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Interviewer effects on the phonetic reduction of negative tags, *innit*?

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Abstract

This paper investigates interviewer effects on speakers' use of full, reduced or coalesced variants of negative tags, e.g. *it's a nice day*, *isn't it/int it/innit*? Using a corpus of North East English containing interviews with a range of participants and interviewers, I examine whether speakers use more phonetically-reduced variants when interviewed by someone who is more familiar to them and speaks a variety of English more similar to their own. Quantitative variationist analysis reveals that these interviewer effects do have an impact on the variation and apply in addition to linguistic and social constraints. When speakers use more full variants, this is characteristic of either a more careful speech style or, in some contexts, so-called "foreigner-directed speech", both of which typically have less lenition and contraction than the vernacular. The findings of this study emphasise that through proper consideration of the effects that interviewers have on the data they collect, we can gain a more comprehensive, reliable interpretation of linguistic variation.

Keywords

interviewer effects; style; sociolinguistic interview; tag questions; discourse-pragmatic variation; Tyneside English

1. Introduction

The interview[1] is one of the most widely-employed methods of data collection in sociolinguistics, yet it presents a number of challenges – most notably, the Observer's Paradox:

> the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation. (Labov 1972: 209)

As Bailey and Tillery (2004: 13) note, the Observer's Paradox "is simply one manifestation of a more general phenomenon – the effects that fieldworkers and interviewers have on the data they elicit". However, such interviewer effects have often been ignored, downplayed or understudied in sociolinguistic studies (Cukor-Avila & Bailey 2001: 254; Bailey & Tillery 2004: 13). Unaccounted differences in how interviews have been set up, both within and between studies, may hinder the generalisability of results (Wolfson 1976; Bailey & Tillery 2004).

Under the traditional Labovian interpretation, the less attention someone pays to their speech, the more casual their speech style. As a result, non-standard linguistic variants are

[1] Becker (2017) makes a distinction between a "sociolinguistic interview" and "The Sociolinguistic Interview", where the former refers to any interaction recorded as part of sociolinguistic data collection and the latter refers to the specific Labovian sociolinguistic interview which consists of tasks including a word list, reading passage and conversation so as to elicit data that can be analysed on stylistic dimensions. I use the term "interview" or "sociolinguistic interview" to refer to any interaction between an interviewer and interviewee(s) that is recorded for the purposes of sociolinguistic analysis.

more likely to appear in casual styles than in more careful styles like those employed when reading a word list or prose passage (Labov [1966] 2006). Others argue that style-shifting is not necessarily due to the amount of attention paid to speech but that speakers adjust their language depending on who they are talking to (Accommodation Theory, Giles & Powesland 1975), or the audience in general including people who are unaddressed or unacknowledged by the speaker but are nevertheless present in the same setting (Audience Design, Bell 1984). For example, speech styles can shift in relation to "the speaker's psycho-social orientation to his or her conversational partner(s) on the dimensions of *social distance* and *intimacy*" (Milroy 1987: 36).

As Wolfson (1976: 197) notes, interviewers are more likely to elicit a natural speech style and engage effectively with their interviewee "if the interviewer shares with the subject certain personal attributes such as age, sex, general attire, and very importantly, dialect or speech variety". Previous empirical research has indeed shown that speakers can accommodate towards interlocutors who share similar characteristics to them – e.g. the same race, ethnicity, nationality, or dialect – or diverge when these differ from their own (Douglas-Cowie 1978; Bell 1984, 2001; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994), though in some cases the effects are small and vary depending on the variable considered (Llamas *et al.* 2009). With many of these studies, it is difficult to disentangle the various characteristics that are significant in influencing the variation. For example, Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) found that an African-American speaker (named Foxy) used African American Vernacular English variants to a greater extent in conversation with an African American interviewer than with a white American interviewer. While Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) appeal to race as the relevant factor contributing to the style-shifting in this case, Cukor-Avila and Bailey (2001: 255) critique the reliability of this conclusion, noting that the African American fieldworker was from the same community as Foxy, had interviewed her on several occasions

previously, and that the fieldworker's daughter was also present in the interview (whereas none of this was the case for the white interviewer).

Linguistic variation is also sensitive to factors such as the topic of conversation (Douglas-Cowie 1978; Coupland 1980; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994; Schilling-Estes 2004; Schleef 2008), the activity in which speakers are engaged (Kyratzis & Ervin-Tripp 1999; Verdonik, Žgank, & Peterlin 2008; Escalera 2009), and the degree of spontaneity and collaboration between speakers (Freed & Greenwood 1996). Furthermore, third-wave sociolinguistic research has shown how linguistic features that develop social meaning can be combined to create individual styles which may form a particular persona (Eckert 2000, 2008; Schilling-Estes 2004; Podesva 2007).

In this paper, I take a quantitative variationist approach to investigate two interviewer effects, namely how an interviewer's dialect and their degree of familiarity with their interviewees affects the interviewees' language use. The linguistic variable of interest is the phonetic realisation of negative tags as full, reduced or coalesced variants, as illustrated in (1):

(1)

a. Full: It's a nice day, *isn't it*?

b. Reduced: It's a nice day, *int it*?

c. Coalesced: It's a nice day, *innit*?

Investigating this variation will offer new insights into the effects of interviewers on language use, as this is a rare example of a variable that is simultaneously discourse-pragmatic and phonetic in nature. Discourse-pragmatic items such as tags are syntactically-optional and highly context-dependent (Pichler 2010: 584), which suggests high sensitivity to

situational factors. Tags in particular serve important interpersonal functions that vary depending on the discourse context (Dubois & Crouch 1975; O'Barr & Atkins 1980; Holmes 1982: 62, 1984; Cameron *et al.* 1989; Pichler 2013, 2016). At the same time, the variants in (1) are distinguished in terms of their phonetic reduction as full, reduced (where the full forms have lost medial consonants and/or have experienced vowel reduction) or coalesced (where the auxiliary has lost its final segment and has become fused with the following pronoun), which may also vary according to situational factors.

Through variationist sociolinguistic analysis of informal conversations from the Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (DECTE; Corrigan *et al.* 2010-12), which includes a diverse range of interviewers, I test the following two hypotheses concerning the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewer's dialect. The results demonstrate that phonetic reduction as a variant of a discourse-pragmatic variable is affected by the interviewer in addition to traditionally-favoured sociolinguistic variables. Furthermore, the findings of this study will help inform future methodological practice within sociolinguistics in collecting, analysing and interpreting speech data.

Hypothesis 1: The closer the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, the more likely the interviewee is to use phonetically-reduced (i.e. reduced and coalesced) negative tag variants.

When familiar interviewers and interviewees converse, "[r]epeated and regular contact has enabled the fieldworker to establish a context that provides something much like everyday linguistic interaction" (Cukor-Avila & Bailey 2001: 258). As Kyratzis and Ervin-Tripp (1999: 1325) note, "friends share common ground and goals, and conversation and interaction are enhanced". Non-standard variants are more likely to be used in such interactions with a familiar

interlocutor (Douglas-Cowie 1978; Coupland 1980; Russell 1982; Thelander 1982; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994).

Given this background, there are three reasons why phonetically-reduced (i.e. reduced and coalesced) negative tags are hypothesised to occur more frequently in speech with familiar as opposed to non-familiar interviewers. Firstly, phonetically-reduced tag variants could be considered non-standard in that they are phonetically-deviant from the full variants – they have an altered vowel quality and/or loss of medial consonants, often leading to a reduction in the number of syllables (see section 4 for full details).

