The Cockney Accent

How an Accent Can Represent Social Identity

English, 15 credits

Halmstad 2020-02-11
Lovisa Moberg-Berlin
Abstract
The purpose of this study is to examine how an accent can represent social identity in London and beyond, as well as to uncover the distinctive phonological and lexical characteristics of the Cockney accent. The study will also focus on its sociolinguistic status, such as the intelligible for non-native speakers and the prejudices which are associated with the accent and its correlation to social class. The primary research is conducted with the help of seven interviews with native Swedish speakers to acquire their understanding of Cockney accent. The main findings of the study are that most participants had prejudices against Cockney accent, as well as other accents. All of the participants associated Cockney accent with lower class or working class people. However, there was a contrast between the younger interviewees and the older interviewees in the way they associate accents to certain social groups.

Keywords
Sociolinguistics, language, accents, dialects, Cockney, social class, slang.
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1. Introduction

Cockney English is one of the most commonly known British accents and can be considered as the working-class speech of London. This essay will consider the features of the Cockney accent in terms of its phonology, word choices and its idioms, including Cockney Rhyming Slang. It will then focus on its sociolinguistic status, how intelligible it is to non-native speakers, specifically Swedish people and the prejudices which are associated with it, i.e. the overt and covert prestige, and its relation to social class. Cockney is of particular importance because it is a variety of British English which is likely to be encountered by foreign visitors to the British capital, and also because of its prevalence in British media, including movies and TV dramas.

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the distinctive phonological and lexical characteristics of the Cockney accent?
2. How does the accent represent social identity in London and beyond?

1.1 Structure

The chapter following this Introduction will be the Theoretical Background, which includes background on sociolinguistics with focus on features such as accents and dialects. It will begin by examining the nature and use of slang terms using linguistic studies, primarily from authoritative textbooks. It will then focus on Cockney English, its historical antecedents, geographic and social extent, its phonological characteristics and the sociolinguistic aspects, especially in terms of community identity, and overt and covert prestige. Next, the methodology for the study is presented which explains how this research has been conducted, relating the process involved in interviews and data collection. The interviews, in their completed form, can be found in the Appendix. Chapter 4 comprises the Results and Analysis chapter, and this includes the results in the form of selected and relevant quotes from the interviews and an analysis of the answers. Following this, chapter 5 serves as the Discussion element of the essay and will explore the sociolinguistic implications of the study. The Conclusion is the sixth chapter, and it provides a brief summary of the essay and a recommendation for future research.
2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter, the theoretical background will be presented with sociolinguistics as the first point and then the historical, geographical and phonological aspects of the Cockney accent will be explored in this research. First, however, this chapter will consider the scope of sociolinguistics, and how it seeks to explain the emergence and use of slang in a language.

2.1 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a field within linguistics that is concerned with language as a social phenomenon, and which uses different linguistic forms. Another significant perspective of the sociolinguistic field is the mechanisms behind language variation and change (Ottesen Nodtvedt, 2011, p.12). Van Herk (2012, p.2) states that sociolinguistics is “the scientific study of the relationship(s) between language and society.” Sociolinguists may, for example, study how the language of one community differs from another speech community, meaning the way language is used. Guy (2013, p.64) claims that language includes “a cluster of linguistic properties occurring together in the collective usage of a speech community”. Regional dialects can be seen in a similar way, due to the fact that they are “typically identifiable by the simultaneous occurrence of lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic characteristics” [ibid]. Two important aspects of sociolinguistics are the function of language in establishing and reinforcing social relationships and the significance of language in conveying information about the speaker. These features indicate the existence of a close inter-relationship between language and society. Speakers consciously or unwittingly disclose information about themselves, including their social and geographical backgrounds, through their use of language. There are different variants of many languages, and these are referred to as “dialects”. Trudgill (2000, p.2) and Mooney et al. (2019, pp.256-266) agree that dialects can be geographically related, and these are recognised as regional dialects, or they can relate to social class, i.e. social dialects, or some other aspect of identity. It is also suggested that dialect can be used to describe the individuality of language, the ‘idiolect’ (Trousdale, 2010, p.5). Another important feature of language is the accent. Mooney and Evans (2019, p.265) describe accents as a “set of features which characterise a speaker’s language”. Accent relates to the pronunciation of words. The key difference between accent and dialect is that accent is exclusively related to the phonological production of language, whereas dialect also includes for example lexical and syntactic features.
Received Pronunciation (RP) is the accent connected to overt prestige and can at times be adopted by a person with working class accent to cover the original accent that is not as accepted. The converse of overt prestige is covert prestige, and this is often linked to working class speech and is not regarded as being as socially acceptable outside of the context of the class that uses it (Kopřivová, 2018, p.16). Certain higher social classes and accents are deemed as higher status or more correct than those lower-class forms. Language and social structure go hand-in-hand, and different accents and dialects are valued in different ways. Standard English (SE) has a higher status and prestige than other English dialects (Kopřivová, 2018, p.17). For accents, the highest prestige accent is the RP [ibid.]. RP is aligned with overt prestige and, therefore, conventionally considered to be the correct way of speaking, as well as being the ‘beautiful’ accent (Trudgill, 2000, p.8). The covert prestige varieties are often regarded as inferior and less beautiful [ibid]. A higher social class speaker can adopt the Cockney accent in the same way a working-class speaker can adopt the RP accent. “Mockney” is a term used to describe a speech affection which is adopted by individuals who would not otherwise speak with a Cockney accent, either because they are not from the relevant area of London, or because they derive from or have achieved a higher social class and would more naturally use RP. Mockney is used to convey the impression that the speaker identifies with the working class of London. This may be done in order to show “street credibility” when dealing with actual working-class people, or to make a political statement (Hernández et. al, 2009, p.207). RP speakers conceal their origins or indulge in verbal play [ibid].

