Chapter Two

Fisher, Farmer, Teuchter, Chav: hyperlocal perceptions of North-East Scottish speech

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Abstract

From the outside, the North-East of Scotland may be perceived broadly as the home of 'the Doric'. However, speak to those from within the region, and a complex picture of intraregional identities emerges. Inevitably, the ideologies surrounding these often go hand in hand with perceptions of linguistic variation. This chapter presents findings from a perceptual dialectology study of the region, with a focus on the importance of considering hyperlocality when interpreting results. Surveying 320 informants from across the region, the study uses an adapted version of Preston's (1999) five-step methodology which includes mapping, place ranking, and speaker identification/evaluation tasks. The results of this process reveal several common ideas about linguistic variation in the region; however, when perceptions are examined at a more hyperlocal level, there is a considerable level of heterogeneity in the responses. This is interpreted through a lens of shifting local identity constructions and possible dialect attrition.

Keywords: Scots language, Doric, perceptual dialectology, local identity, dialect attrition

1   Introduction

Geographical identity is a complex beast. The question 'where do you come from?' can have many answers: in response to a stranger from a faraway place, our answer will most likely be the country we come from; to a compatriot, our answer will be more localised — a region perhaps, or the nearest significant city that we think they might recognise; to someone from the same region or city, our answer will be more specific and most likely namecheck a town, a village, or a particular suburb. And so it continues in a nesting doll of identities which become more and more local in focus as the context narrows: the football team you support, the pub you drink in, the school you went to…

When considering attitudes about language, this zooming-in effect is important to consider as speakers will concurrently hold opinions about linguistic variation which pertain to both the hyperlocal and the pan-regional context. The domain of language attitude research is centred around gathering perceptions of which variety speakers feel is 'best', or 'worst', or the 'most educated', or the 'friendliest', or the 'most proper': in this chapter, I will argue that the geographical scope of a study (in terms of whether respondents are asked to provide perceptions based on an expansive area or, as in the case of this study, a very definable region) may in fact be just as important and interesting as the answers we collect.

To this end, this chapter will present results from a perceptual dialectology study of the North-East of Scotland and discuss how the responses of North-East speakers can be considered at a 'zoomed out' level of pan-regional and even pan-Scottish identity, but also on a very local community scale. I will also account for traditional identities associated with the North-East of Scotland and test their relevance to current younger generations of speakers. Finally, the issue of the North-East dialect label

'Doric' will be investigated in terms of hyperlocal claims of ownership among speakers.

With relevance to the field of perceptual dialectology, the chapter will attempt to address two questions:

1. What methodological benefit is to be had in mounting hyperlocal investigations of language perceptions?
2. What can hyperlocal perceptions tell us about the linguistic situation in a place? (in this case, the North-East of Scotland)

2 Context

2.1 The North-East of Scotland

The North-East of Scotland is one of the current strongholds of the Scots language. According to the 2011 census, just less than half of all North-Easterners described themselves as Scots speakers. Much has been said about the problematic nature of the census question and the caveats that should accompany its results (Macafee 2017; Eunson et al. 2009); but, regardless of methodology, when directly compared with those across the rest of Scotland who were asked the same question, speakers from the North-East were among the clear frontrunners in terms of strength of identification with the idea of 'Scots'.

This relative linguistic conservatism may be partially a by-product of geography: the fact that the region is bordered by sea to the north and the east, with the Grampians to the south and west providing a buffer between the area and the rest of Scotland (historically, at least). Societally, it could be argued that the North-East did not experience the same level of industrialisation as observed in the Central Belt during the rise of the heavy industries. Granted, the city of Aberdeen has had its share of mills, factories and shipbuilding. However, until relatively recently, the more rural and coastal reaches of the North-East have remained tied to the predominant traditional industries of the region: farming in rural inland areas, fishing in the many coastal towns and

villages dotted along the coast, and granite quarrying at famously productive sites such as Rubislaw, Kemnay and Peterhead.

These traditional industries, which had underpinned the economy of the region for centuries, were inevitably dwarfed in the 1970s with the discovery of North Sea Oil. This economically transformative period saw Aberdeen become the European capital of oil and gas exploration and changed the fabric of the region: once rural towns and villages within driveable distance of Aberdeen grew to become important commuter hubs for the growing employment base, while house prices spiralled to become vastly higher than the Scottish average (Scottish Government 2016).

To circle back to the topic of linguistic variation and identities, it feels logical that such a demographic and societal shift as experienced by the North-East over the last fifty years should also influence the nature of the speech community. Social network theory suggests that communities which are dense and multiplex in terms of the connections people have with each other are more resistant to linguistic change (Milroy and Milroy 1997). Rewind to fifty or sixty years ago, and the communities found across the North-East would have been much more likely to fit this description than the world we live in now. Whereas once everyone in a small town would have known everyone else (and their business), nowadays most would probably struggle to name everyone who lives in their street. This general loss of community is obviously not unique to the North-East (and nor will it be true in any uniform manner to communities across the region), but there is no doubt that life in the North-East has changed dramatically in the course of the last half-century.

Linguistically, this shift in community dynamics has been commented upon by several studies in recent decades. Various studies in different parts of the North-East have reported general trends of dialect attrition among younger generations (McRae 2006; Marshall 2004; Millar et al. 2014; Smith 2005). Of most interest for this particular study is probably Marshall's (2004)

work in the market town of Huntly, which sampled both younger and older speakers to investigate the maintenance of traditional dialect features. Marshall's deployment of a 'mental urbanisation' index found that an increased sense of speaker loyalty towards the local rural community was linked to retention of traditional dialect features by that individual. Across the different age groups, younger informants in Huntly identified with their local community less than their older counterparts: a finding which was accompanied by a decline in local variants. However, the results across the younger speaker groups were not found to be uniform, with Marshall suggesting that the variability within these findings may be a sign of change in progress.

2.2   Perceptual dialectology

Perceptual dialectology (PD) is the study of non-linguists' perceptions of language variation and change. Pioneered by the work of Dennis Preston in North America, the field partly arose from a desire to address a perceived shortcoming of previous language attitude studies (Williams et al. 1996: 172–173) by incorporating a geographical element to the consideration of speakers' perceptions (as opposed to asking people to evaluate speakers, but not actually querying where they believe those voices to come from). PD is now generally considered, by Preston himself and others in the field, under a larger umbrella of 'language regard' – a catch-all term which aims to investigate 'the entire process of positioning and organizing languages, varieties, and their units and use within the belief structure of groups' (Preston, 2013: 93).

As well as probing what speakers believe about language use from place to place (from an evaluative perspective), PD also investigates people's understanding of where geographical dialect boundaries exist by utilising mental mapping methods. Preston (1988: 475–6) outlines the primary motivations of PD as seeking answers to the following questions:

How different from (or similar to) their own do respondents find the speech of other areas?

What do respondents believe the dialect areas of the region to be?

What do respondents believe about the characteristics of regional speech?

Where do respondents believe taped voices to be from?

What anecdotal evidence do respondents provide concerning their perception of language variety?

2.3   The Linguistic Homeland

While many PD studies investigate perceptions over a vast area (often at country-level), fewer researchers have focused on more geographically defined communities. An important example of the latter is to be found in Diercks' (2002) regionally-focused study of perceptions in a small area of northern Germany. In this work, Diercks introduces the notion of the 'linguistic homeland' (2002: 51). Diercks discusses this as a reference point which speakers use to construct their perceptions of linguistic and spatial distance relative to their immediate surroundings, but also encompassing the classification of neighbouring areas. He observes that:

> […] individuals discover the concept of linguistic distance of their dialect in relation to those of neighbouring villages and incorporate the stereotypical orientations of their community and pass them on. (Diercks 2002: 51).