Secondly, reduced and coalesced variants are likely to be stigmatised and speakers' awareness and negative evaluation of such features decreases the likelihood that they will use them when talking to a non-familiar interviewer. As Pichler (2013) notes, the OED referred to *innit* as the "vulgar form of *isn't it*" ("innit, *int.*", 2nd edition, OED Online), though the term "vulgar" has since been removed from the June 2018 entry in which *innit* is now labelled as "nonstandard". *Innit* was also one of a set of words that a London school tried to ban students from using in classrooms and corridors (Fishwick 2013). This stigma surrounding *innit* may extend to other phonetically-reduced negative tag variants too, as it does for other forms with elided consonants such as *gimme* ("give me") and *wanna* ("want to") (O'Grady 2013: 52). The description of the form *intit* (*int it*) as a "[b]astardisation of *innit*" in one entry on the website Urban Dictionary supports such an interpretation ("intit", Urban Dictionary).

Thirdly, reduction processes such as assimilation, elision and vowel reduction are more prevalent in more casual speech styles (Giegerich 1992: 289; Laver 1994: 68; Kirchner 2001: 26), which are commonly employed when speaking to someone familiar. Therefore, even if some reduced/coalesced tag forms would not be considered "non-standard" per se, or are not stigmatised as much as *innit*, we would still expect them to be used more often in casual styles

since assimilation, elision and vowel reduction are common articulatory processes in connected speech (Low 2015).[2]

Hypothesis 2: The more similar the interviewer's variety of English is to the interviewee's, the more likely the interviewee is to use phonetically-reduced negative tag variants.

Speakers are likely more at ease conversing with someone who speaks similarly to them, and/or less likely to feel that their language is being monitored, leading us to generally expect greater use of the phonetically-reduced variants in this context. The linguistic distance between individuals will increase when a Tyneside speaker is interviewed by someone from a region of the UK outside the North East of England, which may lead to a less casual situation and speech style. Participants are expected to alter their speech even further in interview with a non-native speaker of English from outside the UK (as all of the non-native speaker interviewers are in my sample – see section 4.2.2), who have the greatest linguistic distance between them since they do not share the same first language.

One specific way in which people may adjust their speech depending on who they are talking to has been described as "foreigner talk" or "foreigner-directed speech" (henceforth FDS), a register used "by speakers of a language to outsiders who are felt to have a very limited command of the language or no knowledge of it at all" (Ferguson 1971: 143), regardless of whether that perception reflects reality. Characteristic features of FDS include high-frequency lexical items, simple syntactic structures, and a slower speech rate that leads

[2] This leads to the hypothesis that other phenomena (outside negative tags) which involve these same processes would also be found more often in the speech of people recorded by more familiar interviewers.

to clearer phonetic articulation with less vowel reduction, less contraction and more fully released consonants (Hatch 1983: 183–4). A slower speech rate may grant a non-native speaker more time to process their interlocutor's utterances, while the other features of FDS may aid comprehension, or at least be intended to (Wesche 1994: 233). Indeed, there are larger distinctions between the duration of voiced versus voiceless consonants in FDS than in speech directed towards a native-speaker (Sankowska *et al.* 2011), as well as significant vowel hyperarticulation which facilitates phonetic processing for both native and non-native speakers (Uther *et al.* 2007; Uther *et al.* 2012).

More fully released consonants, less-reduced vowels and fewer contractions are not only features of foreigner-directed speech, but also more careful speech styles, as noted earlier (Giegerich 1992: 289; Laver 1994: 68; Kirchner 2001: 26). Though we cannot be sure as to which of these registers the speakers will adopt (if any), the same outcome is expected, i.e. lower frequencies of phonetically-reduced negative tag variants, because of the decreased levels of phonetic reduction found more generally in these types of speech.

2. The variable

The variable at the centre of this study, negative tags, are *yes-no* questions consisting of a negatively-marked verb with *n't* and a subject (a personal pronoun or *there*). Under standard tag formation rules, they are attached to the right-periphery of an affirmative clause with which the tag agrees (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 810), e.g. *it's nice, isn't it*? This investigation focuses on tags matching this definition that have the verbs BE and DO, as these are the most frequent types in the data. The variable context excludes invariant lexical tags (e.g. *it's nice, no*?), tags with positive polarity (e.g. *it's not bad, is it*?), negative tags with a negated anchor clause (e.g. *it isn't, isn't it*?), and those that do not agree with their anchor (e.g. *they changed the*

comprehensive system, wasn't it?). The latter are rare in Tyneside English (Childs 2017a) and in some cases could represent performance errors (Algeo 1988: 179).

The tags were categorised as full, reduced or coalesced to represent three stages in a gradual process of reduction. Where there is variation between related full and reduced linguistic forms, it is assumed that the reduced form developed later (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 125). Furthermore, this trajectory has been attested for the development of *innit* from *isn't it* (Krug 1998; Andersen 2001). Although some reduced and coalesced forms were evident as far back as Early Modern English (Jespersen 1940: 433), *innit* is a more recent innovation that has arisen in many British English dialects (Krug 1998; Andersen 2001; Cheshire *et al.* 2005; Pennington *et al.* 2011; Torgersen *et al.* 2011; Pichler 2013, 2016; Palacios Martínez 2015). In some of these dialects, *innit* is grammaticalising – for example, in certain varieties spoken in London, it can be used outside the canonical clause-final position and also in contexts where it does not agree with the anchor clause (Andersen 2001; Pichler 2016). In Tyneside English, the dialect of focus in this paper, *innit* is used in the same syntactic position as *isn't it* and does not appear to be as advanced in the grammaticalisation process compared to other UK Englishes (Childs 2017a). The present study includes *innit* amongst all other forms of BE and DO to examine interviewer effects on phonetic reduction more widely within the tag system.

3. The corpus

The corpus used in this investigation, the Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (henceforth DECTE, Corrigan *et al.* 2010-12), contains recordings of native speakers from the North East of England. The speakers in the present investigation had been born and raised in the Newcastle upon Tyne, Gateshead and North Tyneside areas and were still living there

at the time of recording in 2007-2011. The speakers had been categorised in the corpus metadata as "working class" and their education, occupation and parents' occupation supported this interpretation when these were considered in conjunction with the Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (Office for National Statistics 2010). To enable apparent-time analysis (Bailey *et al.* 1991), the speakers were separated into "younger" (18-25) and "older" (43-78) age groups, with average ages of 20.7 and 58.8 respectively.

Age	**Sex**		**Total**
	M	**F**	
Younger	12	9	21
Older	6	7	13
Total			**34**

Table 1: Sample

This sample was originally selected by Childs (2017a) for the comparative investigation of the grammaticalisation of negative tags (alongside other negation phenomena – see also Childs 2017b) in three Northern UK communities: Glasgow (Scotland), Salford (North West England) and Tyneside (North East England). Thus, there are some imbalances in the sample in terms of how many speakers are interviewed by people who speak a certain dialect or who have a particular relationship with the speaker, as discussed in section 4.2.3.[3] Nevertheless, the

[3] The choice of age groups for Tyneside was also partly determined by the need to maintain comparability across the three regional datasets used in Childs (2017a). The Glasgow recordings were from *The Glasgow Speech Project* (Stuart-Smith & Timmins 2006) where speakers were aged 13-14 (1997 sample), 14-15 (2003 sample) or 40-60 (both samples). The specific ages of individual participants within these age brackets are not provided in the

interviews are all triadic conversations led by a student interviewer, with two White British participants of the same sex who know each other well. The interviewers vary in terms of their familiarity with their interviewees, and their geographical origin and dialect – some are from the North East of England (like the interviewees), others are from elsewhere in the UK, and some are from outside the UK and speak non-native varieties of English – allowing for the analysis of interviewer effects on the variation.