Sociolect denotes the variety of language associated with a particular social group, for example working class or middle-class speech, RP and Cockney. Guy (2013, p.63) states that “in their own behavior speakers manipulate their use of sociolinguistic variables for stylistic ends.” For example, using more prestige variants usually indicates a more careful speaking style. During 1966, the American linguist William Labov conducted research to establish what links existed between social stratification and the speech styles of New Yorkers. His study highlights five main socially stratified phonological variables: coda /r/ presence or absence, raising of the nucleus of /æ/ and /oh/, and affrication and/or stopping of the interdental fricatives (TH, DH). For example, working class speakers should use reasonably high rates of /r/ vocalization, raising of /æ/ and /oh/, and (TH, DH) strengthening (Guy, 2013, p.64). The three department stores are used in Labov’s experiment to represent all the different social classes; Saks represented the upper middle class, Macy’s the lower middle
class, and S.Klein the working class. Labov asked employees about items on the fourth floor to hear their pronunciation of the words “fourth floor”. The experiment showed that sales clerks from Saks used rhotic /r/ most, which revealed that the overt prestige form in New York favoured rhoticity. The employees from Klein’s used it the least out of the three stores. Macy’s clerks pronounced “floor” with a constricted /r/ when asked to repeat the answer. Labov concluded that “the more careful the speech, the more likely the /r/ was to be pronounced.”. The increased use of /r/ in careful speech was most commonly used among the lower middle class, which is likely due to how employees were aware of prestige forms (Mather, 2011, p.2). The variants that were favoured by higher status speakers are also preferred by all speakers for careful speech styles. Each of these variables proves correlations with class and speech style, hence it can be expected that they correlate with each other. Therefore, sociolect would be characterised by a group of variables (Guy, 2013, p.64). The development of social varieties can result from social barriers and social distance. The distribution of linguistic features through society can be obstructed or inhibited through the presence of barriers of social class, age, race, religion or other aspects. Social distance can have the same impact as the geographical distance (Trudgill, 2000, p.24).

2.2 Cockney Accent

Cockney is a term for the people, and the dialect of English spoken by them, in the traditional East End of London. This term was customarily applied to Londoners who were born within the sound of the Bow Bells\(^1\) and will sometimes be defined as the traditional working-class London speech (Ottesen Nodtvedt, 2011, pp.2-3). Fox (cited in Ottesen Nodtvedt, 2011, p.4) suggests that “the Cockney accent has spread further out from the traditional East End due to massive population shifting of many white working-class Anglos” and that the traditional East End has experienced massive social changes. Fox (2011) gives three reasons for this, namely:

(a) After the Second World War, England began a ‘slum-clearance’ programme; there was a lack of housing in the East End and some of its original inhabitants were moved to areas further away. As a result, in 1981 the population in the East End decreased to nearly a quarter of what it has been before the war. Since then, the population has steadily started to expand again, but with major social changes.

\(^1\) Bow Bells of St Mary-le-Bow church in Cheapside in east central London.
(b) In the 70s, the docks in Tower Hamlets shut down, which caused a high 
unemployment among the dock workers who then had to seek work elsewhere. Many 
of the workers moved to Tilbury to continue working as dock workers and in 1981 the 
government sought to remedy the gradual demise of the dock industry in East 
London, and the Dockland Development Corporation was established. This helped the 
area to prosper, along with the development of the Canary Wharf on the Isle of Dogs, 
a new financial centre was created. Due to the emergence of the new financial centre, 
new housing developments were being established in the area, which attracted a 
middle-class community, rather than the traditional working class commonly 
associated with the area.

(c) London, and especially the East End, has for a long time been the arrival point of 
immigrants, a process which began in the 17th century. The growing population in the 
East End from 1981 was largely a result to Bangladeshi immigrants. 
Considering these social changes, it is reasonable to assume that these developments are not 
the only changes in this area, and there are likely linguistic changes as well. Therefore, the 
Cockney accent can no longer simply be considered as confined within the area mentioned. 
The Cockney accent may now be considered as the working-class speech of London, by 
acknowledging that it refers to social class as much as it relates to a manner of speech 
(Ottesen Nodtvedt, 2011, p.5) and may be regarded as both a regional accent and a sociolect 
simultaneously.

There have been few linguistic mechanisms that systematically produce slang, but arguably 
the best-known of these is perhaps the variant known as “Cockney Rhyming Slang”. 
Rhyming slang is a type of wordplay that originated in London during the mid-nineteenth-
century in which words are replaced by a rhyming phrase. Although it is referred to as 
rhyming slang, it is not always slang in the strict sense because certain terms are widely used 
colloquialisms. An example of this is raspberry (tart) “fart: a noise made by blowing with the 
tongue sticking out” (Coleman, 2014, p.46). Green (2002) states that “rhyming slang, 
essentially a Cockney phenomenon, however widely it may have spread, is strictly a London 
dialect; but because London, once again, is so important, geography has ensured that this 
Cockney patois has become part of mainstream slang.”.
The study will use extracts of the film *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) because the film includes a substantial number of Cockney Rhyming Slang examples and the strong use of Cockney accent. The table below - shows some of these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cockney Rhyming Slang</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roger → Roger Mellie</td>
<td>Telly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron rusted</td>
<td>Busted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle cruiser</td>
<td>Boozer → pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custard → custard &amp; jelly</td>
<td>Telly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North → north &amp; south</td>
<td>Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liza → Liza Minnelli</td>
<td>Telly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jam rolls</td>
<td>Arseholes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristotle</td>
<td>Bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping pong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiddly wink</td>
<td>Drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear sub</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird’s nest</td>
<td>Chest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.2.1 Phonetics

Some of the characteristics for the Cockney accent are similar to RP, for example, /æ/ and /aː:/ are distributed as in RP, for example, *arm*, as well as /ɑː/ and /ʌ/ are present and distinguished between and /ʌ/ is realised as [a]. Contrary to RP, the final vowel of for example *city*, is /i/ rather than /ɪ/. /a/ is realised as [ɛ] or as diphthong [ei]. /h/ is almost always absent, and if it is present it is likely to be in a stressed position, for example *happened*. A common feature of the Cockney accent is the glottal stop, [ʔ]. This occurs in the same situations as it does in RP, but it can also be found accompanying /p/ between vowels for example in words such as *paper* and representing /t/ between vowels and before a pause.

Additionally, the contrast between /θ/ and /f/ is lost through a process known as (th)-fronting, which collapses the distinction between labio dental and dental fricatives, for words such as *thanks*. The contrast between /ð/ and /v/ is also commonly lost and originally, for words such as *bath*, /d/ or zero is more commonly heard for /ð/. When /ɔː:/ is final, it is realised as the vowel of *pore* in some RP speech; however, if /ɔː:/ is non-final, its realisation is closer [o:]. A distinction between pairs of words is made, for instance in: *paws* [pɔəz] and *pause* [poːz].

