Dialectologia 3 (2009), 1-21.

DIALECT IN FILMS: EXAMPLES OF SOUTH YORKSHIRE GRAMMATICAL AND LEXICAL FEATURES FROM KEN LOACH FILMS

Kizzi Edensor
University of Provence, Laboratoire de Parole et Langage
kizzi.edensor@lpl-aix.fr

Abstract

This paper focuses on the English dialect in South Yorkshire, examining both traditional and more mainstream aspects over a period of thirty years. The hypothesis behind this study is that the degree or broadness of dialect decreases throughout the years, tending towards a more levelled, less regionally marked English. The corpus consists of scenes taken from three films directed by Ken Loach, they are: *Kes* (1969), *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and *The Navigators* (2001). It seems important to study traditional and to discover which changes can be observed over this period of time.

Key words

Dialect, South Yorkshire, grammar, lexicon, films, Ken Loach.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to give a description of the regional dialect that was found in South Yorkshire in three Ken Loach films from 1969-2001. The films are *Kes* (1969), which was set in Barnsley, *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and *The Navigators* (2001) which were both set (15 miles to the south), in Sheffield. Using three films enabled us to add a chronological aspect to our research and we were especially interested in the evolution of the dialect in South Yorkshire from a grammatical and lexical point of view. Research in dialectology has been on the increase since the first studies by Labov (1976), Trudgill (1979) and Wells (1982). Wells was the first to differentiate between traditional dialects; those that are spoken by linguistically conservative, typically rural people and

©Universitat de Barcelona

mainstream varieties. Research on variation and evolution of regional dialects has led to studies on dialect levelling, which has been proposed as an alternative to Labov's Chain Shift Model (Watt & Milroy, 1999: 25) to explain change. The chain shift model is a phenomenon in which several vowels undergo changes and shift by a process of retraction or rising along the phonological vowel space. Studies that have examined dialect levelling (Watt & Milroy: 1999, Williams & Kerswill: 1999) have argued that traditional features are being replaced by more mainstream features. Watt & Milroy (1999: 41) explain that "the salient pattern of change is a reduction in variability across two generations; localised variants either disappear or are reduced in number". So we have two objectives: the first is to describe the dialect found in these films, the second to observe any change.

This paper is divided into three parts. First of all we briefly examine work that has been done on regional dialectology in the area, this is followed by a description of our corpus and the reasons for using it. The second part gives detailed examples of our dialectal description from the three different periods (1969, 1981, and 2001). In the final part we discuss the results of this study and attempt to evaluate whether this variety has undergone any change over the thirty-year period.

1.1. The notion of standard and non standard English

Defining the notion of standard and non standard language is not an easy task and there is much disagreement between authors. One explanation for this could be due to the fact that when talking about how we speak, much of our personal history is involved. Speech does not only convey meaning but says a great deal about our social background. In Britain, terms such as standard and non standard English were originally used to signify 'good English', (English spoken in court or by educated people) or 'bad or vulgar English' which was often a synonym of regional dialects (Wyld 1907: 47-48). Trudgill (1979) classes standard English as a dialect, which he considers as the most socially prestigious English, the one that is used in official writing and publications. Non standard varieties have grammatical forms, such as double negations: *I didn't do nothing,* and although these forms are not usually used in everyday press they can be found in certain publications, for

©Universitat de Barcelona

example, those of the Yorkshire Dialect Society[1] where poems and prose are published in their dialect. Trudgill (1979) defines a dialect as having mainly social origins and refers to grammatical and lexical aspects. Therefore everyone speaks a dialect and it is not simply spoken in rural areas. For Wells (1982), a dialect includes phonetic, grammatical, lexical and social variations. He opposes modern and traditional dialects, the latter is used in a specific geographical area in parallel with English. An interesting point of view is given by Chevillet (1991) who distinguishes between social and regional dialects. He admits that it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between the two, one example is Cockney dialect, which is both the stereotypical dialect of the East End of London and London's working class dialect.

