Workshop: Social Class

This workshop is intended to make you think about the interaction between linguistic variables and social factors like social class and style. In particular, we will think about the different types of correlation that can occur and the terminology used to describe these relationships. By the end of the class, you should have a good knowledge of the way language and social factors correlate.

Read: Meyerhoff (2006: 22-38, 155-183)

The table below lists words which contain variable pronunciations in the dialects shown. For each word, complete the columns to the right of the example. The first one has been done for you.

	Word	Dialect	Potential pronunciations	What is the variable?	What are the variants?	In your opinion, Is this variable affected by social class?	In your opinion, is this variable affected by style?	Is this variable an indicator, marker or stereotype?
	<thing>	London	/fɪŋ/, /θɪŋ/	*th*-fronting	/f, θ/	Yes, but age also has an effect	Yes, more /f/ in informal styles	Marker
1	<arm>	Cornwall	/aːrm/, /ɑːm/					
2	<house>	Leeds	/aʊs/ /haʊs/					

3	<brother>	Milton Keynes	/brʌðə/, brʌvə/					
4	<happy>	Manchester	/apɪ/, /hapi:/					
5	<book>	Stoke	/bu:k/, /bʊk/					
6	<two>	Sheffield	/tuw/, /tu:/					
7	<home>	Newcastle	/huəm/, /hɔ:m/, /həʊm/					

Additional questions:

a. Which of the variables above do you think represent changes-in-progress and which are stable variation?
b. Do you think that any of the nonstandard variants in the table carry covert prestige?
c. Which of the variables might be prone to hypercorrection?
d. In addition to exploring the social constraints on language variation, sociolinguists are also interested in investigating the linguistic constraints. Consider the (ing) variable (variation in the pronounciation of <ing> at the end of words). What *linguistic* constraints could affect the variant produced for this variable? (You should think about *the type of words* <ing> may occur within.)
e. Can you think of any grammatical variables that have interesting and/or changing social class or style patterns?