This distinction is made on the basis of the presence or absence of a morpheme boundary. For when plural, third person singular and genitive -s is added to a word-final /ɔː/, [ɔə] is still used. The process of /l/ vocalisation is when the /l/ occurs after a vowel or before a consonant in the same syllable, for example in words as *milk* and *well*, and is realised as a vowel, such as mɪʊk and wɛʊ, and is often found in Cockney accent (Hughes, Trudgill, Watt, 2012).
As can be heard in the quote from the movie *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) “If you can't see value here today you're not up here shopping, you're up here shoplifting. (...) I took a bag home last night”. The speaker does not use the /h/ sound for words such as *here* and *home*, which is commonly deleted by Cockney speakers. “Anyone like jewelry?” Here the /l/ appears after a vowel, which means it is pronounced more like a /w/. “They call it walking.” Instead of the /ŋ/ at the end of the word, Cockney users replace it with /n/. “It's a lot more fun.” For words such as *fun*, the vowel’s position is more frontal in Cockney accent. The (th)-fronting is a common feature and for words like *think*, they are pronounced more with a /θ/ sound as in the sentence “Don't think 'cos it's sealed up it's an empty box.”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Standard English</th>
<th>Cockney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Here</td>
<td>hɪər</td>
<td>‘ɪər</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>dʒuːl·ri</td>
<td>dʒuw·ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>həʊm</td>
<td>‘ʊm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>wɔː.kɪŋ</td>
<td>wɔː.kɪn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>fʌn</td>
<td>fn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think</td>
<td>əθɪŋk</td>
<td>fnk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Prejudices Against Accents

Hogenboom (2018) states that “accents can be subject to subtle forms of prejudice”. For many years, RP was the only accepted accent used by presenters and newsreaders on the BBC because it was considered to be the language of elites, power and royalty and was commonly referred to as “the Queen’s English”. Accents can reveal information about social backgrounds which can, in some cases, affect the perception of the speaker, and hearers may be tempted to judge others based on accents. RP English has been claimed to sound posh and powerful (Hogenboom, 2018), whereas Cockney English is often faced with prejudice [ibid.]. The way people speak can play a part in how trustworthy other people view them. There are two main aspects of an accent being seen as trustworthy. Firstly, an accent represents part of identity and, secondly, the behaviour of the person speaking. In a poll from 2013, more than 4,000 people reported that they believed the most trustworthy accents are RP and Devon accents, whereas the two least trustworthy was Liverpudlian and Cockney accents [ibid.]. This trust in accents can change with time due to different social circles and relationships. It was found, however, that if a person with a trustworthy accent behaved in an untrustworthy manner, they were not viewed as a reliable person, more so than a person with an untrustworthy accent and behaviour (Hogenboom, 2018).
An accent or dialect may evoke a positive or negative reaction towards its listeners. A speaker’s accent can disclose ethnic, regional, or social recognition. Studies have shown that individuals who speak with a standard accent are considered to be higher status and further, a higher level of achievement in education (Carlson & McHenry, 2006, p.71). Accent discrimination encourages the establishment of mutually exclusive groups. The attribution of social characteristics as a method of speech reinforces and rationalises the differences between the self and others, whether it is a native or non-native accent. Consequently, it can cause social exclusion and stigmatisation. This could lead to a standard speaker perhaps classifying a non-standard speaker as part of an outgroup and the non-standard speaker may interpret this as a denial of their identity (Freynet & Clément, 2019, p.500). According to Bourdieu (in Jarness & Friedman, 2016, p.14), class structured lifestyle differences imply that the upper middle classes are hostile to working class people, and some may even go so far as avoid interactions with them.

2.4 What Is Slang

Adams (2009, p.vii) argues that English dictionaries’ definitions are so inconsistent with each other that it is complicated to discover what slang is, and therefore which terms they would classify as slang, by simply consulting dictionaries. The Cambridge Dictionary of American English (CDAE) defines slang as “very informal language that is usually spoken rather than written, used especially by particular groups of people”. Merriam-Webster (MW) has two definitions of it as 1. “language peculiar to a particular group: such as a: argot, b: jargon” and 2. “An informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech”. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionaries (OALD) defines slang as “very informal words and expressions that are more common in spoken language, especially used by a particular group of people, for example, children, criminals, soldiers, etc.”. Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s dictionary (2018) defines slang as consisting “of words, expressions, and meanings that are informal and are used by people who know each other well or have the same interests”, whereas the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014) defines it as “very informal, sometimes offensive language that is used especially by people who belong to a particular group, such as young people or criminals”. Although these definitions are to some extent different, there is some consistency among them. All five dictionaries agree that slang is informal and that it is used...
by specific groups of people. Some of the definitions state that slang is more commonly used in speech. The incompatibility of these definitions supports Adams’ statement that dictionaries are inconsistent with one another. However, all of these definitions agree that slang is an in-group language, which means that “the use of which designates who belongs to a group and who does not” (Adams, 2009, p.8).

Dictionaries define slang by identifying the social, aesthetic, and linguistic characteristics that differentiate slang from other languages (Adams, 2009, p.7). The Oxford English Dictionary provides five definitions for slang that refer to language use; four of these are nouns, one is a verb, and one an adjective, also used as an adverb. The OED definition that is the closest to the meaning of slang for the purpose of this essay is “language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense.” However, to understand this definition, it is necessary to consider what is meant with ‘standard’ and ‘colloquial’. SE is the variety schools use to teach children how to write because it is the most prestigious form. It also used to be the variety used in books and newspapers but, in the 21st century, more writers have adopted an increasingly informal tone. Most English speakers do not use SE in their everyday conversations (Coleman, 2014, p.12). It is natural to alter the language according to the circumstances and the people using it. This way of speaking in more of a relaxed and normal speech is colloquial. Therefore, slang is assumed to be ‘highly colloquial’ in terms of that it is further away from SE than colloquial language (Coleman, 2014, p.11-13).

According to Eble (1996, as cited in Holmsgaard Eriksen, 2010) “slang is an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness in society at large”. Coleman (2014, p.13) states that “slang isn’t a register: slang is a label for individual uses of individual terms which are inserted into the appropriate slots in standard or colloquial English sentences.” Slang words are commonly used according to the morphological and grammatical rules of the English language. Most English slang plurals have regular inflections, for example, they are formed by adding an -s, and most past tenses slang terms follow the grammatical rules by adding an -ed. The slang word is still in the same position in the sentence as their SE equivalents would be (Coleman, 2014, p.13). Coleman (2014, p.14) suggests that “some writers insist that a Standard English equivalent must exist before a term can be labelled as slang”. This stipulation means that slang is based
in the rejection of a formal alternative, and this is supported by the fact that authors and
dictionary-makers did not call attention to the topic of slang until the eighteenth century. It
was during the eighteenth century that written English became established in similar form as
those used in the early twenty-first century. However, slang users speak about specific topics
in such a highly detailed way that SE cannot possibly provide all of the necessary synonyms
[ibid].

