Koineization and cake baking: Reflections on methods in dialect contact research

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1. Introduction

The dialect contact paradigm of research in – mostly variationist – sociolinguistics examines the linguistic outcomes of the clash of distinct varieties of the same language.¹ This paradigm gained momentum after the publication of Trudgill’s (1986) book *Dialects in Contact*, which surveyed the rather dispersed literature on the topic up to that date, presented new case studies of contact, and, most importantly, synthesized a set of outcomes common to all or most forms of contact of this kind. He argued that in dialect contact situations, interaction between speakers of different dialects causes routine linguistic accommodation and convergence, which, if sustained over a longer period, could lead to permanent subtle changes in a speaker’s linguistic behaviour. Children born into such communities acquire these converging linguistic systems and, if social circumstances are right, continue to converge them, eventually leading to the community-wide emergence of a focussed new dialect in place of the original mêlée. Given the untenability of the language-dialect distinction, there is, of course, a rather fuzzy boundary between dialect contact and language contact research. The study of each has largely progressed independently, however, using different terminologies and methodologies. Here I focus solely on the contact of distinct, but nevertheless typologically very similar varieties.

This contact between varieties has been examined in a number of different contexts and I will reflect on a number of these here. On the one hand, dialect contact research examines the consequences of very short term contact, such as of the kind that we engage in in service encounters in shops or other brief, fleeting encounters. On the other, it examines the consequences of the long-term contact that results from long-distance mass migrations of speakers of different dialects of the same language. It examines the contact between a travel agent and her customer buying a holiday in Majorca (Coupland 1984) – *linguistic accommodation* – as well as the contact between the hundreds of thousands of British and Irish settlers of New Zealand in the 19th century who formed the first Anglophone speech commu-
nity there (Trudgill 2004; Gordon et al. 2004) – new dialect formation via the process of koineization. And there are a range of forms of contact that fall between these two in scope and intensity, in the literature most notably: the migration of individuals and their families to new places where there is an established but distinct target variety (the end result of which is known in the literature as second dialect acquisition), as well as the contact that results from everyday mundane mobilities in one’s neighbourhood or region (resulting in supralocalization or innovation diffusion). The breadth of these contexts has led some to argue that perhaps all or at least most language change should be conceptualized as resulting from (dialect) contact (e.g. Milroy 2002).

The aim of this paper is, very unusually in dialect contact studies, to reflect upon how research in this sub-discipline is carried out, the methods used to examine the consequences of this contact. Since most researchers in the field come to this topic from sociolinguistic or variationist dialectology, there is an overwhelming tendency to try to apply the methods of traditional Labovian sociolinguistics (e.g. Labov 1966; 1972) to the task. Here I examine some of the particular data collection issues that arise from work in linguistic accommodation, second dialect acquisition, innovation diffusion, new dialect formation and supralocalization. The examination will necessarily be brief, but will attempt to raise some of the problematic issues that researchers have had to face. In some forms of dialect contact research, especially those which focus on koineisation, cooking metaphors are often applied, because an original mix (of dialects) eventually ends up as a more homogenized final product (a koine). In assessing the methods used in dialect contact research, then, this paper also considers the extent to which a cake-baking metaphor can suitably be applied to work in this field.