1.2. The history of South Yorkshire

In 1974, Yorkshire was divided into three new administrative regions: North Yorkshire which was originally known as the North Riding; the South and West which had originally formed the West Riding and East Yorkshire which kept its original name of the East Riding. A natural barrier formed by the rivers Humber and Lune crosses Yorkshire separating the Midlands from the Far North. During the Anglo-Saxon period this line separated two kingdoms: in the North, the kingdom of Northumbria where the Northumbrian dialect was spoken and in the South, the kingdom of Mercia where the Mercian dialect was spoken. Kellet (1992) explains that the North and East Ridings still have dialect features dating back to the Northumbrian dialect and that the West Riding has origins from Mercian.

During the Industrial Revolution, people from the neighbouring Ridings came to work in the West Riding. Kellet (1992) suggests that due to this geographical history, there are more dialect features in the West Riding, now South Yorkshire, than in the North and the East.

[1] Joseph Wright was one of the first British dialectologists and also the founder of the Yorkshire Dialect Society (1897).

©Universitat de Barcelona

South Yorkshire is situated between two linguistic areas: The Midlands and the Far North, it would therefore be expected to find influences from these two regions in the dialect of South Yorkshire.

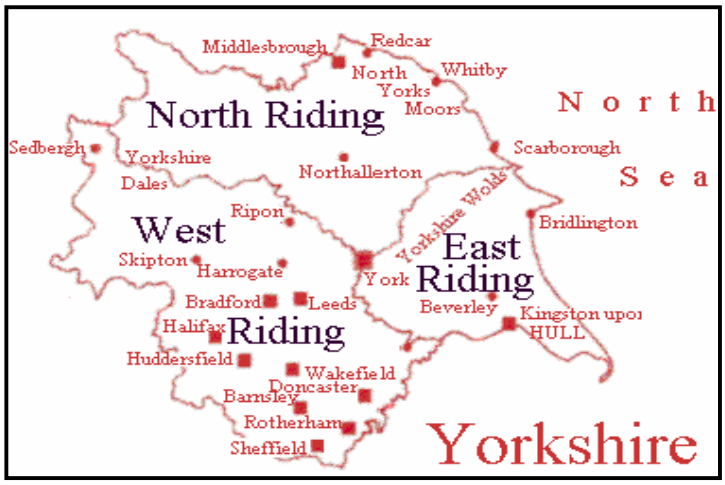

Figure 1. Map of the Yorkshire Ridings.

Figure 2. Map of the new administrative regions since 1974.

©Universitat de Barcelona

1.3. Dialectology and South Yorkshire

There is little information concerning grammatical and lexical features in the South of Yorkshire. Chevillet (1991) reports that when talking about a period of time or quantity there is no plural form, thus *four mileØ*. An example from the SED[2] (Sheffield), cited by Wakelin (1972), is the use of the suffix *-sen* which is attached to a pronoun and is used as an equivalent to standard *-self* or *-selves*. This term originated from the Middle English term *seulen*. Thus, *myself* becomes *missen* and *himself* becomes *hissen*. According to the SED, 63% of the Yorkshire informants used the suffix *–sen* (Wakelin 1972: 83).

Stoddart, Upton & Widdowson (1997) explain that the use of *thee* and *thy* were traditionally male preserves and /ð/ was pronounced /d/. Sheffielders were traditionally known as /diː/ /daːz/ (*thee-thous*) because of this phenomenon (Stoddart, Upton & Widdowson 1999:79).

Other features that have been observed in this area include the use of the auxiliary *were*, which is used for the singular and *was*, which is used for the plural, for example *I were* and *we was*. Sheffielders are known to *put the light on*, rather than *to put* ***on*** *the light* as would be more common in standard English.[3]

1.4. Choice of Corpus

A limited amount of linguistic research has used films for their corpus. There exist some studies on actors; John-Lewis (1986) examined the fundamental frequency of non professional actors in three different speech styles (reading, acting and conversation) and Gussenhoven (1986) used British television series in his intonation research which he classed as quasi-spontaneous speech. He remarked on the fact that using actors is much

[2] The Survey of English Dialects (SED) was conducted by H. Orton from 1948-1961 and reported mainly on lexical but also grammatical variation in rural Britain. The informants were mostly male, over sixty and had always lived in the area.

