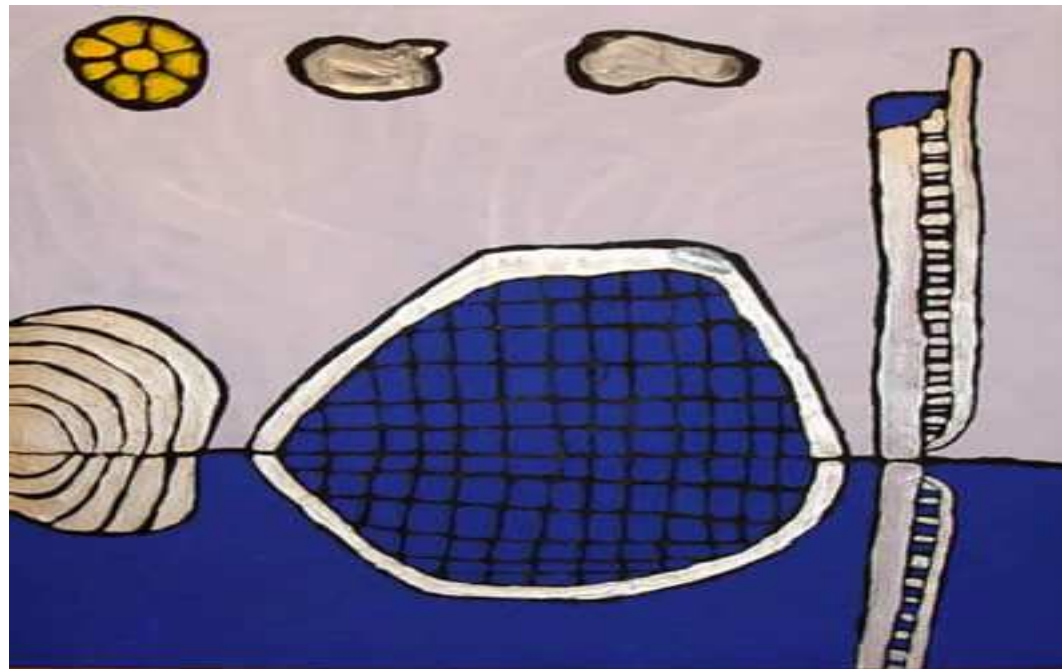


A social basis for sound change? Television and accent change in Glasgow

Jane Stuart-Smith

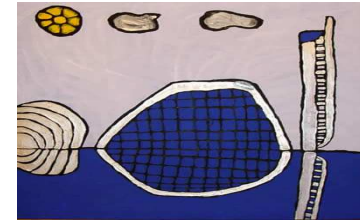
Department of English Language, University of Glasgow



20 December 2006

Institut für Phonetik und Sprachverarbeitung, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

A social basis for sound change? Television and accent change in Glasgow



Paper overview

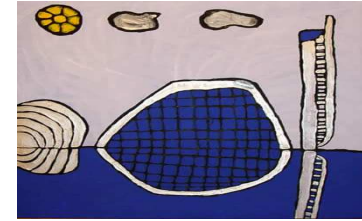
This paper was presented as part of a seminar on Ohala's model of sound change, at Munich University.

The paper presents similar material to that presented at Giessen, with an introductory section relating this research to the main theme of the seminar.

JSS 22/12/07

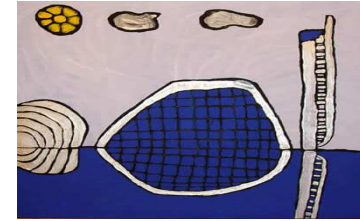
A social basis for sound change?

Television and accent change in Glasgow



- Moving beyond Ohala's model – spread of sound change
- TV and language change
- Why consider TV?
- The Glasgow media project
- Results: the correlational study
- Modelling the results
 - awareness and/or imitation?
- Concluding remarks

Ohala's model of sound change – delimiting/defining 'sound change'



Ohala (1993: 238) distinguishes between

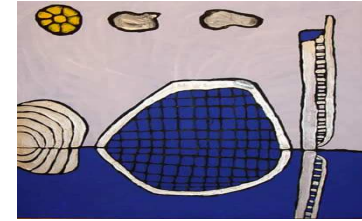
“changes in pronunciation that can come about through many quite different factors, including some, such as spelling pronunciation, paradigm regularization, and fashion, which are language and culture-specific.”

and those which

“have been attested independently in substantially the same form in many unrelated languages and which, therefore, are most likely to arise from language universal factors, i.e. physiological and psychological factors common to all human speakers at any time”

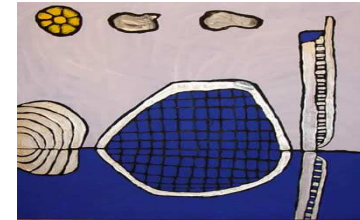
= ‘sound change’

'origins' and 'spread' of sound change



- Ohala's model of sound change refers explicitly to the 'origins' of sound change (1989: 174)
'those causes which are the pre-conditions for sound change'
- but not to (p. 175):
'the immediate triggers of sound change in a particular language at a particular time, I will have little to say about them except to suggest that these things are bound to happen and that it is not so interesting to try to identify them.'
or to
'the spread or transmission of sound change, i.e. how a changed pronunciation spreads through the lexicon, the segment inventory, or to other speakers of the language'

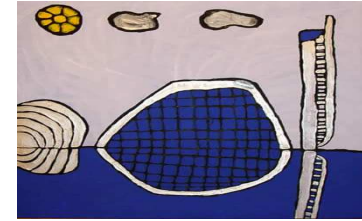
quantitative sociolinguistics observing sound change in progress



- classic sociolinguistic investigation of language variation and change was formulated by William Labov (e.g. Labov 1972), and pioneered in large cities, like New York City and Glasgow
- Linguistic variables (any aspect of language which shows a number of variants) are correlated with extra-linguistic variables (any aspect of society, e.g. social class, gender, age, ethnicity)
- Language change in progress observed through the comparison of patterns of variation across age groups/times, and explained with reference to social factors/processes



