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1. Introduction

Research on koineisation, the linguistic processes provoked by dialect contact, has been busying sociolinguists for quite a considerable period of time. Back in 1959, Ferguson suggested that the precursor of modern Arabic was a koine resulting from contact between speakers of diverse Arabic dialects. Blanc (1968) proposed a parallel origin for Israeli Hebrew. There have been an increasing number of studies which have, for example, considered koineisation as the key process leading both to the emergence of overseas Hindi and Bhojpur-based varieties spoken by indentured labourers and their descendants in Fiji (Siegel 1987), Mauritius (Domingue 1971), South Africa (Mesthrie 1991) and Trinidad (Mohan 1971, Bhatia 1988), as well as to the development of post-colonial English varieties in North America and Australasia (Bernard 1969, Dillard 1975, Trudgill 1985, 1986).

Trudgill's (1986) book Dialects in Contact, an account of the role linguistic accommodation plays in new dialect formation, as well as an analysis of koine development in a number of contact scenarios around the world, has triggered more recent research on the topic, particularly on new town dialects (Kerswill 1994a, 1994b, 1996; Kerswill and Williams 1992; Simpson, forthcoming), and the dialects of newly settled reclaimed areas (Britain 1991, 1997; Scholtmeijer 1990, 1992). We now have a much fuller understanding of the likely outcomes of koineisation, namely simplification (the increase in grammatical regularity and decrease in formal complexity); levelling (the eradication of marked variants in the dialect mix); reallocation (the refunctionalisation of input variants); and the creation of interdialect (linguistically intermediate) forms.

We know much less, however, about the intermediate stages of the koineisation process itself. This is because, as Kerswill quite rightly states (1994a:70-71), most research on dialect contact has consisted of "post-hoc observation of completed changes, for the most part three or more generations after the migration took place." He has been one of the few, in his research on the new dialect of Milton Keynes in southern England, to concentrate on the process of koine formation, as spoken through the mouths of young children of that city.

In this article, I look at koineisation in a dialect contact scenario which began over 300 years ago, in the Fens of eastern England. A comparison of a range of data sources, from Ellis (1889) right through to a recently collected corpus (Britain 1991), demonstrates that the koineisation process, for some variables at least, is barely complete, yet for others appears to have led to the emergence of a stable form over 200 years ago. Despite the long period of time over which koineisation has been underway, therefore, we are still able to see the crystallisation of some dialect features in progress, and hence begin to assess the constraints on new dialect development. Why, then, do some linguistic forms focus quickly, while others do so much more slowly? We will look to social, but particularly linguistic explanations in our attempt to answer this question. In the next section, I will discuss the rather special nature of the dialect contact in the Fenland speech community, as well as evidence that it is a koineised variety. In Section 3, I briefly describe the data sources used in the analysis. The following two sections present evidence of two variables, one which has been koineised for at least 200 years, another which is still focusing today. Section 6 attempts to address why there is such a time difference in the emergence of the koineised forms. We finally conclude in Section 7.

2. Dialect Contact in the Fens

The Fens (see Figure 1) are a low-lying area of eastern England situated about 75 miles directly north of London, and 50 miles east of Norwich. Compared with the rest of Southern England it is a rather sparsely populated region, many parts of which have a population density less than a fifth of that of England as a whole. The area has a rather unique geomorphological and demographic
Figure 1: The location of the Fens

Figure 2: The Fenland in 1650
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history. Figure 2 shows the Fenland in the early seventeenth century. The northern coastline lay up to 12 miles further south than at present. Most of the Fenland population at that time lived on a few islands of higher ground and in small communities on this northern coastline. The southern two-thirds of the Fenland consisted of undrained marshland which was subject to tidal flooding in summer, more continuous flooding in winter and was hence too unstable for permanent settlement. The overall livelihood of many small Fenland communities was directly related to the success of efforts to hold the water back. Even the northern coastline settlements, the most stable and relatively heavily populated, witnessed major flooding in 1439, 1550, 1570, 1607 and 1613 (Darby 1974).