The interviewers asked questions about various topics, including childhood, careers, hobbies and holidays, following an interview schedule of the type in Tagliamonte (2006). However, they had been instructed to welcome off-topic conversation and let the participants converse between themselves wherever possible (Allen *et al.* 2007: 22). The interviewer's input is generally relatively minimal compared to that of the interviewees and they tend to ask *wh*-questions (e.g. *what was it like when you were growing up in your house*?) or *yes/no* questions (e.g. *do you fight a lot [with your brothers and sisters]?*) whereas tag questions are much fewer in comparison.[4] As a result, an analysis of whether the interviewer's use of tag

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corpus. Therefore, when selecting participants from DECTE for the Tyneside sample (and also from the *Research on Salford English* corpus (Pichler 2011-12) for the Salford sample) in Childs (2017a), it was necessary to choose speakers whose ages matched the Glasgow age brackets as closely as possible while meeting all of the other criteria that needed to be controlled for or balanced across the datasets, such as social class.

[4] Almost half of the interviewers, 7 out of 16, do not use tag questions at all. If we count both positive and negative polarity tags with any verb type (a more inclusive count than the frequencies for the participants, which include only negative tags formed with BE and DO, as noted in Section 2), the number of tags that the remaining interviewers use varies as follows:

questions affects the interviewees' usage is not feasible with this particular dataset and so the focus in this paper is on the interviewees' speech.

4. Data extraction and coding

The negative tags were extracted from the transcripts using *AntConc* (Anthony 2011). The audio files were checked thoroughly to code for the pronunciation of the tags and check that none had been overlooked. Tokens falling outside the variable context defined in section 2 were removed from the sample, as were those that were ambiguous, unfinished, in false starts or used in reported speech, following standard sociolinguistic practice (Tagliamonte 2006).

The tags were coded for their phonetic realisation and several factors likely to affect the choice of variant, as follows, so that the impact of interviewer effects on the variation could be compared to other relevant variables.

4.1. Tag variant

The tags were assigned orthographic representations according to the extent of their phonetic reduction and were categorised as full, reduced or coalesced. Table 2 shows the reduction processes that the full forms appear to have undergone to arrive at the reduced forms. Coalesced forms have been reduced further, as the auxiliary and pronoun have become fused as "a single morphemic unit" (Andersen 2001: 98). Full and reduced auxiliaries occur with pronouns to form specific tags (e.g. *isn't he*). The coalesced tags combine the auxiliary and

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1 tag (3 interviewers), 2 tags (1 interviewer), 3 tags (1 interviewer), 4 tags (1 interviewer), 9 tags (1 interviewer), 13 tags (1 interviewer), and 31 tags (1 interviewer).

pronoun – the orthographic representation at the end of each tag indicates the pronoun it corresponds to: *–a* (approximating /a/, representing *I*), *-e* (approximating /i/ or /e/, representing *he*), *-it* (approximating /ɪt/, representing *it*).

Reduction process	**Full tag auxiliaries**	**Reduced tag auxiliaries**	**Coalesced tags**
Loss of medial [s]	isn't[5]	int	inne, innit
	wasn't	want	wanna, wannit
	doesn't	dint, dunt	dunne, dunnit
Loss of medial [d]	didn't	dint	dinna, dinne, dinnit
Reduction in vowel length	aren't	int	-
	weren't	want	werenit
	don't	divn't, dint	-

Table 2: Inventory of BE and DO negative tags in the data

The final /t/ of the full tag auxiliaries can have different realisations, including [t], a glottal stop or zero realisation (see Moore & Podesva 2009). For the purpose of my analysis, it is the loss of medial consonants in the auxiliary (specifically, the final phoneme of the verb stem before *-n't*) and/or reduction in vowel length from the full forms that lead to their categorisation as "reduced". Other studies of the variation have similarly combined *int* and *in* realisations of "isn't" into the same category (Cheshire 1981: 370; Pichler 2013: 183).

Three auxiliaries, *aren't*, *weren't* and *don't*, typically have no stem-final consonants to lose (Tyneside English is non-rhotic), but have long vowels in their full forms (*aren't* [ɑːnt], *weren't* [wəːnt] and *don't* [dɔːnt]) which become short vowels in their reduced alternatives. The form *divn't* ([dɪvənt], N=10), exclusive to North East English (Beal *et al.* 2012: 63), differs from the other reduced tags with its additional [v] and schwa that are not in

[5] There are no tokens of *ain't* in this data. *Ain't* is rarer in the North East of England than many other Northern regions and parts of the Midlands and South (Anderwald 2003).

the alternative *don't*. Although this could feasibly lead to the categorisation of *divn't* as a full variant, here it is categorised as reduced, because the transition from *don't* to *divn't* involves vowel reduction after the initial [d], from a long vowel [ɔ:] to a short vowel [ɪ]. This also places *divn't* tokens among other variants with "non-canonical" pronunciation, rather than conflating these with the canonical full forms.

4.2. Interviewer effects

The coding for the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewer's dialect is explained in sections 4.2.1-4.2.2, followed by a summary of the interview setup for each recording in section 4.2.3.

4.2.1. Interviewer-interviewee relationship

The relationship between the interviewer and each interviewee was coded as one of four options on a continuum of more to less intimate: family, friends, acquaintances, and strangers. While ethnographic studies have scope to explore speakers' social network score (Milroy & Margrain 1980) or community of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992), as in Moore and Podesva's (2009) analysis of the social meaning of tags within peer groups in an English high school, the current investigation's focus on pre-existing corpora leads to the implementation of broad relationship categories devised from information in the speaker metadata and the interviews themselves. Details of how these four categories were defined are given below. One interview was excluded because there was insufficient information to ascertain the relationship between the interviewer and interviewees, leaving 192 tokens for analysis.

Family

The “family” group consists of people who are relatives of their interviewer.

Friends

Interviewees and their interviewers who are friends have a high degree of familiarity and are in regular contact with one another, often knowing each other from school, university or work. They have close personal relationships in that they socialise with one another voluntarily outside their educational institution or workplace.

Acquaintances

Acquaintances include neighbours and relatively new work colleagues. Others in this category have one or two degrees of separation between them, e.g. the interviewee may be a friend of the interviewer’s partner. Acquaintances are therefore somewhat familiar with one another and have regular contact, but do not interact as often or know each other as well as friends do.

Strangers

The interviewers and interviewees who are strangers met only for the purpose of the recording. The only contact that they had beforehand was to arrange the interview.

4.2.2. Interviewer’s variety of English

The interviewer’s variety of English was coded as North East, Other UK or Non-native, as follows.

North East

Interviewers from the North East of England had been born and raised in the region and had lived there for most of their lives. Like the interviewees (all of whom are from Tyneside), they are native speakers of a variety of North East English.

Other UK

"Other UK" interviewers had been born, raised and spent most of their lives in a region of the UK other than the North East of England. All are native speakers of their respective variety of English.[6]

Non-native

The "non-native" interviewers speak English as a second or additional language and had been born, raised and spent most of their lives outside the UK. The three non-native speakers who conducted interviews in my sample are from Saudi Arabia, Thailand and China, respectively.[7]

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[6] The interviewees' dialect is likely to be more similar to other northern English varieties than southern English varieties, and it is possible that they could identify more with an interviewer who is similarly from the north. As there were only 7 "Other UK" interviewers, these factors relating to more specific regional provenance were not explored in the present study, but would be worthy of future investigation.