This is a useful basis on which to consider PD research at an intensely regional level: the idea that we should, naturally, be interested in how perceptions are shaped by who speakers think they are linguistically; but that we also need to be mindful of how perceptions may be shaped by speakers' feelings about who they are not (or who they do not want to be perceived as being similar to). This preoccupation with defining ourselves based on opposition to others is a phenomenon that can be observed at different geographical levels (e.g., Canadians abroad taking great pains to stress that

they are Canadian, not American; or someone pointing out that they come from X village rather than the nearest 'big' town/city).

2.4   Mental mapping

It is at this point that mental mapping provides an important implement in the PD researcher's toolbox. Observation of attitudes via mental mapping is rooted in behavioural geography and attempts to examine the difference in people's perceptions between 'the attributes of "here" and "there"' (Gould and White 1986: 1). Mental mapping places emphasis on individuals' 'spatial interaction' with their surroundings — an interaction which is informed as much by subjective perceptions and relative experience as it is by physical geography. According to Gould and White (1986: 29):

> Our views of the world, and about people and places in it, are formed from a highly filtered set of impressions, and our images are strongly affected by the information we receive through our filters.

It has been suggested that such filters are 'clearly related to experience, to the moulding of individuals and their social norms' (Diercks 2002: 52). Therefore, when considering hand-drawn mental maps of dialect areas as created by speakers in perceptual dialectology studies, it is important to consider the 'filters' which may be impressing upon their subjective rendering of linguistic variation.

2.5   Emic and etic perceptions

Perceptual impressions of linguistic variation will also inevitably vary based on insider versus outsider knowledge of a community. Closely related to the aforementioned discussion of mental mapping, this is linked to the formulation of perceptual boundaries. It has been suggested by Iannàccaro and Dell'Aquila (2001) that such boundaries are informed by the existence of

'etic' and 'emic' isoglosses: in which an etic isogloss refers to the linguistic boundaries constructed by those from outwith the community, while an emic isogloss refers to boundaries which are co-constructed and recognised by the community itself. According to Cramer (2018), the etic/emic distinction was developed by Pike (1954: 8), who described it as 'two basic standpoints from which a human observer can describe human behavior, each of them valuable for certain specific purposes'. By considering both etic and emic perspectives, Cramer (2018: 76) proposes that perceptual dialectologists are able to reach a more 'interconnected' appreciation of language variation.

2.6   Claiming and denial

Another phenomenon to consider is that of 'claiming' and 'denial' — the finding that, if a voice sample is rated negatively, then respondents are more likely to shun it as 'not local'. Conversely, voices perceived of positively may be erroneously 'claimed' as local (as found in Long 1999: 220; Montgomery 2007: 336; and Coupland et al. 1999: 356). According to Coupland et al., this is closely connected to the notion of 'social attraction' (1999: 356). By aligning with a certain group, you identify with 'qualities' of that group, and thus members are motivated to foster positive evaluations of their own group. The result is that favoured voices may be 'claimed' as in-group speakers, while disfavoured voices may be 'denied' and geographically pushed away or placed somewhere the informants consider to be socially 'unattractive'.

3   Methodology

In order to probe the issues presented above, this study of the North-East of Scotland employs an adapted version of Preston's five-point approach for collecting perceptual data (Preston 1999: xxxiv). These five steps were presented to informants in the form of a paper survey comprising of several different activities:

1. **Draw-a-map**: For this task, informants were presented with a blank map of the North-East of Scotland and asked to draw where they believed different speech areas to exist.

2. **Degree of difference:** In this activity, informants were encouraged to consider their own hometown as the 'centre of the universe' and to rate twelve of the North-East's most significant population centres according to how 'similar' or 'different' speakers from these places are to them.

3. **Rating places**: Here, the same twelve population centres were offered and informants required to rate them according to 'pleasantness', 'Doricness' and 'intelligibility' (i.e., 'easy to understand' or 'difficult to understand).

4. **Placing and evaluating voices**: At this point, the survey moves from investigating informants' pre-existing perceptions of language variation towards gathering their reactions when presented with actual examples of speakers. This involved listening to audio samples of five speakers, placing them on the map to indicate where they are believed to come from, and then rating the voices according to five evaluative scales: 'friendliness'*,* 'pleasantness'*,* 'Doricness', 'educatedness' and 'rural'*/*'urban'. The five speakers recorded for this part of the survey were male speakers aged between 40 and 60[1]. These were sampled from five locations which are representative of the different subdialect regions offered by Millar (2007): one speaker from Aberdeen city (more specifically, Kincorth); one from central Aberdeenshire

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[1] This choice of speaker-sample demographic takes its cue from Preston's utilisation of 'male, middle-aged' voices (1989: 128). Admittedly, this is not representative of the wider speech community; however, it aims to mitigate gender-based perceptive variability in terms of the evaluative scales used in this study based on 'friendliness' or 'educatedness'. In a more far-reaching study, a wider range of voices from different demographics would be beneficial and may also yield interesting results regarding possible age and gender-influenced perceptions.

(specifically, Inverurie); from coastal Aberdeenshire, a Fraserburgh speaker; from Angus, a Montrose speaker; and from Moray, an Elgin speaker. Each audio sample contained around one minute of uninterrupted conversational speech.

5. **Open ended questions/conversations about language**: At the end of the survey, informants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts around three questions regarding regional distinctiveness, dialect change/attrition, and the benefits/challenges of being a dialect speaker.

Figure 1: Map showing locations mentioned in this chapter (Google Maps)

In total, 320 respondents were surveyed in face-to-face group sessions across the North-East. As a result, speakers from fourteen separate locations were reached. These locations can be broadly grouped as follows:

- **Aberdeen city**: Hazlehead, Kincorth, Dyce (n = 58)
- **Central (rural) Aberdeenshire:** Inverurie, Logie Durno, Fetternear, and Oldmeldrum (grouped together as 'Garioch' for the purposes of data analysis), Alford (n = 96)
- **South Aberdeenshire**: Muchalls (n = 21)
- **NE-coastal Aberdeenshire**: Newburgh, Peterhead, Banff (n = 89)
- **Moray**: Elgin, Duffus (n = 56)

Respondents were sampled from two age groups: those aged between 14 and 16, and those aged 60 and above.[2] These contrasting age groups were selected in an attempt to view changing perceptions in apparent time.

4   Results

Given the multi-pronged methodology presented above, the results of this study are multi-faceted. This chapter will focus on data pertaining to hyperlocal perceptions; however, further discussion of the results can be found elsewhere — specifically, in relation to labelling of linguistic varieties (Leslie 2022) and suspected dialect attrition (Leslie 2020). For this present consideration, the results will be inspected in terms of their relevance to traditional North-East identities, their commentary on regional socio-economic matters, their demonstration of the 'claiming' and 'denial' phenomena, and their mapped representations of hyperlocal 'Doric' boundaries.

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[2] Both age groups contain a mix of genders, with the younger age group representing a more balanced demographic than the older cohort which contained many more women than men. Gender has not been explored in this chapter as, in the larger study of which this discussion forms a part (Leslie 2020), gender did not emerge as a consistently significant variable factor among cohorts which had a balanced gender mix.