The mid-17th century proved to be a major turning point in the history of the Fens when Dutch engineers were commissioned to begin work on Fenland drainage. Much of the major work was completed by the late 17th century, but in some areas drainage and reclamation were not complete until the early part of this century. A previously barely passable marshland evolved into fertile arable land. The impact of the reclamation on the Fenland’s demographic structure was considerable. Subsequent to drainage, the Fens saw quite rapid demographic growth, particularly in those central Fenland areas which had previously been less accessible and most susceptible to flooding. The influx came from both east (Norfolk) and west (Peterborough and Lincolnshire), though the demographic evidence suggests that relatively few came from further afield than the surrounding counties (see Britain 1997:19-20 for more detail about demographic growth and settler origins). The mixture of varieties brought into the Fens in the late 17th and 18th centuries suggests a dialect contact scenario similar to that seen much later in the polderlands of the Netherlands (Scholtmeijer 1990, 1992).

The lack of intercommunication between eastern and western sides of the Fens before reclamation is reflected in the fact that the Fens today are the site of one of the most important dialect transition zones in British English. Probably the two most often cited isoglosses are the /u - u/ ('cup', 'butter') and the /a - a:/ ('castle', 'last') boundaries, which run north-east to south-west through the Fenland (Orton & Tilling 1969). In addition, at a more local level, the area acts as an important boundary between East Anglian and Midland dialects. Following reclamation, however, the distinct eastern and western varieties spoken by the immigrants of the 17th and 18th centuries would be subject to the processes of koinéisation discussed in Section 1 above. An analysis both of the Survey of English Dialects data for this area (Orton & Tilling 1969) and of my own 81-speaker corpus of data collected in the late 1980s uncovered a number of examples, demonstrating not only that the variety spoken in the Fens straddles a major transition zone, but that it is also in many ways typical of the koinéised linguistic varieties described by Trudgill (1986). Some of the transitions include:

- The presence or absence of /h/: absent to the west, present to the east.
- The realisation of /au/: [e:] to the west, [eu] to the east.
- The realisation of vowels in unstressed syllables: past tense '-ed' forms and '-ing' forms are realised with [i] to the west, but [ə] to the east.

As far as koinéisation is concerned, we can observe, firstly, the levelling of marked features from the immigrant varieties. Absent from the central Fenland variety, but typical of dialects to the east are:

- The presence of ‘do’ conjunctions, as in ‘don’t stroke the cat do he’ll bite you’, where, as Trudgill (1995) explains, the conjunction derives from the grammaticisation of a shortened form of ‘because if you do’.
- The absence of third person present tense –s (Trudgill 1974: 96).

Present in northern and western varieties, but not usual in the central Fens are:
[e] forms of /ei/ in words such as 'take' and 'make'.

The use of 'while' meaning 'until': 'don't come while four o'clock'.

In addition, we can see examples of the reallocation of input variants to serve new social or contextual functions (see Trudgill 1986), or in the cases described below, new lexical or allophonic positions:

* The reallocation of north-western and south-eastern forms of ME a in words such as 'bath' and 'plant' into lexical sets matching neither input variety. Whereas varieties to the north-west of the Fens would have a short [a] vowel in these words, and south-eastern varieties would consistently have a longer (although in this region still quite front) [a:], in the central Fens speakers use [a] in some words and [a:] in others, though it is often the case that each interdialect speaker has a different lexical set in each class.

* The central Fenland has an allophonic distribution of /ai/ similar to that found in Canada and many parts of the northern US. Centralised [ai] onsets are found before voiceless consonants and open ones [ai] before voiced consonants, /a/ and morpheme boundaries. This distribution, I have claimed (Britain 1997), is the result of the reallocation of western open onsets of /ai/ and eastern central onsets to different phonological environments in the central Fenland.