[7] Kangatharan *et al.* (2012) provide experimental evidence that "foreign physical appearance" rather than "foreign accent" is the most relevant factor conditioning speakers' hyperarticulation of vowels in FDS. As DECTE does not provide visual data, I analyse the interviewer's variety of English while acknowledging that speakers may also attend to their

4.2.3. Summary of the interviewee and interviewer demographic

Table 3 summarises the interviewer-interviewee relationships and the interviewers' variety of English for each interviewee in my analysis, as well as their age and sex.[8] With only one exception, the two speakers in each interview had the same relationship with the interviewer.[9] In DECTE, the interviewees are each assigned a code to preserve anonymity.

Interviewer-interviewee relationship	Interview	Interviewer's variety	Interviewees	Age	Sex
Family	2009_SEL2091_017	Other UK	GB/127	O	M
			JE/988	O	M
	2011_SEL2091_003	Other UK	MD/59	O	F
Friends	2007_SEL2091_009	North East	PM/85	Y	M
			SM/84	Y	M
	2007_SEL2091_031	North East	RB/16	Y	M
			GQ/21	Y	M
	2010_SEL2091_007	North East	SM/135	Y	F
			CB/848	Y	F
	2010_SEL2091_014	North East	AS/149	Y	F
			SB/151	Y	F
Acquaintances	2007_SEL2091_003	Other UK	LR/195	Y	F
			JS/221	Y	F

physical appearance, or their ethnicity or race (Douglas-Cowie 1978; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994).

[8] Speakers DK/131 (OM), P/416 (YM) and BB/530 (OM), interviewed by strangers, are not included here because they did not produce any negative tag tokens in this sample.

[9] Although the relationship between *interviewees* could also affect their language use, this was not examined here because all of the pairs have a relatively close relationship or at least have regular contact with one another. The pairs are usually self-selected, meaning speakers choose to be recorded with someone that they know. None of the pairs of interviewees are strangers.

	2007_SEL2091_026	Other UK	AL/912	Y	M
			RM/512	Y	M
	2007_SEL8163_001	Non-native	MM/123	O	F
			MM/456	Y	F
	2007_SEL2091_004	Other UK	MP/158	Y	F
			BB/929	Y	F
Strangers	2007_SEL8163_005	Non-native	JR/456	O	M
	2007_SEL2091_049	Other UK	JS/169	Y	M
			PS/243	Y	M
	2008_SEL2091_012	Other UK	AA/613	Y	M
			BB/329	Y	M
	2008_SEL2091_019	Non-native	CW/123	O	F
			MS/321	O	F
	2009_SEL2091_038	Other UK	B/145	Y	M
	2010_SEL2091_017	Other UK	SG/121	O	M
	2011_SEL2091_003	Other UK	EL/52	O	F

Table 3: Interviewer and interviewee information

As noted earlier, the sample was originally selected for a cross-dialectal analysis of variation and change in negation, including negative tags (Childs 2017a). As Table 3 shows, there is a caveat that some areas of interaction exist between the social characteristics of the interviewees, their relationship with the interviewer, and the interviewer's variety of English. For example, all speakers in the family group are older and were interviewed by someone speaking an "Other UK" variety. The speakers in the friends group are all young and were interviewed by someone from the North East of England (this is the only group where North East interviewers are found). The non-native interviewers meanwhile tended to record older speakers and have weaker relationships with their interviewees (acquaintances or strangers).

While these imbalances are unfortunate, when we consider that the interviewees in DECTE are students who complete these interviews as part of their degree course in Newcastle, it is understandable why these tendencies arise. Local students will interview people they know (friends/family) as opposed to strangers, whereas students from outside the North East will naturally know fewer people from the region and may have to interview people they know less well. One must also acknowledge that the majority of participants in

DECTE are recorded only once, which is true of those in this sample. An ideal avenue for future research is to record speakers on multiple occasions with different interviewers to examine style shift on an individual level. The present study is intended to provide an important first analysis of interviewer effects on negative tag variation, which has yet to be investigated, to identify how these tags vary on both phonetic and discourse-pragmatic grounds depending on the interviewer. Examining the quantitative distributional analyses alongside mixed-effects modelling in section 5 will allow for the exploration of which factors contribute most significantly to the variation.

4.3. Discourse-pragmatic function

Given their status as a type of *yes-no* question (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 810), it might be expected that the core function of tags is epistemic, i.e. to request information from the interlocutor. However, research on tag variation has identified a much broader range of discourse functions (Millar & Brown 1979; Cheshire 1981; Holmes 1982, 1984; Algeo 1988, 1990; Andersen 2001; Tottie & Hoffmann 2006, 2009; Kimps 2007; Moore & Podesva 2009; Pichler 2013, 2016; Kimps *et al.* 2014). Tag functions can also change through grammaticalisation (Brinton & Traugott 2005: 110), whereby the "autonomy of grammaticizing phrases and their growing opacity of internal structure makes it possible for new pragmatic functions to be assigned to them" (Bybee 2003: 618).

One known development of this kind is that tags which are reduced in form can become associated with non-conducive functions, i.e. where "no answer is required" in response to the tag (Cheshire 1981: 375). For example, Cheshire (1981, 1982) found that *in't*, *ain't* and Standard English alternatives were used in conventional tags, which adhere to the sincerity conditions that "the speaker believes the proposition is true" and "the speaker

believes that the hearer knows at least as well as he himself does whether the proposition is true or false" (Hudson 1975: 12, 24), but among tags that were non-conventional in that they violated that latter sincerity condition, only *in't* was used. Pichler (2013) found similar form-function correlations in Berwick-upon-Tweed, UK, where *innit* was favoured for non-conducive functions while canonical full forms were favoured for conducive functions. These observations are consistent with the interpretation that reduced and coalesced tags are further advanced along the cline of grammaticalisation than full variants and that they have developed "more semantically bleached meanings" (Pichler 2013: 217).

To investigate the potential correlation between non-conducive functions and phonetically-reduced tag forms, I listened to each tag in its discourse context and took into account intonation cues, since intonation contributes greatly to discourse-pragmatic function (O'Connor 1955; Millar & Brown 1979; Cheshire 1981; Holmes 1982; Näsblin 1984; Algeo 1990; Kimps 2007; Pichler 2013; Kimps *et al.* 2014). For example, tags with falling intonation express greater certainty than those with rising intonation (Holmes 1982: 50; Quirk *et al*. 1985: 811). However, intonation was not coded separately from function because "there is no tone-independent establishment of the discourse categories" of utterances (Cruttenden 2001: 71).

Following Pichler (2013), the tags were initially coded into five sub-categories – epistemic, attitudinal, mitigating, involvement-inducing and aligning – for the cross-dialectal analysis in Childs (2017a). These functions were subsequently grouped as either "conducive" or "non-conducive" because of the potential for reduction in tag form to be associated with non-conducive functions as described above (Cheshire 1981, 1982; Pichler 2013). Conducive tags are intended to elicit a response from the interlocutor, as exemplified in (2), whereas non-conducive tags do not invite such a response (Cheshire 1981: 375). Furthermore, conducive tags indicate that the speaker is "predisposed" to a particular answer (Quirk et al.

1985: 808), typically an affirmative one. Tags were therefore coded as "conducive" if, based on the discourse context, it appeared that the speaker was expecting or hoping for a certain response. For example, in (2) the speaker is committed to the truth of his/her proposition but uses the tag to elicit agreement from their interlocutor (Holmes 1982: 53; Holmes 1984: 54; Algeo 1990: 445; Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 300-1; Pichler 2013: 190). This specific function of the tag in (2) is "involvement-inducing" (Pichler 2013) – in other literature it has been called "facilitating"/"facilitative" (Holmes 1982, 1984; Coates 1996: 193; Tottie & Hoffmann 2006, 2009).