A (set of) social factor(s) – TV and language change



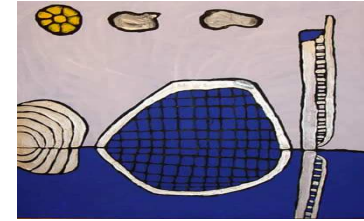
traditional view of ‘variationist’/‘quantitative’ sociolinguistics

- watching TV may affect vocabulary
- but not core features of language, e.g. pronunciation, grammar

(e.g. Chambers, e.g. 1998, Trudgill, 1986)

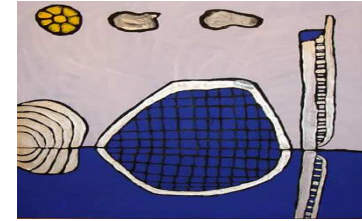
- Language change primarily takes place through accommodation during face-to-face interaction
- assumption of strong media effects with ‘direct’ influence on behaviour

TV and language change



- TV may
 - increase awareness of linguistic varieties
 - and/or affect attitudes towards other varieties(e.g. Milroy and Milroy 1985)
 - If core features of grammar are affected, this must be in some way voluntary, and/or involve imitation
- (Trudgill 1986)

The 'problem' of TH-fronting in the UK



Certain consonant changes, typical of London accents (e.g. Cockney), are spreading rapidly across urban accents of British English

e.g. TH-fronting, [f]/[θ] merger in e.g. *think*, *tooth*

e.g. Foulkes and Docherty (1999), Kerswill (2003)

In some accents, e.g. Glaswegian, these features are found exclusively in working-class adolescents with relatively low social and geographical mobility (e.g. Stuart-Smith, 1999)



the media themselves are happy to blame

television

especially popular soap dramas set in London, such as *EastEnders*, apparently featuring Cockney dialect

12/18/2006

Social basis for sound chang

(GIRD:230, 231)

28 JUN 2000

Cockneys are killing off the Scots accent

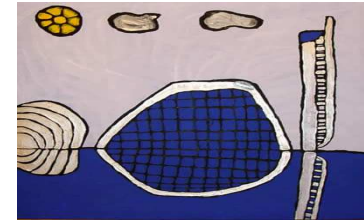
⁶⁴⁵⁵
SOAP operas like *EastEnders* are the most likely culprits for the growing spread of Estuary English among Glaswegian teenagers, academics claimed yesterday.

Youngsters in the city are developing a 'southern drawl' at the expense of distinctive Scottish sounds such as the 'ch' in 'loch', according to the study by Glasgow University.

Researchers found pronunciations such as 'toof' for 'tooth' are becoming more common, while traditional Glasgow variations such as 'mulk' for 'milk' are in decline. They believe the influence of TV is to blame as many of the youngsters surveyed had little direct contact English people.

Gaswegians aged 13-14 were asked to read lists of words and talk in pairs before comparing the results with people aged 40-60. Dr Jane Stuart-Smith, of the Department of English Language, said: 'The finger of suspicion points to the media and programmes like *EastEnders*, which are rich in Cockney accents. 'Whatever the cause, it is certain that Glasgow's accent is changing.'

and linguists?



about TH-fronting in Norwich (Trudgill 1986: 54):

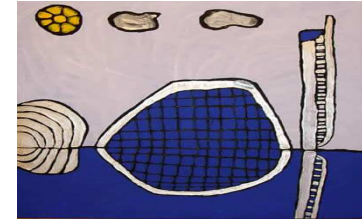
probably a combination of factors working together

- less overt forms of dialect contact
- attitudes towards Cockney might play a role

and – (Trudgill 1988: 44):

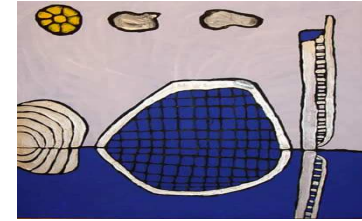
‘[the] sheer speed [of the change] may be due to a ‘softening-up’ process produced by the engendering of favourable attitudes through TV programmes’

Why consider TV? (1)



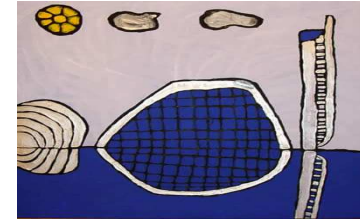
- TV is exceptionally prevalent
- Some TV programmes constitute social phenomena, e.g. the London-based soap *EastEnders* (1985-)
 - screened 4 times/week plus weekend omnibus
 - regularly attracted 18 million viewers/episode (i.e. almost one-third UK population)
 - viewing of key episodes have caused exceptional surges in electricity demand (e.g. National Grid 2001)
 - viewers can be highly engaged (e.g. Buckingham 1987)

Why consider TV? (2)



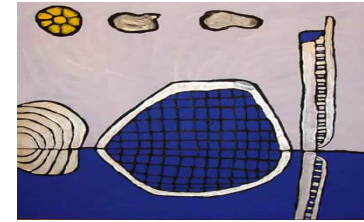
- Media are assumed to affect social behaviour (e.g. McQuail 2000: 424f),
but
 - TV is assumed to be a contributory factor, along with other factors (Klapper 1960: 8)
 - Audience assumed to be active interpreters of media texts (e.g. Philo 1999)
- TV and para-social interaction (e.g. Abercrombie 1996)

Why consider TV? (3)



- linguists are starting to include TV:
 - ‘as part of the global sociolinguistic condition’
(Androutsopoulos 2001: 4)
 - as possible cause of language change, in German
(e.g. Lameli 2004; Muhr 2003)
 - in accounts of language variation
e.g. Br. Portuguese (Naro 1981, Naro and Scherre 1996);
Ur. Portuguese (Carvalho 2004).
- and to wonder about TV in TH-fronting
e.g. Williams and Kerswill (1999); Foulkes and Docherty (2000)

The Glasgow media project



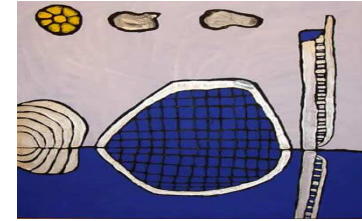
Is TV a contributory factor in accent change in adolescents?
(2002-5)

Economic and Social Research Council (R000239757)

Are the media a contributory factor in systemic language change under certain circumstances for certain individuals?