The usual outcome for slang terms that are continually and universally used is that they
eventually become adopted in the standard language (Coleman, 2014, p.14). As an example
of this, the word *tip*, as it refers to a small amount of additional money given to someone such
as a waiter or a taxi driver (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2014), used to be
slang when it was first used in this way. The term *snob*, which today hold a definition of 1.
“Someone who thinks they are better than people from a lower social class - used to show
disapproval” and 2. “Someone who thinks they are better than other people because they
know more about something - used to show disapproval” (Longman Dictionary of
Contemporary English, 2014), developed from the meaning “a social climber”, which was the
definition during the period spanning 1848-1882, which in turn developed from the sense “a
vulgar or ostentatious person” (1838-1859) or “a lower-class person” (1831-1852). The
earliest use of *snob* was as defined “a townsman” during 1796-1865, as well as “a shoemaker;
a shoemaker’s apprentice” (1781-1896). All of these definitions were regarded as slang, but
the present sense of *snob* is colloquial. Some terms maintain their slang status for long
periods of time. For example, the term *pig* has been used with reference to police officers
since the beginning of the 18th century, yet it remains a slang term due to the fact that is has
argues that the OED definition of slang relates to language rather than words as it is relatively
unusual for a word to be found simply in slang. Numerous slang terms emerge from the
standard language. In SE it is common that words include one or more slang sense. For
instance, *wicked* is not seen as a slang when it is used with the definition “extremely bad;
evil”, though it is considered slang in the sense “extremely good; excellent”.

Slang terms change in meaning and status, and they may also have different meanings and
statuses at any moment. An issue with the fine line between a word being slang, colloquial
and standard, is that a slang term may not always be slang for everyone. In Britain, the term
*brilliant*, as a dead metaphor carrying the same meaning as excellent, may be perceived as
mildly colloquial, whereas that same usage would be considered outright slang in the United States. However, slang terms constantly go through change and terms that do not appear to be considered slang in 2019 might become part of colloquial English in a matter of years. Additionally, some slang terms become outdated by people who belong to a specific age group, rather than entering wider colloquial or standard use (Coleman, 2014, p.17). Therefore, a comparison between two age groups, for example between teenagers and adults, might show a difference in language use in terms of word choices and pronunciations. The younger group might use slang terms considerably more frequently than the older group would. Thus, slang occurs in cycles generationally (Mesthrie et al., 2009, p.117). However, Adams (2009, p.88) states that no matter if they are young or old, no matter their race or gender, or where they live, every speaker uses slang to some degree. Slang that is often associated with certain sections of society, such as young people or criminals, is more apparent than slang relating to other social groups.

Slang has been a feature across languages, cultures and periods of history. Each era has its own characteristics which can be distinguished with the use of specific slang terms. Slang has become more common and is more frequently used at the time of writing (Saliyeva, 2018, p.22). The role that slang plays in the 21st century has increased since earlier eras. As of 2018, an average 20-30% of native speaker’s speech contain slang terms. Saliyeva (2018, p.22) remarks that “slang is a very ancient phenomenon, extending back into the history of language almost as far as our records can reach.”.

Most slang terms are produced in similar ways to SE terms. Slang terms do not simply originate from English words; rather, some terms are borrowed from other languages. For example, the Spanish term medico when referring to “a doctor; a medical student” (Coleman, 2014, p.44). Furthermore, many slang terms derive from onomatopoeic words, such as zap, meaning to kill (with a gun) and yack, which means to chatter inconsequentially (Coleman, 2014, p.45). The mechanisms producing slang terms are typically the same as the mechanisms that produce SE words, but a comparison between the two might reveal some differences. Slang terms are more widely produced by abbreviation of several types, such as leg for legend, and more slang words have to be labelled ‘origin unknown’ than standard words. The difference between slang and SE is therefore not its form or its origins, but the context and use since slang terms cannot be regarded as slang in the true sense until speakers start using them (Coleman, 2014, pp.44-47).
Akmajian et al. (2001, p.303) state: “slang is something that everyone can recognize but no one can define.” A universally agreed and precise definition of slang is close to impossible to find; however, there are some key characteristics of this form of language. Slang is part of the informal types of language use. Traditionally, the term slang has carried a negative connotation because it is often regarded as a “low” or “coarse” form of language. It is also deemed to not fit formal styles of the language [ibid]. Another feature is that slang changes rapidly and slang terms can, therefore, disappear in a matter of years or as little as a few months. This change in usage is faster than other areas of the vocabulary of language [ibid.]. Slang is also an area of vocabulary which reflects a person’s age and is, according to Holmes (2001, p.167), a linguistic prerogative of young people, which signals membership of a particular group. One can speak of for instance teenage slang and criminal slang. In this regard, slang is akin to jargon and it serves as a mark of membership and solidarity within a specific group of people (Akmajian et. al., 2001, p.303). Argot, also known as “cant”, is a variety of language in which the speaker uses non-standard language terms to describe concepts and events, and the effect of using it is to deliberately hide the intention of the speaker. It can, therefore, be defined as a coded language (Holmsgaard Eriksen, 2010, p.23). Adams (2009, p.9) argues that argot’s “primary purpose is to deceive, to defraud, and to conceal”. Therefore, its purpose is different from the purpose of slang. Argot’s intended function is to deceive or give misinformation.

2.4.1 Tracing the Origins of a Word
To understand slang terms, it is also important to establish the time, origin and circumstances of their first use through etymological research. For instance, a scientific text from the seventeenth century could have possible Latin roots. This can be ascertained by checking that the form of the word matches the changes in pronunciation and spelling from the history of other words loaned from the same source language around the same time. For example, *tooth* can be found in texts from Old English, which is the language of the Anglo-Saxons. Old Frisian and Old Saxon were closely related to Old English. *Toth* or *tond* was the Old Frisian word for *tooth* and *tand* was the word in Old Saxon. Due to the similar forms in the languages, it can be assumed that Anglo-Saxon settlers most likely brought the word *tooth* with them when they arrived in Britain in the fifth century. The word *tooth* is also related to Latin *dentem* and French *dent*. The differences between *tooth* and *dent* agree with the patterns
of change seen in other words with similar histories (Coleman, 2014, p.26). A text-based approach to etymology works well with written words in use, but it is more complicated when it comes to slang terms. Historically, slang tended to be part of speech rather than writing. Thus, the earliest written example of the slang term might not exist until many years after its first spoken usage. Coleman (2014, p.28) also describes how a problem with a word simply being heard is that the people who use it have to guess the spelling of the term, which means the spelling might differ for different people. This could be a problem due to how spelling can provide helpful confirmation of the relationships of words. In SE, words can be found in a dictionary and with a generally accepted and authoritative orthography. However, this is not always a possibility with slang terms, as there is often some variation in the written form of slang terms before they become stabilized. Many slang terms originate from SE, which makes it possible to trace their development through closely related senses. For example, gay was in the beginning of the fourteenth century defined as “noble, beautiful, excellent”, whereas it later also defined as a slang for homosexual (Coleman, 2014, p.29).