(2)	PS/243:	it was just misbehaving for (.) like didn't want to be telt[10] what to do it was the discipline, y'knaa[11]?
	JS/169:	I think we always had that with having like a Step-Mam and Dad on two sides we used to be very good at playing them against each other, **didn't we**?
	PS/243:	Aye

Examples (3) and (4) provide further illustration of conducive tags. In (3), BB/929's tag *didn't they* seeks verification of her proposition (*someone got stabbed once*) from her friend MP/158. This tag has an epistemic function, i.e. it is used "to reduce speakers' commitment to their propositions and to seek verification of these propositions from addressees" (Pichler 2013: 187) – a function that is consistently attested in previous literature (Millar & Brown 1979; Cheshire 1981; Algeo 1990; Tottie & Hoffmann 2006, 2009; Pichler

[10] *telt* = "told"

[11] *y'knaa* = "you know"

2013). In (4), IC uses the tag *aren't they* in a way that has been described as "mitigating" or "softening" (Holmes 1984; Tottie & Hoffmann 2009) as these tags "soften the negative force of interactionally dispreferred moves" (Pichler 2013: 189). IC's response to JK's utterance that she has seen Rod Stewart in concert suggests that she would not count that experience as "seeing a famous person". Such conducive mitigating tags "challenge addressees to justify the proposition the speaker disagrees with" (Pichler 2013: 189-90); indeed, JK defends herself by replying indignantly, "Yeah well (.) famous!".

(3)

Fieldworker:	Has anything big ever happened around here (.) at all (.) like some sort of (.) disaster or--
BB/929:	*((To fellow interviewee MP/158))* Someone got stabbed once, **didn't they**?
Fieldworker:	Really?
BB/929:	Someone got stabbed once round here and that's about it.
Fieldworker:	When was that? What happened?
BB/929:	I dunno. Mightn't even been true @ Mightn't even be true, just (.) I heard someone got stabbed once.

(4)

Fieldworker:	em (.) have you ever seen anyone famous?
	(*participants discuss famous people they have seen either in concert or in everyday life*)
	[…]
JK:	Oh I've seen Rod Stewart and [people like that, saw them at the concerts (.) bands
IC:	[Oh they're just- bands though **aren't they** really
JK:	Yeah well (.) famous!
IC:	ish, yeah

Non-conducive tags, on the other hand, are not intended to elicit a response from the hearer. Example (5) features an "aligning" tag (for Holmes 1982, a "responsive" tag) which does not elicit a response itself but functions as a positive politeness device to signal agreement with the previous speaker (Pichler 2013: 191-2). The function of the tag in (6) has an "attitudinal" (Tottie & Hoffmann 2006; Pichler 2013) or "punctuational" (Algeo 1990) function. These tags are "self-centered" in that they "point up what the speaker has said" (Algeo 1990: 446) and are non-conducive because the speaker does not expect a response from their interlocutor (Coates 1996: 194; Tottie & Hoffmann 2006: 300). The speaker is fully committed to the proposition that they express (Algeo 1990: 446; Pichler 2013: 189).

(5) Fieldworker: The world is changing.
MM/123: Yes. Mm it is, **isn't it**?

(6) GB/127: I think we're a bit like Yorkshire and that **aren't we** y'knaa and people e- e- you've got to have pride in your identity like y'knaa eh I think this is part of the reason why we take it so bad you know up here when wor football team's doing so badly, it's like as if ye- ye are representing us as a city you know

4.4. Speaker age and sex

Recent studies of tag variation according to social variables have focused mainly on *innit*, finding that young people are leading in its use (Krug 1998; Andersen 2001; Palacios Martínez 2015; Pichler 2016) and that it is associated more with male speakers than female

speakers (Andersen 2001; Torgersen *et al.* 2011: 108; Pichler 2013). While women typically lead linguistic change (Labov 2001: 321), it is perhaps not so surprising that *innit* is an innovation associated more with men, considering its status as a non-standard and stigmatised form (see section 1). Pichler (2013) suggests that *innit* may have covert prestige for these speakers, given the common association between non-standard variants and male speech (Chambers & Trudgill 1998: 61). For this study, the tokens were coded for speaker age ("younger" or "older", as defined in section 3) and sex ("male" or "female") to ascertain whether there is patterning along these dimensions that is indicative of linguistic change.

5. Results of quantitative analysis

This section presents results of distributional analyses to show how Tyneside speakers' phonetic reduction of negative tags varies according to their relationship with the interviewer and the interviewer's variety of English (section 5.1). Additional effects of the interviewees' age and sex (section 5.2) and the function of the tags (section 5.3) are also examined. The section culminates with a mixed-effects logistic regression to establish the relative impact of these factors on the variation (section 5.4).

5.1. Interviewer effects

Figure 1 shows the relative frequency of full, reduced and coalesced negative tag variants in the sample (as a percentage of the total number of tags in that category) according to the speakers' relationship with their interviewer and the interviewer's variety of English.

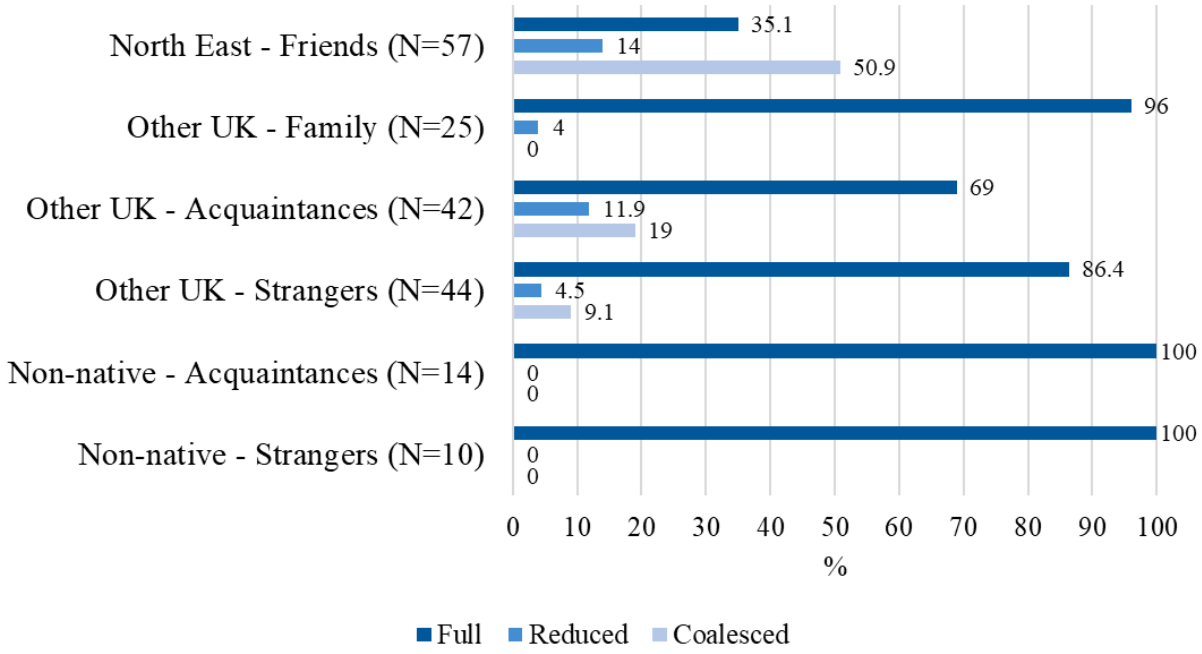

Figure 1: Negative tag variation according to the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewer's variety of English