2. Methods in dialect contact research

2.1. Structural linguistic accommodation

In general, the brief, fleeting nature of the speech events that give rise to short-term face-to-face accommodation have not posed significant data collection difficulties for dialect contact researchers. The routine practice of convergent linguistic accommodation in such short-term contexts is crucial to dialect contact theory, since the latter argues that the changes that take place as a result of dialect contact are the result of the fossilization of linguistically convergent forms (Trudgill 1986). Despite this, such studies are
actually fairly few in number. Service encounters provide a valuable possible source of relevant data, and one of the earliest studies of face-to-face short-term accommodation was carried out in a travel agency (Coupland 1984; see also De Stefani, this volume). Here, a female travel agent was recorded during transactions with customers of different social classes. The study showed that not only did the travel agent change the proportions of her use of different linguistic variables to converge with those of her customers, but also that she did so partially, and incompletely. She converged towards her customers, she did not copy them. Other accommodation type studies of this kind are almost experimental. Bell and Johnson (1997) set up an experiment in New Zealand where four interviewers – two Maori, two European New Zealanders, one male and one female of each ethnicity, each interviewed the same four people, again distinguished by ethnicity and gender. In doing so, they were able to examine how differently the same person spoke when the audience differed. Again, results showed that speakers variably accommodated, depending on the audience, showing that the speaker-addresssee combination together determined the linguistic outcome. Later research by theorists of stylistic variation and accommodation were able to refine and problematize a lot of these early findings (Coupland 2007), but the very fact that incomplete accommodation took place in such settings was all that dialect contact approaches really needed from this kind of data. It is central to established approaches to dialect contact that convergence and accommodation are routinely inaccurate and partial, since thereby it can explain how, as a result of longer-term contact, interdialectal forms sometimes fossilize which are clearly the product of the convergence of two forms in the original dialect ‘mix’. In studies of short-term accommodation, it is naturally obvious what the ‘ingredients’ of this ‘mix’ were – for example, the travel agent and her customer. More tricky, as we will see, is establishing what the ingredients were when we are examining mass migrations that caused dialect contact on a large scale. In these studies of short-term accommodation, however, the recipe was clear.

2.2. Second dialect acquisition

Short-term acquisition studies were able to show that speakers converged, fleetingly, to their interlocutors. But what would happen if this accommodation were to take place routinely and persistently and over a long period of time? Dialect contact theory relies on the fossilization of accommodation to explain the outcomes of more dramatic but long term contact. Researchers then began to study prototypical examples of such long-term accommo-
dation – the consequences for the dialects of individuals who moved from their home dialect area to a new one. Did they lose their original dialect? Did they pick up the new one? Perhaps the most famous study in this field is Chambers’ (1992) analysis of six Canadian children of different ages who moved to Oxfordshire in Southern England. Focussing solely on the linguistic factors that influenced second dialect acquisition (SDA), Chambers developed a set of principles which were supported by his own findings and the other few sporadic pieces of work that could be classed as SDA. Perhaps the most important were that: (i) age was a critical factor – the younger the children, the more likely they are to pick up the second dialect; (ii) lexical features were adopted before phonological ones; and (iii) that ‘simple’ features were adopted more readily than ‘complex’ ones.  

A number of other studies have also tried to test and replicate Chambers’ work – e.g. Tagliamonte and Molfenter (2007) on three Canadian children in Northern England; Al-Dashti (1998) examining Egyptian migrants to Kuwait, Foreman (2003) on Canadians and Americans moving to Australia and Werlen et al.’s (2002) analysis of migrants from Oberwallis to Bern in Switzerland. A methodological dilemma arises here, though. Whilst experimental methods work well for short-term accommodation, for long-term contexts it is more difficult. Ideally, for a first wave study of SDA, one would have a large and socially and generationally stratified sample of speakers, all from the same place, all moving to the same place at the same time with the same degree of exposure to the new target dialect. We would record these people before they leave their home dialect area and then again at some time, or better at regular times, thereafter. But of course real life does not work like that, and it is not the sort of scenario that one could ethically construct for the purposes of research. What we are left with, then, is a literature full of small case studies, where a large number of the parameters are unknown or uncontrollable. In almost all studies, we lack precise information about what the speakers sounded like before they left their home dialect area, and the studies have not been able to control for such factors as the degree of integration (or lack of it) into the new neighbourhood by the migrant.