Slang could be seen as the figurative, extended or narrowed use of SE terms. However, figurative applications of SE terms are not the only possible semantic development. Some slang words come from the disapproval of SE users, meaning that the standard meanings of terms could be the opposite in slang usage, and vice versa. For instance, the negative term “nasty” has been used to express enthusiastic approval (Coleman, 2014, p.31). A change in meaning of one word can sometimes generate changes in the meaning of associated words. Slang terms can also emerge from SE words with a different grammatical function. New words can be created by a process called “backformation”. This is the process of using a word formation rule to analyse a morphologically simple term as if it were a complex term in order to arrive at a new, simpler form by removing affixes. For example, the terms pedlar and beggar, which both existed before the verbs to peddle and to beg due to how speakers assumed that the end of both words comprised the agentive suffix -er. Speakers would, therefore, subtract the -er and receive a new verb (Akmajian et. al., 2001, p.41). Another example is the term emote, which means to display the emotions, that originate from the word emotion, a feeling (of pleasure, fear, etc.). A further possible way for words to arise is from proper nouns and this is called “eponymy”. Lalić (2004) defines an eponym as “(1) a lexeme derived from a personal name; (2) the name from which such a lexeme is derived; (3) the person whose name is thus used; (4) any proper noun that has become a common noun, esp. brand names.” An example of this in SE is sandwich which is claimed to be named after Earl
of Sandwich (Etymology dictionary). This can also be seen for brand names, such as Hoover, which has been the common term for vacuum cleaners for a long period of time, but the term derives from a brand name. It is also common for slang compounds and phrases to incorporate jokes and gratuitous insults, such as Dutch oven which referred to mouth because Dutch people were considered to be greedy eaters (Coleman, 2014, pp.34-35). Abbreviation of SE words offers another means by which slang terms arise. For example, the slang term sup is an abbreviation of “what’s up?” (Coleman, 2014, p.37). Slang terms can originate from coinage, also known as neologism. Coinage occurs when new words are created for new experiences, often with the purpose of naming a new concept. Many coinages originate as brand names, as for example Kleenex for all tissues, regardless of the brand or manufacturer (Cook, 2010).

2.4.2 Reasons to Use Slang

There are multiple reasons to use slang and Coleman (2014, p.107) listed 26 of them by dividing them into subunits. The first four reasons can be seen as using slang terms as substitutes for SE synonyms to:

1. Express their individuality
2. Express themselves more vividly than can be easily done in SE
3. Express emotion
4. Create humour

The next seven reasons could be to provide information about oneself and the interests and relationship between people by using slang terms rather than the counterpart in SE. This sort of slang usage can be seen as codes and hidden hierarchies, but slang terms can also show shared assumptions and implicit judgments which can establish a common ground:

5. Identify themselves as a member of a group
6. Fit in with the people around them
7. Test whether someone else is also a member of the group
8. Identify hierarchies within the group
9. Express shared attitudes and values
10. Imply or refer back to shared experience
11. Deny or distance emotion

Sometimes slang can drive speakers further apart, rather than drawing them closer and then slang is used to:
12. Communicate with deliberate ambiguity
13. Identify someone as not being a member of the group

Slang can be used as a way of fitting in and winning approval. Mixing of slang terms can often occur in a group of people who spend time together and by using each other’s slang. This is likely done to try to create a shared bond:

14. Try to win entry to the in-group
15. Exclude someone from membership of the group
16. Appear cool to people outside the group

It can also be used to demonstrate status and knowledge:

17. Reject someone else’s values or attitudes
18. Shock or offend
19. Rebel
20. Irritate
21. Communicate secretly

In addition, for moments such as during Facebook chats, slang can be used because:

22. It is easier in some way
23. Everyone else uses it
24. It has become a habit or mannerism
25. There is not a word that means the same thing in SE
26. Although there is a synonym in SE, the slang-user does not know it

### 2.4.3 Slang Transmission

Slang terms commonly become adopted by individuals within social settings. For instance, by spending time with people, a speaker is likely to pick up their slang terms or their way of speaking (Coleman, 2014, p.112). Sometimes, the original group will stop using certain slang terms either because they have replaced them with new terms, or else they drift away from a certain group. However, the slang term survives without them by word of mouth across interconnected social networks. The slang term can undergo a change in meaning and, if the meanings are close synonyms, they might coexist with or even replace the original. Slang is not simply transmitted through face-to-face interaction, but also through media such as printed text, movies, music and television and, increasingly commonly, via the internet. Therefore, slang transmits by social contact, media and the internet (Coleman, 2014, pp.112-116).
3. Methodology

This chapter will present the method for the interview-based study. The aim of the survey was to establish how non-native speakers interpret Cockney accent and their prejudices against accents. The interviews are based on a questionnaire that can be found in Appendix 1 along with the rest of the transcriptions of the interviews. The survey includes scenes from the film *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998).

Few would dispute that Swedish people generally have a relatively high level of competence in spoken English, although this may relate to RP when it comes to the United Kingdom. However, the working-class English associated with the capital of the United Kingdom, which is also a major international city and the financial hub of Europe and a hugely popular tourist destination for nationals from across the globe, may reasonably be considered to include a significant element of Cockney. In addition, many movies and TV shows viewed outside London, and the UK, are either set in London or they include a character with some level of Cockney accent. Thus, this study aims to assess how familiar Swedish people are with the accent in terms of recognising it, and being able to decipher what is being said.

The target of the survey was Swedish people who do not have English as a first language. Seven people participated in the study and all of the participants were native Swedish speakers between the ages 15-55, one of which has lived and worked in the United Kingdom. It was first established that all of the participants have sufficient comprehension of spoken English. The generalizability of the results is limited because the sample size is small and limited to Swedish people; however, the results are nonetheless valid for the aim of the research.

The study consisted of interviewees being shown two scenes from the movie *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) and then being asked to answer three multiple-choice questions, plus six more open, qualitative questions in which the interviewees were required to provide more detailed answers. This study was designed in such a way that there was a possibility to ask follow up questions where it was believed necessary to probe the answers given further. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete and notes were taken by the researcher during the interviews to register what had been said. The interviews were recorded with a recording device on a laptop. All interviews were conducted in English and the
answers were then transcribed and can be found in the Appendix. To ensure confidentiality, all of the interviewees’ names have been changed into fictional names to keep their identity hidden and to keep all answers anonymous and treated as confidential, and interviewees will, therefore, be referred to by pseudonyms. The participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research and agreed to it prior to the study.
4. Results and Analysis

This chapter will present the results and the analysis from the interviews with the help of quotes from the interviewees. The full transcriptions of the interviews can be found in the Appendix. The interviewees who agreed to participate in this study are as follows:

Interviewee 1 Anna: Female, age 21. Swedish national. She works as a personal assistant. She has never lived in an English-speaking country.

Interviewee 2 Mia: Female, age 52. Swedish national. She has a university degree and works as an accountant in southern Sweden. She has lived in the United Kingdom.

Interviewee 3 Jacob: Male, age 49. Swedish national. He has a university degree and works as an officer. He has never lived in an English-speaking country.

