THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC STRATIFICATION OF A CONNECTED SPEECH PROCESS – THE CASE OF THE T to R RULE IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

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Abstract

This paper examines the connected speech process described by Wells (1982b) as the T to R rule in the West Midlands speech variety associated with the Black Country. The T to R rule is well known as a linguistic marker of local varieties of the middle and far north of England. Less well understood is its position in the phonological systems of Midlands varieties. Varieties of the Midlands of England are underresearched in comparison with varieties of the north, and what is known about the application of the T to R rule in this transitional dialect area is correspondingly nebulous. This paper focuses on the Black Country area, and examines the possible outputs in the contexts which give rise to /t/ becoming [ɹ] in local varieties of the north. I examine the written and spoken evidence which suggests that the T to R rule does indeed operate in the Black Country variety. My analysis focuses on possible phonetic outcomes of the T to R rule across time. In my conclusion, I discuss briefly the possibility that, lying on a bundle of isoglosses separating north from south, the variety of the Black Country reflects this in that a T to [ɾ] rule, rather than a T to R rule, is the dominant output of this connected speech process in the Black Country. [1]

1. The T to R rule: an overview

Wells (1982b:370) describes the T to R rule as

> a widespread but stigmatised connected-speech process in the middle [north] and far north [of England]. [It] involves the use of [r] instead of /t/ in phrases such as *shut up* [ʃʊɹˈʊp], *get off* [gɛɹˈɒf].

He states that the T to R rule "takes as its input /t/ in the environment of a preceding short vowel and a following boundary plus vowel, [thus giving the rule] t→ r /[[short V] – #V." He gives the examples "*but he ain't got it* [bəɹ i ˈɛɪnʔ ˈgɒɹɪʔ] [and] *not having* [ˈnɒɹ avɪn]." Finally he remarks that "[v]ery occasionally the rule applies word-internally, as in *what's the matter* [ˈmaɹə]."

Broadbent (2008:141) discusses the geographical spread of the T to R rule, examining particularly what is known about how far south the rule spreads. She reports that

> [f]or Wells, the middle North includes Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Lancashire and Merseyside, with the varieties of Tyneside and Teeside constituting the far North (Wells 1982: 350). It is unlikely that this captures the spread of the phenomenon completely. This process can be found further East and South than this characterisation suggests: in East Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire. It may well be

[1] I wish to thank Patrick Honeybone and Judith Broadbent for their help in locating previous academic work on the T to R rule, as well as their comments and advice about this paper.

> the case that it also occurs in parts of Cheshire and Derbyshire. However, it is clear that we do not yet know how far this process extends into the midlands.

This lack of knowledge concerning the southern geographical boundary of the application of the T to R rule forms the first research question to be addressed in this paper. I look at a variety of English which can best be termed as 'western midlands.' This variety is known as 'Black Country', and its structure and geographical range are addressed in the next section of this paper.

2. The Black Country variety – its geographical range and its place on the English dialect continuum

The Black Country is an area which lies directly to the west of the city of Birmingham. Its exact position is given in Figure 1. A closer examination of the area gives the map shown in Figure 2. It can be seen that the northern boundaries of the Black Country border the existing county of Staffordshire, and that the southern boundary runs alongside that of Worcestershire. To the west is South Staffordshire and Shropshire; to the east is Birmingham and Warwickshire. The Black Country itself lies in what is marked on the map as the West Midlands County. The latter was formed from parts of the county of Staffordshire (which was extremely large, and in administrative terms, rather unwieldy) and parts of northern Worcestershire, following boundary changes in the 1970s.

Though the boundaries of the Black Country are disputed by residents (Asprey 2007), the linguistic variety spoken there is clearly Midlands in its structure, and if anything, could be said to be more closely allied with varieties of the North than those of the South. Chinn and Thorne remark that in the light of Thorne's research in neighbouring Birmingham

> [i]t seems that the Birmingham accent once had much more in common with Northern British speech, but has gradually been pulled in the direction of the prestige southern variants (Chinn and Thorne, 2002:21).

In structural terms there are key markers which suggest that Black Country English is still more northern than it is southern and more Midlands than it is northern. Its speakers employ a variety of realisations in the STRUT set which range from [ʊ] through [ɤ] to [ʌ]. Chambers and Trudgill (1998:110) term the variant [ɤ] a fudge, and explain that varieties which contain such fudges can be termed 'fudged lects', rather than 'mixed lects' which only contain variation between [ʊ ~ ʌ], and no middle point. In this respect, Black Country is a mixture of north and south. On the other hand, unlike neighbouring Birmingham, the BATH vowel is categorically realised as [a] (Asprey, 2008). Thorne (2003:96) explains that

> there are certain ways in which Birmingham realisations of the BATH vowel differ from northern realisations. For example…*aunt*, *laugh* and *laughter*, unlike their northern versions…are generally realised in Brummie speech with a lengthened [ɑ], although this is not strictly true of

> the speech of all older Brummies…The speaker in Transcript 11d…produces both the northern and southern variants of the word-initial vowel in *ask* within the space of a single utterance: "It used to be you used to goo 'n ask [ɑːsk] 'im an' – an' ask [ask] 'im erm if we can 'ave a ticket fer the dinner an 'e used to give us one.""

In this respect, Black Country differs from Birmingham and is more clearly separated from accents of the south.

