

STOP AND GO (AWAY): LINGUISTIC CONSEQUENCES OF NON-LOCAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG SMALL-TOWN NEWFOUNDLAND YOUTH

Sarah Knee and Gerard Van Herk

Introduction

TO UNDERSTAND THE LINGUISTIC CLIMATE of Newfoundland, one must look not only at the linguistic variation that exists among Newfoundland speakers, but also at what underlies and drives this variation. It is clear that social factors such as region play a part; Newfoundlanders from the West coast speak differently from those from the Southern Shore, etc. (Clarke 2010). But region cannot account for the differences we observe within individual speech communities. The variationist approach to sociolinguistics has described three main categories of social forces that contribute to linguistic variation: (1) *who the speakers are* (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, community, Labov 1966), (2) *who they know and how they interact* (social networks, communities of practice, Milroy 1987, Eckert 2000), and (3) *who the speakers want to be* (social aspirations, Chambers 2003, Van Herk, Childs and Thorburn 2009).

However, because these types of social forces interact, it is often difficult to tease them apart. For example, consider the results from a recent study conducted in Petty Harbour, an urbanizing Newfoundland fishing community. Van Herk et al. (2009) found that among women, the use of traditional Newfoundland features consistently declined across (apparent) time. Among men, however, there was a split, with some younger generation men patterning the same as the women, and others retaining the same rates of traditional Newfoundland features as older generations. It is not easy to attribute these findings directly to one of the three social forces described above. It is possible that the women (who by and large were looking outside of their rural community for work) vary their speech according to these nonlocal aspirations. This was supported by the observation that the men who were looking outside of the community for work patterned much like the women. However, it is also possible that this variation is due to the speakers' social networks and interaction patterns; the speakers with nonlocal aspirations are also the speakers who left the community for education or for work, providing them with more opportunity to meet and establish relationships with nonlocal individuals.

In order to tease apart the effects of these forces, we need to investigate a situation where speakers have meaningful social options (Chambers 2003) that exist separately from their social experiences to date. We need speakers who

will eventually be able to move across social categories to realize their aspirations, but have not yet had the opportunity to do so. We also need to study the right speech feature: a feature that is salient to speakers and whose use has a particular social meaning shared by all listeners. We find just this situation among rural Newfoundland youth with respect to the use (or non-use) of interdental (th)-stopping, a salient traditional speech feature.

In the sections that follow, we describe our research community, population, and linguistic variable. We then discuss the predictions we might expect each social category to make with respect to the variation that we study. Then, we perform two analyses to test these hypotheses, and discuss our results.

Community and population

New-Wes-Valley is a rural community on central Newfoundland's Bonavista Bay with 2,485 people (Statistics Canada 2007). The nearest shopping centre, fast-food restaurant or café chain is located in Gander, 125km away. There is one community school in New-Wes-Valley, with about 300 students. The school is divided into K-6 Hallway and 7-12 Hallway. This means that all the high school students in the community attend the same school, have the same teachers, and share the same after school programs.

Like many other rural Newfoundland communities, New-Wes-Valley is in the midst of rapid social and linguistic change. There is a strong and growing sense of local pride, both pride of being a Newfoundlander and pride of being a *bayman* (a rural Newfoundlander), while at the same time there is a pull to leave the community for educational and employment opportunities. With a viable fish plant and available carpentry work, traditional employment opportunities remain, but the industries are not booming. For those interested in living in New-Wes-Valley and working a traditional job, it is also possible to work out-of-province turnaround jobs while still residing in New-Wes-Valley. Local non-traditional employment opportunities are very limited, however, and these job seekers must leave both for training and for employment.

Thus we have a situation with intense sociolinguistic forces alongside social mobility. Because of this mobility we find that, as in Petty Harbour, adults with nonlocal aspirations can and do leave. Once they have left a community, it's difficult to determine whether variation in speech is due to their aspirations or different social interactions. Youth, on the other hand, typically live where their parents or guardians choose to live, not necessarily where they *want* to live. But by 12, and certainly by 16, youth are beginning to think about where they might want to live when they get to make that choice, and about what they would like to do career-wise. It is within this age range that we can find a

population who would like to leave, before they do leave. This allows us to tease apart sociolinguistic aspiration and sociolinguistic/dialect contact.