These results lend some support to the hypotheses that the familiarity between interviewer and interviewee, and the similarity of their dialects, leads to speakers using more phonetically-reduced negative tags (i.e. reduced and coalesced variants). The combinations of the two interviewer-related factors shown in Figure 1 reveal a sharp contrast between the high rate of phonetically-reduced negative tags (i.e. reduced and coalesced variants) among speakers interviewed by a friend from the North East (74.9%) and the absence of these variants among people interviewed by non-native speakers of English, whether these be acquaintances or strangers (0%). One must take into account the smaller number of tokens within these latter two groups compared to the others (N=24), but the fact that these speakers categorically use full realisations is particularly striking. The three groups of speakers in Figure 1 who were interviewed by people from the UK but outside the North East exhibit more variation. As expected, people interviewed by an acquaintance use phonetically-reduced

variants more than those interviewed by strangers. However, being interviewed by a family member does not entail high rates of reduced/coalesced tags – quite the contrary. This group uses full tag variants near-categorically and thus bears similarity to the group interviewed by strangers. Although a chi-squared value cannot be given for Table 4 because of some sparsely-populated cells, collapsing the reduced and coalesced categories of variants into a single group of phonetically-reduced variants results in a statistically significant distribution (χ^2=59.75, d.f.=5, p<0.001).

These results corroborate previous findings that non-standard variants occur at higher frequencies in conversation with more familiar interlocutors (Douglas-Cowie 1978; Coupland 1980; Russell 1982; Thelander 1982; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994) and may reflect a more casual speech style featuring more reduction (Giegerich 1992: 289; Kirchner 2001: 2626). However, the patterns for the family group are unexpected under Hypothesis 1, which may be due to one of three factors. Firstly, the family members may not have as close a relationship as initially presumed. None of these interviewers are from the North East and therefore they may not have had regular face-to-face contact with their interviewees, who are from the North East, particularly as none of the relatives are immediate family like parents or siblings. Secondly, family members may not be as relaxed as friends are in an interview context. Indeed, Schilling (2013: 124) describes how relatives may find sociolinguistic interviews awkward, especially if the interviewer asks questions where both the interviewer and interviewee(s) already know the answers. In these cases, the interview is not representative of the usual conversation that relatives have with each other, which may cause speakers to monitor their speech more and use a different style. Thirdly, the family members in my sample are all older and thus the dearth of reduced/coalesced tags in their speech could reflect an age-based difference in usage, as explored further in section 5.2.

We also see that speakers who were interviewed by someone from the North East have the highest rates of tag reduction, followed by those in conversation with an Other UK interviewer, then those recorded by a non-native speaker of English. These findings illustrate the advantage of insider status (as a North East interviewer, in this case) in eliciting more casual speech (Tagliamonte 2006: 47). Furthermore, these results are in line with the proposal that speech used in conversation with non-native speakers tends to have more full vowel and consonant articulation.

5.2. Interviewer effects in interaction with age and sex

To investigate social trends that may be indicative of linguistic change in progress, the next analysis concerns potential interactions between the interviewer effects and the social factors of age and sex, shown in Table 4. Here and subsequently, percentages based on a small number of tokens (<10) are given in parentheses.

	Age & sex	Full		Reduced		Coalesced		Total N
		%	N	%	N	%	N	
North East								
Friends	YM	26.5%	13	16.3%	8	57.1%	28	49
	YF	(87.5%)	7	(0%)	0	(12.5%)	1	8
Other UK								
Family	OM	100%	18	0%	0	0%	0	18
	OF	(85.7%)	6	(14.3%)	1	(0%)	0	7
Acquaintances	YM	28.6%	4	21.4%	3	50%	7	14
	YF	89.3%	25	7.1%	2	3.6%	1	28
Strangers	YM	82.1%	23	3.6%	1	14.3%	4	28
	OM	(100%)	5	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	5
	OF	90.9%	10	9.1%	1	0%	0	11
Non-native								
Acquaintances	YF	(100%)	3	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	3
	OF	100%	11	0%	0	0%	0	11
Strangers	OM	(100%)	1	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	1
	OF	(100%)	9	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	9

Table 4: Negative tag variation according to speakers' age and sex, plus the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewer's variety of English

The interviewer effects identified in section 5.1 are generally maintained when the social factors of age and sex are considered, as Table 4 shows. The surprising result for "Family" that was identified in Figure 1 turns out to be representative of the patterns among the other groups of older speakers in Table 4, which indicates that older speakers use full variants at high rates regardless of the interview setup. Young male speakers use phonetically-reduced variants much more frequently than speakers in other social groups, which is consistent with the social trends observed for *innit* as mentioned in section 4.4 (Krug 1998; Andersen 2001; Torgersen *et al.* 2011: 108; Pichler 2013, 2016; Palacios Martínez 2015).

The results add a new stylistic dimension to the existing social picture, revealing a dramatic reversal in the young men's preferred choice of variant between interview contexts. They use full variants at comparatively low rates (<30%) in the "North East Friends" and "Other UK Acquaintances" groups, but much higher rates (over 80%) in the "Other UK Strangers" category. Social trends therefore appear to weaken or disappear when speakers in a particular social group are interviewed by an unfamiliar person who speaks a different dialect from their own. When interpreting patterns of linguistic change along social dimensions, we therefore ought to consider whether speakers within in each social group were interviewed by different individuals (see also Wolfson 1976), otherwise there is potential to misinterpret patterns as social variation when they are actually the result of undiscovered interviewer effects.

5.3. Interviewer effects in interaction with tag function

As reduction in phonetic form and pragmatic expansion are both associated with more advanced stages of grammaticalisation in the tag system (Tottie & Hoffmann 2009; Pichler 2013, 2016), I now examine whether there is any interaction between the interviewer effects and the discourse-pragmatic function of the tags. Previously discussed in section 4.3 was the possible development of non-conducive meanings and their correlation with phonetically-reduced tag forms (Cheshire 1981, 1982; Pichler 2013), as investigated in Table 5.

		Full		Reduced		Coalesced		Total N	% of total
		%	N	%	N	%	N		
North East									
Friends	Conducive	40.6%	13	12.5%	4	46.9%	15	32	56.1%
	Non-conducive	28%	7	16%	4	56%	14	25	43.9%
Other UK									
Family	Conducive	100%	13	0%	0	0%	0	13	52%
	Non-conducive	91.7%	11	8.3%	1	0%	0	12	48%
Acquaintances	Conducive	79.3%	23	3.4%	1	17.2%	5	29	69%
	Non-conducive	46.2%	6	30.8%	4	23.1%	3	13	31%
Strangers	Conducive	88.2%	30	5.9%	2	5.9%	2	34	77.3%
	Non-conducive	80%	8	0%	0	20%	2	10	22.7%
Non-native									
Acquaintances	Conducive	(100%)	9	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	9	64.3%
	Non-conducive	(100%)	5	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	5	35.7%
Strangers	Conducive	(100%)	9	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	9	90%
	Non-conducive	(100%)	1	(0%)	0	(0%)	0	1	10%

Table 5: Negative tag variation according to tag conduciveness, plus the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewer's variety of English

Table 5 shows that non-conducive tags feature phonetically-reduced variants more than conducive tags, regardless of the interview context. The only exceptions are interviews conducted by non-native speakers, where there is no variation in the tags' phonetic form to begin with. This parallel between phonetically-reduced tag forms and non-conduciveness, a possible consequence of ongoing grammaticalisation, brings Tyneside English in line with varieties spoken in Reading (Cheshire 1981, 1982) and Berwick-upon-Tweed (Pichler 2013) where this has also been observed.