Interviewee 4 Jennie: Female, age 27. Swedish national. She is a university student. She has never lived in an English-speaking country.

Interviewee 5 Sara: Female, age 49. Swedish national. She has a university degree and works as a special pedagogue in southern Sweden. She has never lived in an English-speaking country.

Interviewee 6 Peter: Male, age 51. Swedish national. He has a university degree and works as a personal trainer. He has never lived in an English-speaking country.

Interviewee 7 Sofia: Female, age 18. Swedish national. She is an upper secondary school student. She has never lived in an English-speaking country.

Those participants who were familiar with Cockney accent prior to the study stated that they heard of it at pubs or football games in London. Mia expresses that it is “a common accent to hear when living in London and hanging out with people who were born there.” (Appendix 3).

The participants thought of the Cockney accent as lower class or working-class speech due to preconceptions and some of the interviewees associated it with criminality. The interviewee referred to as “Mia” expressed it thus:

Mia: “There are prejudices, especially if someone speaks with a thick dialect or accent, that will sometimes make you think they do not have a high education. I think that prejudice comes from the fact that in some cases you have to move to be able to study at university and a lot of times you will change your accent to a more standard...
one, either to fit in or to be better understood. So, I would say that the reason for a lot of prejudices is because of education.” (Appendix 3)

Mia highlights that one of the main reasons she believes there are prejudices against certain accents is because some accents are not associated with higher education and, therefore, those accents can be related to lower achievement in education. The interviewee referred to as “Sara” believes that accents can provide the listener with the speaker’s attitude. She also considers that thicker accents are often connected to people who have never moved and never felt the need to change their accent. She states:

Sara: “A prejudice I have against accents is that some accents sound happy and some sound pretentious, and broad accent can often sound like you’re from the countryside and not really used to the standard way of speaking. If you have a thick accent you have probably never moved from your hometown.” (Appendix 6)

The majority of the interviewees expressed a view that one reason prejudices against accents exist is that they are accustomed to standard accents and, therefore, they are not as familiar with other accents. Further, the interviewees state a belief that one of the reasons that speakers’ accents alter is because they move to another location. They may then be continually exposed to another accent from those around them and they consciously or unconsciously pick that up. Mia reports experiencing certain aspects of changing one’s accents because of the influence of other speakers, as well as a consequence of people not understanding. She states:

Mia: “Of own experience, I had a thick dialect and when I moved to another city I had to change it to be understood as well as my accent changed because of the people I was hanging out with.” (Appendix 3)

Additionally, accents convey impressions about the character of the speaker, justifiably or otherwise, and that extend beyond simply geographical origins and social background:

Sofia: “Some accents sound very arrogant and some sound happier so the way you view people depend a lot of how they speak because if someone speaks with an accent
that isn’t as accepted as another, you will think less of those people. Someone with an arrogant accent\(^2\) will make you believe they are also arrogant.” (Appendix 8)

Some of the participants reported how they associate some accents with a happy attitude, whereas some accents were more connected to arrogance. It is also connected to how SE is more widely accepted because it is the accent that is more commonly heard. Anna opines that the norm dictates speakers should speak in a certain way (Appendix 2) and that is a consequence of prejudices against accents. Furthermore, the interviewees express how they do not receive exposure to accents such as Cockney, and therefore, do not deem it as acceptable as SE.

Another prejudice against accents is due to the use of slang because slang terms can have different meanings or usage in different parts of the world, or even between different people.

Jacob: “People who use more slang can be interpreted as people from certain areas and if they do not use the right grammatical changes there can be prejudices against them that they aren’t as good of an accent as an accent without these slang words and ‘correct’ way of speaking.” (Appendix 4)

Peter: “Accents can help in developing emotions, and some are easier to understand whereas some are harder to understand depending on what kind of accent someone got. Some accent use a lot of slang which makes it even harder to understand because those slang terms aren’t used in other accents or areas of the country.” (Appendix 7)

If a speaker frequently uses slang terms that the listener does not understand, the listener can assume that the speaker does it to deliberately show a difference between social group, age, gender, or other aspects that can vary between speakers. Another reason slang usage is often connected to lower class speech is because slang is often related to criminals or teenagers who generally disregard the standard way of speaking.

Further, the interviewees claim that they do not encounter accents that are not standard as often as they come across the standard versions of English:

\(^2\) In Sweden, the accent from Stockholm, Sweden’s capital city, is often associated with arrogance.
Anna: “We do not get exposed to it for example during TV and we do not get taught it in school so it is more accepted with Standard English.” (Appendix 2)

Jennie: “Certain accents get interpreted as comical for example in movies and TV programmes and then you view them in another way than for example Standard English that you are used to hearing and that leads to further prejudices against accents that aren’t as accepted.” (Appendix 4)

One of the main reasons the interviewees associated SE with higher classes is because that it is the accent the interviewees were the most familiar with, whereas accents such as Cockney, that the participants were not as familiar with, were therefore associated with lower social class. For television and movies, accents will often be tempered and made more standard in order to ensure the dialogue is coherent to all audiences.

Sofia: “People with low or no education are often associated to criminals because you often think about criminals as people with lower class who don’t study or hang around people with high class that speak with a more approved speech.” (Appendix 8)

Anna: “I associate it to lower class people and criminals because criminals usually don’t use correct speech and will use slang words and other things to show that they belong to a certain group. Often in TV programmes or films, criminals usually have a thick accent and isn’t associated with a standard accent, which leads to prejudices in real life too.” (Appendix 2)

Media that contains natural speech, such as television and films, affect the preconceptions speakers have about certain accents.

The majority of the interviewees were confident that they could interpret the expressions used in the scenes. However, the second video (Appendix 1) contained a number of examples of Cockney Rhyming Slang terms and it was difficult for the participants to understand what the speakers were saying if they had not seen the video; understanding improved once the video was shown and the context it provided enabled the interviewees to interpret the dialogue.
Peter: “The two scenes show two different situations and the last video is harder to understand because he paints a scenario with the help of slang words that I don’t understand without the context of the video. The first scene is a sales scene and it is easier to understand because he isn’t using slang.” (Appendix 7).

All of the interviewees stated that, without the context of the last scene, it would not have been possible for them to understand what was being said. One of the interviewees, Jacob, had previously heard of Cockney Rhyming Slang prior to being exposed to it in this research, but was uncertain as to precisely what it was and could not define it on his own. None of the other interviewees were previously aware of the existence of this phenomenon and could not, therefore, be expected to be able to interpret it without it being supplemented with the strong contextual information present in the video.

In the second video (Appendix 1), there was a significant usage of Cockney Rhyming Slang, for example “bird’s nest” and “liza” for chest and telly. These slang terms, among others, were not understood by the interviewees, but the context of the videos showed the scenes whilst the man was speaking, which made it possible for the interviewees to connect the actions to the words. However, the interviewees related that they would not be able to interpret the terms on their own and even with the ability to watch the video, they could not be completely sure if their interpretations were correct.

