"I didn't fink dat was funny": An Intraspeaker Lifespan Analysis of Michael Caine's Dental Fricatives

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This paper examines the effect of middle and older age on Michael Caine's realisation of the English dental fricatives. The results show convergence to prestige forms during middle age. Caine only exhibits TH-fronting during his older years within a familiar social setting (audience and speech styles), while TH-stopping is present in both age groups with a significant increase in his older years. It is proposed that the discrepancy between stopping and fronting exists because the two variants carry different levels of stigma in Caine's linguistic community.

1 Introduction

Michael Caine is a pioneer of British film and is recognised for the retention of a Cockney persona in an industry where regional variety has often been severely underrepresented. Looking at his treatment of the TH-consonants, this paper explores the extent to which Caine's resistance to the mainstream has existed at a phonological level. The initial objective was to conduct an age-specific study of Caine's TH-fronting; however, his tendency for the less well-documented TH-stopping encouraged and expanded the focus to his entire treatment of dental fricatives. A quote from Caine (1) illustrates two variants of the dental fricatives: TH-fronting, the movement from dental to labiodental fricative, and TH-stopping, the strengthening of the dental fricative to an alveolar stop.

(1) I didn't think that was funny
I didn't [f]ink [d]at was funny (Top Cat 2015:4m47s)

Considering the literature on individual language change over a lifespan, I expected to see higher frequencies of the non-standard realisations in his language at an older age, contrasting with a heightened use of the standard forms in his middle years during which he is more likely to align with community-wide prestige values (see Downes 1998, Cheshire 2005, Sankoff and Blondeau 2007).

Analysis of his interviews at two points in his lifespan reveals a change in realisation of these fricatives. Caine exhibits TH-stopping during his middle and older years, with a significant increase as he ages with style and audience no longer affecting its use. In contrast, style and audience play significant roles in Caine's use of TH-fronting, a feature which is entirely absent from his middle years. Considering Sharma's (2018) "real me" styles, it seems likely that TH-fronting is a feature that resurfaces from Caine's adolescent vernacular, although it is suppressed at both time periods for reasons of convergence and an associated stigma. Additionally, some evidence for priming is found for TH-stopping in his older years. This suggests that cognition may affect the occurrence of phonological variants which are not susceptible to external pressures like audience and topic.

I will present a quantitative analysis of the data, examining the difference in phonetic realisation of these fricatives at the contrasting periods of Caine's life, considering the role of the linguistic environment, the social setting, and stylistic shifts. A discussion will follow concentrating on the implications of his increased use of these linguistic features associated with the working class. I will be following Sankoff and Blondeau's (2007) proposition that post-adolescence intraspeaker change can be a response by said speaker to changes in their community. For Caine, this requires a look at the media over his lifetime.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Dental Fricatives

The dental fricatives are sparsely found in the phonology of the world's languages, and they are difficult to produce for many L2 English speakers (van den Doel 2006). It has even been suggested that their presence in L1 English could be diminishing (Mateusz 2012:74). Despite their stigma (Altendorf and Watt 2004:192), alternatives to the dental fricatives, be it TH-fronting or TH-stopping, are believed to be spreading across varieties and up the social classes in the UK (Mateusz 2012:63).

2.2 TH-stopping

Realising dental fricatives as stops is a recognised feature of various London Englishes, commonly attributed to the influence of overseas varieties (see Wells 1982:556–559, Mott 2010:84). It has been noted in varieties as far north as Sheffield (Stoddart et al. 1999) and is prevalent in South East London English, where the word-initial /ð/ is realised as a stop (Tollfree 1999:172). Wells (1982:328) finds TH-fronting of /ð/ in word-initial positions (e.g. 'that' as [væt]*) to be unlikely in British English, hence the existence of /ð/-stopping. In contrast, TH-stopping of the unvoiced dental fricative does occur in certain varieties of English around the world, such as the Caribbean (Blake 2008). It is not recognised as a feature in British English varieties, except for some stylised lexical items, such as 'thing' becoming [ting].

The trajectory of dental fricatives in English remains uncertain. Mateusz (2012) envisages a gradual loss of dental fricatives to alternatives such as stops, although Stoddart et al.'s (1999) analysis of TH-variation in Sheffield found a growing preference for the fricative variant. The phonetic quality associated with TH-stopping varies in the literature, but the intrinsic idea is a frictionless realisation of the fricative. It has also been suggested that the voiced dental fricative can be reduced depending on previous phonetic environment, which could lead to the resemblance of an assimilated stop. Both Shockey (2003:43) and Wells (1982:329) comment on the prevalence of preceding alveolar consonants leading to this assimilation with the initial voiced dental fricative, which results in varying phonetic realisations from prolonged alveolar to coalescent dental consonants.