One larger scale study currently underway is examining the second dialect acquisition of American children whose parents are working on a US Air Force base in Eastern England. Grainger (forthcoming) examined the American (and British) children in a British school to which many Americans working at the base send their children. One advantage of this study is that she was able to gather data from large numbers of American children and in controllable circumstances in the school – this study is much larger.
and more systematically sampled than any other previous SDA work. Still not solved, however, is the problem of degree of integration or of what the children spoke before they arrived – new families arrive at and leave the base all of the time, so it was not possible to follow an ideal single new cohort from first day at school onwards. Another study has managed, however, to get around a few more of these problems. Hirano (2011) examined the consequences of expatriate dialect contact amongst British, American and New Zealand English-language teachers in Japan who had arrived there as part of a specific programme (JET) with fixed term contracts. She was able to record a batch of willing new teachers as they arrived in Japan at the start of their teaching contract, and then re-record them a year later, also carefully tracking in great detail the extent and strength of their social network ties with Americans, Brits, Kiwis and Japanese as a way of measuring their integration with speakers of (roughly) the same or other dialects of English, native or non-native. The analysis of the data did show subtle convergence after a year, convergence that strongly correlated with the strength of network ties with relevant speakers. Matter and Werlen (2002: 278), however, found that social network ties did not play a significant role in the accommodation of migrants from Wallis to Bern.

For the most part, though, SDA studies have been small-scale and, it has to be said, focussed much more centrally on the linguistic findings, rather than presenting a rich synthetic sociolinguistic account. We know little about how the processes of acquisition proceed within the context of the performance of people’s everyday routines in their new communities. One of the other major problems is the post-hoc nature of most of the research. It is carried out after the migrants have been exposed to the target dialect for a while, so we can not be certain of the precise nature of the original input dialect. Here, then, we can taste the cake, but we are not certain of the ingredients. It is therefore not clear that we could write down the recipe. The methodological challenges, therefore, are, on the one hand to examine this process with more social sensitivity, but on the other to provide a global overview of the likely constraints, social and linguistic, on SDA, given the unfeasibility of large scale studies that track migrants from before their move to well after.

2.3. New dialect formation

It was the study of new dialect formation that provided the primary stimulus for the expansion in research on dialect contact from the late 1980s onwards. Given the task of explaining the structures of many of the in-
digenised European language varieties found outside Europe, dialect contact approaches were adopted as a way of explaining how, for example, Australian English was structurally different from every variety of English in the British Isles, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of its anglophone immigrants in both the 19th and 20th centuries were British or Irish. The same can be said for varieties of Spanish spoken in the Americas, French in Quebec, as well as, for example, Hindi-Bhojpuri in Fiji, Trinidad and Mauritius, and Japanese in Micronesia, and so on. Trudgill (1986) has argued that in such contexts, where different dialects are thrown together in new surroundings, linguistic accommodation becomes routine and long-term, leading to the process of koineization, whereby eventually a new dialect emerges as a result. Koineization consists of at least four processes: (i) levelling (the eradication of marked linguistic features, marked in the sense of being in a minority in the ambient linguistic environment after the contact ‘event’, marked in the sense of being overtly stereotyped, or marked in the sense of being found rarely in the languages of the world and/or acquired late in first language acquisition); (ii) simplification (the process by which a contact variety becomes more regular, having fewer categories, fewer person/number inflections, or fewer complex constraints on variation than the dialects in the original mix); (iii) interdialect formation (the emergence of forms which were not present at all in the input dialect, but which clearly emerged as the result of the imperfect convergence of two or more such inputs) and (iv) reallocation (the refunionalization of two or more input forms to perform new linguistic or social duties as part of the new dialect repertoire) (see Britain and Trudgill 2005). Studying how new dialects formed well after the event, however, has thrown up a vast number of methodological problems. How did they develop as they did? Once again, we know what the cake tastes like, but what were the ingredients and what was the recipe?

− We need to know where people came from in the donor community, of what backgrounds, in what numbers, and what dialects they brought with them;

− We need to understand “the ethnographic setting in which the … displaced population has come into contact with … other populations whose structural features enter into the competition with its own features” (Mufwene 1996: 85). Has the transported dialect engaged in language as well as dialect contact?

− We need to know about the language ideologies that speakers brought with them, as these, it has been argued, may affect their stances both
towards different varieties present in the post-contact dialect mix, but also towards the standard metropolitan variety;

- We need to know more about what Mufwene (2001) calls the ecology – the nature of social life – of the early post-contact society.

Some early research on new dialects, however, did not take all of these essential factors into consideration. I provide two examples that highlight this here; one from New Zealand English (Britain 2008), and another from the formation of Taiwanese Mandarin (Kuo 2005).