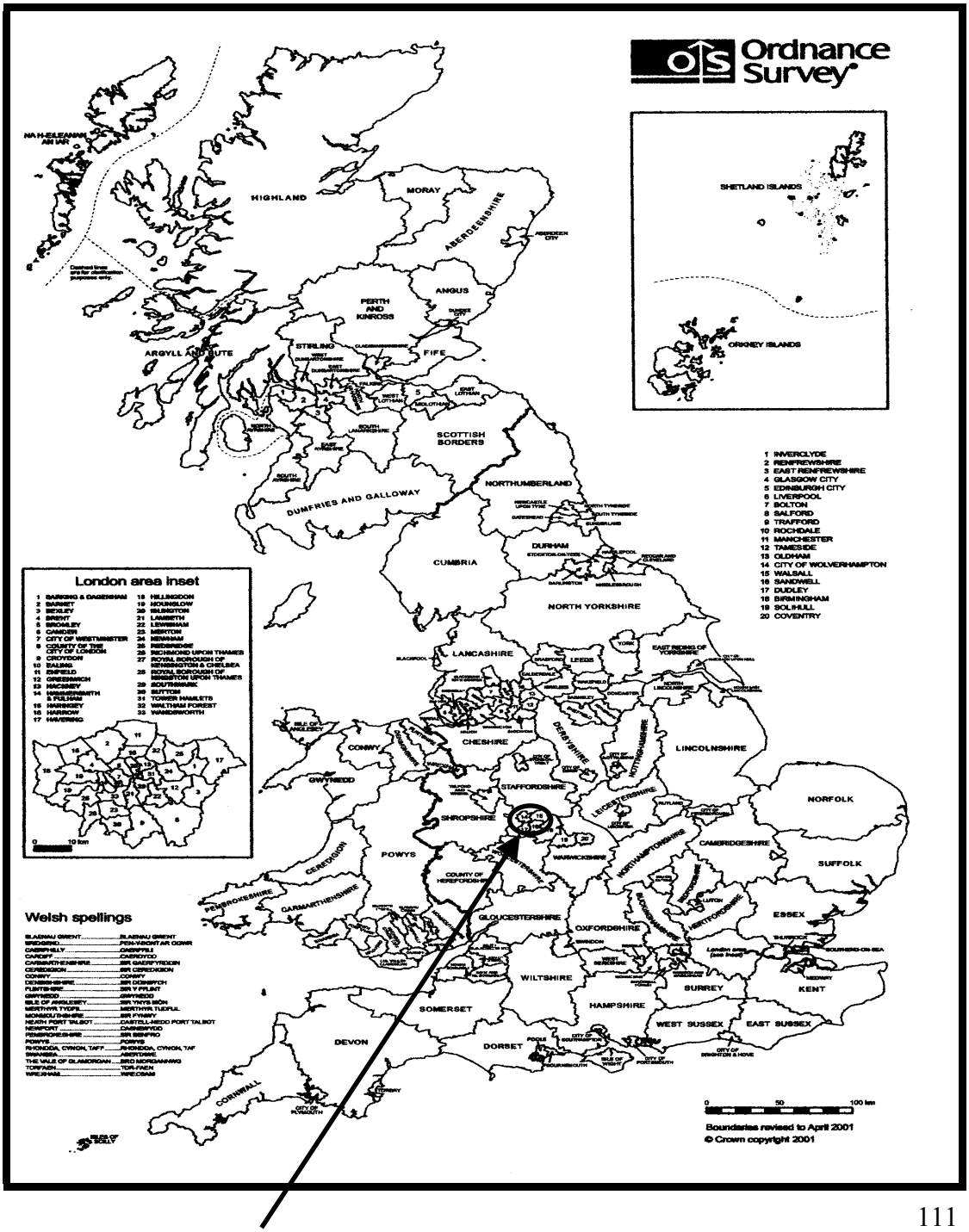

Figure 1. The location of the Black Country (reproduced by kind permission of the Ordnance Survey)

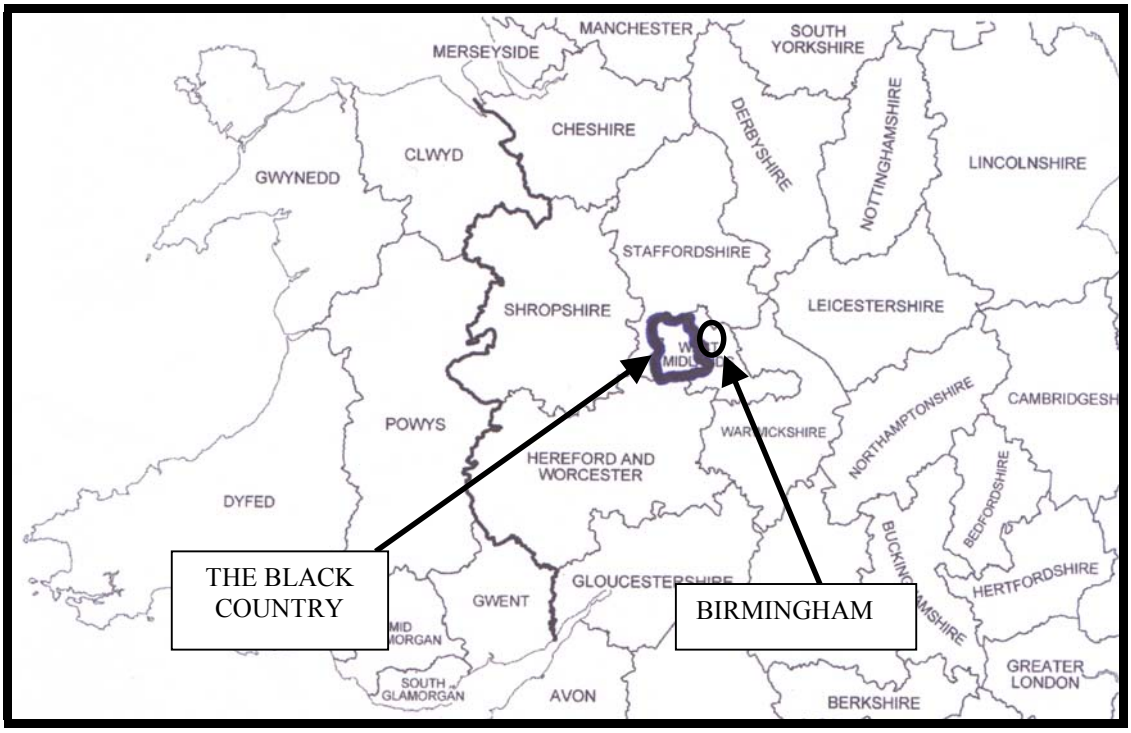

Figure 2. The location of the Black Country within the Midlands (reproduced by kind permission of the Ordnance Survey)

3. Evidence for the existence of the T to R rule in the Black Country – eye dialect

There is considerable evidence in literature for the possible existence of the T to R rule in Black Country English. This evidence is also backed by academic investigations into the phonological system of the Black Country variety across time. I examine first the evidence from what we may term 'eye dialect' texts designed for the amusement of local people, and readily available in the local interest section of bookshops in the region, as well as those available online or in local newspapers. I take as my definition of the term 'eye dialect' that given by Matthews (2007:134) who describes the phenomenon as "conventional misspellings of words, as e.g. <wuz> for [wəz], intended to suggest non-standard accents."

Older dialect poetry by Bartlett, who lived in Bilston, in the centre of the Black Country, shows the existence of the rule well:

1. *Burras* ah were jes a-sayin

2. Un the kids, nor me, nor missus, 'ad'na *gorra* grub ter eat

(Bartlett, 1886: no page, my italics)

Walker (undated) gives the following examples in his own respelling which suggest clearly that the T to R rule is applied to a certain extent in Black Country English. His dictionary appeared in the mid 1980s and is based on his own knowledge as a speaker of the variety from Wednesbury in the north of the Black Country:

3. *ave a goo arrum* – to attack them

4. *gerr ina paddy* – get in a temper

5. *gerraway* – get away

6. *gerrim* – get him

7. *lerrim* – let him

8. *lerrum* – let them

9. *purrin* – putting

10. *tarrarabit* - goodbye

In her translation of the Old Testament, Fletcher (1975:4) gives plentiful examples of the operation of the rule. She was born and raised in Bilston, in the centre of the Black Country:

11. The thaird day 'e *purra lorro* wairter rahnd the place and called it the say

12. On the fowerth day 'e med sum lites – tew big uns an' *alorro* little uns. 'E *purrum* all in the sky an' sed "One o' yow lites is the mewn an' yown *gorra* shine at nite, an' th'uther is the sun an' yown *gorra* shine in the day, an' all yow little uns um gunna be called stars an' yo con shine at nite wi' the mewn" (my italics)

Fletcher (1979:3) suggests even more clearly that the T to R rule operates:

13. Sumboddy sid theez tew blokes prahlin' abaht un went un tode the King o' Jericho thut thay'd sid tew spies *gurrer* Rahab's 'owse

14. 'Er [Rahab] asked the tew blokes ter rimmimba *tharr* 'er'd bin kind tew um un asked um ter spare 'er and 'er famlee frum bein' put ter jeth

15. The blokes asked 'er ter tell nobody *abahrr* um bein' theer un thay'd dew *worr* 'er waantid (my italics)

Example 15 is particularly interesting in that it is not predicted by Wells's rule on the grounds of its containing a long vowel. There is no evidence of it in the data used in my paper, however my own observations confirm that both [əbaːɹɪt] and [əbaːɾɪt] are possible in the Black Country variety.