Finally it has interdialect features, features which are phonetically intermediate forms of the input variants:

* It has, for example, an intermediate [v] for /ʌ/: the varieties to the north and west have [u], and to the east and south [ʌ].

Like many varieties subject to koineisation, Fenland English was once considered by folk linguists to be relatively standard-like, presumably since the levelling process had eradicated marked regional features present in neighbouring or immigrant dialects (cf. Read 1933, Bernard 1969, Dillard 1975, Gordon 1983, Trudgill 1986). Ellis cites the data gatherer from the central Fenland town of Wisbech, a Mr Little, who claimed that the town had 'very little dialect proper' (1889:253) and that 'the fen country generally is the home of pure speech, by which I mean, of language but little differing from the ordinary literary English' (1889:254). Similar sentiments were expressed by Miller and Skertchly (1878).

All of the above features differentiate east from west, emphasising both the role the undrained Fens played in hindering east-west communication, and the quite radical linguistic differences which existed (and still exist) to either side.¹

For the rest of this paper, I wish to look in more detail at two of these koineised features: the reallocated [ai]–[ai] forms of /ai/ and the interdialectal [v] form of /ʌ/. As we will see, despite the fact that both involve ongoing changes that were underway in English long before Fenland draining, all evidence suggests that the dialect contact which followed reclamation focused one new dialect form very quickly, while the other was much slower in crystallising a distinct koineised form. I firstly present the evidence which demonstrates this differential rate of focusing, and secondly ask why we should expect such a difference. In doing so, I draw parallels between variable rates of focusing of new dialects in contact situations on the one hand, with the variable acquisition of second dialects on the other (Payne 1980, Chambers 1992, Kerswill 1996).

3. Sources of Data

In order to assess the extent to which Fenland Raising and interdialectal [v] have focused in the central Fens, we are able to draw upon a number of sources, some written, others in the form of oral recordings, some traditional dialectological, others analysed

¹More recent changes, however, have come largely from the south, from London, including /l/ vocalisation, labio-dental approximant [u] forms of /r/, and the merger of /l/ and /r/, and non-initial /r/ and /v/.
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within a more modern variationist framework. They give us a picture, albeit patchy in the case of the earlier and traditional data sources, of the past 170 years of Fenland English. By comparing the development of /ai/ and /a/ in these data sets we will be able to chart the progress of koineisation in this variety.

The earliest source we have at our disposal is Ellis (1889). This is a dialect survey of the traditional type, based on information from over 1100 locations in Great Britain. Data in the form of spontaneous transcriptions of reading passages and word lists were sent to Ellis by a combination of trained dialect enthusiasts, such as Thomas Hallam or interested locals. The reliability of the data is therefore open to considerable question, but in some locations (luckily including the Fenland for some variable features) Hallam was sent to check the validity of the local data collectors' work and investigate some features more thoroughly.

Secondly we have the data from the Fenland localities set out in the Basic Materials of the Survey of English Dialects [SED] (Orton and Tilling 1969), a traditional dialectological survey of 311 largely rural localities, two of which, Outwell in Norfolk and Warboys in Cambridgeshire are in the central Fenland. The SED data from these sites can be compared with localities surveyed to the east of the Fens, such as Little Downham in Cambridgeshire, and to the west, such as Crowland in Lincolnshire.

Finally we have 3 corpora of contemporary recordings. Between 1987 and 1990, I collected a corpus of recordings of 81 working class Fenlanders of two broad age groups: old (45-66) and young (16-30) (Britain 1991). Most recordings consist of 60 to 90 minutes of informal conversation with second-order network links across the Fens, from Spalding and Warboys in the west to West Winch and Soham in the east (see Figure 3). In addition to my own data, I was fortunate enough to find two corpora which I could analyse in the same way as my own recordings. The King's Lynn Corpus, housed in that town's local library, was recorded as part of a Manpower Services Commission Local History Project carried out in the mid 1980s. All of the 10 speakers were over 55 years old and most in their 70s. The Chatteris corpus in the town's museum is a collection of 11 individual recordings made over a number of

Figure 3: Principal Fenland urban centres and other locations mentioned in the text.
years between 1974 and 1985 by the curator. Ten of these recordings are of working class residents of Chatteris. Most were at least 70 years old. The other recording was of a former Olympic ice-skater, also in his 70s, from Outwell, near Wisbech (see Figure 3).