©Universitat de Barcelona

better than using spontaneous speech because unlike the latter, it does not contain "mushy materials like false starts and repetitions".

We did not find any previous research on dialect in Ken Loach films.

Several reasons motivated our choice of corpus. Ken Loach is renowned for his social and political films. His first television film, *Cathy Come Home* (1966), led to the creation of a homeless charity (The Shelter Foundation). This film took place in London and didn't encounter any problems of comprehensibility.

This changed with the film *Kes* (1969), which took place in Barnsley, South Yorkshire. The actor's accents were very broad and the producers considered dubbing the film with a more "standard" and comprehensive English before showing the film in the UK and the United States. This was to become a recurring issue and other films were later subtitled (in English). Ken Loach is renowned for using people with strong regional accents, he explains this choice in an interview for "*Cineaste*."[4]

> Cineaste: "In this regard, you don't iron out regional accents, which tend to be obliterated in mainstream British and American films. RiffRaff was even subtitled in this country". (USA)
>
> Loach: "If you ask people to speak differently, you lose more than the voice. Everything about them changes. If I asked you not to speak with an American accent, your whole personality would change. That's how you are. My hunch is that it's better to use subtitles than not, even if that limits the films to an art-house circuit".

There are several reasons that lead us to believe that Ken Loach films contain quite natural, spontaneous speech and therefore hold great potential for dialect study. The most important reason is his use of non professional actors. Loach chooses people who are similar to the characters in the film. For example, in *Kes* (1969) the actors are mainly ordinary locals or local amateur actors. David Bradley, aged 14, who plays the main character Billy, was picked out of a local Barnsley school and had only ever acted in pantomimes and school plays. Loach explains that he does this so that they have an

[4] *Cineaste:* "The Politics of Everyday Life: An Interview with Ken Loach" (1998). Entretien de Susan Ryan et Richard Porton. http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/.

©Universitat de Barcelona

authentic accent; they are also more likely to be concerned by the social issues dealt with in the film.

The actors usually receive their scripts just before shooting and are strongly encouraged to use their own words. In *The Navigators* (2001) there is a large difference between the written script and what is actually said in the film.[5] The fact that the actors are originally from South Yorkshire suggests a strong feeling of belonging to the area. It could be possible to compare this with Labov's (1976) work in Martha's Vineyard and his explanation that people's sense of belonging to an area accentuates the dialect features in their speech.

Loach takes almost as long casting as he does filming. He looks for people who are similar in their social and regional origins to their characters, often hiring people who are unemployed or miners if the film deals with these themes. We chose to use these films because of Loach's unique way of working but also because of his long career, it was possible to study a thirty year period.

If we consider all of these reasons it seems reasonable to say that the speech in the films can almost be classed as semi-spontaneous. The next part of this article exposes grammatical features, lexical variation and expressions found in each film.

2. Dialect features in Ken Loach films

For each film, we decided to select five scenes. Our description is based on these five scenes. Before determining which scenes to use, we analysed former studies and dialect literature concerning South Yorkshire, or surrounding areas, and determined which features had already been recorded.

We began with an auditory analysis in order to identify the scenes with the most striking or unusual features. In order to single out important scenes, we listened to each film several times and then chose the ones which presented the most interesting and novel

[5] Script: Dawber, R. (2000), *The Navigators*.

©Universitat de Barcelona

aspects of the dialect, including unknown expressions and passages of words that we were at first unable to comprehend.

Although most of the actors come from working class backgrounds we are aware that they are still actors in a film and for this reason, we shall not attempt to draw any sociolinguistic conclusions. Our objective is to describe the most striking and common features found in these films and to examine any evolution.

The grammar in these films is a mixture of standard and non standard forms. But it is always difficult to separate social characteristics from regional ones. For example, replacing the article *the* by a glottal stop or a /t/ is characteristic of this variety in general, whereas the non standard use of *to be* is generally associated with the working class. This kind of phenomenon is found in *Kes*, in the teacher's speech. In real life, this person works as a teacher and therefore theoretically does not belong to the working class. He uses a glottal stop to replace the article *the*, but does not use any non standard grammatical forms.

It would appear that there are different levels of variation: one that differs on a social level, a second kind which is found in the North of England, but not in the South, and the third which is found only in South Yorkshire.