New Zealand English (NZE) began to be formed from the mid-19th century onwards as a result of migration from the British Isles and Australia. One oft-cited characteristic of NZE is a pronunciation of the MOUTH vowel, /au/, as [εu - εə - ε:]. With a mid-open front nucleus. These realisations have almost always been labelled as ‘strongly stigmatised’ (e.g. Gordon 1983, 1994; Maclagan and Gordon 1996: 7), though evidence suggests that they are by far the majority form in NZE informal speech. These mid-open front realisations have traditionally been explained as a result of a change from [aʊ], a fronting and raising, therefore, of the nucleus (e.g. Wells 1982: 256, Labov and Ash 1997: 514). Maclagan, Gordon and Lewis (1999: 22), for example, claim that “the diphthong variants that are stigmatized are those associated with a relatively recent shift … there are now very few … [au] variants of /au/ which earlier would have represented the most conservative, least stigmatized variants of the diphthong. Similarly, the first elements of the stigmatized variants have raised over time”, as well as “in New Zealand, the first target of /au/ is typically progressively fronted and raised by lower social class speakers. Tokens with a relatively open first target ([au]) were classified as conservative, those that started on [æ] were classified as neutral, and those with raised first targets ([ɛ]) were classified as innovative” (1999: 29). This account clearly suggests that NZE shifted from [au] to [εu - εə - ε:].

If this were really the case, then we would need to demonstrate convincing evidence that [au] was indeed once a widely used vernacular variant of NZE and that it was the dominant, or at least one of the dominant forms brought to New Zealand by British and Irish migrants. The evidence suggests the opposite, however. Britain (2008) shows that, firstly, mid-open front variants of MOUTH have been identified as significant variants in even the very earliest studies of NZE. Secondly, the demographic and historical dialectological evidence from the British and Irish migrant communities does not support an [au] origin for contemporary NZE pronunciations of this diphthong either. The demographic evidence robustly
demonstrates that the dominant migration to New Zealand came from Southern England, with smaller waves coming from Scotland and Ireland (see Britain 2008 for a survey of this evidence). The dialectological evidence, from a series of surveys that were investigating the dialects of speakers born at roughly the same time as those migrating to New Zealand (Ellis 1889; Wright 1905; Kurath and Lowman 1970) showed that the overwhelmingly dominant forms used in Southern England (and Ireland) were [ɛu - ɛə] and [ɔu]. [au] was barely reported at all in the south of England, except as one of a number of variants in London, and the variant used in the far west of Cornwall in the English South-West. Kurath and Lowman’s description of the pattern of MOUTH use in southern England neatly summarises what was found by all of the relevant dialectological surveys of the time: “in most of the eastern counties … the reflex of M(iddle) E(nGLISH) ū is a diphthong starting in mid-front or lowered mid-front position and gliding up toward [ʊ]. In the central counties this [ɛu - ɛu - æə] is universal. In Norfolk and … the western counties ME ū has yielded [ɔu] … it is noteworthy that the Standard British English type [au] does not occur in the folk speech of the section of England dealt with here” (Kurath and Lowman 1970: 5). I have argued (Britain 2008) that, given the dominance of mid-open front forms in the British dialects spoken in those areas that dominated migration to New Zealand, the present NZE realisation of [ɛu - ɛə - ɛ:] has focussed as a result of it being in the majority in the early NZE dialect mix and the consequent levelling away of other minority variants over time. This account allows for researchers finding some other variants in the early NZE variant pool, but takes seriously the demographic and dialectological facts which clearly dismiss a raising from [aʊ] as a viable course of contemporary [ɛu - ɛə - ɛ:]. If we return to our cake baking analogies once more, then here we could say that we know what the cake tastes like, but it seems that some people have assumed the wrong ingredients and followed the wrong recipe.