Anna: “I understand the contexts of the videos, but I would not be able to translate what he said and I do not understand his slang terms on their own.” (Appendix 2)

Mia: “I understand what they are saying but I do not understand the term if I hear them on their own but due to the context with the videos it is easier to connect the words to what they might mean but I’m not totally sure if it is correct.” (Appendix 3)

It is evident that Cockney Rhyming Slang is difficult to comprehend for speakers who are not accustomed to it and it is necessary for the interviewees to have the ability to view the scenes as they are hearing the story to understand it.
5. Discussion

The results of this study, as shown in the previous chapter, tend to support research by Trudgill (2000) that language and social structure correlate to each other. The majority of the interviewees associated SE with higher classes due to it being the most familiar accent for them. Hence, the interviewees associated SE with being the most correct way of speaking. This tallies with Trudgill’s (2000) view that this speech form is overtly prestigious, and earlier studies (e.g. Carlson & McHenry, 2006) which have shown that standard accents are connected to a higher level of education and social class. The findings from this study also accord with Carlson and McHenry’s (2006) observations on SE whereby certain accents, such as Cockney, were not as universally accepted, but were associated with lower social classes. This can be understood as a consequence of how RP\(^3\) was the only accepted accent for presenters on the BBC. This can further be connected to how some accents evoke a positive or a negative reaction experienced by listeners, and the participants in this present study all formed a negative impression of hearing Cockney, which led them to associate it with undereducated people and criminals. It may be the case that prejudices against accents will continue as the trend seems to indicate that more speakers will try to conform towards the standard accent. In the future, this could lead to the erosion or even complete disappearance of some regional accents.

The characteristics of the Cockney accent can in some cases be considered to be less correct compared to SE due to how the accent does not follow the standard changes in their speech, for instance, the loss of /h/ and /ŋ/ sounds being replaced by the /n/ phoneme. For a speaker who is familiar with SE, these changes will sound unfamiliar and is therefore perceived as less correct. The interviewees stated that they find accents without slang terms and a more “correct” way of speaking, such as RP, more accepted and associated with higher social classes. Conversely, they stated that Cockney speakers, who use their own slang (including expressions derived from rhyming slang) more frequently, are regarded as speaking less correctly and, as such, they are perceived as lower in the social hierarchy. Labov’s study (1966) stated that the more “careful speech”, the more favoured it would be by higher status speakers as well as being the most preferred way of speaking by all speakers aiming to convey a positive impression. This can be connected to how the interviewees in this study associated SE with higher social class speakers.

\(^3\) All RP speakers speak in SE.
A study by Hogenboom (2018) concludes that accents can reveal information about social backgrounds and this may lead to perceptions of the speaker. Further, her studies showed that the Cockney accent is one of the most commonly judged accents, as well as one of the least trustworthy accents. The results from this study accord with Hogenboom’s study in how they associated the Cockney accent as lower-class speech and some of the interviewees connected it to criminality. The interviewees all had their own perceptions of the accent and further, the speaker.

A finding from this study indicates that the younger participants aged between 15-25 associated a Cockney accent with criminality to a greater degree than the older participants did. This could be because of how the media portrays criminality with lower social classes and undereducated people who do not generally communicate by using the standard varieties such as SE, and younger speakers may be more affected by movies and social media than the older generation. Additionally, younger people may be more conscious of these stereotypes due to greater use of social media and therefore they associate slang and lower-class speech, such as Cockney, with criminality and lower social status.

Slang is often related to groups of people such as criminals, because speakers outside of these groups can at times be unable to comprehend what certain slang terms mean, which excludes them from specific groups and conversations, and arouses suspicions of nefarious intentions. Additionally, the media’s portrayal of criminality leads to increased preconceptions against accents often associated with either slang or lower-class speech. It may be suggested that slang is more commonly used by certain demographics, such as teenagers or by members of social underclasses such as criminals, who do not have a higher level of education, which often leads to preconceptions of slang terms and prejudices against those who use them. However, as can be seen in this study, slang terms are used by educated speakers as well as less-educated people, and they are not simply terms used exclusively by teenagers and criminals. It is possible to believe that the evolution of the English language will continue to be influenced by slang in multiple ways. One of the main reasons for using slang is to create a bond between speakers or to drive speakers further apart to show that they are not alike. Slang usage can also be a feature of speech in a particular accent, as is the case with Cockney Rhyming Slang. This accords with the interviewees’ thoughts that some accents being more associated with specific slang terms than other accents and, for speakers from other
geographical areas, and this could lead to misunderstandings. Further, slang terms can exclude certain people from the conversation since they are unable to understand the meaning of those words. Covert prestige varieties are often viewed as being inferior and an example of this is Mockney which is used by speakers who seek to identify with the working-class Londoners. This could also be connected to machismo, especially in movies that glamorize the tough boys who are willing to break the rules. This could be a way for men to gain covert prestige, achieved through enhancing their status among peer groups by showing off their masculinity. Speakers thus use their accents to establish or reinforce social identity, which can lead to the feeling of belonging to a specific social group or speech community.

In summary, an accent can reveal information about a speaker, such as their social and geographical backgrounds, to both in-group and out-group observers. Accents are often associated with different social classes because of the prestige forms of languages. Accents used by higher social status speakers are connected to overt prestige, whereas adopting or emphasizing working class speech is often deemed as covert prestige. Thus, a strong regional accent and the slang associated with it represents social identity in the sense that it conveys information about the speaker in multiple ways while preserving some degree of obscurity to outsiders. The Cockney accent provides a striking exemplar of this phenomenon.
6. Conclusion

The Cockney accent is a well-known British accent for Londoners, but non-native speakers have difficulty understanding it due to one of the most important features of the accent being Cockney Rhyming Slang. When slang is created in such a unique way, it is often difficult for those outside the speech community to interpret. There are many ways to define the term “slang” and, although there is not a single, universally agreed definition for the term, most definitions state that it is part of the informal types of language use and slang can also help in reflect the speaker’s characteristics, such as age or social class.

This study further confirms the sociolinguistic understanding that there is a relationship between social class and language. Language, accents, dialects and slang are all aspects of identity that can reveal information about the speaker and a speaker can change his or her way of speaking depending on circumstances, such as kinship, social relationship, work and education. Mockney is the speech adopted by speakers who would not otherwise speak with a Cockney accent, but it is the speaker’s effort to identify with authentic, working-class Londoners, and all that entails. Working class people attempting to copy the higher status social groups by adopting RP speech is an example of overt prestige. People from higher social classes who, in order to integrate with or identify as working-class people, effect a working-class accent (including Mockney, or expressions derived from Cockney Rhyming Slang) are engaging in covert prestige. The accent can, therefore, represent social identity in how speakers use their accents to display their attitude.