There are cases where certain dialect expressions could be mistaken for standard English. For example A. Kellet mentions words that are orthographically the same in standard English and the dialect of south Yorkshire but are semantically different. For example:

- *Gang* - not a group of people, but the verb 'to go'.
- *Real* - a description of something good or outstanding, not a reference to genuineness.
- *Brat* - not necessarily a child, this could be an apron.
- *Starved* - relating to feeling cold rather than a state of hunger.
- *Sharp* - used in the sense of 'quickly' rather than having a point or edge.
- *Right* - employed not only to indicate direction but as an intensifier in the sense of 'very'.

©Universitat de Barcelona

2.1. Kes *1969*

In the selected scenes there were 11 speakers, 9 males and 2 females. This included two main characters: Billy and his teacher Mr. Farthing who was in his forties.

In this film, non standard grammar is often encountered and some sentences have several typical examples. The following sentence is used to talk about a past event, but out of context, has no elements that show that it is situated in the past: *and keep on to missen, saying that fly it free next day*. The term *next day* signifies *tomorrow*. Another example in the same context of Billy describing how he trained his hawk is: *so while I walking back, I saw her flying, she came like a bomb, about a yard off floor, like lightening, head still and you couldn't hear wings, there wasn't a sound from wings and straight onto glove! Wam! And she'll grab you for meat*. This is also a good example of the absence of the article *the*.

2.1.1. Verbs and Auxiliaries

- The auxiliary *be* was the most frequently used in non standard forms or was completely absent. For the first person singular we found: *I were pleased, I terrified*; and for the third person we found: *she were stood there, there/that were*.
- *Isn't* is often replaced by *ain't*, but this is normal in other varieties (Chevillet 1991: 97).
- The main character, Billy often uses the terms /wʊnt/ or /wɒnʔ/. It is difficult to know whether this corresponds to *wasn't* or *weren't*, even though the latter seems more plausible.
- The auxiliary *have* also undergoes different transformations or is absent, for example: *I seen 'em*. In the sentence: *no, and I've to tell you why*, *have* does not have the meaning of an obligation but means *I'm going to tell you why*.
- In general verbs are conjugated in non standard forms, usually with a final /s/, *I knows*, *I says*.

©Universitat de Barcelona

2.1.2. Endings

The ending -*ing* is pronounced /ɪn/ and -ed was often /ɛd/ or was absent.

2.1.3. Pronouns and possessive adjectives

- *Thee* and *thy* are used to replace standard English *you* and *your*. The traditional pronoun ending with -*sen* was found: /mɪˈsɛn/.
- *My* is often reduced to /mɪ/, for example /mɪ/ /mam/ (my mother) and /mɪ/ /and/ (my hand). This is also found in other parts of the North of England.
- *What* is often used in a non standard manner, for example in the sentence: *a fact is something what you find evidence out*.

2.1.4. Plural and possessive forms

- /s/ is frequently absent in possessive forms or when talking about quantity, so the *kestrel's nest* becomes *kestrelØ nest* and *twenty miles* is said *twenty mileØ*.

2.1.5. Word order

A sentence's word order is often slightly different to that of standard English, for example, *there's nowt to go up for there* as opposed to *there's nothing to go up there for* in standard English.

2.1.6. Dialect Expressions

We will now present some expressions found in this films and that we have classed as being part of the dialect. We found the following expressions:

- *she'd be right sharp*, which according to Kellet (1992) means *very quick*.

©Universitat de Barcelona

- The word *ramshack* is believed to be an abbreviation of *ramshackle*, meaning *derelict, flimsy*;
- the word *rattle,* usually associated with something that makes a noise, is found in the phrase *thy has got too much rattle thee!* To imply that the speaker talks too much;
- *nick* in the expression *do I nick* is a negation and an old word for the devil.
- The word *about* was often replaced by *over* in certain expressions: *he goes mad over it* or *he's*;
- *crackers over it* (standard English would be: *he goes/is mad about it*, and *he's crazy about it*);
- *nowt* and *owt* often replace *nothing* or *something* in this film.