Recent newspaper articles also suggest that the rule still operates. The following examples are taken from Ogden (2005), who collated local sayings sent in by readers of the Express and Star (a daily local paper which has a wide circulation throughout the Black Country):

16. *Gerra* cheer, si dahn and *sharrap* (reader from Bilston, central Black Country)
17. If gud looks ad *gorra* be hung erd come back loffin' (reader from Stourbridge, on the extreme southern edge of the Black Country)
(my italics)

4. Evidence for the existence of the T to R rule in the Black Country – academic research

Though the Black Country language variety has been less widely studied than some other regional varieties in England, there exists a small bank of linguistic research which can be referred to in investigating the presence of the T to R rule. My study here does not extend to the historical processes which have given rise to the application of the T to R rule in the Black Country. I begin instead by examining evidence from this century. My first source is the *Survey of English Dialects* (*SED*) (Orton and Barry 1969; 1970; 1971). Since the purpose of the *SED* was primarily the elicitation of linguistic forms in isolation, the only data of use here is the informant interviewed by Stanley Ellis, who tells four humorous narratives in what is best called casual narrative style. He is from Himley, in the extreme south west of the region. At the time of recording in 1955 he was 67 – today his age would therefore be 120. Of 23 utterances where the T-R rule might be expected to operate in the light of Wells's (1982b) schema he gives in the recording, which lasts 8 minutes 11 seconds, there are 7 instances of [ɾ] and 16 of [t] – the level of tapping is at 30.4%. The table of utterances in context is given in Appendix One.

Looking at the *SED* informant in terms of the quality of the allophone used for *syllable initial /r/* it is possible to see that of 30 tokens, 24 are realised as approximants [ɹ], and only 6 tokens as taps [ɾ] – 20% of all tokens. The link between initial tapping and tapping as a connected process does not seem clear. The situation is complicated further by the fact that the informant's accent is variably rhotic, and his speech does not always contain linking /r/, but 4 of the 6 tapped tokens occur in a linking /r/ position. In the text itself there are seven possible instances where the T to R rule *could* operate (but not necessarily where it does). Looking at the data, we see that these items are as follows:

Table 1 SED – possible environments for the T to R rule

1	about	7 tokens
2	got	4 tokens
3	but	4 tokens
4	out	2 tokens

5=	but	2 tokens
5=	bit	2 tokens
6=	bet	1 token
6=	packet	1 token
6=	forget	1 token
6=	getting	1 token

I turn now to Painter (1963), who recorded male informants at the Red Lion pub in Rowley Regis (the mid-east of the region). He gives only 24 lines of transcribed conversation between two male darts players, and their age is not given. Combining data from the two informants, it is possible to see that they use 5 taps and 2 voiceless plosives. [ɹ] does not appear. Painter comments:

18. 6. Flaps: intervocalic /r/ = [ɾ]. Many RP words with /t/ may fall into this phoneme as [ɾ].
7. [ʔ] does not occur
(Painter, 1963:32)

Examining the quality of the informants' syllable initial realisations of /r/ as well as the quality of /r/ in consonant clusters, we see that Painter's remarks are entirely justified. Of 10 tokens, 8 are realised as taps [ɾ], and only two as approximants [ɹ]. It is possible that tapping as a widespread realisation of /r/ is a relatively new phenomenon, or it may be that in locations in the south of the Black Country, the tapped realisation is less widely used than is the approximant realisation. On the other hand, these results may point to [ɾ] as the dominant output in the T to R context.

Later descriptions of the linguistic system of the Black Country include Manley (1971) and Rock (1974) each working in the south of the region, and Higgs (2004) also working in the south of the region. Sadly none of these studies marks any difference between the quality of the output of the T to R rule; they suggest, in fact, in their orthographic rendering of the allophone as <r> that the output is [ɹ]. Manley does not deal with connected speech processes, and Higgs concentrates on grammatical variation. Rock's data is given in respelled form (she concentrates on lexical variation), and she only uses <rr> to represent any kind of T to R rule:

19. He'd *gorra* brother as lived here
(Rock, 1974: 15, my italics)

The reliability of such respelling is called into question by the fact that all her informants were male and over 70, and yet she never marks /h/ dropping in their speech, when previous research such as the *SED* suggests that /h/ dropping is almost categorical in working class speech.

Similarly, Higgs (2004) respells his transcript, giving no information in the IPA. He does not mark any /h/ dropping, and his transcription mirrors eye dialect in that he uses confusing and sometimes unnecessary respelling - <yer> for *you* throughout, probably to mark a realisation with schwa, rather than a long vowel [uː], but extremely unlikely to mark post-vocalic /r/. Similarly, he marks elision in connected

speech which might be expected in many linguistic varieties, not just Black Country, thus

20. *A lot o people* came from round erm like my Grandad came from Bewdley (Higgs, 2004: 171, my italics)

In this respect, respellings of T to R processes might be called into question in scholarly research in exactly the same way as they can be in eye dialect spelling, and though they suggest a realisation in [ɹ], Painter's remarks suggest that this is far from always being the case, and the *SED* data on T to R reinforce Painter's findings. Honeybone (2006) has suggested that examination of what he terms *CHLDL* (contemporary humorous local dialect literature) is useful, and that

21. There can be a set of conventions for writing features in a variety's *CHLDL*, to the extent that:
    - these features are salient for the speech community and
    - they can be written using the resources of the alphabet in general
    - and the kinds of graph-phone correspondences that exist for spelling the reference variety.

The question of whether either the *CHLDL* literature in the Black Country or scholarly research which employs orthography to represent phonology are as representative of actual phonological processes as is, for example, the *CHLDL* literature Honeybone has examined for Liverpool, remains therefore to be examined in greater depth.

The last piece of scholarly research to be conducted in the Black Country was carried out by Mathisen (1999). It was based on data collected in Wednesbury (in the north of the Black Country), Tipton and Rowley Regis, both in the central Black Country. The data were collected in 1984 from 57 informants. Of the T to R rule, Mathisen says nothing; she does however comment on the quality of /r/ in non final position, and like Painter, she finds that

22. the tap [ɾ] is a male variant with higher frequencies increasing with age (20% for the 70 year old [age group]). Within the female groups, this realisation is WC, and not age-sensitive (Mathisen, 1999:110).

This will be useful information in any future investigation of the T to R rule, since the relationship of /r/ in non final position to the quality of the output of the T to R rule may be significant. It also shows that my small investigation of the *SED* data may not have produced results as far removed from other research as Painter's data suggested – the percentage of tapped tokens for /r/ in non-final position was also 20% for the *SED* informant. I turn now to detailed explanation of the variables to be examined in this investigation in the light of existing research.