Another issue that arises from the development of /au/ are the language ideological questions that surround the ‘stigmatisation’ of [ɛu - ɛə - ɛ:]. Early sociolinguistic accounts of linguistic change have relied quite heavily on people’s language behaviour being influenced often strongly by the ways in which dialect forms are evaluated vis à vis the standard. Forms which are non-standard, dominant in conversational speech, but perhaps used less when performing formal oral tasks such as reading a short story aloud or a list of minimal pairs, and forms which raise comment from ‘language guardians’ are often labelled as ‘stigmatised’. ‘Stigma’ is defined by the New Oxford Dictionary of English as “a mark of disgrace associated
with a particular circumstance, quality or person” (Pearsall 1998: 1826). I would argue that this term is overused in sociolinguistics – the juxtaposition of, on the one hand, the considerable, routine and systematic use of a feature by millions of speakers and its being, on the other, “a mark of disgrace” seems, to me at least, to be untenable. ‘Stigma’ in some forms of sociolinguistics seems actually to mean something like ‘not adhering to formal normative ideologies about ‘correct’ language use’. In the contemporary Western world, many of these ideologies are diffused and transmitted via institutions such as the media, the education system and public administration. But this then leads us back to question the nature of linguistic ideologies at the time of the dialect contact. We cannot assume that these same conditions held then as hold today. As detailed in Britain (2005), for example, language ideologies were likely to have been considerably different 150 years ago among the early Anglophone settlers in New Zealand.

- In mid-19th century Britain, the time of significant migration to New Zealand, there was no compulsory education. Consequently there was no universal institutional medium for the vast majority of children to be indoctrinated with the ideology of the standard language, and no formalized locale where children were brought together for that purpose;
- Literacy levels were very much lower than today – Cipolla (1969) highlights that almost a third of bridegrooms and almost half of all brides in Britain were unable to sign their names in the register on their wedding day; Belich (1997: 393) puts the illiteracy rate in New Zealand in 1858 at 25%;
- Daily life for many people in mid-19th century New Zealand revolved around survival. The departure of millions in search of a better life in North America and the Southern Hemisphere was triggered by the extremely poor living conditions in 19th century Britain. Food and shelter were more important concerns than whether they pronounced /au/ ‘correctly’. Physical not academic toil was most certainly the priority of the vast majority;
- 19th century New Zealand society was less class-orientated and less deferent than the society the migrants had escaped from. As Belich argues, many, in moving to New Zealand, engaged in ‘custom shedding’: “For European settlers migration was a chance to select cultural baggage – to discard as well as take. Highly overt class differences … excessive deference towards the upper classes and customs that publicly implied subordination were leading candidates for the discard pile” (Belich 1997: 330).
I do not want, of course, to argue that 19th century migrants did not have language ideologies, but simply that without a standard indoctrination, evaluations of language would likely have been much more locally grounded: local versus non-local, young versus old, this village versus the one over the hill rather than ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘standard’ or ‘non-standard’ (Britain 2005). We cannot assume that the vast majority of the population ‘stigmatised’ non-standard /au/ in New Zealand, even if School Inspectors there did (Gordon 1983). We must, therefore, understand the social, cultural and ideological ecologies of the community at the time of the new dialect formation, and not simply transpose 21st century ideologies to 19th century contexts.

