Mixing real and apparent time data with population movement: A case study from Somerset

VICTORIA GARNETT
Trinity College Dublin

Apparent-time data has often been considered a surrogate' and somewhat inferior alternative to real-time data. The logistics of a long-term study to elicit real-time data often prove difficult, either from lack of funding, or indeed time, making apparent-time studies an attractive alternative to those under such constraints. Population movement as an external factor to language change and dialect-levelling has been investigated both from the perspective of change that occurs to the moving individual, and change that occurs to the area a large community might move into, as can be seen in New Zealand (Trudgill et al, 2000), or Milton Keynes (Kerswill and Williams, 2000) . One may also consider this from the perspective of a larger community which sees much in-migration, or from which individuals migrate on a periodic basis. This paper will evaluate a mix of real and apparent-time data from Somerset, UK within the context of population movement as a potential external factor in linguistic change. Somerset, the area of study, has had a large influx of economic migrants over the past 60 years. The theories of population movement and accommodation (Trudgill, 1986) would indicate that a change via accommodation and diffusion might be expected in an area that sees a good deal of in-migration and commuting (Omdal, 1994; Britain, 2003; Kerswill, 2001; Kerswill, 2006). Drawing on local data gathered from the Survey of English Dialects during 1957 (Orton et al, 1967), and comparing this to apparent-time data gathered in 2011 from Bridgwater, in Somerset, we can begin to see if this mixed data-set indicates change in the use of allophones of /l/, and what relationship exists between the real and apparent-time data. With increasing mobility among adults for employment or education, are data-sets such as these the way forward for evaluating and perhaps predicting language change and dialect-levelling?