5. Linguistic change in the Black Country - variable outcomes of the T to R rule

Thorne (2003:140) discusses linguistic change in Birmingham, and his remarks are also pertinent in the light of linguistic change in the neighbouring Black Country. Examining the speech of a 40 year old male from Birmingham, he remarks

23. The speaker's realisation of *get his* ([gɐ̟ʔ ɹ̟z̟] suggests that the influence of Estuary English is continuing to build ([gɐ̟ɹ ɹ̟z] or perhaps [gɐ̟ɾ ɹ̟z] would be expected in the speech of older Brummies), but the majority of phonological variables in Brummagem articulation…show no signs of abating.

This trend is also reported in Broadbent (2008:151), who remarks of West Yorkshire English that

24. during the course of the twentieth century t-glottalling became a feature of the variety…and so [there is] a possibility that as the FREQUENCY OF USE of t-glottalling increased, this would quickly overshadow t-to-r usage.

She finds, though, that

25. paradoxically, FREQUENCY OF USE is also responsible for the t-to-r phenomenon manifested today. More specifically, t-to-r remains in a small group of words which are related by phonological shape. As a consequence of their frequency and shape, they have lexical strength, and this is why a fossil t-to-r is maintained in West Yorkshire today.

In other words, though glottalling is on the increase in the West Yorkshire local variety, a certain group of words related in phonological shape and by their high frequency of usage, resist change to glottalling, and continue to maintain the T to R rule. Not only are words related in shape and frequency of usage, however, but in terms of word class. Thus conjunctions such as *but*, relativisers such as *what* and determiners such as *that* are more likely to preserve the T to R rule than lexical items such as *lot* and *got*.

In discussing an increase in glottal reinforcement of /t/ among young children on Tyneside, Milroy, Milroy, and Hartley (1994:23) discuss the effect of this increase on the maintenance or attrition of the T to R rule.

26. Reflexes of /t/ in pre-vowel word-final context are…of particular interest in showing the comparative distribution of glottal and voiced variants. This environment favours voiced and/or tapped realisations, particularly in Northern dialects, including Tyneside. Wells (1982:370) describes this process as "the T-to-R rule." While the commonest output of the rule appears to be the tap [ɾ], we have [considered] a range of audibly different realisations together as voiced variants.

In this way, the distinction between the various possible outputs of the T to R rule - [ɹ ~ ɾ ~ ɖ] - is neutralised in the results given. This is an important methodological decision, since it blurs the fine patterns which might exist in other varieties; for example, the apparent tendency of Black Country speakers to favour a tap realisation over an approximant realisation. Within these methodological boundaries, however, the researchers find that the most frequently used variants of /t/ in pre-vowel word final contexts are

27. not [ʔ] or [tʔ] but voiced variants of [t], with males using them at the highest frequency – 68% of the time.

Of those using the voiced variants, five-year old children used more than ten-year old children, and males of both age groups used more than girls. The researchers conclude that

28. voiced variants are socially differentiated as a male phenomenon….What is of interest here is that in these two processes [glottalisation and intervocalic tapping], the more and less localised variants are competing for the same or similar territory…[results] show that although voiced variants are indeed strongly favoured in a specific context, glottalised variants are also used approximately one quarter of the time by boys and one third of the time by girls.

They also point out (1994:24) that

29. the voiced variants are lexically restricted, being confined in these data to a very few frequently occurring monosyllabic lexical items, such as *get*, *got*, *put*, *that*, *it* and *what*. While glottalling is lexically blind, the T-R rule is a lexical rule.

In this their findings echo those of Broadbent (2008). Docherty, Foulkes, Milroy, Milroy and Walshaw (1997:306) have gone on to make this finding even more explicit in reworking and expanding on the 1994 Tyneside data; they make it clear that

30. present phonological accounts, such as those of Harris and Kaye (1990) or Carr (1991) do not always accurately predict patterns of surface variation. For example, the predictions that are made about contexts where glottalisation cannot occur, and about the relationship between glottalling and 'weakening' do not seem to be correct. In fact, data gathered from a substantial number of speakers of both sexes and different ages tends to disconfirm specific predictions, such as Carr's claim that glottalling and 'weakening' to [ɹ] are in complementary distribution.

It is also indicated in my own examination of eye dialect that words like *got* and *put* are very likely to demonstrate the T to R rule when followed by a vowel. The

possibility of lexical strength as a factor in resisting the competing process of glottalisation in the Black Country will be considered throughout analysis of the data.

The Black Country is no different from West Yorkshire in terms of the rise of t-glottalling within the local speech variety. Though Painter (1963: 31) concludes from his data that

31. [ʔ] does not occur

this is no longer the case. Mathisen (1999:110) is the most recent source to document the rise of glottalling. She reports that of her 57-strong speaker sample

32. the glottal stop is very frequent in teenage speech and also variably in young adult (30 year old) speech, especially in MC [middle class], but very infrequent in the speech of the elderly. Age is the main social factor, but female and MC speakers, in that order, are at the forefront of this ongoing change. The score for word-final and word-medial position (all phonetic contexts included) is 23% for female speakers and 18% for males…The glottalised variant [ʔt], plays a much more modest role within all social groups, with the MC teenagers and the young adult (30yrs) female MC speakers displaying the highest frequencies.

It is reasonable to suggest that the processes of glottalling and glottal reinforcement may impact on the continued application of the T to R rule in the Black Country.

In terms of the possible input variables for the T-R, or indeed T-[ʔ] process, the following are the environments in which lenition is found in my data. Since I am interested in the competing processes of glottalling versus [ɾ] ~ [ɹ], I have included only those environments where either [ɾ], [ɹ], or even both variants are found. The distribution of the glottal stop is far more widespread in terms of the environments in which it can now appear; for example, there are very few instances of approximants or taps word-medially among my corpus, yet glottal realisations are frequent. Thus lexical items such as *matter*, *getting* and *better* do not appear, whereas the items *whatever* and *putting* appear more resistant to a shift towards the glottal variant. Environments which allow the T to R rule to operate are now as follows, according to all data in my corpus:

but
it
bit
about
what
that
get
shut

lot
not
got
put
whatever
putting
In section 7 I give a detailed correlation between age and use of the possible variants in each of these words.

6. Sample structure and methodology

This investigation is a preliminary examination of possible links between gender, age, and the application of the T to R rule. Within this framework, I also examine the possibility that the T to R rule in the Black Country is actually a T to 'tap' rule: that is, that the conditions Wells sets out for the lenition of /t/ to [ɹ] exist in the Black Country as /t/ to [ɾ ~ ɹ], and in the Black Country [ɾ] is the more common output, except in very high frequency phrases like *tarra* for goodbye. More than this, I then seek briefly to investigate the possibility that the alveolar approximant realisation [ɹ] and the alveolar tap realisation [ɾ] may exist not only in complementary distribution, but that the use of the approximant versus the tap may be actively linked to extralinguistic factors such as age. It is a fact that in the Black Country the lexical items *but*, *it*, *what*, *that*, *get*, *shut* and *got* can be realised with *either* an approximant *or* a tap. Future work, it seems, must examine possible reasons for this variation, and decide whether the variants are socially stratified or in free variation. In my conclusion, I go on to suggest possible patterning of the variants across the region, with realisations in the northern Black Country differing from those in the south.