Another problematic example of new dialect formation comes from the emergence of a Taiwanese variety of Mandarin. A significant Mandarin speaking community only developed on Taiwan after the flight to the island of Chinese Nationalists pushed out of Mainland China by Mao’s Communists in the late 1940s after the Chinese Civil War. When the Nationalists arrived, they found a population that spoke either an indigenous language or one of a number of Chinese languages, but very few speakers of Mandarin, the dominant Chinese language on the Mainland. The numerically most important language spoken in Taiwan was Southern Min, spoken by around three-quarters of the population. The new Nationalist rulers from the Mainland were mostly Mandarin speaking and imposed their language as the language of education. Over time, a Taiwanese variety of Mandarin emerged. The previous literature on Taiwanese Mandarin suggested strongly that this new variety was different from Standard Beijing Mandarin because of the second language acquisition failure of the Southern Min speaking population – in essence, that Taiwanese Mandarin was a result of the inability of the Taiwanese to learn Mandarin accurately. Earlier researchers pointed to the fact, for example, that whilst Standard Beijing Mandarin had four retroflex consonants in its inventory, Southern Min had none, and so, when learning Mandarin, the Southern Min speakers merged the retroflexes with corresponding non-retroflex sounds, and diffused these non-retroflex consonants to the population at large, including to the children of original mainlanders (see Kuo 2005 for a long review of the claims to this effect). Through a very careful analysis both of the structure of Chinese dialects in the middle of the 20th century, and census information on the regional origins of the migrant mainlander population, Yun-Hsuan Kuo (2005) demonstrated that whilst retroflexes were common in central Beijing, they were rarely found elsewhere in China, and were almost entirely absent in those areas from which the mid-20th century migrants to Taiwan had originated. The merger of retroflex and non-retroflex, proposed by earlier researchers,
seems untenable given that retroflex consonants were barely used at all by
the Mandarin speaking population of Taiwan, let alone the Southern Min
speakers. In Taiwan, there were simply no retroflexes to merge with. Kuo
(2005) argued, reviewing the evidence, that the lack of retroflexes (and
other features of Standard Beijing Mandarin) in Taiwanese Mandarin was a
simple result of them not having been brought to Taiwan in sufficient num-
bers in the first place, and the few that were brought, being highly marked,
were swiftly levelled away. Once again, the arguments circulate around the
recipe and the ingredients and not the cake itself. We know what the cake
tastes like, but, here at least, and in the New Zealand English case, there are
disputes over what went in it, and how it was baked.

Central to these disputes about new dialect formation, clearly, are the re-
lationships between the dialects of the ‘donor’ community and those stud-
ied, usually later, in the new dialect community. These arguments have
prompted scholars to examine diaspora dialect formation in two distinct
ways. Some (e.g. Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001; Tagliamonte 2002) have
argued that in order to establish firm and direct connections between donor
and recipient communities we need to not only find the same features in
both, but also to ascertain that each feature is embedded in the grammar in
the same way, with the same grammatical and other linguistic constraints
on variation. This has led them to examine relatively isolated rural dialects
of England, Scotland and Ireland, and compare variation there with similarly
isolated, long-standing communities in North America. If the linguistic
constraints on variation operate in the same way in both locations, then a
firm link can be established. A good deal of the early work in this vein was
carried out in order to demonstrate that many characteristics of African
American Vernacular English did in fact have their roots in British non-
standard dialects.

Dialect contact approaches have recognised that these very strict condi-
tions for a link are rarely if ever sustainable, given the social and geograph-
ical mobilities of speakers once arrived in the new speech community, and
the linguistic consequences of accommodation between mobile speakers
who come into contact. Belich, commenting on New Zealand, highlighted
just how mobile speakers were 150 years ago – between half and three-
quarters of all households in the mid-nineteenth century were gone ten or
fifteen years later (1997: 414). Expecting pure and untainted transmission
from donor to recipient variety in contexts of high mobility is perhaps a too
strict condition to set in such circumstances. Contact approaches, assuming
koineization and convergence, set somewhat looser linguistic criteria for
demonstrating a connection between potential donor and recipient, but do
place more importance on careful demonstrations of demographic relationships.