Turning to the final column of Table 5, we can see that the overall relative frequency of tag functions varies depending on the interview context. Although conducive tags are always the majority, the interviewer-interviewee relationships that were originally defined as

the closest – friends and family – exhibit the highest frequencies of non-conducive tags, followed by acquaintances, then strangers. Strangers interviewed by non-native speakers of English have the lowest percentage of non-conducive tags of any group (10%). Thus, the closer the relationship between speaker and interviewer, and the more similar their variety of English, the more often speakers use non-conducive tags. Further exploration of this issue is left for future research, but it would seem that this quantitative distinction may reflect a qualitative difference in the types of interactions that occur in these contexts. Non-conducive tags typically express a speaker's stance or are used to agree with other speakers, whereas conducive tags more often request information or seek involvement (Pichler 2013: 200). The fact that conducive tags are used more often in the interactions with the lowest degrees of interviewer-interviewee familiarity and dialect similarity may represent speakers' efforts to maintain the flow of conversation in an unfamiliar or less relaxed setting, just as Bell (2001) suggested for the New Zealand discourse marker *eh* in a recording where it was used by the interviewer at a particularly high rate.

5.4. Regression analysis

To establish the relative impact of the factors considered thus far, this section presents a mixed-effects logistic regression in *R* (R Core Team 2014) using the lme4 package (Bates *et al*. 2015). Reduced and coalesced tags are henceforth collapsed into one category of "phonetically-reduced" tags to distinguish between full variants and those that have any extent of phonetic reduction, as well as satisfying the requirement for a binary dependent variable when running this type of regression using lme4.

The preceding distributional analyses in sections 5.1-5.3 have shown that the interviewer's relationship with their interviewees, the interviewer's variety of English and the

interviewees' age and sex affect negative tag variation in Tyneside. To account for the imbalances in the data previously discussed, the regression model includes one factor that combines the interviewer's variety, their relationship with the interviewee, and the interviewee's age. This ensures that the orthogonality requirement of the statistical model is met (Tagliamonte 2012: 132), while allowing for the investigation of the impact of all three factors by comparing their estimates and significance levels in the output. In this group, each level is labelled with the interviewer's variety of English given first, then the interviewer-interviewee relationship, followed by the interviewee's age. For example, an older speaker who was recorded by a stranger who spoke a native variety of UK English other than North East English would fall into the "OtherUK-Strangers-Older" group.

Some groups had to be excluded from the model because of their (near-)categorical use of one particular variant. These are (i) people interviewed by non-native speakers, as they used full tag variants categorically (N=24), and (ii) people interviewed by family members, as they used full variants 96% of the time (N=25). These exclusions reduce the sample size to 143. Although this is smaller than one would ideally like, it is nevertheless sufficient for the model to run effectively. Furthermore, the token distribution satisfies the standard minimum recommendations for at least 10 tokens per predictor (Pardoe 2012) and per cell (Guy 1980). Most cells (8 out of 10) also satisfy the more preferable "30 tokens per cell" guideline (Guy 1980). The final set of levels within this factor is as follows:

- NorthEast-Friends-Younger
- OtherUK-Acquaintances-Younger
- OtherUK-Strangers-Younger
- OtherUK-Strangers-Older

The other factors included in this model are verb type (BE, DO), conduciveness (conducive, non-conducive) and sex (male, female). Speaker is included as a random effect to account for any remaining inter-speaker variation.

Table 6 shows the results of this mixed-effects logistic regression. Within each fixed factor, the reference level acts as a baseline to which the other levels are compared (Levshina 2015: 146). The values for the "estimate" values represent the strength of effect, with positive integers showing that the context favours the application value – in this case, the use of reduced/coalesced variants as opposed to full variants.

	Tag reduction					
Total N	143					
AIC	128.5					
Log Likelihood	-56.2					
Deviance	112.5					
	Estimate	**Std. error**	**p-value**	**Sig.**	**%**	**N**
(Intercept)	-6.2137	1.4017	$9.30e^{-06}$	***		
Verb type						
Reference level: DO					19.4	67
BE	2.1201	0.5294	$6.21e^{-05}$	***	56.6	76
Conduciveness						
Reference level: Conducive					30.5	95
Non-conducive	0.7399	0.5000	0.138953		56.2	48
Sex						
Reference level: Female					10.6	47
Male	2.4784	0.6760	0.000246	***	53.1	96
Interviewer variety, relationship and interviewee's age						
Reference level: OtherUK-Strangers-Older					6.2	16
NorthEast-Friends-Younger	3.4264	1.2180	0.004907	**	64.9	57
OtherUK-Acquaintances-Younger	2.7538	1.2423	0.026646	*	31.0	42
OtherUK-Strangers-Younger	0.6440	1.2724	0.612790		17.9	28
Speaker						
Random standard deviation	0					

Table 6: Mixed-effects logistic regression of factors in the phonetic reduction of negative tags in Tyneside

As Table 6 shows, the factors that have a significant effect on the variation between full and phonetically-reduced negative tags are (in order of greatest impact, based on the p-values and estimate values): (i) verb type, (ii) the interviewee's sex, and (iii) the interaction factor of the interviewer's variety, interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewee's age. Childs (2017a), in her comparative analysis of negative tag reduction in three Northern UK communities, tested a similar model for Tyneside in which the same factors were included except for the interaction factor.[12] In that previous model, the same two factors were significant (verb type and sex) with the same direction of effect.[13] Thus, the inclusion of the interaction factor – interviewer's variety, relationship and speaker age – does not change the ranking of the other constraints; rather, the interviewer has a significant additional impact. A hypothetical alternative scenario where the new interaction factor was significant but speaker sex lost significance and/or changed its overall pattern would suggest that the original effect of speaker sex was not real but was an epiphenomenon of the interviewer effects.

[12] The original model had 205 tokens because the exclusions that were required in relation to the interviewer's dialect and relationship factors, as explained in sections 4.2.1 and 5.4, were not applicable as the interviewer effects were not taken into account (Childs 2017a). The original model also did not include age as a fixed factor as the older speakers near-categorically used full tag variants whereas the younger speakers used phonetically-reduced variants much more.

[13] The same was true when Childs (2017a) replaced "conduciveness" with "(inter-)subjectivity", i.e. whether the tag is oriented towards the speaker (subjective) or hearer (intersubjective), on the grounds that intersubjective meanings can develop through grammaticalisation (Traugott 2010).

Under the interpretation that higher frequency items come to be reduced through "the consequent overlapping and reduction of articulatory gestures" (Bybee 2010: 75), we can interpret the result that BE tags are more likely to become phonetically-reduced than DO tags as a product of the former's higher overall frequency. BE tags are likely further along the cline of grammaticalisation than DO tags, given the findings here and previous reports on the development of *innit* (Krug 1998; Andersen 2001; Cheshire *et al.* 2005; Pennington *et al.* 2011; Torgersen *et al.* 2011; Pichler 2013, 2016; Palacios Martínez 2015). According to Table 6, men are also more likely to use phonetically-reduced forms than women, just as men tend to lead in the use of *innit* specifically (Andersen 2001; Torgersen *et al*. 2011: 108; Pichler 2013).