The extralinguistic variables of primary interest, then, are age and gender. The sample I am using is monoclassal in that it consists only of working class informants (this having been determined using the National Statistics Socioeconomic Classifications following Rose and Pevalin 2001). A pilot study such as this does well to restrict the number of factors it examines, and though Mathisen's data strongly suggest that middle class membership is linked to higher levels of glottalised variants, there is no room here to examine these claims, and I restrict myself to age and gender variation.

The linguistic factors under scrutiny are the competing processes of glottalling versus lenition of /t/ to another variant (in this case, [ɹ] and [ɾ] are isolated as possible alternative variants). I am also aware that data elsewhere in the country such as Milroy et al (1994) uncovered a voiced variant [d̬], and though preliminary findings from Painter (1963) and the *SED* data do not suggest that this variant exists, should this be found, I shall make this clear in my presentation of results.

My sample consists of data recorded between 2003 and 2006. It takes the form of semi-structured interviews based on the *Survey of Regional English* (*SuRE*) methodology (Kerswill, Llamas and Upton 1999; Llamas 2000). It is based on networks of lexical keywords which informants complete with the words they use themselves and hear around them, and subsequent discussion of these words, as well as discussion of their feelings about the area and its associated language variety.

Examples of the questionnaire are given in Appendices Three and Four. Although it is certainly a sociolinguistic interview, efforts were made to ensure that informants were relaxed and comfortable. The interviewer's presence is backgrounded, since the informants themselves provide the material for the discussion; they are also recorded in dyads among their peer group. In an effort to ensure that the data represents casual speech as closely as possible, I have also begun linguistic analysis ten minutes in to each interview.

I examine here data from 12 informants. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the speaker sample. Full informant data is given in Appendix Two. I analyse 30 tokens from each informant where possible (*n* is given where it was not possible to collect 30 tokens in total from each informant) using the data I collected from a preliminary analysis of my data before the detailed analysis, and the knowledge gleaned from the eye dialect passages and from previous academic studies. It is therefore entirely possible that some environments may in this way have been overlooked; however this is work to be carried out at the end of this initial study. I present results of my analysis in the next section, in the interpretation of which it is crucial to remember that utterances which begin in orthography with [h] begin in reality with a vowel, since 'h' dropping is almost categorical in the speech of WC Black Country speakers. Thus 'Put his wheelbarrow down' in the table for the young male speaker can exhibit the T-R rule because *his* is realised as [ɪz].

Table 2 *Speaker sample*

Female (16-30)	Male (16-30)	Female (40-55)	Male (40-55)	Female (60-80)	Male (60-80)
2	2	2	2	2	2

7. Results

Table 3 shows the percentage results and raw figures for use of what Carr refers to as weakening in the T to R environment. There are two extra columns which represent the trill [r] and the voiced dental stop [d]. These are rarer outcomes of the process which it would be unwise to subsume on the basis of similar phonetic shape until more is known about the relationship between lexical constraints on output. The only decision which has been taken at this stage is to collate glottal reinforcement of [t] with the full glottal stop [ʔ], so that any finer patterns concerning precise places and manners of articulation can be left clear for further detailed analysis at a later point.

Table 3 *Percentage results for the varying outputs of the T to R rule*

	[ɹ]	*[ʔ]*	*[ɾ]*	*[r]*	*[d]*	*[t]*	*Ø*
YF1	20	53.3	16.7	0	0	0	0
YF2	3.3 (n=1)	90	0	0	0	3.3 (n=1)	3.3 (n=1)
YM1	16.7	16.7	33.3	0	6.6 (n=2)	20	6.6 (n=2)
YM2	40	33.3	16.7	0	0	3.3 (n=1)	10
MF1	31.5	21.1	21.1	0	0	26.3	0

* n= 19							
MF2	13.3	6.7	36.7	0	3.3 (n=1)	40	0
MM1	0	0	83.4	0	3.3 (n=1)	13.3	0
MM2	16.7	3.3 (n=1)	70	0	3.3 (n=1)	3.3 (n=1)	0
OF1	16.7	6.6 (n=2)	23.3	10	0	43.3	0
OF2	10	0	43.3	6.7 (n=2)	3.3 (n=1)	36.7	0
OM1	23.3	0	43.3	0	20	13.3	0
OM2	16.7	0	43.3	0	0	40	0

The pattern which emerges most clearly is the link between the age and increased use of t-glottalling. The glottal variant is undoubtedly the preserve of the youngest age group, and two out of the three informants from the other age groups who use the variant are female. Use of this variant is particularly high among the young female informants, at 53.3% and 90% respectively. Even among young males the percentage is higher than it is among males in the middle and old cohorts. Among 'middle' females, usage stands at 31.5% for MF1 (whose total number of tokens was only 19) and at 6.7% for MF2. Use of the glottal among men plummets to zero and 3.3% among middle males. This finding tallies with those of Mathisen (1999) and her research in Sandwell which suggested that glottal variants were on the increase among younger people.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 are sample tables of the raw analysis of data, and the way in which this was organised.

Table 4 *Raw data – young male cohort*

Time point	Example in context	Realisation

0.24	Yeah but at least	[ʔ]
8.20	Lost that a long time ago anyway	Elision
10.51	That's what I do	[ɹ]
12.32	Shut up	[ɾ]
13.01	Got to	[ɹ]
13.04	Just got to take it	[ɾ]
17.18	Put him	[ɾ]
18.23	Getting my head down	Elision
20.57	Shut up you chatterbox	[ɹ]
20.59	You know what I mean	[ɾ]
21.07	Stuff like that ay it	[ʔ]
21.36	They actually shut up	[ʔ]
22.04	Shut up	[ɹ]
22.07	They shut up	[ɾ]
22.08	It's like a shut up way of saying it	[ɾ]
22.12	Put a cake in it	[ɾ]
22.14	Plug it up	[ɾ]
22.34	I put er	[t]
22.36	That is lately	[ɾ]
23.30	Put his wheelbarrow down	[ɾ]
23.46	That is	[d]
24.36	Told them that I	[ʔ]
26.23	Met her dad	[t]
26.31	Met her dad	[t]
26.32	Met him	[t]
26.53	Laughed about it	[t]
28.24	Probably out of a song	[t]
28.46	I think I got it from my mate	[ʔ]
28.47	I think I got it from Dave	[ɹ]
28.49	I think I got it from him	[d]

Table 5 *Raw data - young female cohort*

Time point	Example in context	Realisation
0.21	Yeah but he's	[ʔ]
2.20	But I wouldn't	[ʔ]
3.18	I put ignorant	[ʔ]
5.46	It's a bit of a	[ʔ]
5.47	It's not a	[ʔt]
7.11	And I have a go at him	[ʔ]
11.20	Not a lot	[ʔ]
18.21	Getting my head down	[ʔ]
18.22	Getting my head down	[ʔ]
21.13	Shut up (citation form)	[ɹ]
21.54	Telling him to shut up	[ɾ]
22.09	Put a	[ʔ]
22.10	Put a cake in it	[ʔ]
26.16	Laughing at him	[ʔ]
27.21	That's about it	[ɾ]
29.14	That's about it	[d]
29.27	That's about it	[ɾ]
30.29	You have to shut up now though	[ɹ]
37.28	But if you saw	[ʔ]
38.31	No but it's coming towards Bilston	[ɾ] excited speech
38.34	So shut up	[ɹ] excited speech
40.04	But I think	[ʔ]
42.32	Yeah but I don't think	[ʔ]
43.00	Is that a personal attack?	[ʔ]
44.09	NO NO SHUT UP	[ɹ] excited speech
45.11	So erm shut up	[ɹ]
45.16	Shut up	[ɾ]
45.18	You got an actual intake into it	[ʔ]
45.28	Just shut up Brownie	[ɹ]