Another criticism of the methodological approaches of new dialect formation research is that all of the work has been posthoc – the new dialect has emerged, a century or more has passed, and then we reflect on how that dialect emerged all those years ago. Useful, it was argued, would be to examine new dialect formation in progress. Kerswill and Williams attempted this in their study of Milton Keynes in south-east England (e.g. 2000). Milton Keynes is a New Town, ‘created’ in the late 1960s from the merger and extraordinary expansion of a few small villages into a city of over 200,000 people. They studied children, native to the new community, contrasting them with their primary caregivers, not native. They were able to demonstrate elements of koineization in progress, but many of the features emerging in the new dialect were also emerging in many similar communities of the south-east of England, especially those which, like Milton Keynes, had seen high levels of mobility and transience. Distinguishing, then, between what was happening as a result of new dialect formation in light of the clash of dialects in the new city (which, perhaps unfortunately, were predominantly South-Eastern dialects anyway) and what was happening because of everyday routine mundane mobility in the south-east of England (see Britain in press) generally, was extremely difficult. Here, then, we can see that the cake baking analogy breaks down – in this case we know the ingredients pretty well, we know the recipe from earlier studies of dialect contact, but we cannot be entirely sure when the cake is ready to take out of the oven – in fact, of course, all such cakes carry on baking, with new ingredients added all the time (and some already added ingredients removed). New dialects are variably affected by ongoing social mobility that characterizes the broader regional context in which they have developed. Ideal conditions for witnessing ‘pure’ new dialect formation would, of course, be a mixture of donor dialects arriving in a new community with no indigenous or local population and no subsequent contact with the donor or any other community for a few hundred years. Unlikely, of course. Many of the new dialects studied in the literature emerged in the context of ongoing contact with the donor variety, as well as contact with local languages – Maori in New Zealand, Aboriginal languages in Australia, Native American languages in the Americas, etc. Schreier’s (2003) research on Tristan da Cunha, a small anglophone community in the South Atlantic, did present a community that had been largely isolated for many decades since first settlement (enabling a highly distinctive variety to emerge), but he was also able to demonstrate the linguistic consequences of the recent increasing contact Tristanians were having with non-island varieties. One community
in which migrants were not faced with the presence of a pre-existing local language was the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic, but here the population has been rather turbulent and mobile over the 180 years since first settlement (Britain and Sudbury 2010; Sudbury 2000).

2.4. Supralocalization and innovation diffusion

More recently in the dialect contact paradigm, researchers have highlighted how, as a result of everyday mundane mobilities, such as short-distance housemoves, commuting, the geographical consequences of increases in tertiary-sector education and economic development and in consumption mobilities, locally specific dialect forms are losing ground to forms found across a wider geographical area (see Britain 2010; in press). One example of this is the rise and rise in England of the glottal stop as a variant of /t/, so 'butter' [bʌʔə], 'cut' [kʌʔ]. Milroy, Milroy and Hartley (1994), for example, demonstrated how in Newcastle in the North-East of England, local [t?] variants of /t/ were gradually being replaced by the nationally spreading glottal stop [ʔ]. In tandem with this, scholars have noted the increasing tendency for certain dialect forms to diffuse extremely rapidly, both across individual countries and even beyond. In the British context, one such dialect form that has spread rapidly in the last half century is the fronting of /θ/ and non-initial /ð/ to [f v] respectively (e.g. 'think' [fɪŋk], 'mother' [mʌvə]. Kerswill (2003) charts how this feature was largely confined to London and Bristol before 1950, but has reached many parts of England and Scotland since. Many studies of individual locations around the country have examined it and shown it to be on the increase.

Methodologically, though, identifying innovation diffusion and supralocalization are not as straightforward as they might first appear. Crucial to many of these problems is the identification, once again, of the donor variety. Let’s take innovation diffusion first. Too frequently argued in studies of innovation diffusion in the British Isles is the following:

a) Large influential city A has as a dialect feature X;
b) A study of City B, possibly 200 or 300km away from A, finds X as an incoming innovation;
c) Conclusion: X comes from A.

Such has been the implicit assumption in a good deal of the work on innovation diffusion. In some cases, it may be true, and such validations appear more robust if we can establish the direct demographic connection that we
sought in the new dialect formation research above. What tends to be forgotten is that if city B is adopting feature X, then cities M, N, O, P etc may also be doing so or may have already done so. Thereby, the origins of variant X in city B may possibly be more accountable through contact with M, N, O and/or P than contact with A. Innovations may rather rarely be adopted as a result of contact with the original source of that innovation, rather than due to more direct and sustained contact with much more recent and nearby adopters. The adoption of a number of linguistic innovations by residents of many cities across the British Isles has been blamed on the influence of London, even though direct contact between London and these cities is demographically limited.