We must also consider the lexical implications as TH-stopping occurs almost exclusively in function words, such as 'that', 'there', or 'then'. Van den Doel (2006:165–169) found that, of 13 non-standard pronunciations, RP speakers deemed the TH-stopping of 'that' to be the least severe "error". Considering the implications of this finding for other /ð/-initial function words, English speakers may be less inclined to suppress TH-stopping. Given their syntactic vitality, function words can be subject to pronunciation variation and remain intelligible.

2.3 TH-fronting

English speakers in London are frequently associated with TH-fronting, a feature that has received lots of attention in pop culture. Dental fricatives are replaced by their labiodental voicing counterparts, but the fricatives still exist in the underlying phonology and are used by all Londoners in certain situations (Wells 1982:328). Fronting is indicative of London and South East English varieties, recognised by speakers and often used in self-reflective humour, such as on clothing in the print "Norf London". The feature is attached to the working class (Hudson and Holloway 1977), and it has been stigmatised in South East London (Tollfree 1999:172). TH-fronting is now spreading to varieties in northern England and Scotland, especially amongst young males, which we could attribute to its suggested covert prestige status (Smith 2011).

While there is no statistical evidence to suggest that TH-fronting has a bias towards either of the two dental fricatives, there are more phonological environments in which it is possible for the voiceless /θ/ to be fronted in British English. The phonetic environments in which we see the TH-variants in British English, the "variant contexts" (Tagliamonte 2006), are demonstrated in (2).

(2) TH-stopping
    ð → [- cont] / #_V
    TH-fronting
    ð → [- cont] / V_V / V_#
    θ → [- cont] / #_V / #_C / V_V / V_C / C_V / V_# / C_#

Kerswill (2003) studies non-standard variables which are diffusing throughout Britain, including TH-fronting. He describes its wave-like spread as a combination of diffusion of the variant to different communities and convergence towards the variant by these communities, also known as dialect levelling. Data from his study, which concerns students from the same Durham school in 1983 and 2002, show a drastic increase of TH-fronting. It seems that TH-fronting has also spread significantly in Caine's lifetime.

2.4 Intraspeaker Variation

2.4.1 Biography

Caine, born 14 March 1933, is heralded as a representative of working-class London English. Britannica (2020) affirms that he was known for having "retained his affable Cockney persona in most roles" after having grown up in Camberwell, South London. Even after having moved to California, USA, in 1979, he was considered an ambassador of England. Indeed, he returned to live in Oxfordshire in 1987. Despite observations that he retained a regional variety of English in his performances, we have to consider the effect that this exposure to American

English may have had on his vernacular. Moreover, we can expect Caine's linguistic community to remain international and include a broad range of English varieties. In an interview with The New York Times (2010), Caine claims to have used his regional variety to "break down the class barriers" that existed in the film industry. This study explores how these values towards his accent and his working-class heritage are reflected in his linguistic behaviour.

2.4.2 Lifespan Change

Michael Caine's language is here studied at two distinct periods of his life, his 40s (middle years) and his 70/80s (older years), long after the critical period where speakers acquire a stable grammar (see Labov 1963). More recent studies have found that post-adolescent lifespan change can occur where a speaker's language moves in tow with the general changes that are happening across a community (Sankoff and Blondeau 2007). Wagner and Sankoff (2011) found older speakers countering this trend, whereby they would increase the use of a variable that was being lost in the wider community. Therefore, a decline of the dental fricatives at a community level in recent decades could result in a variety of responses from Caine. For example, Shapp et al. (2014) found that Justice Ginsberg produced stigmatised features of the New York vernacular in her later life despite the decline of these features seen in the wider New York community. They attributed one feature's variation across her lifespan to changing dynamics in the workplace and another to age-specific change. It is therefore important to consider changes specific to Caine: changes in the media and in his position within the media community. We can then use the patterns in TH-stopping over Caine's lifetime to explore community-level attitudes towards the feature which has received less attention in studies of L1 British English.

Phonetic forms which replace the fricatives, the prestige forms, have been stigmatised in British English. Cheshire (2005:1557) explains how prestige forms are often accessed by middle-aged speakers while older speakers are more likely to use less prestigious variants or to show stylistic variation, a process known as age-grading. This convergence to prestige forms in the middle years is a response to the pressures of the "standard language market" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975:12). Wagner (2012) proposes that older speakers may move against community change due to their views towards those younger than them. This could explain the retrograde direction noted by Wagner and Sankoff (2011). It will be important to consider the international nature of Caine's work and that he has not yet retired — factors which may affect his response to the standard language market.