4. ‘Fenland Raising’ of /ai/

In most instances, /ai/ derives from Middle English. Its historical development is linked to a large-scale set of phonological changes commonly known as the Great Vowel Shift (GVS). The GVS is believed to have begun sometime in the 15th century (Wells 1982a: 184) and possibly completed in the south-east of England by around 1600 (1982a: 185), although in some parts of the UK, such as the north-east, the GVS has not completed to this day. As part of the GVS, ME ə and ɔ became diphthongs and subsequently the onsets of these diphthongised forms became gradually more open and central before reaching the more advanced contemporary forms (Lass 1987, Wells 1982a).

In the central Fens, speakers of all age groups consistently retain an allophonic distinction similar to Canadian Raising: centralised [əi] onsets before voiceless consonants, and open onsets, [ai], or even open monophthongs, [aː], before voiced consonants, /a/ and morpheme boundaries. In varieties spoken to the west of the Fens we find open onsets in all environments, whereas to the east centralised onsets are found in most environments. Figures 4, 5 and 6 show the realisations of /ai/ according to following segment found in the speech of three speakers from my corpus: typical central (Emneth: see Figure 3), eastern (Wayhead) and western (Peterborough) speakers respectively. Bearing in mind the demographic history of the Fens, and the phonological naturalness of such allophony, I have argued (Britain 1997) that the ‘Fenland Raising’ demonstrated here by the Emneth speaker, but typical throughout the central Fens, is a dialect contact phenomenon, a reallocation of western

open onsets and eastern raised onsets to different phonological environments.

We have good evidence to suggest that ‘Fenland Raising’ has been present in the central Fens for almost 200 years. In Ellis (1889) there is little evidence to enable us to judge the progress of /ai/ which was not one of the sounds Ellis was particularly interested in. There is no reliable data from the central Fenland town of Wisbech, for example.
However, an allophonic split is found in the central Fenland community of Wryde near Thorney, where Hallam reports [nait] but [toim] (Ellis 1889: 254).

In the Survey of English Dialects data, the central Fenland locations of Warboys (informants born between 1883 and 1889) and Outwell (born between 1874-1889) show the allophonic distinction, with [AY - AI] in ‘night’ and ‘ice’, and [ai - oi] in ‘time’ and ‘sky’. Locations to the east and west do not show such an allophonic distinction.

The Chatteris Museum data from the Chatteris men and Outwell ice-skater, born in the early years of this century, also show very clear allophony. Compare their realisations in Figure 7, with those found in the eastern Fenland King’s Lynn corpus, where the use of centralised forms is not limited simply to before voiceless consonants.

My own data from the central Fens shows very little age grading, with /ai/ allophony present in the speech of young and old alike. Figure 8 shows the index scores for four speakers. Harry, the oldest, was born in 1922, Wayne, the youngest, in 1972.

The apparent time data clearly show that there has been little change in the status of Fenland Raising between the oldest and youngest generations. If anything, the distinction has become greater as monophthongal forms become more prevalent before voiced consonants, /ai/ and morpheme boundaries.
5. Interdialectal [y] Forms of /a/

The origins of present-day /a/ in Southern British English are complex. The largest source of this lexical set is Middle English ð occurring in words such as 'butcher', 'cushion', 'luck' and 'up'. Around London in the 16th century, certain but not all of the words in this class underwent unrounding and lowering (and more recently fronting) from [u] to [a] (and in some varieties, such as Cockney, [a]). In addition, a few /a/ class words have their origins in ME ð such as 'blood' and 'flood', and others ('among', ME ang/ong, for example) have alternative sources. Furthermore, a number of borrowings have joined the /a/ class: bungalow, yuppie (see Britain, in preparation).