Identifying the source dialect is even more problematic in the case of studies of supralocalization. Supralocalization assumes that one variant of a variable emerges as victor at the expense of other locally restricted ones, presumably because at the time of the mobility it was more widespread than the others. Again, as with much new dialect formation research, what we witness is the emerging dominance of one variant without being sure where that variant came from. It is consequently more difficult to ascertain how it succeeded. Similarly, supralocalization assumes that a feature becomes dominant in several places, across, for example, a whole region. Identifying the multilocality emergence of one feature at the expense of possibly a number of different others is difficult for practical reasons – it is rarely feasible to collect similarly robust datasets from enough locations within the supralocal domain to be able to securely demonstrate the emergence of the same feature (with the same linguistic constraints on its appearance) in many places at a similar time. The ubiquity of the glottal stop demonstrates this very issue. It is found in many different parts of England, but seems to be subject to slightly different linguistic constraints in each. In some places it is blocked in turn-final positions, in others it is even possible in syllable initial positions if the /t/ occurs in an unstressed syllable (e.g. ‘go tomorrow’ [ɡəʊʔɔmərə]). So are we dealing with the same supralocal feature? Or a supralocal feature which has ‘indigenised’ slightly differently in each place of occurrence? Or should we not see these different manifestations of the glottal stop as related at all? Some multilocality studies even in the same area have found similar problems. Przedlacka (2002) investigated the possible emergence of a supralocal variety of English in the south-east of England, and examined four locations north, south, east and west of, but not far from, London. She found statistically significant differences between the four locations for most of the variables she studied suggesting that this area was certainly not yet supralocalized, but that, perhaps, similar trends were underway at different speeds and intensities in the dif-
ferent locations. Hard and fast evidence of supralocalization has, in fact, been extremely difficult to pin down securely. It has been theorized extensively within the dialect contact literature, but not yet sufficiently and robustly evidenced. In this case we have a number of different cakes that have been baked, all in the same kitchen, all with (presumably, though we don’t know for sure) slightly different ingredients, and according to an unsure recipe. We assume they all taste similarly, but we have only been allowed to try one or two, so we do not know for sure. Despite these culinary problems, however, we have already written the cookbook about these cakes.

3. Conclusion: A long way to the cookbook?

This paper has attempted to overview some methodological issues surrounding the practical study of dialect contact in its various forms. Despite the maturity of the discipline now, methodological questions and difficulties remain. In many cases, these difficulties relate to the identification of the ingredients of the dialect contact, not only when the contact took place hundreds of years ago, with our limited understanding of how migrants spoke at the time of migration or indeed where they came from, but also in the case of present-day examples of contact, driven by rather mundane, but incredibly intensive, turbulent contemporary mobilities. In other cases, difficulties arise because of the interference of what appear to be standard ideologies in our theorization of change. As we saw earlier, for whatever reason, New Zealand English and Taiwanese Mandarin were assumed to have changed simply because they were different from Standard English and Standard Mandarin respectively, even though these standard varieties were insignificantly represented among the founders of the two communities. And in some cases, it is quite simply the nature of social life – mobile, unpredictable, individual – which impedes a clear view of the consequences of contact. Neat, tidy samples of speakers are simply not compatible with the reality of human mobility. The new dialect recipe is, thanks to 25 years of research since *Dialects in Contact*, becoming clearer, but it is still important for us to put painstaking effort in to understand what the correct ingredients are if we want to learn how that cake was baked. As time goes on, we will perhaps have kept better records of those ingredients than are available to dialect contact cake eaters today.
Notes

1. I would like to thank the editors for their useful comments on an earlier version of this paper – they have certainly made it a much more readable paper, or perhaps I should say a much more edible cake…

2. “Simple rules are automatic processes that admit no exceptions. Complex rules have opaque outputs, that is, they have exceptions or variant forms, or – a type of complexity that comes up especially in dialect acquisition, as we will see below – they have in their output a new or additional phoneme” (Chambers 1992: 682). Chambers suggests, for example, that the eradication of Canadian flapped /ɾ/ in favour of [t] is a simple rule: wherever [ɾ] occurs it can appropriately and accurately be converted to [t]. Unlike the English of Southern England, Canadian English lacks, however, a distinction between the vowels in COT and CAUGHT, BOBBLE and BAUBLE (Canadian [ɑ], Southern England [o] – [ɔ:] respectively): acquiring this phonologically ungoverned distinction represents a complex rule, because speakers have to learn which vowel should be used for each lexical item.

3. Although published in 1970, the data for this survey were collected in 1930.

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