2.4.3 Pop Culture Change in Caine's Lifetime

Intraspeaker change post-adolescence can be in response to community change, so it is necessary to look at the changes in Caine's community. RP's unofficial title "BBC English" is indicative of the conservative speech heard in the 1970s British media. Beal (2009:223) looked at modern British musicians and the use of regional language features to index authenticity and "independence from the corporate machine". This increase in representation of regional accents is not unique to the music industry; Schwyter (2016:191) discusses the growing presence of "local accents" in BBC reporting. Such reports seem to reflect a shift across the British media as regional varieties of English have become more prevalent — a shift which has taken place during Caine's career. Caine says that he fought to retain his accent and to represent Cockney in film (Mackay 2007), so any attrition of the regional Cockney features in his middle years would speak to a particularly strong influence from his media peers to standardise.

2.4.4 Stylistic Variation

Linguistic variation can be stylistic, as speakers modify their speech in response to, for example, the audience and the topic (see Bell 1984). We first need to consider the effect of the addressee, the primary interlocutor who is addressed by the subject. When there is a distance between the spoken varieties of Caine and his addressee, we need to consider the possibility of accommodation features (see Giles and Ogay 2006). Generally, speakers will converge, adapting their speech to be closer to that of the interlocutor, if they wish to reduce the social distance between them. Speakers only diverge if they want to increase this distance. Bell (1984) found that third members of a conversation, or auditors (who are particularly pertinent to this study), also play a role in the linguistic behaviour of the subject. The auditor's variety of English is important in the discussion as they can elicit accommodation features from the subject, just as with the addressee, but to a weaker degree (Bell 1984:174).

Aside from audience, the conversation topic can also promote variation in a speaker's style and consequently the linguistic variants which are performed. Sharma (2018) found that a bidialectal speaker would move to one dominant dialect, their earliest-acquired variety, when performing certain tasks. Sharma lists different tasks that lead to this "real me" variety, which include irony, arguing, and teasing (2018:24). For such "real me" situations to exist, it is imperative that the subject is confident that the addressee is familiar with the dominant variety (2018:24).

2.5 Linguistic Priming

Priming, often referred to as *persistence* in linguistic research (Tamminga 2016), is the repetition of phenomena in close proximity (Clark and Villareal 2018). It has seen growing interest in sociolinguistics, as cross-disciplinary research with cognitive science can better inform our understanding of language variation. Clark (2018:230) recognises how the priming of phonological phenomena has seen less attention in the natural dialogue of speakers than in, say, corpus linguistics. The current study uses pre-existing interviews, which are arguably more naturalistic data than a sociolinguistic interview.

Studies on phonological priming find complex results. For example, Tamminga (2016) only found the repetition of phonological variables in tokens of the same morphological class. An increase in the production of a phonological variant has often been associated with the repetition of lexical items which contain said phonological feature (Tamminga 2016, Clark 2018). Clark and Villareal (2018) call this *Lexical Boost*, a feature which will become particularly relevant when looking at TH-stopping, as the voiced dental fricative is the onset of many high-frequency monosyllabic content words in English (e.g., 'the', 'that', 'then').

3 Methodology

Four interviews have been transcribed, divided into one pair of interviews that took place in Michael Caine's middle years (1970s) and one pair of interviews where he was in his older years (+2000s). These two time periods show contrast in Caine's life: the 1970s interviews take place before his move to America and global fame and the +2000s interviews take place after Caine's resurgence (Pettinger 2008).

The interviews were sought with contextual similarity in mind. Each time period has one interview with a familiar male addressee (Michael Parkinson) as well as a third male member of the conversation (the auditor). Each pair also includes an interview with a female addressee who is unfamiliar to Caine. The intention was to limit the variation in accommodation features (Giles and Ogay 2006) employed by Caine over the two time periods. The interview details, including the participants, their gender, and the year, are outlined in (3).

(3) UK_f_1973: Female British addressee in 1973
UK_m_1976: Male British addressee and male auditor in 1976
UK_m_2007: Male British addressee and male auditor in 2007
AM_f_2013: Female American addressee in 2013

Interviews were transcribed and the variants of the dental fricatives were auditorily coded and collated. The non-standard realisation of word-initial /ð/ is referred to as TH-stopping throughout (see van den Doel 2006:251, Wells 1982:329, Mott 2012:84). Despite the quality of this variant perhaps resembling TH-tapping, the coding of TH-stopping was done in a binary fashion: non-standard or standard. TH-fronting was also coded in a binary way. Deleted tokens were coded as "non-standard" in the preliminary analysis, but were omitted in the final analysis.

