

## **Sociolinguistics and immigration: linguistic variation among Scottish-born and Polish-born adolescents in Edinburgh**

Miriam Meyerhoff (*University of Edinburgh*), Erik Schleeff (*University of Manchester*)  
& Lynn Clark (*University of Edinburgh*)

Recent demographic changes in the UK provide an opportunity to observe how migrants acquire the norms of their new speech community. Since the expansion of the EU, significant numbers of Polish families have moved to the UK. We examine the speech of some teenagers from these families living in Edinburgh and compare their use of (ING) with that of locally-born adolescents. We explore whether the Polish teenagers have acquired 'local' constraints on (ING) or whether they display constraints on this variable found in other varieties of English.

We interviewed 16 teenage Poles in Edinburgh (and 21 locally-born teenagers) and we examine the distribution of [m] and [ɪŋ] in relation to a range of linguistic, stylistic and attitudinal factors. Since these speakers have acquired English mainly through immersion, and at the cusp of the so-called critical period, we hypothesise that their attitude to living in Edinburgh may have an effect on their acquisition of local patterns of variation.

A pilot multiple regression analysis of 527 tokens of (ING) from 8 Polish- and 8 Edinburgh-born adolescents shows some surprising results. First, the social constraints of style and gender pattern for Edinburgh-born teens as in previous research, but there is no evidence of the typical 'grammatical category effect' (Labov 2001). Rather, the linguistic constraints show a significant phonological priming effect (Abramowicz 2007) and an effect for the number of syllables in a word.

A regression analysis of 234 tokens of (ING) from the Polish-born adolescents suggests that these speakers may be orientating towards supralocal norms: there are significant effects for gender, style and grammatical category. However, when attitudinal predictors are included in the regression, no linguistic factor groups are retained; all and only the social factor groups remain significant.

Comparing the constraint hierarchies from native and non-native speakers is a usefully way of exploring the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence, but it is also necessary to consider group-specific predictors in reaching a complete account of the variation among young migrants of this age.