4.1 Traditional North-East Identities

4.1.1 'Fisher'/'Farmer'

Traditionally, it could be argued that established identities in the region have tended to group around three different aspects of North-East life: the agricultural North-East, conventionally characterised by farming life and rural living; the many fishing communities found along the coast; and, finally, the city of Aberdeen – the North-East's only city and the central urban settlement. Therefore, if we consider North-East life as being historically viewed through the lens of these three traditional identities, are they observable in the maps of linguistic variation drawn by local speakers?

The results of the hand-drawn map task paint a mixed picture in this regard. A good place to start is with the traditionally perceived distinction between North-East coastal residents and those who farm the land away from the coast. Historically, this division has been quite keenly expressed in the literature (see Millar et al. 2014:18; Turnock 1987: 174; and McClure 2002: 3); but in this map task, the mentions of *fisher*-speak or *farmer*-speak were actually somewhat sporadic. However, a closer look at the distribution of these limited mentions reveals two locations where *fisher* speakers or *farmer* speakers were mentioned with marked frequency (see Figure 2 below). These were in Alford and Banff.
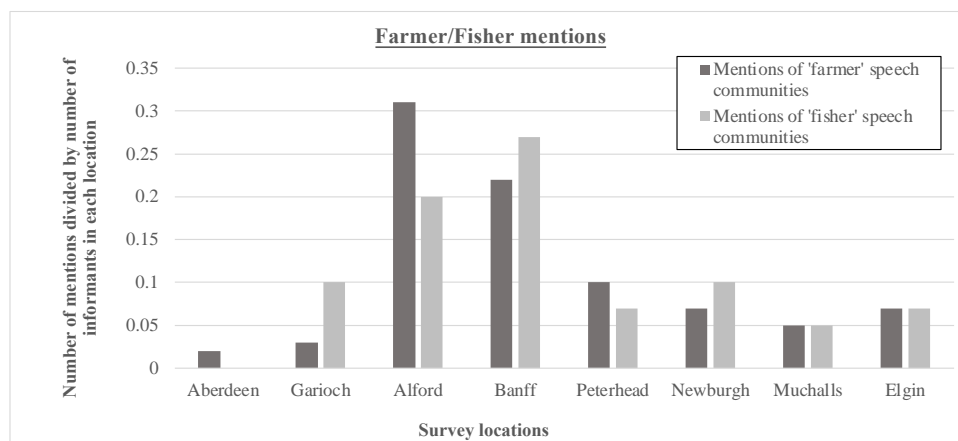

Figure 2: *Fisher/farmer* map mentions (divided by survey location)

Alford is a relatively small town with a population of just over two thousand (USP 2015). Located in the Don Valley, it is a traditionally agricultural hub and is the original home of the Aberdeen Angus cattle breed. Recently, the town has experienced some population inflation (a rise of 22.9 per cent from 2006 to 2016) as a result of new housing developments attracting some commuters (who now account for around a quarter of the working age population); however, at 26 miles inland of the city and with less comprehensive transport links (when compared to somewhere like Inverurie which is connected to the city both by rail and a dual-carriage road corridor), Alford is still arguably far enough removed from Aberdeen to retain its 'rural' status.

Up on the northern coast of the region, Banff is a slightly larger town with a population of around four thousand. Once a busy fishing port, Banff's maritime industry is now much curtailed compared to the significant harbour activity along the coast at Peterhead. At a drive of an hour and ten minutes to Aberdeen, Banff is also too far removed to serve as a serious commuter hub – only seven per cent of the working age residents make the daily 92 mile round-trip to Aberdeen, as opposed to figures of between 30 and 40 per cent in much of the Garioch and Formartine (Aberdeenshire Council 2019).

Given the 'remoteness' of these towns compared to the other survey locations included in the study, it is perhaps not surprising that speakers from these places should exhibit a slightly heightened attachment to the traditional 'fishing' and 'farming' identity markers. Because no older people were surveyed in Banff, and because no older people used the terms in Alford (partly due to low informant numbers and poor engagement with the map task by the older Alford group), this provides two comparable groups of youngsters among whom there appears to be some investment in these terms. It is important to point out, of course, that most youngsters in these locations did not mention *farmer* or *fisher*-speak on their maps; however, the fact that

more youngsters in these locations did mention them than informants from any other location is noteworthy and represents a buck in the general trend.

4.1.2 'Toonser'/'Teuchter'

Another pair of traditional North-East identities worth probing is the split between 'toonsers' (speakers from the city) and 'teuchters' (speakers from more rural areas). The *Dictionary of the Scots Language (DSL)* defines *teuchter* as 'A term of disparagement or contempt used in Central Scotland for a Highlander, esp. one speaking Gaelic, or anyone from the North, an uncouth, countrified person' (*DSL*, s.v. *teuchter*, n. 1 and 2). The *DSL* comments that 'no satisfactory etymology has been found' for the term, but that various theories have been proposed with some suggesting it may derive from Gaelic based on its resemblance to other occupational nouns in the language; while others have put forward a possible link to Scots *teuch* meaning 'tough, rough or coarse' (although there is less evidence for the latter suggestion). References to this term in the map task were varied in terms of spelling and included: *teuchter, tuechter, choughter, chuchter,* and *chookter*.

     'Toonser' and 'teuchter' are culturally salient terms in the North-East: you can even buy merchandise online (pin badges, baby bibs, t-shirts, etc). declaring yourself either part of tribe 'toonser' or tribe 'teuchter'. On social media, these opposing identities have also been highlighted by local content creator @Doric.dad (real name, Paul Hourston). Since creating his account in 2020, @Doric.dad's videos have garnered almost half a million 'likes' on TikTok. As well as starting most of his videos with the greeting 'Fit like iday, teuchters?' (meaning 'How are we today, teuchters?'), he also recently parodied the popular song 'She's a Belter' by Glaswegian musician Gerry Cinnamon, giving it his own North-East twist with the following lyrics:

I am a teuchter

We're nae like toonsers

We bide oot in the shire

We're runnin on reed diesel

And biden in the byre

We've got wir waldies

Coz the rain it makes a kirn

And fan wir on the road

the cyclists make us want ti girn

I am a teuchter

(@Doric.dad, TikTok 2022)[3]

He has also posted videos to his 20k+ TikTok followers as part of a playlist entitled 'Words teuchters ken but toonsers dinna' (*ken* meaning 'know' and *dinna* meaning 'don't'). At the time of writing, this series is comprised of seven parts and has included the words: *chattys, sharn, raa, steepie, sypin, rooser,* and *shiel.*

In the map data, many 'classification' comments were made singling out Aberdeen city as home to a 'distinctive' speech area separate to the rest of the region (n = 65). The instructions for the map task were to draw where 'distinct speech areas exist' and Aberdeen was by far the most commented-upon place overall (featuring in 131 maps in total). However, explicit references to the terms *teuchter* and *toonser* were less common. Combined, the hand-drawn maps contained 23 annotations including either toonser or teuchter-speak. Of these mentions, over 80 per cent were made, once again, by youngsters in Alford and Banff. However, these mentions are not equally

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[3] Translated into English as: 'I am a countryside-dweller/ We're not like city-dwellers/ We live out in Aberdeenshire/ We're running on red diesel/ And staying in the cowshed/ We've got our wellington boots/ Because the rain it makes a mess/ And when we're on the road/ The cyclists make us want to moan/ I am a countryside-dweller'.