Finding interviews with a comparable social setting presented the main methodological challenge. AM_f_2013 has an American female interviewer compared to a British female interviewer in UK_f_1973. We can expect that a greater social distance between the speakers would affect Caine's TH-variation. Additionally, while the comparable UK_m_1976 and UK_m_2007 interviews have the same addressee, the auditors are not the same. UK_m_1976 contains a young Elton John, who speaks very little, while the auditor in UK_m_2007 is Billy Connolly, who is much more active in the conversation with a highly accented variety of Glaswegian English. Regarding TH-tokens, the limited interview material reduced the number of tokens available in contrasting phonetic environments, specifically the tokens for the less common /θ/. There are also numerous occasions where Caine performs impersonations in UK_m_2007, and these moments have been omitted from analysis.

By coding for the variant contexts listed in (2), the proximity of the variants could then be compared for an analysis of priming. Deleted tokens were omitted from the priming data, following Tamminga (2016). I looked at prime-target structures where one production of a variant, the prime, is followed by one or more realisations of the same variant (Clark and Villareal 2018). Looking at the distribution on the TH-variants, any clustering and the simultaneous conversation task is used in the discussion of stylistic variation. Given the preliminary nature of this data collection for priming, morphology and lexical repetition were considered with reference to the transcripts, but there were no formal tests to assess their relevance to the priming of phonological features.

4 Results

4.1 Realisation of the Dental Fricatives

Let us first inspect the raw data and percentages for Caine's production of the voiced and unvoiced dental fricatives. The non-standard forms (TH-stopping, TH-fronting, and deletion) are used at the same frequency in

both +2000 interviews: 40% (27 tokens) in UK_m_2007 and 40% (31 tokens) in AM_f_2013. In both 1970s interviews, his non-standard frequency is considerably lower than in his older years: 8% (7 tokens) in UK_f_1973 and 11% (8 tokens) in UK_m_1976. There is consistency between the interviews at both time periods.

Table 1 separates the non-standard figures into the non-standard realisation of the unvoiced /θ/ and the voiced /ð/. This shows that Caine produces the unvoiced dental fricative /θ/ in the standard manner for the entirety of both 1970s interviews and in the AM_f_2013 interview. Only in UK_m_2007 do we see non-standard variants of /θ/, accounting for 50% of all /θ/ tokens in that interview. Therefore, we can observe a consistent increase in his overall production of non-standard TH-variants over time, but there is less consistency in which non-standard TH-variants he produces.

Table 1: Non-standard variants of /θ/ and /ð/: % (N)

	UK_f_1973	UK_m_1976	UK_m_2007	AM_f_2013
/θ/	0 (0)	0 (0)	50 (7)	0 (0)
/ð/	12 (7)	16 (8)	43 (20)	48 (31)

Non-standard realisation of /θ/ is more probable in UK_m_2007 than non-standard realisation of /ð/, per variant context. Of these non-standard /θ/ realisations, six are TH-fronting and there's one case of deletion. This is also the only interview with fronting of /ð/, and there is 36% TH-fronting across all of the variant contexts for both fricatives.

The most common non-standard realisation was TH-stopping. In UK_m_2007 and UK_f_2013 respectively, 37% & 45% of word-initial /ð/ was produced as a stop. In UK_f_1973 and UK_m_1976, 11% and 13% were produced as stops. Overall, the 1970s interviews contained 30% less TH-stopping than the +2000s (Figure 1).
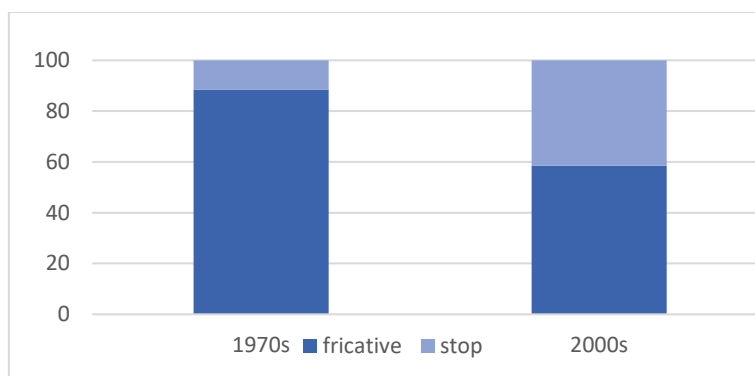

Figure 1: Variation in Michael Caine's word-initial /ð/ production: 1970s versus 2000s.