The changes which led to the development of /a/ from ME ð and ã were resisted in vernacular varieties of Northern England which retain [u] in ME ð and have either [u] or [u:] in the ME ã set and [o] or [u] in 'among', for example. Borrowings with [a] in southern varieties typically have [u] in the north, hence [bungalou] and [yupi:]. The dialect transition between the Northern /u/ area and the southern area with both /u/ and /a/ straddles the Fens (see, for example, Chambers and Trudgill 1980:128).

The contact between Northern and Southern forms which arose following reclamation could potentially have had a number of linguistic outcomes. One possibility would be a lexically determined reallocation of Northern and Southern forms in the new intermediate dialect. This is what appears to have developed in the case of the /a - a:/ transition in words such as 'plant' and 'after' discussed earlier in this article. Alternatively, since the change to /a/ is an innovation, we could perhaps have expected the southern, possibly more prestigious form to 'win' the dialect conflict and lead to the further gradual diffusion of /a/ north and westwards. Neither of these possibilities appear to have materialised. Instead, the data suggest that a phonetically intermediate form between [a] and [u], namely [y], has emerged as the norm in the central Fenland.

Unlike in the case of /ai/, however, the evidence suggests that this interdialectal form in the central Fenland has only very recently focused from a broad and diffuse range of variants [u - y - a - ã - u] used by speakers across the speech community. Furthermore, the interdialectal form has only focused among the young living in and around the central Fenland town of Wisbech, and not in other central Fenland locations, which remain largely diffuse.  

Ellis considers the /u - /a/ split to be one of the more important dialect distinctions in his research (1889:15–17) and his data provide evidence of thorough and detailed analysis of realisations in towns and villages along the isogloss. We therefore have quantitatively more, and, because of the checking and rechecking of data sources by his main fieldworker Hallam, better information about this variable than any other in the area under investigation. He notes that the town of Wisbech is mixed with interdialectal forms [u - y - a - 3] used by young and old: he cites forms from a 13 year old boy and a 39 year old man as well as older residents of the town. Other central Fenland locations he labels 'mixed' or 'transitional' include: north Cambridgeshire (1889:249), March (252) and Chatteris (253).

Despite the impression one might gain from looking at some published maps derived from its data, the Survey of English Dialects (Orton and Tilling 1969) also provides evidence both of the existence of interdialectal forms, and the unfocussed nature of those interdialectal realisations. Whereas the 'northern'-type SED locations of Crowland and Lutton have [u] in words such as...
'money', 'thunder' and 'guzzle', realisations such as [y - a] are cited for the central location of Outwell and [u - y - a - a] for the central eastern village of Little Downham. Chambers and Trudgill (1980) reanalyse the SED data, and demonstrate the transitional nature of this dialect 'boundary'. They categorise different lects in the Fens (and other parts of Eastern England and the Midlands) as having either 'fudged' forms (phonetically intermediate) or 'mixed' forms (the variable use of both the ingredient forms).

It appears that there is some fieldworker inconsistency in the transcription of phonetic forms between [u] and [a]. The fieldworker for Little Downham, Warboys, Lutton and Crowland, Stanley Ellis, defines 2 intermediate variants [y] and [a]; Nelson Francis, the fieldworker for Outwell, only uses one [y]. Although it is possible that this difference was deliberate, to reflect the production of different forms in different locations, my own data suggest that this is unlikely (see Britain 1991, in preparation). Albeit a minor difference, it has consequences for subsequent reinterpretations of this data, such as that carried out by Chambers and Trudgill (1980: 129-137).

I found no mixed lects (variable use of both ingredient forms [u] and [a], but no intermediate [y] forms) in my conversational data. Their presence in Chambers and Trudgill's analysis results, however, from the fieldworker inconsistencies mentioned in the previous footnote.