distributed across the two groups: some Alford youngsters refer to both toonsers or teuchters on their maps; Banff youngsters refer only to the latter. This is in contrast to the fisher/farmer labelling which was mostly used contrastively to indicate notions of the 'here' and 'there' in a fairly consistent fashion. In the case of teuchter/toonser labels, the Alford and Banff teenagers' usage varies, and this appears to be because the Banff youngsters are not using either term as a means of self-identification – they do not see themselves as sufficiently urban to be a toonser or sufficiently rural to be a teuchter, whereas a subsection of the Alford teenagers are keen to identify themselves as teuchters (see Figure 3 for two examples of this).
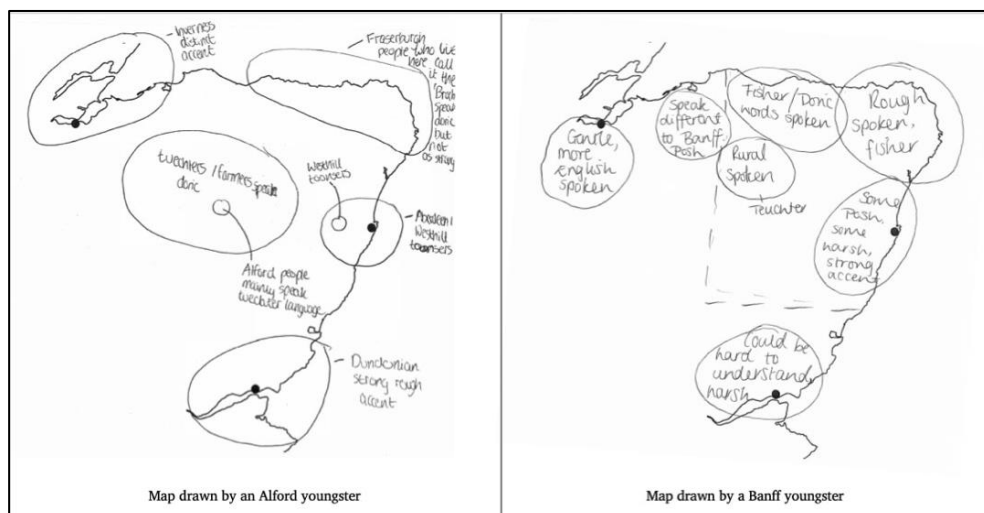

Map drawn by an Alford youngster   Map drawn by a Banff youngster

Figure 3: Two maps from informants in Alford (left) and Banff (right)

4.2 Socio-economic commentary

Much has been made in the previous literature about the social class structure of North-East Scottish society, especially in relation to use of North-East Scots. Macafee (1997: 546) writes of the region:

> A particular characteristic of (this area) is the vertical integration of the community. Middle-class people, including teachers, who have grown up in the area speaking the local dialect and participating in the local culture, are able to

provide children with role models, demonstrating by example that local people can succeed, and that they can be bidialectal.

However, McGarrity's (1998) research suggested that this egalitarian approach to language use is reserved to positive evaluations of idealised rural varieties of the dialect. She notes the finding that, in her study 'respondents identify with the quintessential Doric but are not interested in being associated with the urban variety' (McGarrity 1998: 147). Given that both of these comments are now over twenty years old, it is worth probing to what extent these sentiments still hold true.

Of all map annotations in the hand-drawn map task, *Doric* was unsurprisingly the most commonly-offered annotation; however, the second most offered type of label forms an explicitly pejorative set of terms which occurred with frequency, relating to the idea of perceived delinquency among speakers. This was characterised by map annotations such as *chav(s)/(vy)*, *neds* and *junkies*. Other lesser used similar terms included *mink(s)/(y)* and *tink(s)/(y)*. These all express a similar evaluation – one of perceived lowly social status – with *chav(s)/(vy)* appearing with the highest frequency.[4]

Across all hand-drawn maps, 43 terms were offered which could be included under this 'chavvy' umbrella. This makes it one of the highest frequency annotations across the whole survey. Notably, however, all of these annotations were supplied by youngsters. The reason for this is likely manifold: firstly, that some terms – e.g., *chav* and *ned* – are relatively recent lexical developments; secondly, that local rivalries may be more keenly experienced by teenagers; thirdly, that economic inequality in the region may

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[4] This in itself is an interesting example of diffusion. Originally a term found in the South East of England, and understood to be derived from Romani *čhavo* (meaning 'male child'), the term *chav* seems to have spread throughout the U.K. and is now in common use. It is interesting that this term is favoured by youngsters in the North-East ahead of the chiefly Scottish term *ned*.

have been exacerbated in recent years as a result of post-industrial hardship, the decline of traditional industries, and austerity; and, finally, it may just be that the teenagers have 'no filter' and just say what they think.

As Figure 4 shows, the areas of highest agreement for these pejorative labels centre on, to a lesser extent, the city of Aberdeen, and to a much greater extent, the city of Dundee. There is also a smaller and less significant area of agreement in the Buchan corner.
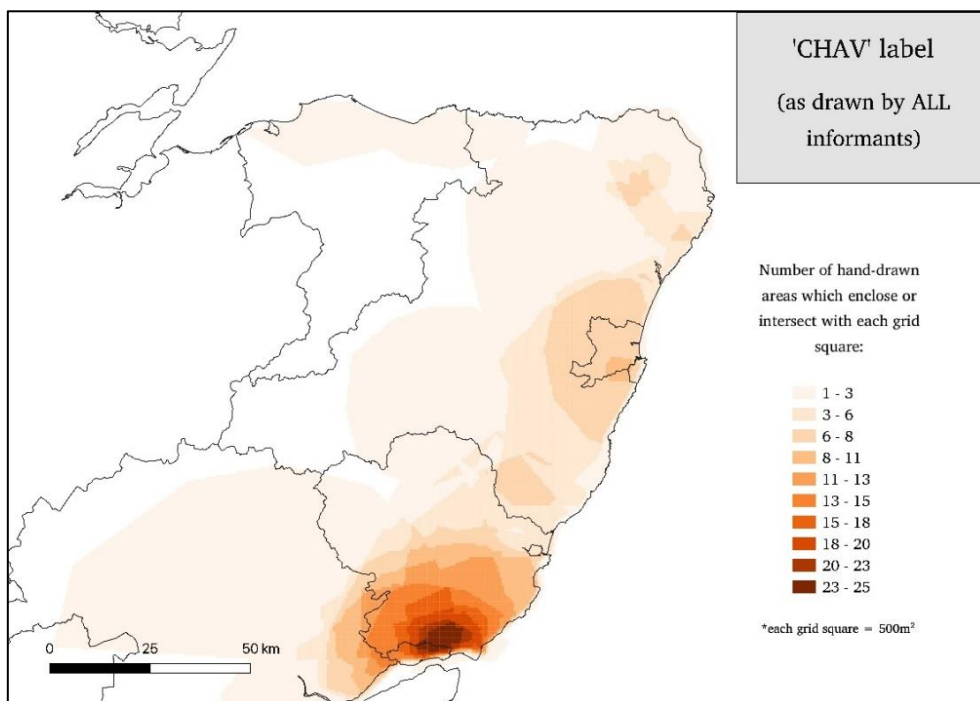