Variable

Interdental (th-)stopping (see 1) is a widespread and well attested characteristic of Newfoundland English (Paddock 1981, Colbourne 1982, Clarke 1991, 2004, 2008, 2010) involving the stopping of the voiceless and voiced interdental fricatives to [t] and [d], respectively. It is a salient marker of Newfoundland English, easily recognizable to both native and non-native speakers as a Newfoundland speech feature. This point is illustrated in examples (2) and (3), taken from recordings with two of our participants.¹ Because stopping is socially salient, it can be used agentively, as speakers must know such a thing exists and what it means in order to use it.

- (1) Interdental (th-)Stopping
 a. Theta stopping: [θ] → [t]
 e.g., *think* is pronounced *tink*, *math* as *mat*
 b. Eth stopping: [ð] → [d]
 e.g., *that* is pronounced *dat*, *bathe* as *bade*
- (2) *My take on Newfoundland, is, I like some words that we use – like I use b'y, like eh b'y, or maid. We're forever sayin' that. But like, I don't like it when they mispronounce 'th,' like tree [3]. I hate that. A tree is a living thing that grows from the ground, not the number. [Aphrodite]*
- (3) *All they [the kids at a Nova Scotian camp] used to do was make fun of my accent. All the time. Especially when I'd*

¹All names of participants are pseudonyms.

say tree [3]. For one week straight, like every two seconds a kid would come up to me and dey're like: "Say three million, three thousand, three hundred, and thirty three." And I'd be like: "3,003,333." Dey're like: "No, the way you always say it." And I was like, "Kay, tree million, tree tousand, tree hundred, and tirty tree." [Jessica]

With the appropriate community, population, and variable established and described, we are now in a position to test whether aspiration is contributing to variation in Newfoundland English, independently from social categories and networks.

The studies

Data collection and coding

Data for the analyses come from four interviews of one to two hours in length with twelve young residents of New-Wes-Valley (six male, six female). All participants were interviewed by the first author, also a New-Wes-Valley native. The participants were either friends of hers, or friends-of-friends of hers. Interviews were conducted in private homes in New-Wes-Valley, usually in a living room or kitchen, and were digitally recorded. Interviews were done individually or in groups of two or three.

Tokens of potentially variable interdental stopping contexts were extracted starting after the first 15 minutes of each interview (to allow for a comfortable environment to be established) until 100 useable tokens were collected. For informants who did not reach 100 useable tokens, the first 15 minutes were then used to collect more tokens. Altogether, we collected a total of 1024 tokens. We excluded ambiguous tokens (if we were unable to hear a contrast, or to determine the variant without looking at a spectrogram or waveform), neutralization contexts (if a token was preceded or followed by one of the variants, e.g., *with this*), and tokens that exceeded the type-token ratio. For this study, we only accepted five repetitions (token) of any one word (type). For example, if a participant said *thanks* seven times, we only kept the first five utterances of this word. A word was not considered repeated if it had a different meaning (e.g., *there* referring to a location, as in *let's go over there* and *there* used to introduce a clause or sentence, as in *there were 30 students in my class*, were considered to belong to two different types).

All tokens were coded for the social category factor of participant sex (male, female), and the aspirational factors of educational aspirations (university, trade, undecided) and local aspirations (local, nonlocal). To rule out possible non-social influences, we also considered three linguistic factors: position in syllable (beginning or end), preceding phonological environment (consonant, vowel, or pause) and word class (functional, (e.g., *this*, *that*, *the*) or lexical (e.g., *bath*, *breathe*, *thunder*, *theatre*)) consistent with Dubois and Horvath (1998), Bell and Gibson (2008), and Van Herk et al. (2009).

Hypotheses and predictions

As mentioned earlier, the variationist approach describes three types of social explanations for linguistic variation. The specific predictions generated by each of these hypotheses are listed and described in turn (see 4, 5, 7).

- (4) H1: You speak like *who you are* (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, community)
 P1: Speakers belonging to the same **social categories** will speak more similarly than those belonging to different social categories. Differences in use of the variants will be across categories, not within.

With the exception of sex and aspirations, the participants in this study formed a homogenous group with respect to the social categories often considered in variationist work (see, e.g., Chambers, Trudgill and Estes 2002, Tagliamonte 2006). All participants were from the same speech community (New-Wes-Valley), they were all in the same age group (12-16) and their parents were in similar socioeconomic classes. Thus, in this situation, the "You talk like who you are" hypothesis predicts that males will have similar stopping rates, which may differ from stopping rates among females.

- (5) H2: You speak like *who you know and how you interact* (social networks, communities of practice)
 P2: Speakers belonging to the same **social groups** will speak more similarly than those belonging to different social groups. Differences will be across these groups, not within.