The data from the Chatteris and King's Lynn archives further illustrate the unfocussed nature of the interdialect form. The results of the analysis of these corpora are in Figures 9, 10 and 11.

Finally, my own data corpus, collected in the late 1980s, demonstrates the gradual focusing of the central intermediate
variant [v] in and around Wisbech. Figure 12 shows the relationship between age and variant use for the four speakers whose consistent use of 'Fenland Raising' we saw earlier. It is only among the younger two speakers, particularly Wayne, that the [v] form has focused. Older speakers and those outside Wisbech and its suburbs remain diffuse. Figure 13, for example, shows the variant scores of four speakers from other parts of the central Fenland.

The question which the remainder of this article attempts to address is why certain forms (in this case ‘Fenland Raising’) focus more quickly during the koineisation process than others (interdialectal [v], for instance). In trying to answer the question, we can draw on both social-psychological and linguistic explanations (Trudgill 1986, Chambers 1992, Kerswill 1996). Firstly we can look to the salience of the forms. Fenland Raising is a ‘marker’ (Labov 1972), with speakers across the Fens showing great awareness of regional and social variation of /ai/. It was regularly mentioned as locally significant – many informants in my own sample claimed to be able to spot Wisbech speakers by their use of /ai/ (but weren’t able to accurately pinpoint what it was about /ai/ that distinguished Wisbech from elsewhere) (see Britain 1997). /a/, on the other hand, was a very unsalient sound altogether. Nobody in my survey mentioned it as being a feature which showed regional variation, despite the huge phonetic difference in the range of variants used in the Fens. Trudgill (1986: 51) has noted a lack of saliency of this feature more generally in East Anglia, and Ellis made a similar discovery over a century before. He writes ‘a woman of Middleton [see Figure 3] married a man of Narborough. The woman called cup (k3p) (= [k3p] (DB)), the man (k3p) (= [k3p - k3p] (DB)) and they had never noticed that they spoke differently, so that TH (Thomas Hallam) had the greatest difficulty in making the woman recognise the distinction’ (1889:261). /a/, although salient for linguists and dialectologists, clearly isn’t for speakers living in the transition zone. It is possible, therefore, that the salience of Fenland Raising supports and is itself enhanced by its use as a local identity marker in the central Fens, distinguishing the area from both east and west. /a/, on the other hand, lacks salience and is not used in this way. However, the evidence of focusing of an interdialectal form among youngsters in Wisbech for whom /a/ is still unsalient suggests we need to look elsewhere for a full explanation.

In addition to social reasons, linguists have also sought linguistic explanations for variable rates of dialect acquisition.
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(Payne 1975, 1980, Trudgill 1986, Chambers 1992, Kerswill 1996). Payne’s (1975, 1980) pioneering research on the acquisition of Philadelphia English by in-migrants found, for example, that while the in-migrants rather successfully acquired the fronting of the onsets of /au/ and /aʊ/ and the raising of the onset of /ʌ/, none accurately acquired the tensing and raising of /æ/. In a synthesis and extension of the work on second dialect acquisition, Chambers (1992: 682-687) accounts for this finding in terms of rule complexity. He claims that in second dialect acquisition scenarios, simple phonological rules progress faster than more complex ones.

In Philadelphia, Payne’s results demonstrate that the successfully acquired forms were all relatively straightforward, categorical phonetic changes, whereas the rule governing the tensing and raising of short /æ/ is extremely complex (Payne 1975, Chambers 1992, Labov 1989). Chambers provides further examples from his own research of Canadian children acquiring the southern British English of Oxfordshire. He finds that while they are relatively successful at devoicing /h—simple rule—they are much less successful at acquiring ‘vowel backing’, i.e., the /a—ə/ split of southern England.