Does TV play a role in the appearance of Cockney accent features in the speech of Glaswegian adolescents?

Glasgow project: assumptions

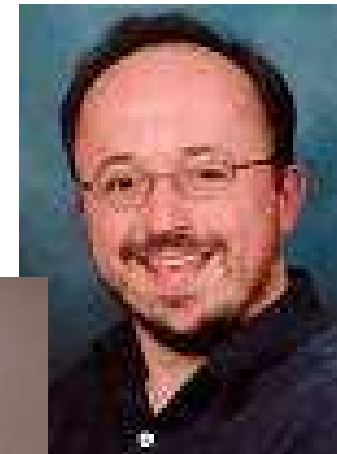
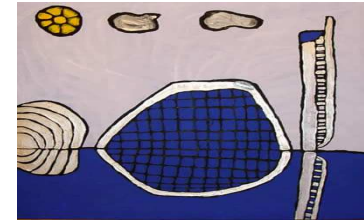


1. Methods from sociolinguistics and media effects research may be combined to investigate the relationships between the media and language variation and change
2. There are several potential causes for language change
3. If the media are involved in language change, this is most likely to be as **a contributory factor**, alongside other social factors

The research team

- The Research Fellow
Claire Timmins
- The Statistician
(Prof) Gwilym Pryce
- The Media Studies expert
(Prof) Barrie Gunter

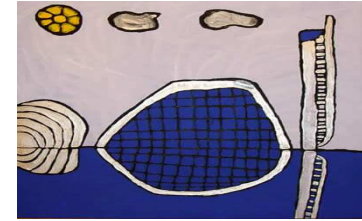
- a group of kids (and adults) from Maryhill in Glasgow



Kippochill Road. As with many other parts of the city, new housing has been built on

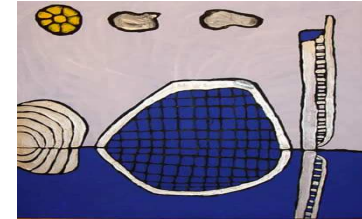


Scope of the project



- sample
 - 36 adolescents; 12 adults (working-class)
 - longitudinal - tracks 2 age groups across 2 years
- methods
 - quantitative and qualitative
- data
 - speech: wordlist and spontaneous
 - questionnaire
 - informal interviews
 - diaries
 - television/language experiment (quiz show)

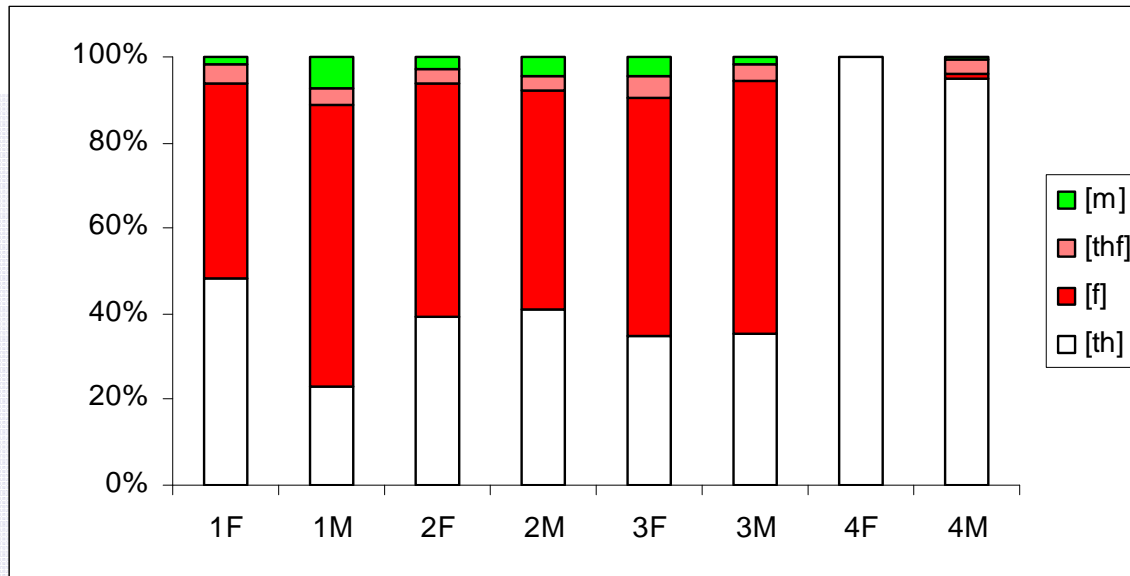
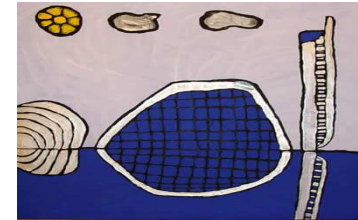
Theme for this paper: TH-fronting



1. Is TH-fronting spreading in Glaswegian vernacular?
2. (methods)
3. If so, is this correlated with:
 - a. **dialect contact** with Cockney and/or other dialects of English?
 - b. **attitudes** to Cockney and/or other urban accents?
 - c. **watching TV** programmes set in London?
 - d. or these and more *together*?
4. Are Glaswegian adolescents **aware** of this feature in 'Cockney' shown on TV?
5. Can they successfully **imitate** 'media-Cockney' phonology?