Figure 4:   An aggregated heatmap of all 'Chav' annotations

The highest number of mentions were recorded by youngsters from Aberdeen (n = 18) and Peterhead (n = 13). Although the number of mentions from teenagers in Alford and Inverurie are relatively low, when combined (n = 8), they produce a heat-map which could be interpreted as a more 'rural' perspective (although Inverurie is now a sizeable town, it is still arguably 'rural' in comparison to Aberdeen). Therefore, Figure 5 presents comparative heatmaps for these survey locations: Aberdeen, Peterhead and Central Aberdeenshire (Inverurie/Alford):
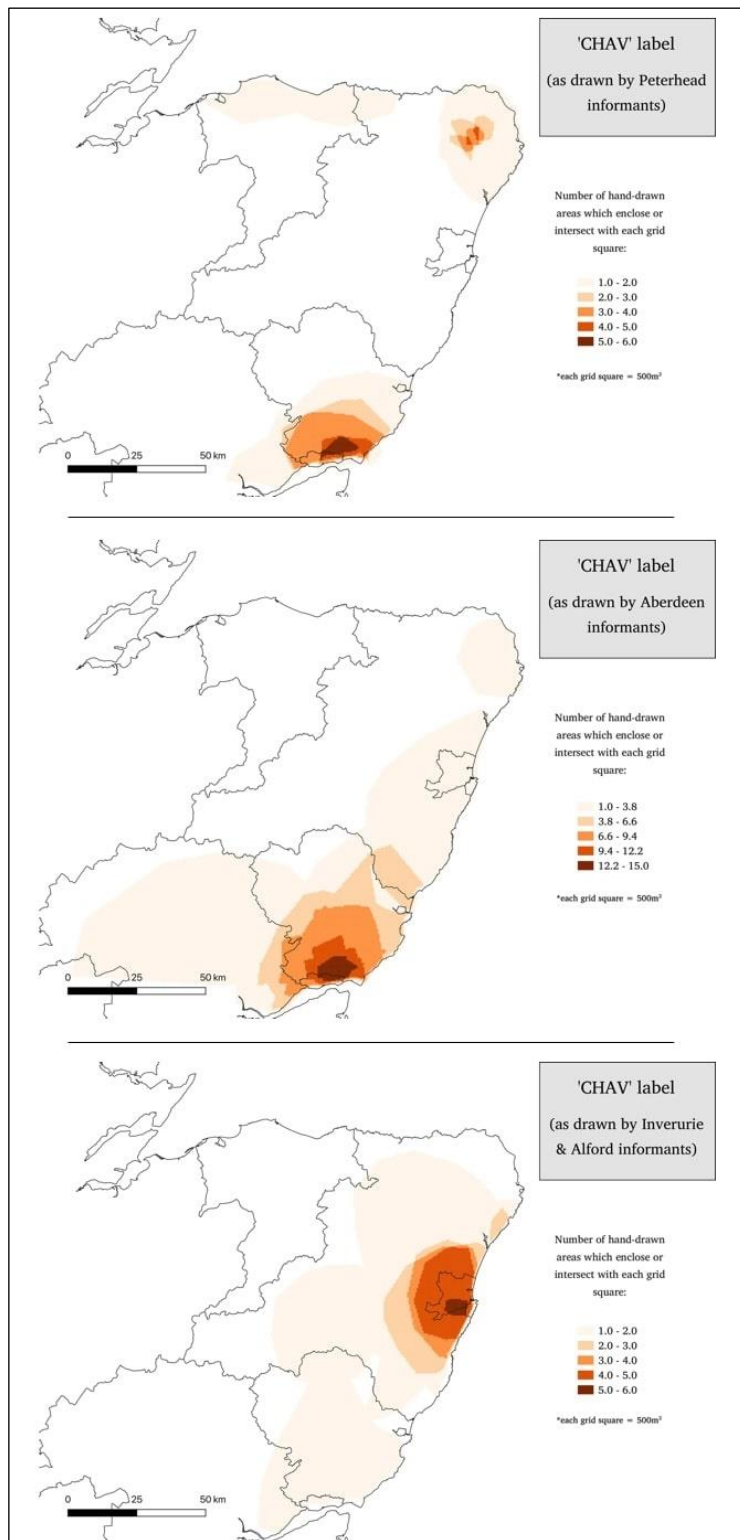
Figure 5: Comparative heatmaps of *Chav* annotations for informants in three different survey locations

From this, differences emerge in terms of where the *chav* evaluation is being directed. For the more rural Aberdeenshire informants, there is a strong area of agreement around the city of Aberdeen. The Peterhead youngsters differ slightly in that their map presents a small area of agreement just inland of Peterhead – this is because of several maps in which nearby Mintlaw is marked as *chavvy*. This is not the only evidence in the data of stigmatised views towards this town, most probably as a result of local rivalry. Comparing the heatmaps of the Peterhead and Aberdeen informants, the strength of feeling towards Dundee becomes apparent. As Scotland's third and fourth biggest cities respectively, rivalry between Aberdeen and Dundee has long been attested, with football matches between Aberdeen F.C. and Dundee United F.C. termed the 'New Firm' derby from the 1980s onwards (as a nod towards the notorious 'Old Firm' rivalry between Celtic F.C. and Rangers F.C. in Glasgow). Although separated by 67 miles, they are neighbours in city-terms – Aberdeen's other closest city-neighbour is Inverness, 104 miles north. Therefore, if the city of Aberdeen is considered as the foremost perceptual 'centre of gravity' for the North-East region, it is understandable that some youngsters may, in turn, construct their own sense of identity in opposition to those from Dundee. Of course, if this study was conducted again in Dundee, it is almost certain that similar negative evaluations of the North-East would be provided. A quick search on Google for 'Aberdeen/Dundee memes' presents culturally salient stereotypes in which Aberdeen is considered as somewhat of a rural backwater, while Dundee is mocked for its perceived urban deprivation. This commonly held stereotype is echoed in the maps of some young informants in which Dundee was referred to as *Scumdee* – a derogatory moniker for the city which has attracted much criticism for its insulting nature.

It could be argued that an evaluation such as 'chavvy' is outrightly social rather than linguistic, but this is where the overlap between these spheres of perception is visible. These annotations were offered in notable

frequency by speakers in a task in which the only instruction was to 'divide the regions into sections based on where (they) believe different speech areas to exist'. Therefore, it would be unwise to discard these evaluations as not pertaining at all to language. However, what these terms do suggest is a close link between negative social evaluations and subsequent stigmatisation of the relevant language varieties.
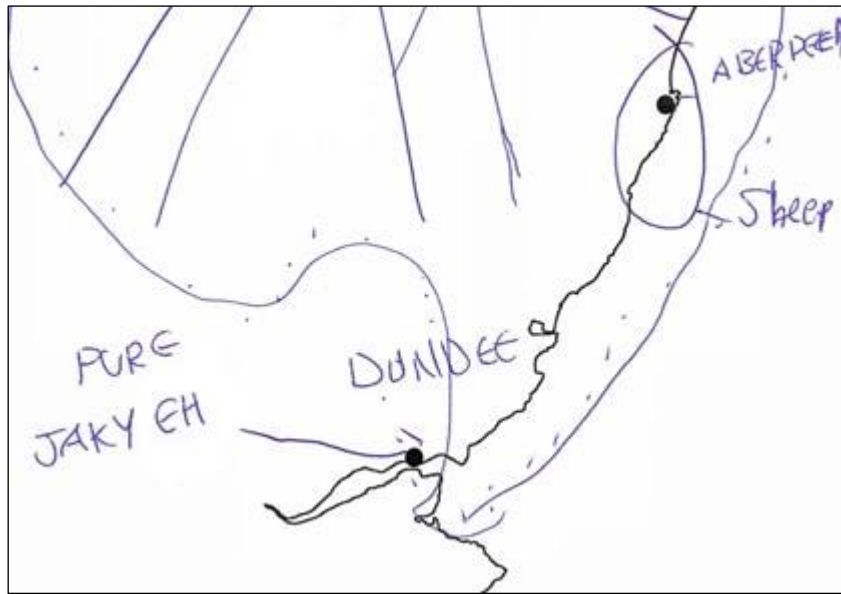