There is some slight indication that TH-stopping was more common when preceded by a consonant, except for in AM_f_1973. In this interview alone, Caine was more likely to produce a stop after a preceding vowel. Table 2 shows the percentage of TH-stopping depending on the place of articulation (POA) of the preceding consonant (across a word boundary). In the +2000s, TH-stopping slightly favoured a preceding labiodental consonant over consonants with an alveolar POA. The small number of labial and velar environments makes it more difficult to see any patterns concerning these POAs.

Table 2: TH-stopping and POA of preceding consonant: % (N stops/all /ð/)

	UK_f_1973	UK_m_1976	UK_m_2007	AM_f_2013
labiodental	27 (3/11)	24 (4/17)	50 (9/18)	48 (11/23)
alveolar	4 (1/22)	7 (1/14)	43 (3/7)	39 (7/18)
labial	0 (0/2)	50 (2/4)	0 (0/0)	0 (0/0)
velar	0 (0/3)	0 (0/3)	100 /3)	17 (1/6)

4.2 TH-variant Distribution

The distribution of TH-stopped tokens was evenly spread across the dialogues UK_f_1973, AM_f_2013, and UK_m_2007. However, in UK_m_1976, the 7 instances of TH-stopping all appear during a 69 second segment where Caine tells a funny anecdote about his childhood. This cluster can be seen in Figure 2, where the x-axis values represent each feature of the variant context in Caine's speech. On the binary y-axis, the value 1 represents TH-stopping and 0 represents the standard form.
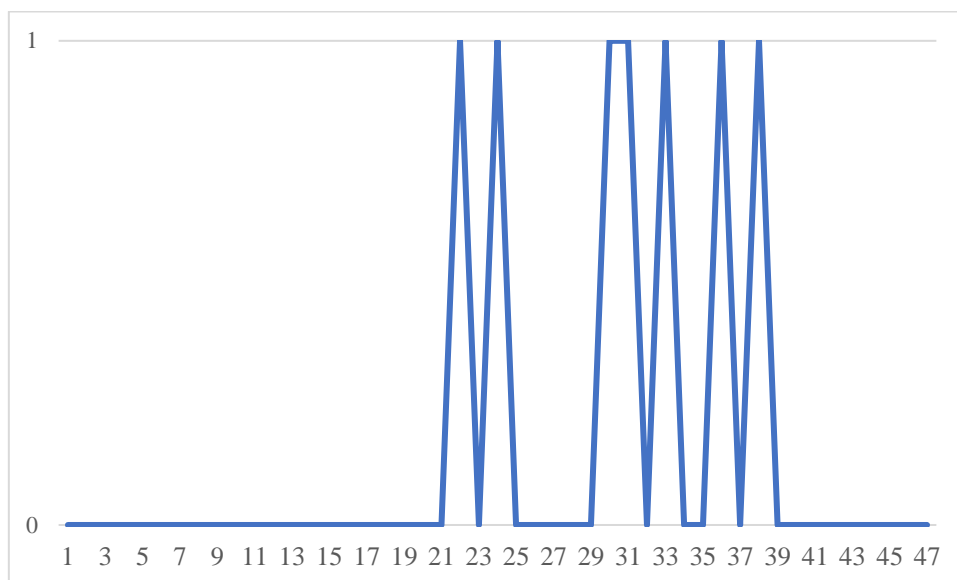

Figure 2: TH-stopping (1) or standard (0) variant for each variant context, UK_m_1976.

In Figure 3, we can see the TH-fronting distribution in UK_m_2007, the only interview in which Caine realises the fronted TH-variants. This figure offers a more uneven distribution, whereby the fronted variant is produced in 9 of the first 12 TH-fronting variant contexts, where Caine jokes about a story involving the auditor. By contrast, the final 9 variant contexts were realised with standard dental fricatives.
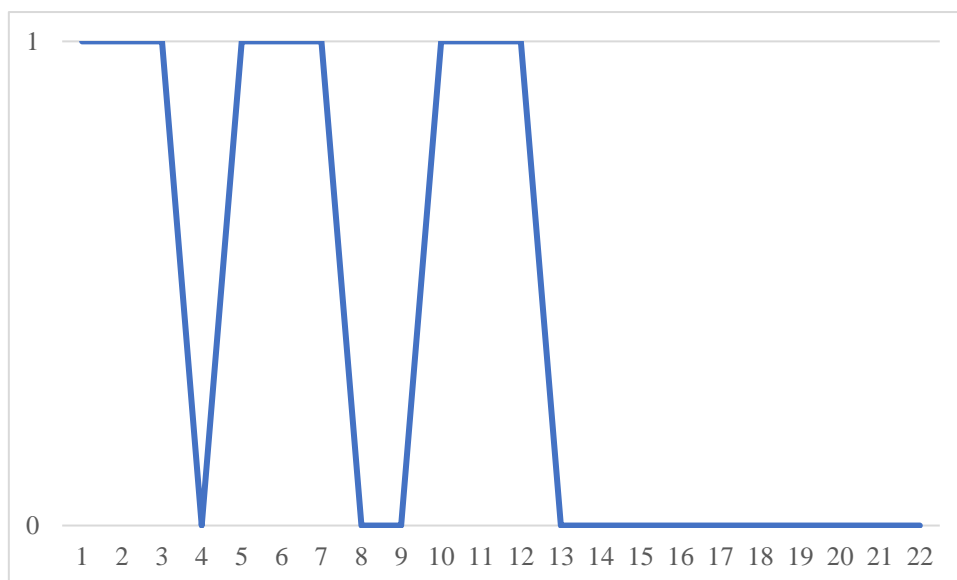