TH-fronting in wordlists is used as example

1. TH-fronting is spreading in Glaswegian



n = 951

1 = 10-11 years

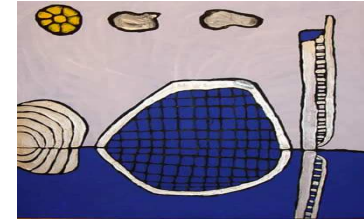
2 = 12-13 years

3 = 14-15 years

4 = 40-60 years

- apparent-time change: adolescents use more **[f]** than adults
- real-time change: we find more **[f]** in 2003 than in 1997

2. Extra-linguistic variables



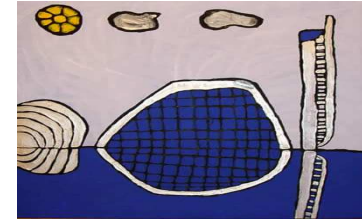
In addition to: linguistic (word-position); age; gender

thematic ‘categories’ of variables:

- dialect contact (beyond and within Glasgow)
- attitudes to accents (auditory/mental image)
- social practices/identities
- music (incl. radio)
- computers (incl. internet)
- film (incl. video/DVD)
- sport
- TV

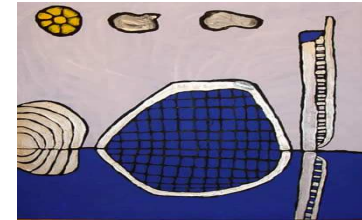
created from questionnaire; informal interviews;
conversations; participant observation

2. Statistical analysis - methodology



- multiple regression (logistic)
- 'general-to-specific' model
- check and remove odd variables (low response/skewed distribution)
- check for multicollinearity within each thematic category to produce list of possible variables
- run regression on category lists separately ('enter')
- draw up overall shortlist containing all significant variables from each category, plus theoretically interesting variables if not significant
- progressively run regressions ('enter') on overall shortlist until only significant variables remain.

3a. TH-fronting and dialect contact

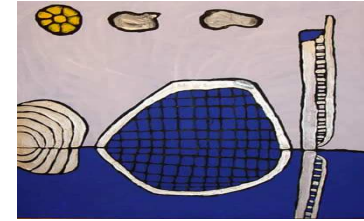


Initial baseline criteria: informants born and raised in area
(2.8% born in England, 2001 Census)

Questionnaire and interview data revealed:

- most have a few relatives beyond Glasgow
- they talk on the telephone to these relatives more than they see them (when the relatives visit them)
- most show a low degree of active mobility outside the city.
- most have face-to-face contact with friends (and family) within Glasgow.

3a. TH-fronting and dialect contact

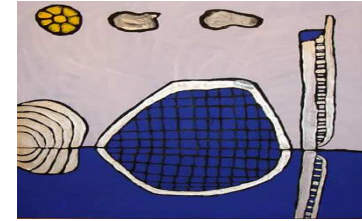


TH-fronting is linked positively with

- having relatives in the South of England

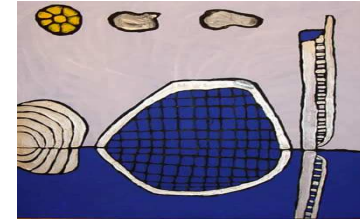
(only 8% variance explained)

3b. TH-fronting and accent attitudes

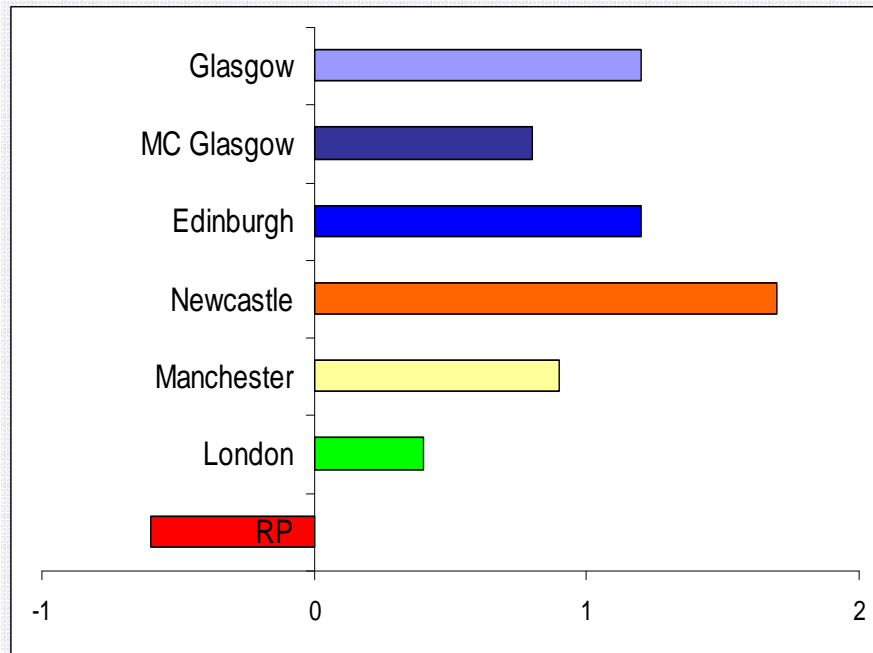


- speech samples of 7 accents
 - female speakers same age
 - reading same passage
 - beginning of questionnaire
 - also checked identification of accents
- ‘mental image’ of 8 urban accents (cf Preston 1999)
 - ‘what do you think of the accents in *London*?’
 - end of questionnaire