Other non standard expressions were:

- *how thee going on?*, the auxiliary *are* is absent and the term *going on* is used to express the meaning of *how are you*;
- *hands off cocks, on socks* which is an old army expression used when soldiers got up.

There was one expression for which we can only speculate on its signification:

- *to stand there like a nail* which could mean *to stand still*.

2.2. Looks and Smiles *1981*

There were 6 speakers in the selected scenes, 4 males and 2 females. The two main characters were Mick Walsh played by Graham Greene and Alan Wright played by Tony Pitts. They are both in their late teens, early twenties and in real life, one is unemployed and the other is an apprentice mechanic.

Most sentences in this films clearly showed the kind of non standard forms that were encountered, for example, when the main character's father tries to convince him to phone about a job advert he says: *I mean, thee'll not be only one that's seen advert that I knows,*

©Universitat de Barcelona

here, go give 'em a ring should thee. Besides the use of *thee* in this sentence we can also note the non standard form of *know* and the word inversion at the end of the phrase.

2.2.1. Verbs and Auxiliaries

- The auxiliary *be* was the most frequently used in non standard forms or was completely absent. For example: *anyway, what you after?*, or *I were walking*.
- The auxiliary *have* has different forms or is absent, for example: *all the jobs that has gone; how old you got to be.*
- In general verbs are conjugated in non standard forms, usually with a final /s/, *I knows*, *I says*.

2.2.2. Endings

The ending -*ing* is pronounced /ɪn/ and -*ed* was either a glottal stop or absent so that *look* and *looked* were homophones: /lʊk/ or /lʊkʔ/ or /lʊʔ/.[6]

2.2.3. Pronouns and possessive adjectives

- *Thee* and *thy* are used to replace standard English *you* and *your*. The traditional pronoun ending -*sen* was found: /mɪˈsɛn/.
- *My* is often reduced to /mɪ/, and *me* and *myself* can be repeated in a sentence that begins with I, which would be impossible in standard English: *I'd give 'em a ring me; I can see difference myself in you.*

[6] The consonants t, k, p, d were often replaced by a glottal stop, enabling the pronunciation of looked as /lʊʔ/.

©Universitat de Barcelona

2.2.4. Word order

A sentence's word order is often slightly different to that of standard English, for example, *fed up me* as opposed to *I'm fed up* in standard English, *I'll fetch police you on*, instead of *I'll get the police onto you* – in standard English.

2.2.5. Dialect Expressions

Many expressions were often slightly different than they would be in standard English but were still understandable:

- *it's up on East Bank*, *up* is often added when talking about a place or giving directions in the North of England;
- *nowt* and *owt* often replaced *nothing* or *something* in this film;
- *sick and fed up of* whereas it is more common to say *sick and tired of*;
- *on* replaces *of*, for example, *never heard on him*.
- *I'm fed up of listening to thy mouth* obviously means that the person is tired of listening to the other person;
- *right* was often used emphatically to mean *very*, for example, *they're right snug*;
- *like* was also used emphatically to mean *for example*. This is quite common in working class speech. An example of this is: *Aye look, like have one regiment versus another like*;
- *before they'll set you on* means *before they will hire you*;
- *they'd get shot an all* signifies to leave, *an all* corresponds to *as well;*
- In this film the term *next year* means *another year*, for example, *and to think they kept him on at school for a next year because they couldn't find him a job.*

There was one expression where we can only speculate on its meaning: *wouldn't mind being a mechanic than a horse for these*. One plausible explanation given the context, would be to say that because the character is talking about army tanks, we

©Universitat de Barcelona

presume that he is referring to the fact that he would rather fix a tank (like a mechanic) than have to pull one (like a horse).

2.3. The Navigators *2001*

In the selected scenes there were 16 male speakers (some only had one sentence). The average age was 45.

In this film there are more non standard grammatical features than dialect expressions. Typical examples can be seen in the following sentence: *I reckon six sector track cable to replace and well, thy do a little bit less than us 'coz for being on fifteen*.

2.3.1. Verbs and Auxiliaries

- The auxiliary *be* is only non standard in the third person singular: *he were fucking useless on tracks*.
- The auxiliary *have* is usually in a non standard form: *has you made a start yet?*
- In general verbs are conjugated in non standard forms, most frequently with a final /s/, *I knows*, *I says*.