Figure 3: TH-fronting (1) or standard (0) variant for each variant context, UK_m_2007.

Table 3 contains the number of TH-stopping variants that occur in prime-target structures and the number of TH-stopping variants that are isolated, followed, or preceded by the standard form. There is then a percentage of all stops that occur in the prime-target sequence. The 1970s interviews do not contain enough tokens of TH-stopping to draw strong conclusions from the results, but the +2000s interviews contain a high percentage of prime-target structures.

Table 3: TH-stopping variants in a prime-target structure

	UK_f_1973	UK_m_1976	UK_m_2007	AM_f_2013
prime-target	4	2	15	21
isolated TH-stop	2	5	2	6
% prime-target	67	29	88	78

Every word which permits TH-stopping is a monosyllabic function word, as stated in 3.1, and while there is a high frequency of TH-stopping for 'the' and 'that', these words are also produced frequently with the dental fricatives. Not all TH-stopping words are monomorphemic; the contraction 'they're' is also realised with the stop variant. As for the TH-fronting in UK_m_2007, all 9 tokens are found adjacent to words which have a fronted dental fricative. The words 'with', 'Rothchild', and 'birthday' all exhibit TH-fronting on 2 occasions.

5 Discussion

Diachronic intraspeaker variation is a product of changes in both the attitude of the speaker and in the changing linguistic backdrop behind that speaker over the same period of time (see Downes 1998:223–227). I will first discuss the changes in Caine's realisation of dental fricatives over his lifespan and then explore the explanations for such changes, from individual change to the effects of societal shifts during his lifetime. The priming data will be used to tease apart the roles of cognition and social stimuli in Caine's production of non-standard features.

5.1 The Decline of Caine's Dental Fricatives

Caine uses TH-stopping in all four interviews, and it is more prevalent than TH-fronting in each. Wells (1982:329) discusses the prevalence of such "frictionless" dental realisations when /ð/ closely follows a consonant. All interviews support this with more TH-stopping following a consonant than vowels or pauses, apart from AM_f_2013, where TH-stopping was more common after a vowel, albeit with fewer of these environments to analyse. Concerning POA, a preceding labiodental consonant led to the highest percentage of TH-stopping in the following word and, due to its close proximity in POA, the result did indeed sound like assimilation, as described by Wells (1982:329). Alveolar consonants also frequently preceded TH-stopping variants, supporting Shockey's (2003:43) estimation that TH-stopping is /ð/-reduction with preceding alveolar consonants. These ideas of /ð/-reduction or assimilation are not the only precursors to TH-stopping, evident in the number of instances where it occurs after a vowel or a pause. In (4), we can see three excerpts from the interviews which illustrate the different environments in which Caine would exhibit TH-stopping:

(4) a. and [d]en he [f]ought [d]at was funny (UK_m_2007)
     b. oh yes… [d]e reason (UK_m_2007)
     c. to be [d]e toughest butler (AM_f_2013)

(4a) demonstrates the TH-stopping described by Shockey: the preceding alveolar reduces /ð/ to a stop. As for (4b), the TH-stopping follows a pause and after a vowel in (4c). This clearly shows that Caine's TH-stopping is not just caused by assimilation with a preceding consonant or by creating sandhi forms (Wells 1982:329).

Although we see a much higher frequency in his older years, the presence of TH-stopping in Caine's middle years suggests the feature has always existed in his vernacular. The percentages for TH-stopping between both +2000s interviews are extremely similar, and those for the 1970s are even closer. This coherence at each time period indicates that Caine's changing realisation of word-initial /ð/ is diachronic (Cheshire 2005:1552), as opposed to being determined by synchronic social factors.