Table 6 *Raw data - mid male cohort*

Time point	Example in context	Realisation
0.19	They try and put it	ɾ
1.19	What ethnic group	ɾ
3.05	But I never use it	ɾ
3.55	Lot of the things	d
4.07	But a	ɾ
4.08	Lot of	ɾ
4.52	Or whatever	ɾ
7.32	And that it's	ɾ
9.01	A lot of	ɾ
12.05	Got out	ɾ
12.32	That I always think	ɾ
14.23	But a	ɾ
14.24	Lot of	ɾ
14.51	Hear that even more	ɾ
14.54	Sort of	t
15.28	What I mean	ɾ
15.46	But err	t
16.50	Don't matter	t
17.29	That's what I say	ɾ
17.39	Tippex that out	ɾ
19.30	I just put earholes	ɾ
21.20	But I ain't	ɾ
21.21	Put it	ɾ
22.48	Shut up	ɾ
22.50	Shut up	ɾ
24.13	Words like that are dying out	ɾ
24.32	Might hear	t
24.41	But a chap	ɾ
25.00	But you know what it means	ɾ

It is clear that [ɹ] is a possible output of the T to R context, just as it has been shown to be in the north of England. Use of the variant [ɹ] is highest for YM2, who did however discuss the words used in the Black Country for *goodbye* at length in his

interview which, it is probable, skewed results towards an unusually high number of approximant tokens. One informant in my study who is not analysed here was highly observant in his comments on the phonetic realisation of this item. A male informant aged 31, he spells the word both *tarra* and *tada* in his respelling of lexical items found in the Black Country.

A female informant aged 23 gives the following comment which suggests that some speakers cannot only hear the difference between tap and approximant, though this time this is in reference to the older greeting which derives from *what ho*:

16.08 EA: "And what do you say for hello?

INF 9 "[wɒɹoʊ] my dad always says [wɒɹoʊ] (.)and [aduː] that's an old one though"

EA "I think [wɒɹoʊ] is an old one as well isn't it?"

INF 9 "Yeah [wɒɾoʊ](.)that's right"

(Asprey 2007:96)

The other informant with high levels of this variant is MF1, who, gave only half as many tokens as other informants, which skews her percentage results. In general, it is possible to say that the approximant variant is relatively stable amongst the community as a whole, appearing at levels within a range of approximately 15%-25% for most informants.

The zero variant ø only appears in the speech of younger informants, and even then only at very low levels. The two young males use this variant, and YF2 has one instance of it. The trill variant [r] is entirely the preserve of older female informants: both OF informants use this variant. The relationship between the voiced dental stop and the tap [ɾ] is unclear; for most informants the voiced stop [d] appears at low levels. Informant OM1 however has a level of use of the [d] variant at 20%, though he also uses the tap [ɾ] at high levels (43.3%). The reasons for this are not clear.

Analysis turns finally use of the standard variant [t]. This variant is not found among all informants; informant YF1 never uses it, so high is her level of glottalling. All other informants, however, do use it to a varying extent. Of these informants, it is the middle and older female informants who use it at the highest levels. Stratification is clearest in the middle group, where male informants use the variant at 3.3% and 13.3% respectively, while the female informants use it at 26.3% and 40% levels respectively. The interest in this variant is chiefly that it represents the standard. The nature of the task given to informants focused their attention on their speech and discussion of standard versus non-standard often took place at interview. The situation could at best be described as semi-natural, and it is possible that the interview domain influenced speakers in their choice of variants.

What *is* clear is that T to R in the form of [t] →[ɹ] is entirely possible in Black Country English, though in all cases among all informants bar one, other outcomes for this connected speech process outstrip the frequency of this variant. The [ɹ] variant is

found among all age groups and both genders within those groups. The tap variant [ɾ] is common and again found in all age groups.

The relationship between glottalling and the T to R rule
Like Docherty, Foulkes, Milroy, Milroy and Walshaw (1997:306), my own analysis shows that the T to R rule is in direct competition with glottalling, rather than the two being in complementary distribution. In this way, informant YM1 can say

33. I think I got it from my mate [ɑːfɪŋkɑgɒɹɪʔfɹʊmɑmeiʔ]

and just two seconds later in the interview can continue

34. I think I got it from Dave [ɑːfɪŋkɑgɒʔɪʔfɹʊmdeiv]

Word-internal T to R
There are very few instances of T to R word internally in my data, though this is not to suggest that is cannot occur; certainly [wɒɾɛva] and [wɒɹɛva] for *whatever* are possible realisations of that lexical item, as are [pʊɾɪn] and [pʊɹɪn] for *putting*. In this sense my findings at present do not tally with those of Carr (1992:56) in Newcastle, or with those of Docherty et al (1997) in Newcastle. They also set Black Country English apart from West Yorkshire English, since Broadbent reports the possibility of [ɹ] as an output in additional items such as *getting*. It is worth noting however that my dataset is small and unlikely to be representative of the speech community as a whole. It is unwise to rule out other forms which undergo word-internal change to a tap or approximant until more comprehensive datasets exist.

The patterning of possible environments which favour retention of T to R
I now go on to give detailed figures for the total appearances of each word (omitting data on the glottal stop, the voiced dental stop and the standard variant; these last two occurring at extremely low levels and the former at extremely high levels among the youngest cohorts), and their hierarchy of frequency in the data. It is to be remembered from my earlier discussion that certain words appear much more frequently in spoken language; for example, conjunctions such as *but* and the item *what* (in the Black Country, this item functions in place of *that* and *who* as a common relativiser) are more likely to appear than lexical items such as *get* and *lot*.

For this I have first collated tap and approximant variants and then tabulated the most common items. I show below the most common exhibitors of the rule, and divide each score into the tap [ɾ] and the approximant [ɹ]. Of all tokens, the possible environments for different variants to occur are given in Table 7.

Table 7 *Possible environments favouring or blocking T to R*

token	approximant	tap	glottal
but	yes	yes	yes
got	yes	yes	yes
bit	**no**	yes	yes
out	**no**	yes	yes
about	**no**	yes	yes
what	yes	yes	yes
that	yes	yes	yes
get	yes	yes	yes
shut	yes	yes	yes
lot	yes	yes	yes
not	yes	yes	yes
put	yes	yes	yes
whatever	yes	yes	yes
it	yes	yes	yes
putting	yes	yes	yes
tarra	yes	yes	no

Change to either tap or approximant is most often undergone in the lexical items *but*, *put* and *what*, which are also most likely to promote the use of the approximant [ɹ] variant. Not so common exhibitors include *lot*, *put* and *get*, as the table below shows, giving percentage figures where the total number of tokens allows:

Table 8 *Percentage results for the varying outputs of the T to R rule*

Lexical item	Total *n* tokens	[ɹ] *n* + %	[ɾ] *n* + %
but	61	12 19.6%	40 65.5
what	41	11 26.8	23 56.0
got	23	6 26.0	16 69.5
shut	22	8 36.3	7 31.8
that	14	2	2
not	10	2	2
about	8	1	4
get	7	2	5
lot	6	1	4
put	3	0	2
it	2	1	1

Speakers across the total sample favour the tap output more than the [ɹ] output, though it must be remembered that this conclusion is based on relatively few examples.