Figure 6:   A clipping from a dialect map drawn by an Elgin youngster

The above map (from a youngster in Elgin) makes use of the stereotypes alluded to previously by characterising Aberdeen speakers as *sheep* and those from Dundee as *pure jaky eh*. *Jakey* is a derogatory term, described by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as referring to 'A homeless person or tramp, esp. one who habitually drinks large quantities of cheap, strong alcohol' (*OED*, s.v. *jakey*, n.). However, this is not the only interesting thing about this map. The inclusion of 'eh' seems to be in reference to the sentence-final interjection often associated with Dundee and nearby Fife speakers, and parodied on social media by comedian Brian Limond (known as Limmy) in his series of videos titled 'That Accent' (in which a character repeatedly uses

this feature, only to be mocked by his West-Coast friend) – these have now morphed into a popular meme used to react to any accents/linguistic performances deemed 'questionable'. In this perceptual commentary, the informant's evidence of actual linguistic knowledge accompanied by a clearly pejorative annotation supports the claim that social perceptions and linguistic perceptions can be closely linked.

The flipside of the 'chavvy' evaluation are those labels associated with 'posh' speech. In this study, identifying a speech community as *posh* appears as a means of speakers separating themselves from those they do not wish to be seen as similar to. In the case of the North-East, it is probably safe to presume that when a speaker refers to other speakers as bein*g posh*-spoken, they do so in a pejorative context. Labelling a speech community *posh* seems to contrast in intent compared to positive evaluations of people being *well-spoken* or speaking a *nice* variety.

The hand-drawn maps returned 27 mentions of general 'poshness'. Attempts to create a heat-map of responses present an unclear picture of agreement, featuring several areas of higher agreement but disparately spread throughout the region. This is because, of the fourteen survey groups, only informants from three groups mentioned 'poshness'. These were youngsters surveyed in Peterhead, Banff, and Alford. While there is some agreement across these three survey locations that speakers from Aberdeen city and its surrounds are *posh*, other perceptions vary according to informants' hometown-specific view of the region. For instance, several informants in Alford name-checked Huntly speakers as being *posh*. In Peterhead, informants sent their evaluations of 'poshness' in two directions: firstly, along the Moray coast; and secondly, towards the city of Aberdeen and the more populous centres of Formartine and the Garioch, name-checking such places as Inverurie and Ellon. For the teenage Banff informants, evaluations of 'poshness' are to be found within a very local context, with nearby Gamrie (Gardenstown) being marked out for this purpose.

But why these places? Firstly, the focus of Banff, Peterhead, and Alford youngsters on Aberdeen and its immediate hinterlands as a target for evaluations of 'poshness' suggests that some of the teenagers from these rural and coastal communities may consider themselves as being socially (and perhaps ideologically) in opposition to the urban, economic centre of the region. Interestingly, none of the teenage informants in Inverurie offered such evaluations – but nor did they self-claim the 'Doric' identity label quite as strongly and as specifically as their peers in Banff, Alford, and Peterhead. Inverurie is also the closest to Aberdeen of these four locations and the best connected to the city. Therefore, it could be that in these non-urban places where younger speakers have a strong sense of 'Doric' or local identity, there is a desire to protect this by marking more urban areas as *posh* and, in turn, characterising them as lacking in the authenticity or 'localness' they perceive themselves as possessing.

In terms of the more locally-focused perceptions of 'poshness', it is necessary to consider these in the context of each individual survey location. When I first noticed some Alford teenagers singling out Huntly as *posh*, my first reaction was one of confusion. Both towns are quite similar demographically and have similar histories as agricultural market towns. However, it then occurred to me that possibly the only experience these Alford youngsters may have had of Huntly would have been to visit its secondary school for inter-school competitions. While Alford Academy is a non-descript modern campus, the secondary school in Huntly differs in that the central part of the school campus is an impressive early Victorian building with a grand archway. The school also differs in name from other secondary schools in the region: whereas all other state secondary schools in Aberdeenshire adhere to the '(Placename) Academy' format, the secondary school in Huntly is named 'The Gordon Schools'. Although just a speculative theory, this could be a reason why some Alford teenagers perceive Huntly as *posh* – especially given that their experience of the town and its speakers is

likely to be quite limited. The focus of some Peterhead informants on Ellon as being home to *posh* speakers feels more straightforward. In terms of towns of considerable size, Ellon is Peterhead's closest neighbour to the south. Therefore, some animosity or feelings of rivalry towards Ellon from the Peterhead youngsters is perhaps to be expected. In terms of socio-economic status, the average household in Ellon is £13,000 a year better off income-wise than their neighbours in Peterhead (Aberdeenshire Council 2019). This could play a part in Peterhead teenagers forming pejorative notions of their neighbours in Ellon sounding 'posh'. In terms of the Banff informants, certain evaluations of 'poshness' are formed on a more micro-regional scale, concentrating on small communities just along the coast from them. The small village of Gardenstown (known locally as 'Gamrie') is name-checked by some Banff informants as being *posh*. In this case, marking the Gamrie speakers as *posh* appears to serve the function of further 'othering' them. The annotation was accompanied on several occasions by other descriptors – namely *religious* and *inbred/all one family*.

In each case above, it is important to consider the hyperlocal context in which they have been offered. Combined, the *posh* label emerges as one used by informants as a means of creating distance. Montgomery (2012: 654) reports on similar findings in the north of England where informants frequently demarcated the South as *posh* or *posher* than the North – a trend explained as motivated by the desire to mark a clear North/South divide and reflective of speakers' preoccupation with emphasising their own 'Northern-ness'. These findings in the North-East of Scotland reflect a similar tendency for informants to use *posh* as a speech label aimed at putting distance between themselves and the perceived 'other'. The fact that this has mainly coalesced around more affluent or urban areas suggests that, on the one hand, perceptions of dialect-usage in the North-East may be moving towards a more socially stratified ideology (where to be living in an economically worse-off area increases the chances of considering yourself a Doric-speaker); while,

on the other hand, rural perceptions of the urban as less authentically Doric (as previously suggested by McGarrity, 1998) also seem to be holding true to some extent.

4.3   Claiming/Denial

In this study, the aforementioned 'claiming' and 'denial' is evident in some instances; however, this is by no means noted consistently across all survey groups. Rather, it is most clearly evident in instances where a speaker is rated strongly one way or the other. In Task #4 of the survey (please refer back to section 3 for details), claiming was most evident with the Inverurie speaker who was rated very positively by older Aberdeenshire informants and was claimed as being relatively 'local' accordingly. With the youngsters, a different type of claiming appears to be in play. In the results for the Inverurie speaker from youngsters in Alford and Peterhead, perceived 'Doricness' seems to be a key factor in whether or not a voice is identified as being part of the local speech community. Hyperlocal feelings of 'ownership' of the Doric will be discussed in the next section, and may explain why youngsters in Alford and Peterhead were found to be keen to 'claim' the Inverurie speaker – a speaker whom they perceived as very Doric-sounding, despite not returning unequivocally favourable ratings on the other evaluative scales.