Caine only exhibited TH-fronting in UK_m_2007, where he fronted 36% of all the available fricatives, most commonly fronting word-medial /θ/ in consonant clusters. The complete absence of TH-fronting in the three remaining interviews, including the most recent, AM_f_2013, implies that this feature is not solely age-specific. AM_f_2013 also takes place 6 years later, which further weakens the notion that this linguistic feature has increased as Caine has aged. He does indeed perform TH-stopping in AM_f_2013, so it appears that the two variants are determined by different factors.

As the results weaken the notion that TH-fronting is solely age-specific, we can turn to the role of synchronic factors: audience and topic. The exceptional TH-fronting could be attributed to his stronger relationship to the auditor — Caine tells multiple anecdotes from the past involving Billy Connolly — and the auditor contributes a lot in the conversation with his non-standard variety of Scottish English. Caine could be converging to this auditor at a prestige-level: by producing non-standard variants of his own variety he reduces the distance from his

auditor's non-standard variety (Bell 1984). I use "prestige-level" because Caine is not converging to an interlocutor's use of TH-stopping or TH-fronting; neither of these features are present in the speech of any of his interlocutors across all four interviews. Parkinson refers to Caine and the auditor as "lad[s] from the buildings" (Top Cat 2015), referring to their shared working-class background. The TH-fronting also occurred exclusively during the interview's first topic of discussion, where the participants are making jokes and telling anecdotes, indicative of the "real me" styles that Sharma (2018) believes encourage the use of the speaker's dominant language variety. The more stigmatised TH-fronting is therefore only seen when Caine is in conversation with other speakers of a non-standard variety, whereas the occurrence of TH-stopping is less dependent on audience.

The need for more data on the effects of age and the social setting was reinforced by an impressionistic study of another stigmatised variant that we associate with London English. In UK_m_1976, Caine pronounced word-final -er with the standard British English [ə] in the word 'rubber'. In the later UK_m_2007 interview, we can hear the [ɐ] in 'driver', which is associated with London varieties of English (Wells 1982). This aligns with the findings for the TH-variants and the higher prevalence of non-standard variants in his older years, strengthening the conclusions made about his return to his working-class vernacular in his older years.

5.2 Priming

In Caine's older years, variants of TH-stopping occurred in prime-target structures. Moreover, these structures were often lexical repetitions, but the narrow set of /ð/-initial monosyllabic words hinders us from delineating any clear lexical boost patterns. TH-fronting appears to support lexical boost patterns with repetition of the feature in the same words ('with', 'Rothchild', 'birthday'), despite the small data set. As such a narrow set of monomorphemic words contain the TH-stopping variant context, we are prevented from exploring Tamminga's (2016) claim that priming exists for morphology but not phonology, although TH-stopping of the bimorphemic 'they're' does not support her claim. The data provide preliminary evidence for linguistic priming, and further study could illuminate the role of morphology and lexis. Perhaps, looking at more widespread phonological phenomena, such as the vowel variation noted in -er words, will reveal more about the role of phonology in priming.

The most important information revealed by the priming data is the division between cognitive and social effects on each variant. Where the audience is similar in UK_m_1976 and UK_m_2007, TH-stopping surfaces in the performance of "real me" styles in the former interview, but it is used in prime-target structures distributed evenly across the dialogue in the latter. TH-fronting in UK_m_2007 then mimics the TH-stopping pattern that we see in UK_m_1976. I argue that Caine's TH-stopping is no longer determined by topic and audience as he ages and it is in free variation with the standard form likely to occur in prime-target structures. Considering the effects of audience and style, TH-fronting occupies a similar position in his older years' vernacular to the TH-stopping of his middle years.

