

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis explores the linguistic consequences of sustained and frequent interaction between Anglo and Non-Anglo children and adolescents in an international school in Spain. The aims of the research are to examine if *focussing* (see Trudgill 1986, 2004) is occurring over time in this diverse speech community, and to find out if, despite all the different languages, dialects, ethnic groups and age groups in this very transient and fluid community, we might still be able to trace processes of dialect contact.

Previous research (see Giles 1973; Coupland 1988; Trudgill 1986) has shown that speakers may converge linguistically to the person they are speaking to. This convergence may be to minimise regional or social distance. Research has also shown that speakers may diverge, or become linguistically less similar for purposes such as emphasising their distinctiveness or for increasing social distance. This linguistic convergence or divergence can take place with the modification of regional or socially sensitive features of language. Trudgill (1986) argues that this is a very important process that may lead to dialect levelling, i.e. dialects becoming more similar if the accommodation process is repeated over a long period of time. The dynamics of linguistic accommodation in a highly fluid community is currently poorly understood due to a lack of empirical evidence. Recently a large number of English speakers from different parts of the UK have been settling in Spain. This study investigates the linguistic effects of frequent and sustained interaction between Anglophone teenagers and young children from different dialect locations of the UK and Spanish and Northern European teenagers and young children in the speech community of an international school in Spain.

There have now been over twenty five years of dialect contact research. Studies have previously concentrated on dialect contact situations where a regional dialect has been established for some time such as post-colonial country or a New Town. What has not been studied before, is a less stable community such as the speech community in the present study which has been brought about by lifestyle migration. This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature by exploring the linguistic consequences of lifestyle migration in a highly diverse, fluid and unstable community.

Lifestyle migration differs from other types of migration previously studied in dialect contact research. For example, previous linguistic research has been undertaken on New Zealand, where migrants went to escape poverty, and New Towns, where people moved out of slum housing. These migrations have been for economic reasons, whereas lifestyle migration is deemed to be more about whim and desire. It is more difficult to talk about community formation when talking about lifestyle migration compared to economic migration. For example, in the case of New Towns, people were subsidised to move there. The New Town movement aim was specifically to create a new environment and a new community. There are definitional problems with lifestyle migration. We might perceive it for individuals, as being somewhere on a continuum between lifestyle and economic migration, in that some migrants do go to Spain to work. However, it is not usually for increased salaries. People migrate for reasons such as the sun, golf, horses, a house in the country or a desire to immerse oneself in Spanish culture. There is no one movement and no one motive. Motives are not usually economic, rather they are individualistic. Being individually driven, the resulting community is fluid, transient and linguistically heterogeneous. The linguistic mix in the melting pot of the speech community of the present study is diverse. It includes children

and adolescent migrants other than Anglophones, Spanish and other ethnic groups who mix together in the speech community of an international school. This speech community is an extreme case of dialect contact. The present study is the first of its kind to explore such a speech community linguistically.

The argument of the present study is based mainly on accommodation theory (Giles 1973; Giles and Powesland 1975), long term-accommodation and Trudgill's model of New-Dialect Formation (Trudgill 1986, 2004). Trudgill (1986) claims that short-term accommodation occurs with a particular speaker in a particular setting, but that this linguistic adjustment is temporary. Dialect contact between linguistic varieties from speakers whose dialects are mutually intelligible is particularly interesting when it occurs on a long-term basis, as it can lead to levelling, i.e. dialect change within a community through the reduction of marked features. According to Kerswill (2002: 680) “long-term accommodation results from the cumulative effect of countless acts of *short-term accommodation* in particular conversational interactions”. Trudgill (1986: 39) argues that over time, long-term accommodation strategies may become fixed. Given that the setting for the present research is a fluid and transient community of mobile speakers, with the absence of a dialectal norm, the setting provides a unique environment to test for these processes. Previous research has found that levelling is more advanced in new mobile communities (Cheshire, Gillett, Kerswill and Williams 1999: 3), therefore, we might expect to trace processes of dialect contact such as levelling in this community. The present study does not claim that these changes will be permanent, as continued language change across the lifespan is a widely documented phenomenon (e.g. Sankoff and Blondeau 2007); however, we still expect to be able to locate processes of dialect contact in this community.

The setting for the present study differs from typical dialect contact settings. Dialect contact studies have to date usually been concerned with mobile individuals or groups coming into contact with a non-mobile majority. The speech community in the present study however, consists of a mix of members from different language and dialect backgrounds. The members of the community are linguistically heterogeneous. The community may be comparable to Trudgill's (1986, 2004) very early stages of New Dialect Formation, the mixing stage. In addition to the diversity of the speech community, its members are mobile and transient. The turbulence makes the setting less than ideal to study New Dialect Formation. However, as we shall find out, despite all these factors and the 'messiness' of the speech community, dialect contact processes were still traceable.

In the present study the BATH vowel and the (t) variable are analysed across two age groups, young children aged eight years old and adolescents aged between fifteen to eighteen years old. The BATH vowel is a particularly interesting variable to study in this community with no stable dialectal norm, given that it is regionally sensitive in the UK. The focus of the study for the (t) variable in particular is the glottal stop, ubiquitous in the UK amongst young people. We might expect that the young informants are still below the age of Chambers' (1992) critical period for dialect acquisition, and that they are still relatively flexible in terms of their dialects. We might expect that the dialects of the teen informants are less elastic, but still not resistant to linguistic accommodation. We might predict different outcomes from the two variables. The question of interest regarding the BATH vowel for this project is whether informants categorically use one or other form of the vowel, or if there is variability in this mixed speech community. The dialectal boundary that runs through the middle of England, with just one short vowel in the North and a TRAP-BATH split (see Wells 1982) in the South, has remained remarkably stable for over two hundred years. The BATH vowel is

known as being notoriously 'stubborn' in the UK. We shall find out if it behaves the same way when it is transplanted to this new diverse speech community. The (t) variable is interesting within this speech community in that the glottal stop variant is currently involved in geographical spread in the UK, particularly among young people (see Docherty and Foulkes 1999; Mathisen 1999; Schlee and Ramsamy in press; Stuart-Smith, Timmins and Tweedie 2007; Williams and Kerswill 1999). Recent research has revealed rapid and widespread accent change in the UK regarding this variant (see Foulkes and Docherty 1999). This study aims to find out what variant of (t) is dominant in *this* speech community.

The thesis is structured in the following way: **Chapter 2** looks at the theory relevant to this thesis, focussing in particular on dialect contact, New Dialect formation, koinéisation and linguistic accommodation. It looks at previous research within dialect contact, Trudgill's (1986, 2004) model of New Dialect Formation and the proposed stages, and previous dialect contact studies in fluid communities. It includes the research questions for the present study. **Chapter 3** outlines the methodology of the present study, including the ethnographic research, and what it is like to be a migrant in Spain. It also gives us an insight into the lives and practices of the informants in the study. The analysis of the (t) variable is presented in **Chapter 4**. The chapter reports why this variable was selected and what is happening with it in other parts of the world including the UK. Social and linguistic constraints that were applied are discussed. The results are presented in relation to this speech community and previous research. **Chapter 5** presents the history, analysis, results and discussion of the BATH vowel. Lastly, **Chapter 6** presents the conclusions from the thesis. It outlines the most interesting results, discusses the theoretical implications of the findings, points out the limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for future study.