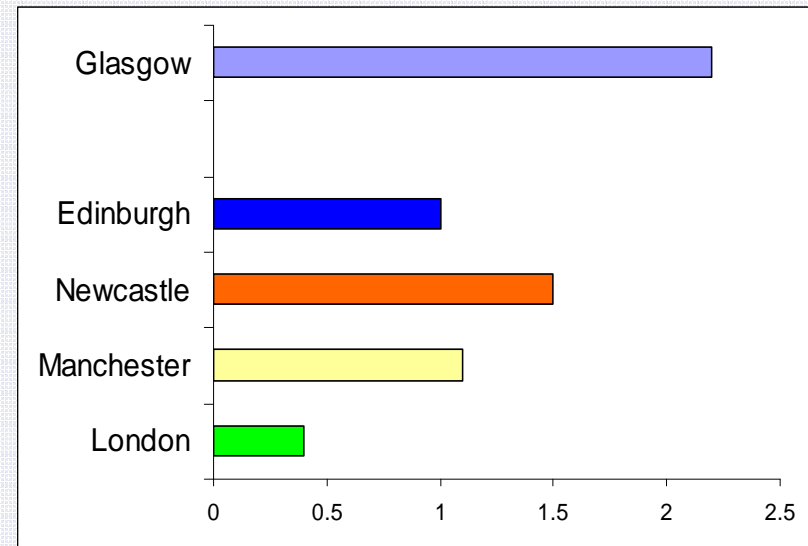
3b. TH-fronting and accent attitudes



- Glasgow kids like **Cockney**, but less than other accents



Speech samples

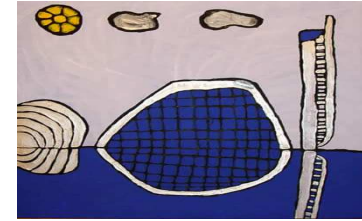


mental image

average responses for all informants

(scale: less positive more positive)

3b. TH-fronting and accent attitudes

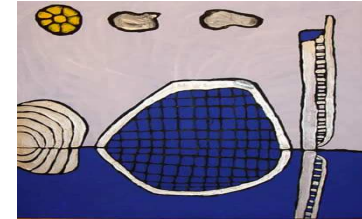


TH-fronting is linked positively with

- liking the Cockney speech sample
- and liking the Manchester speech sample
- but negatively with liking an Edinburgh accent ('posh')

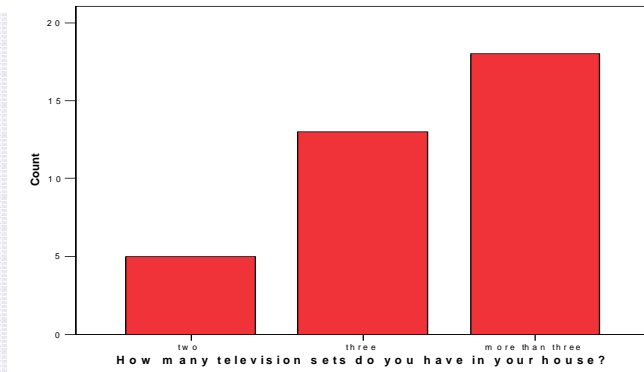
(only 12% variance explained)

3b. TV as 'softening-up' agent?

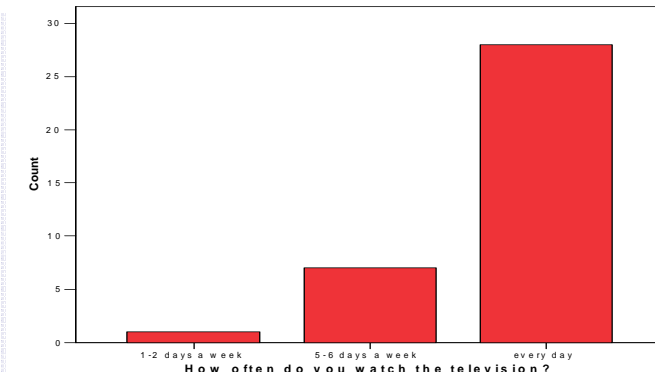


- Are positive attitudes towards Cockney the result of watching popular programmes set in London (i.e. Trudgill's 'softening-up')?
- We tested this claim statistically using multiple regression analysis to find out which variables might be linked with holding positive attitudes to Cockney.
- The only significant result was in fact a **negative** link between liking the Cockney speech sample and watching *EastEnders*.