There is evidence that my informants' data backs the assertions of Broadbent (2008: 165), who cites Bybee (2001). She reports Bybee's claim that

35. forms that occur frequently are more likely to undergo change than infrequent forms, but additionally that frequency will protect a form from change. At first glance, this may appear a paradoxical claim, but the t-to-r phenomenon arguably provides an excellent example of this in that as glottalling has come in over the course of the twentieth century it will have affected frequent forms such as *put*, *but*, *that*, *get*, *got*, *what*, etc. However because these words are more frequent than e.g. *fit*, *cut*, and *set*, they have maintained *t*-to-*r* simply because WY speakers have had regular experience of these forms.

Bybee's explanation of the reason why certain lexical items are more likely to retain a certain phonological process is based on the notion of frequency; that the more frequently a certain item appears, the more likely it is that it will perpetuate the phonological process in question, and on lexical *shape*. In this way, forms like *bit* and *but* sharing as they do high frequency of usage in speech, and the phonetic shape of PLOSIVE + SHORT VOWEL + DENTAL STOP are more likely to continue to exhibit T to R than words which occur less frequently that these. In the same way, it follows that *bit* should follow the lead of the higher frequency item *but* in retaining T to R. In this the Black Country variety appears no different to West Yorkshire English.

Environments most likely to promote T to R as an output

Since West Yorkshire is the closest location to the Black Country which has been closely researched in these terms, it is sensible to relate my own findings to those of Broadbent 2008. Following her (2008: 146) classifications of

36. (1) regular t-to-r exhibitors, (2) not so common t-to-r exhibitors, (3) rare/uncertain, and (4) t-to-r not possible

I have divided data in the Black Country into the same four categories. Like Broadbent's (2008:146) report on West Yorkshire English, my own data show clearly that the most common form to exhibit T to R in terms of *either* an approximant *or* a tap output is *but*, with total realisations of these two variants at 85.1%. For example, OM2 gives

37. But it was pure water [bʊɹɪtwəzpjuəwɔːta]

and MM2 gives

38. But I mean [bʊɹɑmiːn]

Since percentage figures are not reliable when dealing with so few tokens, it seems only reasonable to state that the items most likely to favour any kind of T to R rule are *but*, *what*, *got*, *and shut.*

We can say then, that given the data presented, *but*, *what*, *got*, *and shut* can be termed 'regular exhibitors', *that, not*, *about*, *get*, and *lot* 'not so common exhibitors', *put* and *it* 'rare' (as, on the strength of my own observations, are the word-internal variants discussed earlier). It is not possible to say definitively at this stage which items block application of the T to R rule, though it seems likely on the basis of my analysis that at least one of these may be *bit*. It seems also that the highest exhibitors of the T to R rule in the Black Country are also those which produce the most approximant variants.

In comparison with Broadbent's own findings (2008: 146), the Black Country has some differences from the patterning of the rule in West Yorkshire English. Broadbent finds that her data

39. demonstrate that the most common words to exhibit t-to-r are but, get, got, put, what, that, and let. Within this group a further distinction can be made in that but, get, got, and put are more likely to exhibit t-to-r than what, that, and let. T-to-r typically manifests as [ɹ], though [ɾ] is also found….T-to-r is still found in shut up [ʃʊɹˈʊp] and although this is the most common instance of shut +V-initialword, it does occur with otherV-initialwords, though this is extremely rare. The well-known northern farewell ta ta typically exhibits [taɹa]. Forget/forgot, bet, and not cannot be excluded from this list and although lot may still exhibit the phenomenon, it is by no means as certain as all the data items mentioned so far.

Broadbent finds the opposite to my results in the Black Country, which is that *what* and *that* show higher levels of lenited variants than do *get*, *got* and *put*. It is also not uncommon in the Black Country for otherV-initialwords, besides *shut + up* to exhibit

lenition; my own data contain examples of *get up* and *lot of* with both tap and approximant realisations at the syllable boundaries. Finally, it seems that the approximant variant is the dominant output of T to R in West Yorkshire, whereas across the Black Country it is the tap.

Evidence for the regional patterning of outcomes of the T to R rule

Table 9 shows that there is little light to be shed on the possible outcomes of the rule according to region. Evidence from the *SED* in the next location south of the Black Country (Romsley in Worcestershire) suggests that at that time T to R was not in evidence in the speech of the informants there. We might hypothesise on the strength of such evidence that T to R use would be significantly higher among northern Black Country informants; this is not the case.

Table 9 *Percentage results for the varying outputs of the T to R rule by region*

	[ɹ]	[ʔ]	[ɾ]	[r]	[d]	[t]	Ø
YF1 North	20	53.3	16.7	0	0	0	0
YM1 North	16.7	16.7	33.3	0	6.6 (n=2)	20	6.6 (n=2)
YM2 North	40	33.3	16.7	0	0	3.3 (n=1)	10
MF2 North/Central	13.3	6.7	36.7	0	3.3 (n=1)	40	0
MM1 Central	0	0	83.4	0	3.3 (n=1)	13.3	0
MM2 Central	16.7	3.3 (n=1)	70	0	3.3 (n=1)	3.3 (n=1)	0
MF1 Central	31.5	21.1	21.1	0	0	26.3	0
OM1 Central	23.3	0	43.3	0	20	13.3	0
YF2 South	3.3 (n=1)	90	0	0	0	3.3 (n=1)	3.3 (n=1)
OM2 South	16.7	0	43.3	0	0	40	0
OF1 South	16.7	6.6 (n=2)	23.3	10	0	43.3	0

OF2 South	10	0	43.3	6.7 (n=2)	3.3 (n=1)	36.7	0

8. Conclusions and suggestions for further research

This paper has shed light on the variable output of the T to R rule in the Black Country. It is clear that T to R does exist in its traditional form, and that the output can indeed be [ɹ]. In this it has been shown that the rule applies at least as far south as the Black Country area. It is also clear however, that a T to [ɾ] rule dominates the T to [ɹ] output. The glottal stop is taking over from a tapped or approximant output, appearing extremely frequently among the youngest speakers. Conversely, though the two processes of glottalling and lenition are in direct competition, there are certain phonetic forms which favour the retention of the approximant and tap outputs even among the youngest speakers.

Further work must focus on collecting a much larger corpus of data. A large amount of data would enable detailed analyses to determine whether the Black Country functions as a transitional area between regions where the T to R rule operates, and those where it does not. With such an increase in data, conclusions would be much firmer, and socially stratified patterns such as a relationship between gender and output, region and output and social group and output could be more firmly drawn. In addition, issues of frequency could be incorporated into an analysis, so that not only broader sociolinguistic patterns but more finely graded patterns of linguistic context could be examined.