6.1 Future

To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address the prejudices against accents and how well speakers trust accents from a broader perspective. This study has mostly focused on Cockney accent, so it would be interesting to examine a wider range of accents and perhaps establish whether there are additional viewpoints if further accents were investigated, for example to observe if there are similar preconceptions to other accents. Another potentially informative study would be to compare and contrast speakers with accents that are deemed as trustworthy with speakers whose accents are considered untrustworthy to discover why speakers with certain accents are seen as more reliable than others as well as to examine how these accents represent different social identities.
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Lovisa Moberg-Berlin 30
Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in my survey. The purpose of this survey is to establish how a certain group of non-native speakers, specifically Swedes, interpret Cockney accent, as well as if there are prejudices against certain accents. All your answers will be anonymous and the identities of respondents will be treated as confidential. The answers are used for statistical purposes only.

The survey makes use of scenes from the film Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels. Opening scene [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeztSCCX6VY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeztSCCX6VY)  
Bar scene [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73d6h_go7QI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73d6h_go7QI)

Interview

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?

Videos

6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Appendix 2

Interview 1
Anna

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
Anna: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
Anna: No.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
Anna: Yes, there are prejudices against certain accents. Maybe it is because of the norm, which says that you should speak in a certain way, and that it is prettier to speak more clearly and in a more prestige way. We do not get exposed to the accent as much as we get exposed to Standard English, for example during TV programmes and we do not get taught it in school so it is more accepted with Standard English because we are more used to hearing it.

Videos
6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Anna: No.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Anna: I associate it to lower class people and criminals because criminals usually don’t use correct speech and will use slang words and other things to show that they belong to a certain group. Often in TV programmes or films, criminals usually have a thick accent and isn’t associated with a standard accent, which leads to prejudices in real life too.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. **Not Confident**
   d. Unable to Understand Them
Anna: I understand the contexts of the videos, but I would not be able to translate what he said and I do not understand his slang terms on their own.

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Anna: No.
Appendix 3

Interview 2
Mia

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
Mia: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
Mia: Yes, I lived in London in 1986 for six months.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
Mia: Yes, there are prejudices, especially if someone speaks with a thick dialect or accent, that will sometimes make you think they do not have a high education. I think that prejudice comes from the fact that in some cases you have to move to be able to study at university and a lot of times you will change your accent to a more standard one, either to fit in or to be better understood. So, I would say that the reason for a lot of prejudices is because of education. With my own experience, I had a thick dialect and moved to another city I had to
change it to be understood as well as my accent changed because of the people I was hanging out with.

**Videos**

6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Mia: Yes, it was a common accent to hear when living in London and hanging out with people who were born there.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Mia: Lower class people, who usually do not have a high education.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them
Mia: I understand what they are saying but I do not understand the term if I hear them on their own but due to the context with the videos it is easier to connect the words to what they might mean but I’m not totally sure if it is correct.

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Mia: No.
Appendix 4

Interview 3
Jacob

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. **Male**
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. **46-55**
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
   Jacob: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
   Jacob: No.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
   Jacob: Yes, people who use more slang can be interpreted as people from certain areas and if they do not use the right grammatical changes there can be prejudices against them that they aren’t as good of an accent as an accent without these slang words and “correct” way of speaking.
Videos

6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Jacob: Yes, I have heard it in the east end of London, and I went to football games and pubs and therefore met people from London who spoke like that.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Jacob: Working class slang.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them
Jacob: You can’t follow along with all the words that are being used but you can understand what they probably mean due to the context.

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Jacob: Not totally sure how to explain it, I’ve heard of it before but I’m not certain.
Appendix 5

Interview 4
Jennie

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
   Jennie: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
   Jennie: No.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
   Jennie: Yes, certain accents get interpreted as comical for example in movies and TV programmes and then you view them in another way than for example Standard English that you are used to hearing and that leads to further prejudices against accents that aren’t as accepted.
6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Jennie: Yes, a few times in movies but never really heard it in real life.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Jennie: It makes me think of lower social class, who don’t really live in the “good” part of the city. I associate it with people who doesn’t have a higher education and maybe there is often drugs or similar things involved.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Jennie: No
Appendix 6

Interview 5

Sara

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
Sara: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
Sara: No.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
Sara: Yes, a prejudice I have against accents is that some accents sound happy and some sound pretentious, and broad accent can often sound like you’re from the countryside and not really used to the standard way of speaking. If you have a thick accent you have probably never moved from your hometown.
Videos

6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Sara: Yes, heard it before, often at pubs or football games in London, where you meet people from the area.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Sara: People who aren’t as educated and often lower class.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them
Sara: The second video was harder to understand than the first, but it was possible due to the context of the video.

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Sara: No.
Appendix 7

Interview 6
Peter

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
   Peter: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
   Peter: No.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
   Peter: Yes. Accents can help in developing emotions, and some are easier to understand whereas some are harder to understand depending on what kind of accent someone got. Some accent use a lot of slang which makes it even harder to understand because those slang terms aren’t used in other accents or areas of the country.
**Videos**

6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Peter: I’ve heard of it before, often in films.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Peter: No one who is upper class would speak like this, so it makes me associate it with lower class and working class people.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. Reasonably Confident
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them
Peter: The two scenes show two different situations and the last video is harder to understand because he paints a scenario with the help of slang words that I don’t understand without the context of the video. The first scene is a sales scene and it is easier to understand because he isn’t using slang.

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Peter: No.
Appendix 8

Interview 7
Sofia

1. What gender do you identify as?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Another/Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?
   a. 15-25
   b. 26-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56+

3. What language or languages do you consider to be your first or native language/s?
   Sofia: Swedish.

4. Have you ever lived in the United Kingdom? If so, please indicate which city or region, and supply approximate dates.
   Sofia: No.

5. Would you say that there are prejudices against certain accents? If so, please explain why you believe so?
   Sofia: Yes, some accents sound very arrogant and some sound happier so the way you view people depend a lot of how they speak because if someone speak with an accent that isn’t as accepted as another, you will think less of those people. Someone with an arrogant accent will make you believe they are also arrogant.
6. Have you ever heard this accent before, and if so, when, where and under which circumstances?
Sofia: I don’t know.

7. What type of person would you associate with this sort of speech?
Sofia: People with low or no education are often associated to criminals because you often think about criminals as people with lower class who don’t study or hang around people with high class that speak with a more approved speech.

8. How confident are you that you can interpret the expressions used in the conversations in these scenes? (Possibility to elaborate their answer).
   a. Totally Confident
   b. **Reasonably Confident**
   c. Not Confident
   d. Unable to Understand Them

9. Do you know what Cockney Rhyming Slang is?
Sofia: No.