3c. TH-fronting and TV

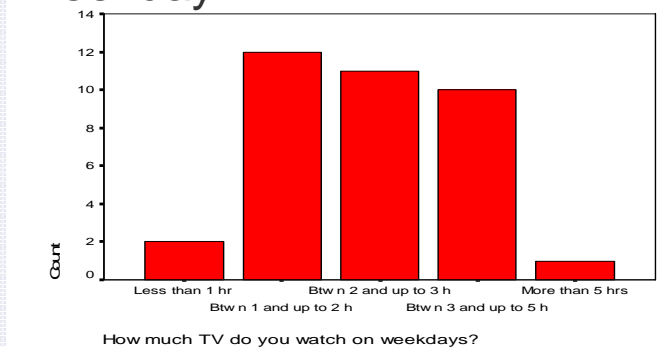


many have 3 or more TV sets

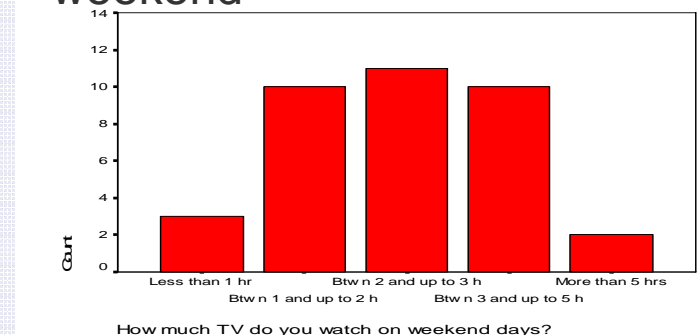


most watch TV every day

weekday

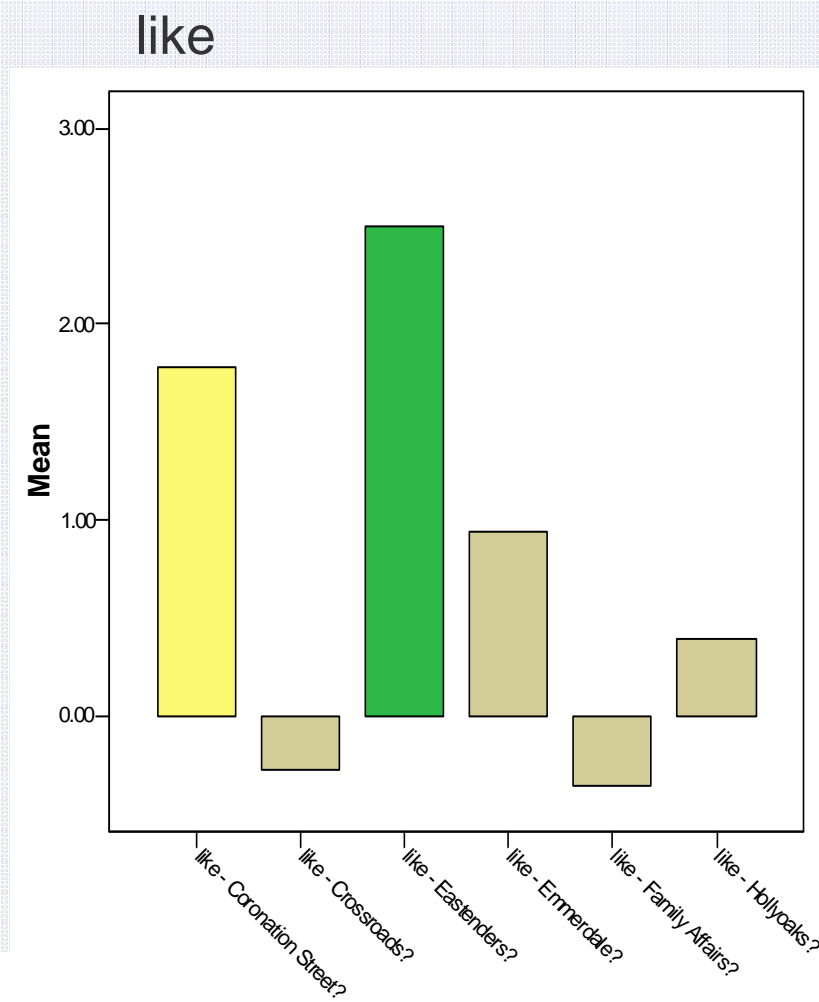
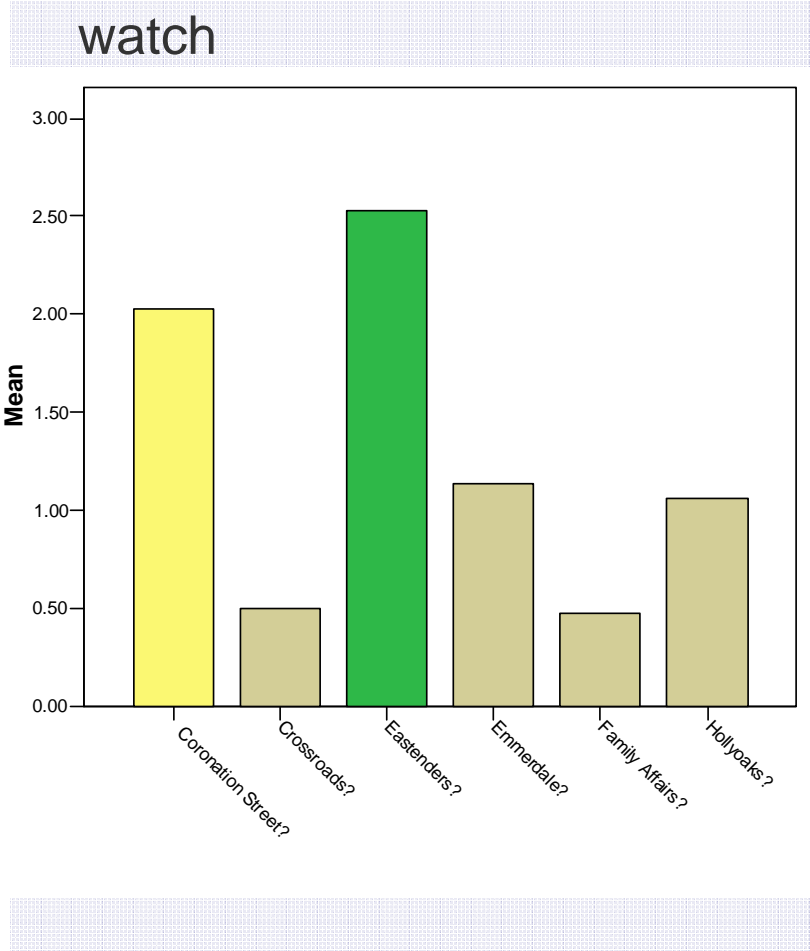
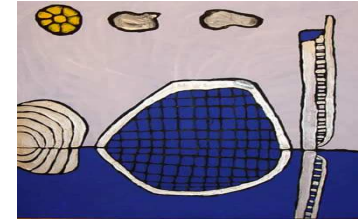