I would like to claim that we can look to the same sociolinguistic principle, that simple rules progress faster than complex ones, to explain why Fenland Raising focused more quickly in the Fens than interdialectal [v]. First we must justify our application of the principles of second dialect acquisition suggested on the basis of speakers’ relatively short-term contact with the target variety, to new dialect focusing where the contact is ultimately much longer term. Both second dialect acquisition and new dialect focusing, of course, involve dialect contact. However, in the case of the latter the focusing is being conducted not only by adults, but also by children acquiring their first variety. Roberts and Labov (1995) report that children native to Philadelphia are mostly successful in acquiring the very complex, lexically diffused /æ/ tensing/raising rule. There are, however, some important factors in new dialect formation, particularly of the sort witnessed in the Fens, which make the koinisation process in such conditions rather more complex than in the acquisition of varieties where a clear target dialect is predominant.

Robert Le Page, in whose work with Andrée Tabouret-Keller the notions of ‘focused’ and ‘diffuse’ in their sociolinguistic sense originate (Le Page 1978, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), claims that our choice of socio-linguistic variants represents an act of identity. The individual, he maintains, ‘creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified’ (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 181). Our ability to do so is constrained by the extent to which we can identify those groups, have adequate access to them and the ability to analyse their linguistic behaviour, have sufficient motivation to join those groups, gain feedback from them, and have the ability to modify our behaviour to become more like that of the target group.

Initially, in a new dialect scenario such as that in the Fens, or in other such settings where there was no (or only a very small) native population speaking the same language, these target groups to which one may focus either do not exist, because new groups have yet to form in the new speech community, or are absent, because the in-migrant groups left them behind, usually permanently, in their original speech communities. Such new dialect communities must therefore create the groups and develop afresh the stronger network ties (L. Milroy 1980, J. Milroy 1992) which can act as focal points. I have discussed elsewhere (Britain 1997) some of the potential motivations for joining such groups. The ability of the koinising dialect speakers to analyse the linguistic behaviour of their peers must be constrained by the wide mixture of varieties under contact, and feedback from other speakers, although accommodatory, is likely to be linguistically distinct and diffuse. Children in such scenarios are in a position of having to focus a new norm from a diffuse target variety spoken in a speech community only beginning to develop new social groupings, identities and distinctions. The fact that this process in the sparsely populated Fens began well before education was universal (no school environment, therefore, to encourage the development of wider peer group norms) further impedes focused koin development. In such an environment, principles of second dialect acquisition and those of new dialect formation seem comparable, notwithstanding the time differences involved.
Fenland Raising, as we saw earlier, and despite the inhibiting factors outlined above, focused quite quickly in the Fens. If, as our evidence suggests, it was present in the area around 1800, then it must have focused towards the time at which most of the major reclamation work was nearing completion. It is, moreover, a relatively simple rule, the allocation of raised onsets to a position of phonetic naturalness before voiceless consonants in the same syllable, and open onsets to positions before voiced consonants, morpheme boundaries and schwa.

Interdialectal [v], on the other hand, is only now being focused by the youngest speakers in one urban centre of the central Fens. The reasons for this are, I suggest, at least in part due to a number of linguistic factors which combine to make the focusing of one variant extremely complex:

- The complexity of the /u - a/ split: there is little phonological conditioning of this split, and even where there are tendencies, there are always exceptions. For example:
  - Many of the /u/ class words have preceding bilabials/labiodentals (e.g. bush, full, put, woman, pudding, bosom), yet there are many exceptions (buck, fund, pump, won, punch, bucket).
  - Many of the /u/ class are followed by /i/ or /I/ (e.g. bush, push, wool, full), but again there are exceptions (rush, gush, lush, dull, gull, hull).
  - If the vowel precedes /g/ or /d3/, it is usually /a/ (e.g. mug, bug, rug, budge, fudge, sludge); the principal exception is 'sugar'.
  - The proximity of the area with no /a/: the north-west of the Fens is linguistically ‘northern’ in English terms, having /a/ in both 'pus' and 'puss', for example. Because this is a rural area, school catchment and travel-to-work areas are large and it is possible for some speakers from areas with southern variants to go to school or work in places with no /a/ and vice versa. Any movement beyond the locality will involve contact with speakers with different proportions of the different variants.