2.3.2. Endings

The ending -*ing* is pronounced /ɪn/ and -*ed* was quasi systematically a glottal stop or absent so that *finish work* and *finished work* were homophones: /fɪnɪʃʔ/ /wəʔ/.

2.3.4. Pronouns and possessive adjectives

- *Thee* and *thy* are sometimes used to replace standard English *you* and *your*. *Us* is used instead of *our*, for example: *us notes*.
- The traditional pronoun ending with –*sen* was found: /jəˈsɛn/, for *yourself* and /təˈgɛn/ which we believe means *together*.

©Universitat de Barcelona

2.3.5. Plural forms

- /s/ is frequently absent in plural forms or when talking about quantity, so *ten yards* becomes *ten yardØ* and *two weeks* is said *two weekØ*.
- Plural /s/ is often absent, for example the sentence: *we don't have to clock off on Sunday now*, is enounced even though the speaker is talking about *Sundays* in general.

2.3.6. Dialect Expressions

There were less dialect expressions in this film and some of the ones found were quite common in the North of England in general, for example:

- *you can't pull that one on me* which signifies *you can't fool me/do that to me*;
- *to take the mickey* corresponds to *to take fun out of (someone or something)*.

Other expressions included:

- *right* was often used emphatically to mean *very*;
- *like* was also used emphatically to mean *for example*. This is quite common in working class speech;
- *nowt* and *owt* often replace *nothing* or *something* in this film. For example, *'course you do owt Jim*, means '*course you have to do it (something) Jim*;
- *up* is added to sentences: *been sent up to find out*, *working up agency now;*
- *to swing lead* is *to pretend to be sick so you don't have to go to work*. This can also be heard in the Midlands;
- *you've got a right number* means *to have good luck*;
- *chuffing* is a more polite way to swear.

©Universitat de Barcelona

3. Discussion

In the three films there were non standard grammatical features and dialect expressions but they were both decreasing in the last film.

3.1. Features that were present in all films were:

- Be–*were* forms were normal in the singular and *was* forms in the plural (though the latter was decreasing).
- *Have* was used in non standard forms in all three films.
- The pronouns *thee* and *thy* were present in all films but appeared to be very much in decline.
- We recorded the reflexive pronouns in their traditional form such as *myself* /mɪˈsɛn/ in *Kes* and *Looks and Smiles.* Reflexive pronouns that end with -*sen* were still present in *The Navigators* /jɒ:sɛn/ but less so than in *Kes*.
- In all three films /s/ was added to the first person singular present tense: *I knows* or *I gonnas*.
- The ending -*ing* is pronounced /ɪn/ in all films.
- *The* was either a glottal stop or was absent.
- *Nowt* and *owt* were common in all films.
- *up* was added when talking about a place or giving directions.

3.2. Features that were only present in two films include:

- Absence of plural /s/ in measure nouns: *twenty mileØ, two weekØ.* This was present in *Kes* and *The Navigators*.
- -*ed* could be pronounced /ɛd/ only in the first film and was either a glottal stop or absent in all films.

©Universitat de Barcelona

- Word order was different compared to standard English, for example in the sentence: *well there's nowt to go up for there, fed up me* (compared to: *There's nothing to go up there for, I'm fed up* in standard English). This was found in *Kes* and *Looks and Smiles*.
- Prepositions were replaced by different ones in this dialect, for example, *about* was replaced by *over* in certain expressions: *he goes mad over it* or *he's crackers over it*; *of* was replaced by *on*: *I never heard on him* instead of *never heard **of** him*. This was only found in *Kes* and *Looks and Smiles*.
- The auxiliaries *was* or *were* could be omitted, but only in the first two films.
- *Next day* meant *tomorrow* in *Kes*, but *a next year* meant *another year* in *Looks and Smiles*.