weekend

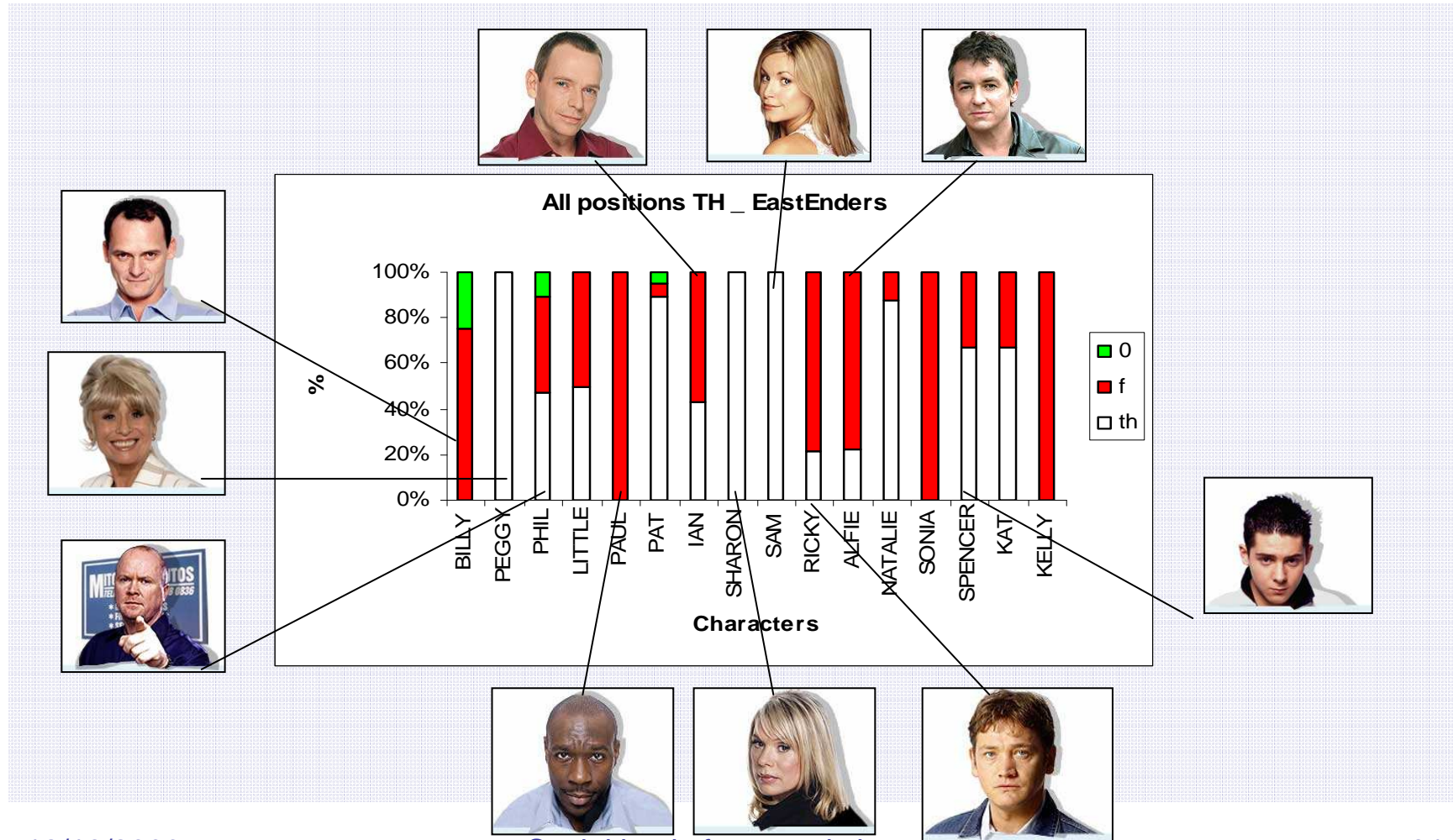
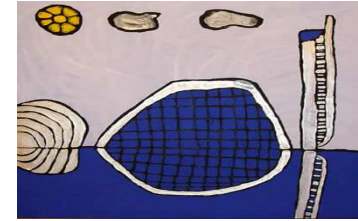


self-reported TV exposure of between 1 to 5 hours a day (av. 3hrs)

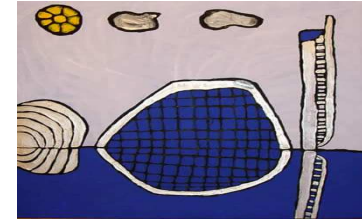
3c. They watch and like *EastEnders* most



3c. TH-fronting occurs (variably) in *EastEnders*



3c. TH-fronting and TV



TH-fronting is linked positively with

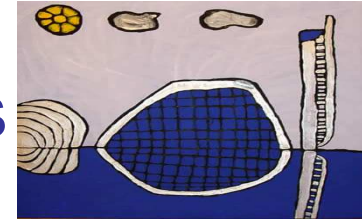
- giving *EastEnders* as favourite programme
- criticizing soap characters
- liking *EastEnders* (also *The Bill*, London police drama)

but negatively with

- general exposure to TV; watching Scottish, Northern, and US-based dramas
- reported talking about TV whilst watching TV
- talking about TV programmes in the conversations

(only around 5% variance explained)