Conversely, denial is also evident in some of the results. This is most apparent in the reactions towards the speaker from Elgin, in Moray. When overall results are considered, the Elgin speaker was rated as the least *educated*-sounding of all the speakers and was also not rated as particularly *pleasant*-sounding (possibly as a result of repeated use of discourse markers *like* and *(ye) ken*). He was also not accurately placed as being from the Moray area by the vast majority of informants; instead, in most cases, placements of the voice were quite dispersed. Despite this, for some survey groups, there were clusters of placements in locations which had been stigmatised in other tasks. For example, the Dyce (Aberdeen) teenagers rated the Elgin speaker

negatively in terms of 'pleasantness' and 'educatedness'; accordingly, the majority of their placements identified him as being from the south of the region, gravitating towards Dundee – a location that was described by many Dyce informants in the draw-a-map task as associated with *rough* or *chavvy* speech. Central Aberdeenshire teenagers surveyed in Inverurie and Alford were similarly unenamoured with the Elgin speaker and placed him mostly towards Aberdeen, the Buchan corner, and Dundee – locations that they marked out in other tasks as being more *unpleasant*, *unfriendly*, *rough*, or *chavvy*. Similarly, Peterhead youngsters rate the Elgin speaker as mostly *unpleasant*-sounding and place him either towards Dundee, Aberdeen, or neighbouring Fraserburgh.

This neighbourly rivalry between Peterhead and Fraserburgh produces one of the study's clearest examples of claiming and denial.
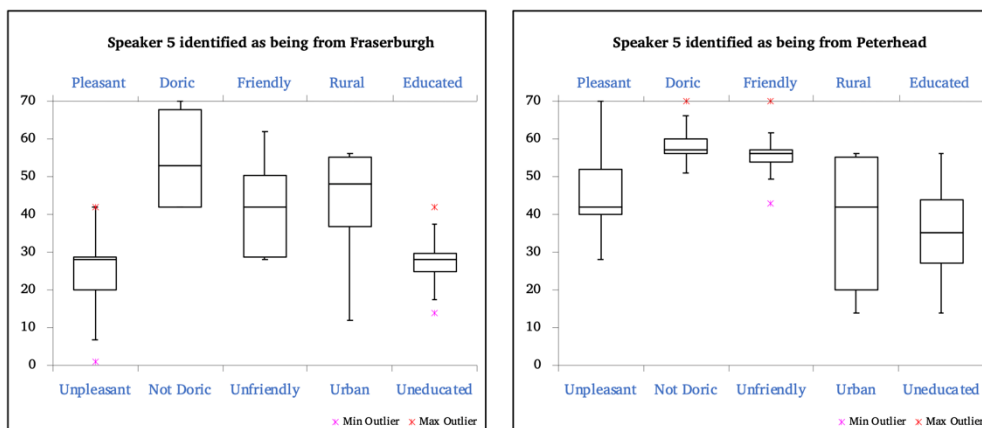

Figure 7: Comparative ratings based on whether the Peterhead youngsters identified the speaker as being from Fraserburgh (left) or Peterhead (right)

This is in reference to the final audio sample presented to informants featuring a speaker who was, in fact, from Fraserburgh itself: notably, he was rated very positively for 'friendliness' and 'pleasantness' by those Peterhead teenagers who thought he was from Peterhead, but less favourably by Peterhead

youngsters who (accurately) identified the voice as being from nearby Fraserburgh – a town perceived by the Peterhead group in previous tasks as being quite linguistically different and for whom, in the place evaluation task, they reserved their most negative assessments. This anomaly, illustrated in Figure 7, demonstrates how categorisation of a speaker as being 'in-group' or 'out-group' can affect evaluations of the speaker, particularly regarding solidarity factors such as 'friendliness' and 'pleasantness'. This mismatch, which is dependent on where informants thought the speaker was from, demonstrates that judgements placed upon speakers may often be based on perceptions of a place rather than anything purely linguistic.

4.4   Hyperlocal 'Doric' Boundaries

The *Doric* label has been mentioned throughout this discussion. One of the main aims of this study was to discern where speakers perceive the Doric dialect as being spoken – that is, to gain an understanding of public consensus regarding what 'counts' as 'Doric'. To analyse this, all instances of a *Doric* boundary being drawn on respondents' maps were aggregated. This can then be broken-down by survey location to reveal perceptions of the 'Doric' from different North-East perspectives. Doing so uncovers hyperlocal claiming of this pervasive, but somewhat difficult to decisively pin down, dialect label.

Figure 8 illustrates this breakdown of results and visualises the manner in which many of the respondent groups have sought to position their own immediate speech community within the heart of the 'Doric'-speaking North-East. These composite maps confirm that there are outer limits beyond which North-East informants are unlikely to extend the Doric boundary; but internally, the situation is somewhat less conclusive. Rather, the perceived border for the dialect noticeably moves around depending on who you ask.

This hyperlocal shifting of the Doric boundary suggests that perhaps Doric is not the uncomplicated 'catch-all' umbrella term that people sometimes imagine it to be. Rather, it could be argued that this study has

unearthed a series of 'micro-Dorics' which exist within the region. This could demonstrate a dual desire among speakers to identify with a 'Doric' identity but also, given the hyperlocal focus of the task, maintain an important sense of distinctiveness from their intraregional neighbours.
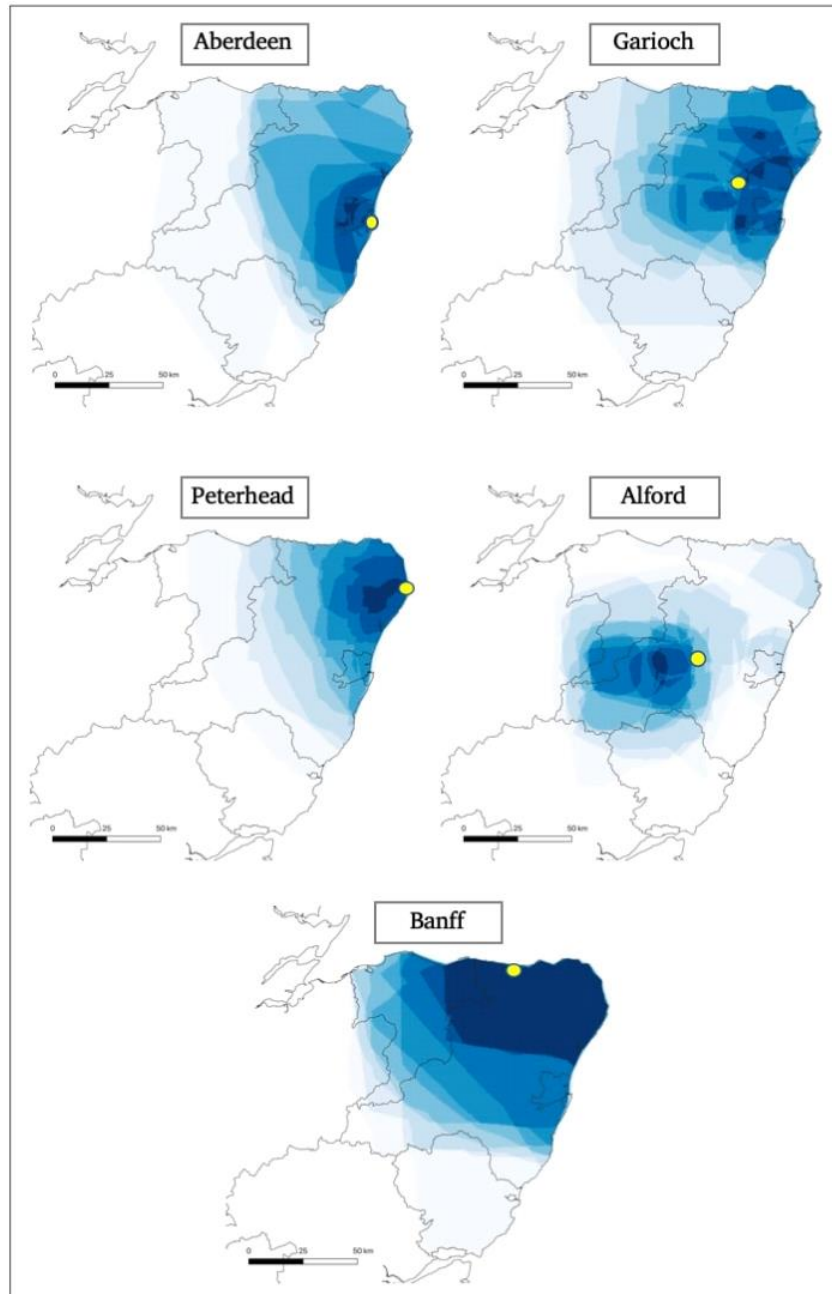

