ëbrokeringí would appear to be relevant. Brokering is the ëuse of multimembership to transfer some element of one practice into anotherí (Wenger 1998: 109) and is a term introduced by Eckert (2000) into sociolinguistics to describe how adolescents introduce new ideas into their friendship groups. These may be ideas about fashion and ways of doing things, as well as new ways of talking. Brokering entails spanning the boundaries between one group and another and transferring elements between those groups. It seems that some people are better at brokering than others and, as Wenger notes, some people even seem to thrive on being brokers, regularly creating connections and engaging in ìimport-exportî (Wenger 1998: 109). In order to be a successful broker they must be able to exert enough influence in each group to be able to carry ideas from one group and introduce them to another. Personality factors would therefore seem to be a key factor to this notion.

The seven speakers who are the focus of this paper would seem to have more than multi-ethnic friendships as a common denominator. All are dominant characters within their friendship groups and highly regarded by their peers. Their friendship networks extend beyond the college grounds, giving them the opportunity for brokering. They are all involved in activities such as rapping and MCing either as participants or consumers, and these are highly valued resources in contemporary youth culture. These factors, together with the evidence from our analyses, lead us to conclude that these seven speakers are the leaders of change amongst the adolescent speakers in this study, and are representative of the social and personality types who are innovators within their group.

"When you hang around with someone things of that person will get stuck to you and things of you get stuck to him do you get me now?"

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Multicultural London English
Innovation Starts Inner City
A Post-racial Fusion of Language

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