3d. TH-fronting – a combination of factors



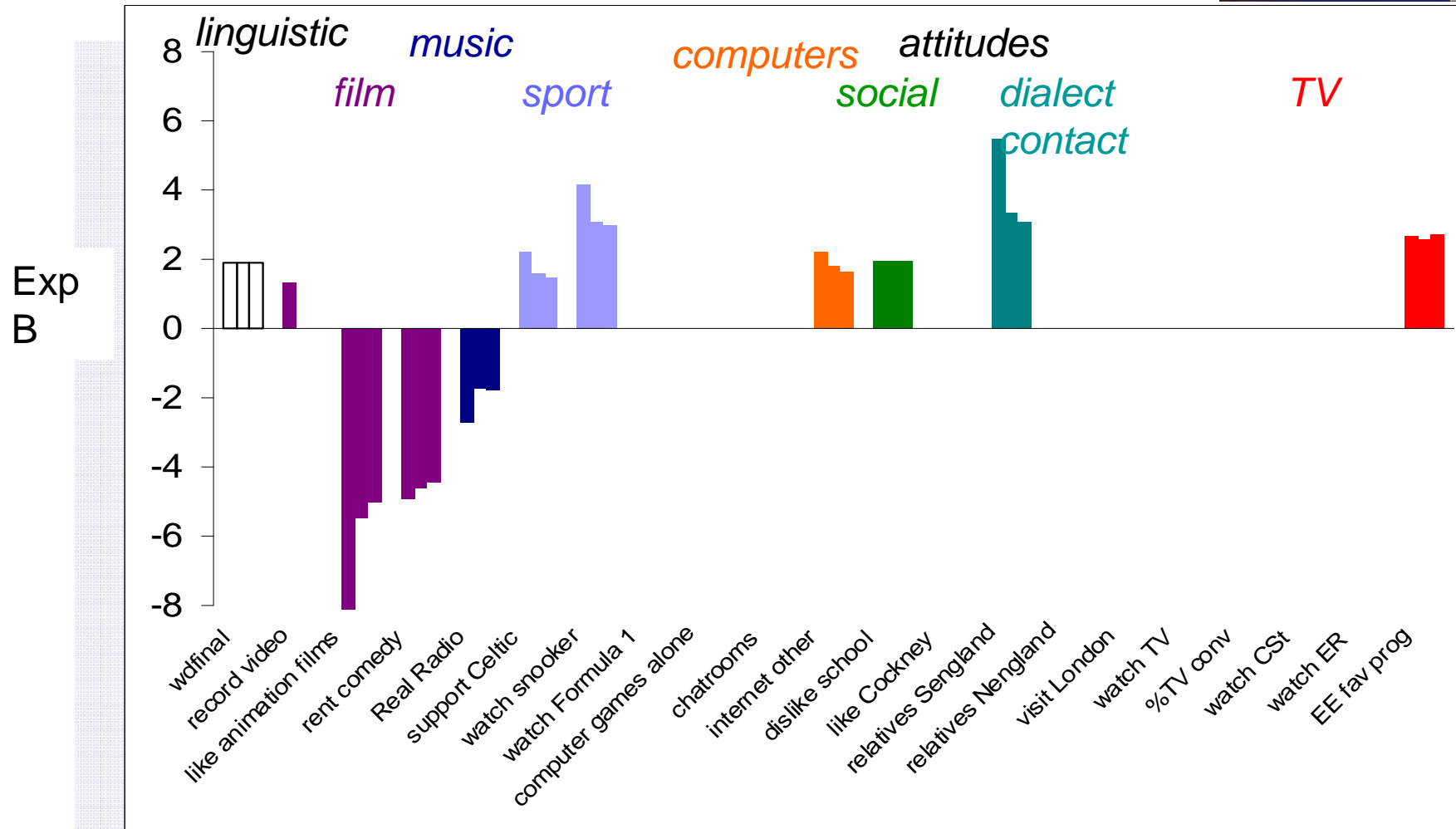
our statistical model was designed to consider a *range* of ‘social’ factors *together*.

- dialect contact
- attitudes to accents
- TV

and

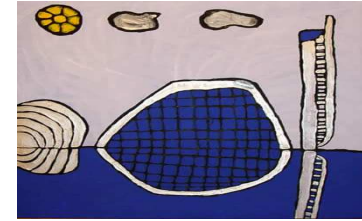
- social practices/identities
- music (incl. radio)
- computers (incl. internet)
- film (incl. video/DVD)
- sport
- age
- gender
- (and linguistic: word position)

3d. TH-fronting across categories



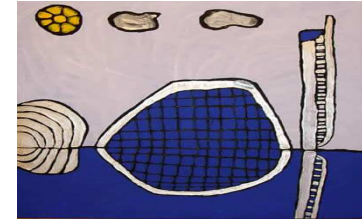
Reg 1: n=756; $r^2=.377$; Reg 2: n=756; $r^2=.358$; Reg 3: n=756; $r^2=.354$

3. Interpreting the results



- a number of factors are involved in the spread of TH-fronting in Glasgow
 - the correlations with TV
 - may stand for another factor unaccounted for within the model, e.g. possibly covert positive attitudes towards Cockney (e.g. Tore Kristiansen, pc, cf. Kristiansen (2003))
 - may refer to those adolescents, who show TH-fronting, and who also prefer *EastEnders*/other programmes set in London
 - may result – in some way – from their engagement with popular programmes set in London
- NB other significant factors in model are unlikely to be assumed to have a direct causal effect on the production of TH-fronting, e.g. using chatrooms, disliking school.

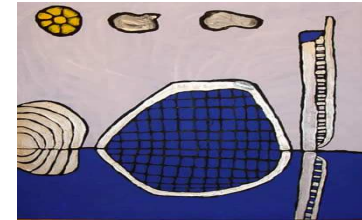
4. Awareness of 'media-Cockney'?



- Explored using informal imitation task (boys only) given during informal interview (cf Preston 1992)
 - informants shown a set of picture cards
 - asked to pronounce words first in their own accent
 - shown a picture of a leading actor from *EastEnders*
 - asked to talk about his accent and theirs
 - asked to say words again, but with the same accent as the actor
 - Fine phonetic analysis of the pairs of words



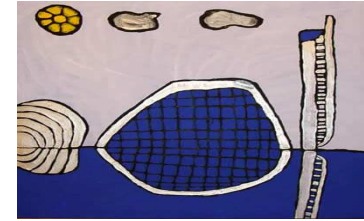
4. Awareness of media-Cockney



All children thought the actor's accent was different from theirs

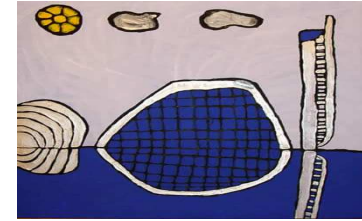
- *'he's from a different place ... just different'*
- *'English' 'he's fae England' 's just ... pure English, no?'*
- *'English snobby' 'says it posher'*
- *'It's like a sore throat accent ... or ... they took his tonsils oot or something'*
- *'Ah 'hink they pronounce more'*
- *'He changes the letters, if it was 'f' he'd use 'v''*
- *'he talks different' 'he talks more tough'*
- *'It's aw right ... I wouldnae like to speak like it but'*

4. Imitation of media-Cockney



- Our first impressions were that little had been changed
- BUT close phonetic analysis revealed that most children altered at least something in response to the task
- Not imitation so much as **phonetic alteration**

Concluding remarks



- These results need to be taken in conjunction with other results from the project
 - e.g. other variables also showing similar results
 - language/TV experiment, which seems to reveal subtle indications of variation linked to TV
 - qualitative data from spontaneous speech and participant observation
- We suspect that understanding the data requires a shift of perspective, specifically to one which emphasizes watching TV as a socio-culturally embedded activity during which viewers appropriate such elements as fit their own view of the world ('kommunikative Fernsehaneignung'), cf. e.g. Holly et al (2001).

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