3.3. Dialect Expressions

None of the expressions that we have classed as dialect appeared in all of the films, that is, in the scenes that we selected for our research. The only expression that appeared in the first two films was: *how thee going on?*, and was used to express the meaning of *how are you*. In order to say whether these expressions are truly dialectal is would be necessary to study the films completely. Another way to ensure that these expressions only belong to this specific dialect would be if we had found them mentioned in other studies. We found no record of these expressions in other reference work. It would be logical to assume that the older the expression the more likely it reflects traditional dialect, as there were fewer means for the expression to be heard in different areas because people travelled less and there was also less media. *Kes* was set in a more rural area and it seems therefore natural to find more traditional features. Dialect expressions were rare in the last film. Most of the expressions found in *The Navigators* were expressions that were common in the North of England or in the Midlands.

These findings suggest that some features of this dialect are receding. Most of the characteristic features of the dialect grammar recorded in the SED have inevitably moved towards more standard forms. One reason could be that there was greater social and

©Universitat de Barcelona

geographical mobility in 2001 compared to 1969. The fact that the actors in *Kes* are from a smaller, more rural town may be a reason for the presence of more traditional features.

If there is a decrease in the degree of dialect, does it affect all aspects of speech in the same way and are we moving towards a more standard English or just a regionally levelled one?

Features such as the use of *thee/thou* and *thy*, first and third singular verbs were expected to be found and our results correspond to the literature on South Yorkshire. Beal (2004) discusses the continued existence in the traditional dialects of many parts of northern England of *thou* and *thee*. Wales (2004) confirms the use of *thee* and *thou* in Sheffield and the use of *thy* in Barnsley amongst school children. In spite of this we found the use of *thee* and *thy* to be decreasing. Unmarked plurals in noun measures were also said to be typical of this region. This result was found in *Kes* but continued to appear in *The Navigators*. In regards to the traditional pronouns (*missen*) they were also less common in the last film.

There was an increase of the use of *like* and *right* in the last two films which we believe corresponds to a general social trend in the North of England where these terms can also be heard. Although these expressions appear to be characteristic of this variety, we do not think they are part of the dialect because of their widespread use in other regions.

For the ending -*ing*, we had expected to find either /ɪn/ which had been predicted by Trudgill or /ɪŋg/ which had been reported by Wells. Our results show that the former is the most common in this corpus. The transformation of plosives into glottal stops has already been reported by Stoddart, Upton & Widdowson (1997), but we did not expect this to concern final -*ed* as it did in all three films.

4. Conclusion and further studies

Our initial objective was to describe this variety and to try to find out whether dialect forms had continued to exist over the thirty year period. From our results it is

©Universitat de Barcelona

obvious that many features have disappeared, or are in decline. We could state that we found it very hard to understand the first film, slightly less the second and much less the third (even though it could be argued that this is due to familiarity). But each dialect aspect seems to change at different rates. There were less non standard grammatical forms and less dialectal expressions in the 2001 film than in the 1969 film. One could of course argue that this is a conscious choice on behalf of the film director to use actors whose speech is less regionally marked. But Ken Loach affirms that this is not the case, and any differences merely reflect changes due to diferrent periods.[7] If we consider the age of the actors in *The Navigators,* some were in their early thirties, but others were nearly sixty, so they were young adults at the time that *Kes* was filmed, this could explain any similarity between the two films. The fact that many features found in Kes were absent in *The Navigators* would also confirm the hypothesis that South Yorkshire dialect has undergone some kind of dialect levelling.

But, other aspects remain and show no sign of decreasing, such as the pronunciation of *-ing* and the pronunciation of final *-ed*. So while some aspects have disappeared, others persist. The fact that the characters were mainly male in this study could be an explanation as to why some of the features remain throughout the three films, bearing in mind that men generally tend to retain localised forms more than women (Labov: 1976).

The question is: are the features that have disappeared more representative of this dialect than the ones that continue to exist? The answer to this is probably positive. Many features that are found in the last film can often be associated with other regions. Although it was sometimes hard to understand *The Navigators*, it was definitely easier than for *Kes*.

We do not think that this dialect is undergoing any kind of standardisation, but is levelling with surrounding varieties and it would be misleading to describe these features as standards of any kind. According to Watt & Milroy (1999), "dialects can not be compared even to a regional standard. This is because standards by definition are institutionally imposed like the now recessive British prestige accent RP and the essence of a levelled variety is that it develops by quite regular sociolinguistic processes" (Watt & Milroy (1999: 43).