5.3 Lifespan and Community Change

We can assess what significance these findings hold for lifespan change and changes in the wider linguistic community. My findings for TH-stopping somewhat parallel those of Shapp et al. (2014), with a feature of the speaker's vernacular becoming more prominent in his older years. Shapp et al. (2014:9) attribute Justice Ginsburg's increase in r-vocalisation to a loss of linguistic capital with age as conversations with Justice Ginsburg more often than not began to focus on her old age. The conversations are similar in the +2000s interviews where Caine looks back at his career and gives advice for young aspiring actors. These conversations imply that Caine is at the end of his career and this reduces any motivation for convergence to mainstream norms. The security of Justice Ginsberg's professional status is also evidenced for her returning vernacular feature (Shapp et al. 2014), another parallel with Caine and his own professional security. Downes (1998:225) illustrates a speaker's divergence from their adolescent vernacular during middle age followed by a return in their older years. If Caine has followed such a trajectory, then he likely acquired TH-stopping in his younger years. In the 1970s, it seems he is "[adapting] to the norms and values of mainstream society" (Cheshire 2005:1558) by suppressing the less prestigious form at a time when convergence to overt prestige forms is expected. The prescriptive values of the media during this period (Schwyter 2016:190) may have contributed to Caine's use of /ð/ in his middle years, as it is recognised that post-adolescent change corresponds with changes in the community of the speaker (Sankoff and Blondeau 2007). Caine claims to have used his accent to "break down the class barriers" (The New York Times 2010), so he clearly recognised this prescriptivism and the relationship between spoken variety and class. Although he seems to have recognised the value of his accent and its relationship to his working-class London heritage (Britannica 2020), his suppression of TH-stopping in his middle years indicates his own, albeit slight, submission to the conservative linguistic community of the 1970s, and it confirms the stigma attached to all alternatives to the dental fricatives (see Altendorf and Watt 2004, Tollfree 1999).

As for TH-fronting, the results can be explained by diachronic and synchronic change. In AM_f_2013, there is a large social distance between Caine and the female American interviewer, and we see significant TH-stopping but no TH-fronting, possibly a result of convergence (Giles and Ogay 2006). For example, the 1970s interviews see similar rates of TH-stopping, despite the difference in gender of and familiarity with the interviewers; the difference in nationality of AM_f_2013 affects accommodation features more. Caine seems to view TH-fronting as the more non-standard of the two TH-variants, avoiding its use for communicative purposes (see van den Doel 2006). Living in North America perhaps allowed him to develop an adapted language variety to which he switches when speaking with American interlocutors. It may even be that TH-fronting was acquired by Caine in his older years, following the wider community, as the feature's prevalence has grown in British English (Kerswill 2003). However, I propose that TH-fronting is present in UK_m_2007 as a feature of Caine's vernacular, acquired during or before adolescence. He uses TH-fronting when the topic demands "real me" speech styles, delivering humour and teasing in this case (Sharma 2018). The cluster of TH-stopping in the earlier UK_m_1976 foreshadows the behaviour of TH-fronting in UK_m_2007, as TH-stopping is the non-standard feature that surfaces here when Caine, again, delivers humour. As Sharma (2018) explains, the "real me" speech style reflects features of the speaker's dominant language variety. I believe that Caine has acquired TH-fronting in his younger years but suppressed it in public-facing contexts, more so than TH-stopping. Speakers who front are also able to produce the dental fricatives (Wells 1982:328), and Caine has simply chosen to produce the standard variant to converge, be it to his interlocutor or the standard language market (Wagner 2012).

Older speakers exhibiting more non-standard features has often been explained by the speakers' retirement from work (Chambers and Trudgill 1998:79, Downes 1998:225), yet Caine has not yet retired in the +2000 interviews. Chambers and Trudgill (1998) explain how retirement and use of the vernacular is related to the achievement of success, and how there is no longer a pressure to impress. Caine's respected status in the film industry may have alleviated these pressures just as retirement would (see also Shapp et al. 2014). The increased representation of regional varieties in the media (Schwyter 2016:190) and the growing covert prestige of regional features in British pop culture (Beal 2009, Smith 2011) may suggest that Caine's non-standard TH-realisation is attributed to changing societal values that support his individual change. This could certainly be the case with TH-fronting, which we only see in a British interview with another celebrity speaking a regional variety. Caine's lower frequency of the non-standard TH-variants during his middle years is not enough to suggest that he did not "doggedly retain" his regional accent (Mackay 2007), but it does highlight the pressures of the standard language market of the 1970s mainstream media. Other features, such as his *-er* vowels, need to be looked at to explore the extent to which he diverged from his vernacular in these years.

6 Conclusion

This study has supported the previous work on lifespan change (Cheshire 2005, Downes 1998, Shapp et al. 2014), as Caine diverges from the prestigious forms, favouring non-standard features of his vernacular during his older years. The interviews demonstrate an effect of social setting on intraspeaker variation, as Caine's use of non-standard variants depends on audience and topic. We have also seen prime-target sequences of TH-stopping, to be studied further to tease apart the roles of phonology, morphology, and lexis.

This paper was inspired by the surprisingly frequent TH-stopping in Caine's speech. Strengthening of word-initial /ð/ has not had the same attention as fronting and vowel variation associated with L1 London English, and it is not just caused by assimilation with previous phonemes as previous works have suggested (Shockey 2003, Wells 1982). It is possible that more will be revealed about TH-stopping in British English with increasing focus on the feature.

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