Three pairs of participants stand out as sharing the closest social networks and communities of practice: Gabe & Kole, Venus & Aphrodite, and Jessica & Elizabeth (see 6). The "You talk like who you talk to" hypothesis

predicts that we should see less variance between members of these pairs than between one member of a pair and any other participant. So, for example, this predicts that Gabe and Kole will have more similar rates of stopping than Gabe and any other participant.

- (6) Participants in close social networks
Gabe & Kole: friends, participate in the same activities together, share the same friends and interests.
Venus & Aphrodite: share same interests, on the same sports teams, hang out inside and outside of class.
Jessica & Elizabeth: fraternal twins, raised together, involved in church together, spend most of their (free) time together.
- (7) H3: You speak like *who you want to be* (social aspirations)
 P3: Speakers sharing the same **social aspirations** will speak more similarly than those who don't share the same social aspirations. These aspirational differences will cut across social categories and networks.

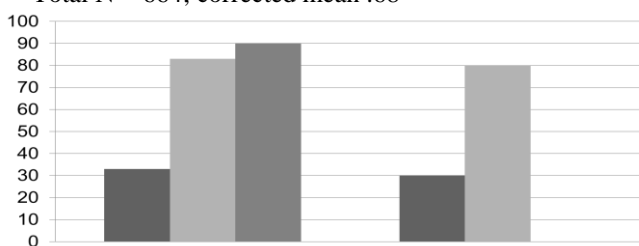
Participants were coded according to their educational aspirations, whether they wanted to go to trade school, university, or were undecided, and their local aspirations, whether they were locally or non-locally affiliated. The "You talk like who you want to be" hypothesis predicts that participants sharing aspirations (e.g., those wanting to go to university) will pattern more similarly than those with differing aspirations. If this is the major factor influencing th-stopping in Newfoundland English, then we predict to find differences *within* males and within females, as well as differences *within* close social networks, counter to P1 and P2.

In the remainder of this paper, we perform two tests, one to determine whether variation is between (H1) or within (H3) social categories, and one to determine whether variation is between (H2) or within (H3) social networks.

Testing H1 and H3: Social categories vs. aspiration

To determine whether differences were between or within social categories, we conducted a multiple linear regression analysis using Goldvarb X for Mac (Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith 2005). We considered three social factors: sex (male, female), educational aspirations (university, trade, undecided) and local aspirations (local, nonlocal) and three linguistic factors: position in syllable (beginning or end), preceding phonological environment (consonant, vowel, or pause) and word class (functional or lexical). As rates of [ð]- and [θ]-stopping have been shown to vary considerably (e.g., Childs et al. 2010), these were examined separately.

(8) Results from Eth-Stopping ([ð] → [d]; *that* pronounced as *dat*);
Total N = 664; corrected mean .68



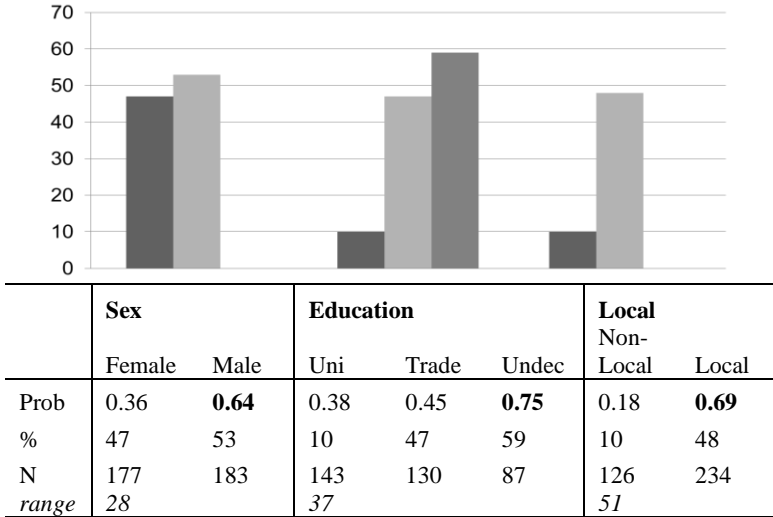
	Education			Local	
	Uni	Trade	Undec	Non-Local	Local
Prob	0.25	0.52	0.87	0.2	0.69
%	33	83	90	30	80
N	291	214	159	236	428
range	62			49	

Not significant: sex, place in syllable, phonological environment, word class

Bold = favouring context

As indicated in (8), the only factors selected as significant for eth were educational and local aspirations. University-aspiring participants had far lower stopping rates (33%) than trade-aspiring (83%) or undecided (90%) participants. Participants with nonlocal aspirations had lower stopping rates (30%) than participants with local aspirations (80%). No linguistic factors were selected as significant.