The results for the interaction factor support the hypotheses that a closer interviewer-interviewee relationship and greater similarity between their dialects leads to speakers using more phonetically-reduced tags. The ranking of the four levels in the group in terms of the percentage of phonetically-reduced tags coincides with what was expected under the initial hypotheses: NorthEast-Friends-Younger > OtherUK-Acquaintances-Younger > OtherUK-Strangers-Younger > OtherUK-Strangers-Older. Being interviewed by a friend from the same region lends itself to especially high rates of tag reduction as this is the only group in which phonetically-reduced variants are the majority (>60%). Speakers interviewed by someone less familiar and from somewhere in the UK other than the North East of England use phonetically-reduced variants to a lesser extent and these percentages decrease further as the interviewer-interviewee relations become less familiar. Although the OtherUK-Strangers-Younger group has a higher overall frequency of phonetically-reduced variants than the OtherUK-Strangers-Older group, the model does not distinguish the two statistically. Once again, this indicates that social distinctions in language variation may dissolve in interview

settings where there is lack of familiarity between participants – a crucial methodological consideration for sociolinguistic research.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This paper has presented a quantitative variationist investigation of interviewer effects on the phonetic reduction of negative tags in Tyneside, North East England. Using the DECTE corpus of informal conversations between native speakers of Tyneside English and different interviewers (from different parts of the UK and abroad), the analysis focused on how the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, as well as the interviewer's dialect, affected interviewees' use of phonetically full, reduced or coalesced negative tag variants (e.g. *isn't it*/*int it*/*innit*).

Underpinning this research was the observation that speakers adopt more casual speech styles when speaking to people they know well, in which they use more vernacular linguistic variants (Douglas-Cowie 1978; Coupland 1980; Russell 1982; Thelander 1982; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994). The same tendency has been found when speakers are interviewed by someone who shares their dialect (Douglas-Cowie 1978). In contrast, when people are in conversation with a non-native speaker, they may use a less casual speech style, or "foreigner-directed speech" (Ferguson 1971) – a register with less phonetic reduction (Hatch 1983: 183–4). In the light of these observations, the hypotheses for the present study were: (i) the closer the interviewer-interviewee relationship, the more likely the interviewee is to use more phonetically-reduced (reduced and coalesced) negative tag variants; (ii) the more similar the interviewer's variety of English is to the interviewee's, the more likely the interviewee is to use phonetically-reduced negative tag variants.

Although the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the interviewer's variety of English were not always orthogonal, examining the rate of negative tag reduction according to the combination of these two factors revealed that the percentage of phonetically-reduced tag variants ranged from 74.9% among speakers interviewed by a friend from the North East of England down to 0% for speakers recorded by an acquaintance or stranger who was a non-native speaker of English. The categorical use of full tags in the latter group could reflect either FDS or a more careful speech style, both of which characteristically feature more precise articulation, less vowel reduction and less contraction (on FDS: Hatch 1983: 183-4; Uther *et al*. 2007; Kangatharan *et al*. 2012; on careful speech styles: Giegerich 1992: 289; Laver 1994: 68; Kirchner 2001: 26).

It would appear that the phonological properties of casual speech and FDS are the same, or at least intrinsically linked, but that their lexical and grammatical properties are distinct. For example, FDS typically includes simple, high-frequency words and simple grammatical constructions (Saville-Troike 2017: 113) which would not necessarily be expected to occur at higher frequencies in more careful as opposed to more casual styles. In contrast to this typical type of FDS (called "grammatical" FDS), there is an additional marked variety called "ungrammatical" FDS which is a patronising style in which speakers might omit verbs or use constructions such as "*no* + verb", e.g. *you no go there* (Ellis 1997: 45). Indeed, one of the interviews in the sample, between a non-UK interviewer and two older men, contained features of this type (e.g. *you understand that*?). These latter features in particular would not be characteristic of careful speech between two native speakers of English. Future research could therefore establish how variables on the level of the grammar are used differently with different interlocutors, to disentangle the effects of FDS versus careful speech.

In a mixed-effects logistic regression analysis, the interviewer effects (in interaction with age) had a significant impact on the variation, after verb type and speaker sex. Childs (2017a) identified the latter two variables as significant in relation to this variation and the fact that they remain significant in the present analysis, with their effects unchanged, shows how the interviewer effects apply on top of these existing factors. Thus, we can identify a hierarchy of constraints on this variation in which the linguistic is primary, followed by the social, then the interviewer effects. These findings also suggest that phonetically-reduced negative tags are not simply indicators associated with particular groups, but they are in fact sociolinguistic markers (Labov 2001: 196), as they are stigmatised (see section 1) and have been shown here to vary on both social and stylistic dimensions.

Another contribution of this research is the observation that social trends in the variation vanish in the interview situations that would be expected to be the least vernacular or casual. Younger speakers, particularly men, are the main users of phonetically-reduced tag forms, but even they eschewed these variants in interview with a non-familiar, non-native speaker of English. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant difference in the usage between young and old speakers when they were interviewed by strangers with a UK dialect that was different from their own. Corpus-based investigations of language variation and change according to broad social categories would therefore be strengthened through consideration of potential interviewer effects to ensure that possible social trends are not in fact an interviewer effect masquerading as a social effect. In practical terms, these findings emphasise the importance of rapport between interviewers and interviewees to minimise the impact of the Observer's Paradox (Labov 1972). The DECTE interviewers who are from the North East of England (like the interviewees) would appear to have an advantage in conducting their sociolinguistic interview, as they are already familiar with the community under study and its culture (Tagliamonte 2006: 47).

Analysing the discourse-pragmatic function of the tags revealed that they are used differently depending on the interview setup. Non-conducive tags, where "no answer is required" (Cheshire 1981: 375), were used at decreasing rates as the familiarity of the interviewer and interviewee decreased. Speakers interviewed by a friend or family member used non-conducive tags at rates of over 40% (versus conducive tags, which are intended to elicit an answer from the interlocutor), which decreased for acquaintances and yet again decreased for strangers. Strangers interviewed by a non-native speaker of English used them at especially low rates, instead favouring conducive tags 90% of the time. This preference for conducive tags could reflect a qualitative difference in these interactions, perhaps indicating that these speakers use the tags more like conventional questions to request information, or to encourage others to contribute to the conversational floor, which are common conducive functions (Pichler 2013: 200). Interlocutors who are better acquainted share more common ground (Kyratzis & Ervin-Tripp 1999: 1325), which would explain why they do not use so many of these conducive tags and instead can use more non-conducive tags for functions such as stance-marking and agreeing with others (Pichler 2013: 200).

As language variation and change research focuses predominantly on the language used by speakers, with primary focus on internal and social factors, the interviewer's role is sometimes treated as tangential and of little importance, if any, to the analysis. As demonstrated in this paper, the impact that interviewers have on the data that they collect ought to be granted more attention and consideration in sociolinguistic research. Interviewers who know their participants well and speak the same dialect as them appear to have the best chance of eliciting casual speech and a higher frequency of vernacular variants. Of course, this may depend on other factors too, such as the conversation topic (Douglas-Cowie 1978: 43; Coupland 1980; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994; Schilling-Estes 2004), which were beyond the scope of this paper but are also worthy of further investigation.

Any further insight we gain into the nature of fieldwork interviews and the impact that methods have on our data can only enhance our interpretation of results. Although pre-existing corpora will always have some degree of inconsistency between recordings, e.g. different interviewers, this study has shown that these issues are not insurmountable. As long as corpus compilers provide metadata about the interviewers, any potential effect that they might have can be explored (see also Pichler 2010). In doing so, scholars can disentangle the effects of situational factors from social factors (Bailey & Tillery 2004: 28), improving the accountability of sociolinguistic analyses and arriving at more reliable conclusions about language variation and change.

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