Figure 8: Side-by-side comparison of 'Doric' heat-maps from different locations (with the survey location represented with a circle)

4.5   Intraregional 'Broadness'

Despite locally-specific ownership of the *Doric* label being evident, this does not automatically translate to speakers from these places classifying themselves as the 'broadest' speakers. This is an interesting development as it confirms the existence of the *Doric* label as a local identity marker which speakers have pride in, even if they do not necessarily consider their community as being home to the most conservatively spoken variety of the dialect.

On a hyperlocal level, the far north-eastern Buchan corner was widely identified as home to the 'broadest' Doric speech (encompassing large towns such as Fraserburgh and Peterhead). This shows that, perceptually, linguistic conservatism is seen as being pushed to the fringes of the North-East region. It may also be important to note that these parts of the North-East are among the most socio-economically deprived. Given that Fraserburgh and Peterhead were also rated consistently as home to the most *unpleasant*-sounding speakers, this complicates matters of local prestige. It suggests that 'Doric' operates within its own prestige system whereby different 'kinds' of Doric trigger different feelings which are arguably based on socio-economic differences between places rather than anything purely linguistic. This is vindicated by the fact that informants from other parts of the North-East did relatively poorly when trying to geographically place a Fraserburgh speaker when they listened to an audio sample of his speech. Therefore, their offered perceptions of this part of the region seem to be based on preconceived notions of the type of people who live there rather than actual linguistic knowledge.

Furthermore, the fact that perceptions of 'broadness' do not necessarily match with hyperlocal placements of the 'Doric' area flags the *Doric* label as a powerful marker of local identity which may well have transcended its function as a purely linguistic descriptor (discussed further in Leslie 2022).

5 Discussion

The results of this study relevant to the scope of this chapter confirm a complex system of hyperlocal perceptions about language. This has implications not just for gaining an understanding of the linguistic issues at play in the North-East of Scotland, but also for the field of perceptual dialectology in general in terms of the benefits of hyperlocal studies.

5.1 What methodological benefit is to be had in mounting hyperlocal investigations of language perceptions?

This study has confirmed that mounting a more hyperlocal investigation of language perceptions allows *emic/etic* boundaries to be observed more acutely. The foremost example of this is found in the mapping task with the shifting of the 'Doric' boundary from survey location to survey location. From the outside 'etic' perspective, *Doric* appears as a straightforward designation for the North-East dialect; yet, insider 'emic' perceptions reveal a more complicated relationship with the term.

The limited scope of the survey task (i.e., the fact that informants were given only a map of the North-East of Scotland) may play a key part in this: it seems unlikely that the same hyperlocal claiming of the 'Doric' would be evident if the task was replicated on a Scotland-wide or UK-wide map. It seems reasonable to assume that 'zooming in' on speakers' perceptions may produce different results to when language attitudes are probed more generally: that is, when thinking about language on an inter-regional basis, informants may provide perceptions of larger divisions (e.g., east vs. west, Doric vs. Dundee vs. Glasgow); however, when the scope of inquiry is more focused, hyperlocal microregional perceptions can come to the fore because it is arguably human nature to want to mark ourselves as somehow special or distinctive compared to those around us.

The highly-focused nature of this study's scope of inquiry has also demonstrated that evidence of 'claiming' and 'denial' can be observed at a very local level, thus highlighting local prejudices, rivalries and stereotypes. This was most evident in certain survey groups' strong identification with the idea of 'Doricness', the stigmatisation of certain speaker communities (most likely as a reflection of socio-economic perceptions), and the intensely local rivalry perceived on behalf of speakers in Peterhead towards their coastal neighbours in Fraserburgh. Most, if not all, of these findings would either not have been possible, or may have been less keenly expressed, had the study been carried out with a much wider scope of inquiry.

5.2 What can hyperlocal perceptions tell us about the linguistic situation in a place? (in this case, the North-East of Scotland)

Comparing speakers' responses from different locations within a relatively small geographical area (in this case, the North-East) also allows for a more nuanced evaluation of the linguistic situation in the region under investigation. The results from youngsters in Peterhead, Banff and Alford (which often differ from those in the rest of the region) suggest that these communities may be further behind in the dialect attrition process. Youngsters in these communities were found to be more likely to 'claim' conservative speakers as local and demonstrated a much stronger affinity with the *Doric* label. In Banff and Alford in particular, some youngsters also connected with traditional local identity markers in a way not observed in other survey groups.

Perceptions of 'broadness' communicated in the hand-drawn map task may also provide clues for sociolinguistics on where the dialect is still spoken in its most conservative form. Although widespread identification with 'Doric' identity was observed, it was acknowledged by informants that there are some parts of the North-East (most notably, the Buchan corner) where the dialect is spoken in a much 'purer' or more conservative form than in others.

Combined, this provides a strong suggestion that dialect attrition may be underway at different paces in different places across the region and that, if these informants' perceptions are in any way reflective of the linguistic reality, this may not be a uniform pan-regional process.

6   Conclusions

The findings regarding the hyperlocal scope of inquiry link back to Diercks' notion of the 'linguistic homeland' as the reference point from which we construct our perceptions of other speech communities. This study investigates the 'linguistic homeland' as an intensely local concept: however, given the results of other, much geographically wider, perceptual dialectology studies, we know that this is something speakers can also experience on a much broader level. The majority of perceptual dialectology research thus far has focused on this broader understanding of variation across countries, across borders, or even across an international diaspora of speakers. By limiting the scope of inquiry to a much smaller region, this study reinforces the benefits of a more hyperlocal study of community perceptions and highlights the often highly-specific opinions held by speakers in relation to their immediate linguistic surroundings.

This is also a useful example of how a perceptual study of dialect variation can act as a springboard for future sociolinguistic research. From a sociolinguistic perspective, there is still much to be done in the North-East of Scotland in terms of providing a contemporary account of the health of the dialect. Historically, the dialect has been well-documented in terms of literature, archive materials, speaker recordings, and so on; but, aside from some targeted studies of specific communities, no overarching sociolinguistic survey of the region has taken place. The results of this study suggest that the region may provide an interesting platform for the study of dialect attrition, especially with regard to how this may be experienced differently in communities of varying sizes, locations, and socio-economic statuses.

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