(9) Results from Theta-Stopping ([θ] → [t]; *thank* pronounced as *tank*); Total N = 360, corrected mean .262



Not significant: place in syllable, phonological environment, word class

Bold = favouring context

Unlike the eth-stopping results, sex is selected as significantly contributing to theta-stopping, with females disfavouring (47% as opposed to male 53%). Aspiration, be it local or educational, is still the better predictor for who is stopping, as shown by the *range* in (9) above. We see the same pattern we found in eth-stopping, with non-university and locally aspiring participants showing higher rates of stopping.

In summary, speakers with the most similar stopping rates shared similar aspirations and, for eth-stopping, differences were *within* social categories rather than between them. This matches the predictions in P3, supporting the hypothesis "You talk like who you want to be." In the next section, we test the predictions of social network (differences between social groups) against social aspirations (differences with social groups).

Testing H2 and H3: Social groups vs. aspiration

To determine whether participants in close social networks had more similar stopping rates than those in different social networks, we performed Fisher's exact tests on the tight social network/community of practice pairs mentioned in (6). Results from these tests are in tables (10) and (11) below.

(10) Results of Fisher's exact tests for eth, [ð] (*th in that, then, father*)

Participant	Aspirations		[ð]	[d]	other	total	% stop (d)	Statistically Significant Difference?
Kole	UnD	Loc	4	42	1	47	89%	No
Gabe	UnD	Loc	3	53	1	57	93%	
Venus	Uni	Loc	17	40	2	59	68%	Yes
Aphrodite	Uni	NonL	61	4	1	66	6%	
Jessica	Tra	NonL	10	48	3	61	79%	Yes
Elizabeth	Uni	NonL	41	17	1	59	29%	

(11) Results of Fisher's exact tests for theta, [θ] (*th in thank, with, teeth*)

Participant	Aspirations		[θ]	[t]	other	total	% stop (t)	Statistically Significant Difference?
Gabe	UnD	Loc	6	25	3	34	74%	No
Kole	UnD	Loc	5	17	1	23	74%	
Venus	Uni	Loc	16	5	6	27	19%	Yes
Aphrodite	Uni	NonL	32	0	2	33	0%	
Jessica	Tra	NonL	26	10	3	39	26%	Yes
Elizabeth	Uni	NonL	36	0	5	41	0%	

We find, for both eth- and theta-stopping, that only Kole and Gabe's stopping rates are similar. Venus and Aphrodite have statistically different stopping rates, as do the fraternal twins, Jessica and Elizabeth. Interestingly, Kole and Gabe are also the only pair whose members share the same aspirations. So, again, P3 is supported more strongly than P2. In the previous section we found that participants with like aspirations patterned similarly. This comparison confirms these results, and demonstrates that variation with respect to stopping is found *within* social networks.

Summary/Conclusion

This paper sought to tease apart three interacting types of social forces used to explain linguistic variation – social categories, social groups/interactions, and social aspirations – in an effort to better understand what motivates variation in a socially significant feature of Newfoundland English. To do this, we studied a sociolinguistic situation with three relevant characteristics: a social situation that provided meaningful social options for speakers, a population of speakers who will eventually be able to move across social categories to realize their aspirations, but have not yet had the opportunity to do so, and a salient speech feature whose social meaning is understood and shared by community members.

We found that rates of th-stopping in New-Wes-Valley youths varied within social categories and within social groups. Social aspirations were a better indicator of variation than either sex or social group. Thus, we can conclude that these youth were making decisions (whether conscious or not) about how they speak which reflected their local and educational aspirations: participants aspiring to remain at home and have traditional employment used more of the traditional local form (stopping) than those who aspired to leave the community and look for other lines of work.

There are methodological implications to our findings. Wide variation in the use of a feature can exist even in a population sample that has been scrupulously stratified according to the social categories and groups generally studied in sociolinguistics. In this case, for example, an apparently balanced sample would have missed out on a powerful finding: personal aspirations are an important motivator of variation within Newfoundland English.

Sarah Knee is a PhD candidate
in the Department of Linguistics,
Memorial University.

Gerard Van Herk is Canada Research Chair
in Regional Language and Oral Text
in the Department of Linguistics,
Memorial University.

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