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10. Appendix One

Analysis of SED recording in context

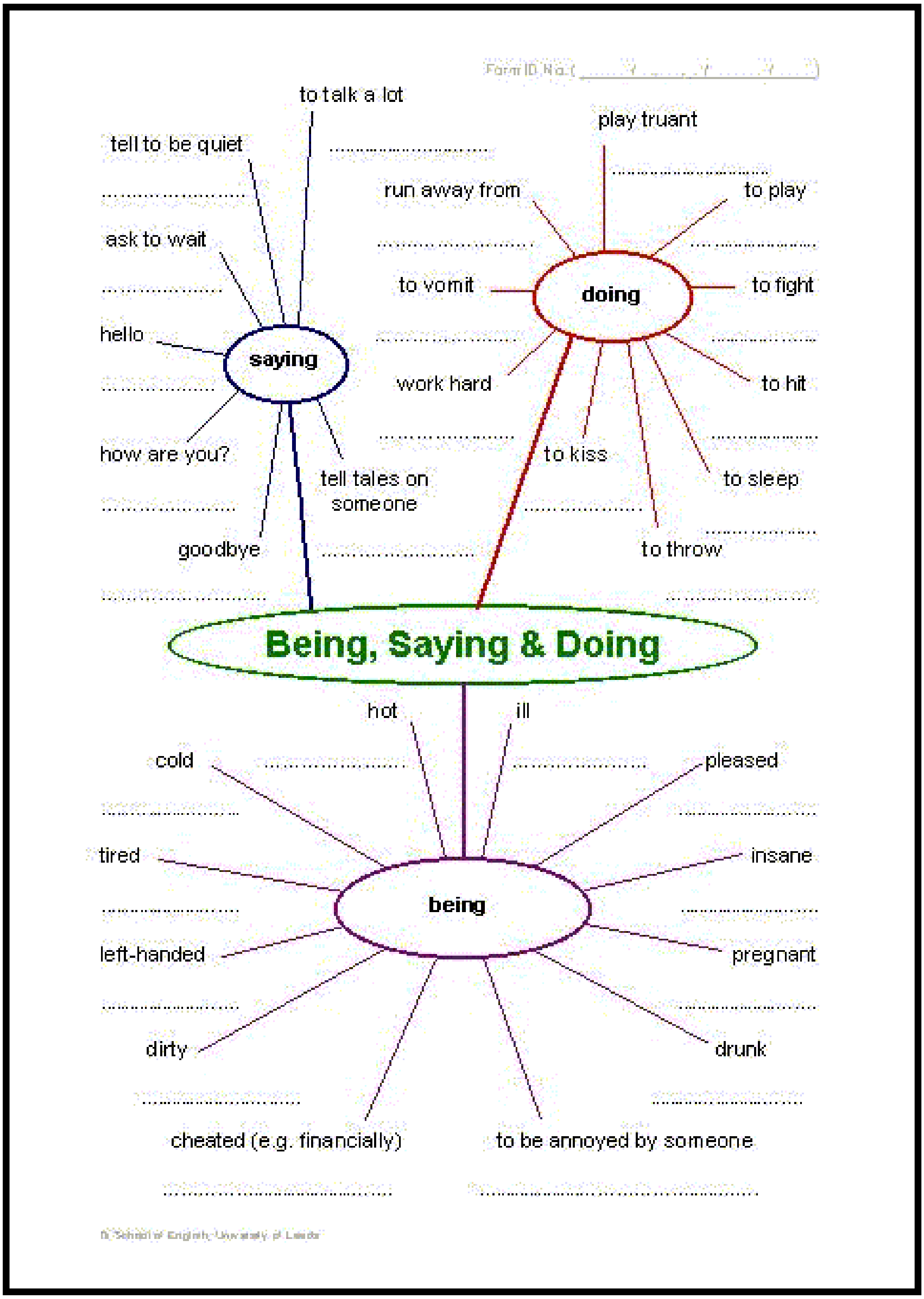
Time point	Example in context – initial or T to R	Realisation
0.21	About here	[t]
0.36	Round about a weekend	[ɾ]
0.38	All about Black Hills	[t]
1.52	I think they'd got a pheasant	[t]
2.01	He got up	[ɾ]
2.26	He set about [əm] with his stick	[t]
3.31	But er	[t]
3.36	But er	[t]
4.10	You could go out of our house	[t]
4.20	You'd got a job to get back then	[ɾ]
4.36	A packet [ə] Woodbines a penny	[t]
4.39	Out of a shilling	[ɾ]
5.42	I forget [ɪz] name now	[t]
5.46	Is getting on	[t]
5.51	They had a bet as one durdn't {darePASTNEG] go	[t]
5.58	He'd got to go to the tree	[ɾ]
6.03	Ask him how he was getting on	[t]
6.11	A bit of money	[t]
6.39	All manner of different tales about it	[t]
6.41	But I think	[ɾ]
7.21	I stopped a bit and er	[t]
7.42	They hold about a couple of gallons	[ɾ]
7.47	About [eɪpni] a pint	[t]

11. Appendix Two

Informant	Age	Age group	Place of residence	Profession
YF 1	17	**16-26**	Wolverhampton	Trainee Nursery Nurse
YF 2	19	**16-26**	Smethwick	Student
YM 1	20	**16-25**	Wolverhampton	Waste Management Operative
YM 2	25	**16-26**	Wolverhampton	Finance clerk
INFORMANT 18	52	**41-60**	Bilston	Food processor
INFORMANT 19	*54*	***41-60***	*Darlaston*	*Office worker*
MM 2	41	**41-60**	Tipton	Part time in copyright/semi-professional musician
MM 1	57	**41-60**	Darlaston	Warehouse
INFORMANT 33	71	**71+**	Cradley Heath	Machinist (now retired)
OF 1	67	61-70	Wednesfield	Retired Shop Assistant
INFORMANT 37	75	**71+**	Stourbridge	Welding+thermal engineer
INFORMANT 29	64	61-70	Dudley	Sales engineer

12. Appendix Three

Sample Sense Relation Network from the *Survey of Regional English*


Form ID No.(
Being, Saying & Doing
saying
to talk a lot
tell to be quiet
ask to wait
hello
how are you?
goodbye
tell tales on someone
doing
play truant
run away from
to play
to vomit
to fight
work hard
to hit
to kiss
to sleep
to throw
being
hot
ill
cold
pleased
tired
insane
left-handed
pregnant
dirty
drunk
cheated (e.g. financially)
to be annoyed by someone

13. Appendix Four

Sample questionnaire

Form ID No. (_____/_____/_____/_____)

NOW PLEASE TICK THE BOX WHICH SHOWS HOW CLOSELY YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

I would change where I come from if I could

Definitely ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Definitely not

Why/ why not? _____

The place where I live is

Beautiful ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Ugly

Dull ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Interesting

I recognise the accent of the place where I live (e.g. if I hear it on the radio or television)

Never ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Always

My accent is

Attractive ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Ugly

I can imagine myself changing the way I talk in certain situations

Frequently ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rarely

How would you describe the place where you live to someone who had never been there? _____