- The presence of variants of /a/ which overlap with those of the /u/ class: even those speakers who have /a/ (in some phonemic sense, though not necessarily matching RP or other more southern varieties of English English) may well in some situations have variants of /a/ realised as [u], while on other occasions having [a] or [v] or some other variant in the same word.

- The wide phonetic range of variants present in the community: as mentioned previously, variants noted in my data range from [u] to [e].

- The presence of ongoing change in /a/ in neighbouring regions: /a/ continues to open and front in southern British English - Cockney has reached [a]. Speakers are therefore exposed to variants which continue to phonetically diverge.

- The lack of phonological or lexical conditioning of variant choice: initial analyses suggest that there is little or no significant phonological or lexical conditioning of the variants in the /a/ class in this speech community.8

Together, these have severely inhibited the focusing of one particular variant, the intermediate [v], such that it is only recently that one has emerged. Why it has emerged now is puzzling. One possibility is that it is linked to a change underway in southern British English which is unrounding and beginning to lower the vowel in /u/ class words. However, Laver (1995), in a

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7 I say ‘relatively’, because non-natives who arrive in the central Fens as adults do not acquire it. Chambers had a similar finding for Mr J, originally from New York State, attempting to acquire the Canadian Raising of /au/ (Chambers 1992 689). For most English people, acquiring Fenland Raising as an adult would equate to having a learn a distinction (albeit a phonetically natural one).

8 Research is continuing to try and find some. Having initially treated the /a/ class as one set, the next stage is to separate out the words of different origins (i.e., ME o from ME ð from borrowings and words of other origins) and run a further analysis for the effects of conditioning.
small pilot study, found that this change was being led by a considerable margin by middle class girls in the sample of secondary school children he studied, whereas my Fenland sample comprises only working class speakers. An analysis of /u/ will be presented in Britain (in preparation).

7. Conclusion

We have been able to track koineisation-in-progress in the Fens, despite the fact that the original contact began over 300 years ago. Some linguistic norms of the new variety crystallised quite quickly. We have seen evidence, for example, of Fenland Raising in even our very early dialectological sources. Other features such as interdialectal [y] are only now showing evidence that a focused norm has evolved.

The goal of this article has been to demonstrate that this differential rate of koineisation is due, at least in part, to differences in phonological rule complexity. Just as Chambers (1992) and Payne (1975, 1980) have shown that second dialect acquirers successfully adopt simple rules of the new target variety much more quickly than complex ones, so it has been demonstrated that, exposed to diverse, diffuse and mixed target varieties, speakers in the Fens more readily focus koineised forms with simple phonological rules than those with complex rules, irregular, lexically determined outputs and new phonemic distinctions. Fenland Raising is a relatively simple and phonologically predictable rule with no exceptions. Much more complex, however, is the rule which produced /a/- it is a phonologically unpredictable, lexically determined rule originating from the incomplete merger of ME 5 and 8 which took place as the latter was undergoing a split which led to the development of a new phoneme. The complexity is made more extreme in the Fenland speech community by contact with lects with a wide range of variants, including some which do/did not have /a/- at all. It is apparent that, in this case, the nature, location and timing of the contact, and the complexity of this linguistic feature have conspired against those creating a new dialect in the Fens to make the crystallisation of [y] a slow and laborious sociolinguistic process.

More detailed investigations of a range of different speech communities in the process of focusing new linguistic norms at all levels are clearly required if we are to explain the outcomes of contact and koineisation. A more fruitful and extensive dialogue with other areas of language contact research (e.g., pidginisation and language death) will doubtless move this endeavour forward. The constraints on the phonological focusing of Fenland English provide one small clue as to the direction in which we must look.

References


Dialect Contact, Focusing and Rule Complexity

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