

'I'm not f\*\*\*ing Geordie! I'm not actually anything!'  
Koineization and the struggle for identity in a South Durham New Town.

*Helen West*  
*University of Edinburgh*  
*s0457924@sms.ed.ac.uk*

Abstract

This paper identifies the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors of variation which exist in the unique dialect of Newton Aycliffe, a South Durham new-town “with no identity”. A panel study, similar to that of Watt and Milroy’s (1999) study of Newcastle English, looks at the vowel variation in the variety and the social factors which appear to influence that variation. In addition to variation as a result of differences in class, age and gender, the linguistic situation in Newton Aycliffe is further complicated as a result of the region’s complex historical and social make-up and subsequent issues with local identity. Primarily, the town’s issue with identity lies with the complicated nature of New Towns, as discussed for example by Kerswill (2000), where a mixture of linguistic features have come together in one area form to a unique dialect with no obvious linguistic affiliation. The cocktail of identities and dialects involved in the creation of the new-town have left the second generation inhabitants struggling for an identity, as they are born into a linguistic and social “no man’s land”, with the town situated between two distinct dialect areas: “Geordie” and “Yorkshire” (cf. Llamas’s (1999) study of Middlesbrough). This mixture of identities and the collision of dialects give rise to ‘new dialect formation’ with ‘levelling’ of competing variants as well as the creation of new forms (cf. Kerswill (2000)). This paper examines the significance of a range of linguistic features in this unique variety of English and aims to identify whether it has its own linguistic and social identity.

References:

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