[7] Personal communication from Ken Loach in April 2009.

©Universitat de Barcelona

To conclude we could say that the dialect in South Yorkshire did show some change but the changes did not affect all features in the same way. We could therefore argue that South Yorkshire dialect is evolving towards a more mainstream dialect in regards to certain features but not all of them. In order to test the degree of levelling that we have found in this study it would be interesting to compare our results with other results found in the region from even more recent periods.

References

BRITAIN, David (2002) *Phoenix from the ashes?: The death, contact and birth of dialects in England*, Cambridge: Essex Research Reports in Linguistics 41, 42-73

BRITAIN, David (ed.) (2007) *Language in the British Isles*, Colchester: Cambridge University Press.

CHEVILLET, François (1991) L*es Variétés de l'Anglais*, Coll. Fac. Langues étrangères, Paris: Éditions Nathan.

FOULKES, Paul, DOCHERTY, Gerard, J. (eds.) *Urban Voices* (1999), London: Hodder Arnold.

GUSSENHOVEN, C. (1986) "The Intonation of 'George and Mildred': post-nuclear generalisations", in: JOHN-LEWIS, Catherine (ed.), *Intonation in Discourse,* London: College-Hill Press, 77-125.

HUGHES, Arthur, TRUDGILL, Peter (1979) *English Accents and Dialect: an Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of British English*, London: Edward Arnold.

JOHN-LEWIS, Catherine (1986) "Prosodic Differentiation of Discourse modes", in: JOHN-LEWIS, Catherine (ed.), *Intonation in Discourse,* London: College-Hill Press, 199-212.

KELLET, A. (1992) *Basic Broad Yorkshire* [Revised Edition], Otley: Smith Settle.

LABOV, William (1976) *Sociolinguistique*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.

STODDART, J., UPTON, C., WIDDOWSON, J.D.A (1999) "Sheffield Dialect in the 1990s: revisiting the concept of NORMS", in: FOULKES, Paul, DOCHERTY, Gerard, J. (eds.), *Urban Voices*, London: Hodder Arnold, 72-89.

TRUDGILL, Peter (1974) Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society, London: Penguin Books.

TRUDGILL, Peter (1990) *The Dialects of England*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, (second edition 2003).

©Universitat de Barcelona

TRUDGILL, Peter (1994) *Dialects*, London: Routledge.

WAKELIN, Martyn (1972) *English Dialects: An Introduction*, London: The Athlone Press.

WALES, Katie (2004) 'Second person pronouns in contemporary English: the end of a story or just the beginning?', *Journal of Franc-British Studies*, 33-4, 172-85.

WATT, D., MILROY, L. (1999) "Patterns of variation and change in three Newcastle vowels: is this dialect levelling?", in: FOULKES, Paul, DOCHERTY, Gerard, J. (eds.), *Urban Voices*, London: Hodder Arnold, 25-46.

WELLS, J.C. (1982) *Accents of English* (volumes 1&2), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WYLD, Henry (1907) *The Growth of English*, London: John Murray.

Films

The Navigators (2001) Director: Ken Loach; film script: Rob Dawber; starring: Dean Andrews, Tom Craig.

Looks and Smiles (1981) Director: Ken Loach; film script: Barry Hines; starring: Graham Greene, Caroline Nicholson.

Kes (1969) Director: Ken Loach; film script: Barry Hines, Ken Loach, and Tony Garnett; adapted from the book *The Play of Kes* by Barry Hines, starring: David Bradley, Freddie Fletcher, Colin Welland, Lynne Perrie, Brian Glover.

Tools

DAWBER, R. (2000) *The Navigators*, Film script bought from Sixtenn film, London (film production company formed by director Ken Loach and producer Rebecca O'Brien).

HINES, Barry (1981) *Looks and Smiles*, London: Penguin Books.

HINES, Barry, STRONACH, Allan (1976) *The Play of Kes*, London: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

TILL, Lawrence (2000) *Kes*, London: Nick Hern Books, (adapté de *A Kestral for a Knave,* de Barry HINES).

©Universitat de Barcelona