The Talk of the Toon

http://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte/toon

Newcastle University

http://www.ncl.ac.uk

The Diachronic Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English

http://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte

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http://www.ahrc.ac.uk

Suggestions for

Student Activities & Projects

This document suggests activities and projects relating to three main themes:

(1) The Use of Corpora **(2) The Use of Questionnaires** **(3) Media Research**

Consider also ideas from the following pages (which partly overlap with the suggestions given here):

Richard Hudson, UCL
http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/ec/projects.htm
http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/projects.htm

The British Library: Sounds Familiar?
http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/activities
http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/regional-voices/phonological-variation

Andrew Moore, Universal Teacher.org.uk
http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/lang/research.htm

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(1) Use of Corpora

e.g. ***The Talk of the Toon*** (http://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte/toon)
DECTE (http://research.ncl.ac.uk/decte) **SCOTS** (http://www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk)

These exercises have been couched in terms of gender but can also be used for class or age.

- Use the corpus to investigate the use of a linguistic variable by gender:
  - Intensifiers (*very, totally, so, really,…*)
  - Quotatives (*say, think, go, be like,…*)
  - Possessive pronouns: *me vs. my hat/mother/house,….*

- Use the corpus to check a validity of common gender stereotypes:
  - The amount of speaking
  - The amount of interruptions
  - The use of tags (*isn't it, won't we?*)
  - The use of colour terms

- How does the use of these features change across time (e.g. between the 1960s, the 1990s and the 2000s, as represented in the Talk of the Toon / DECTE interviews)?

- How does the use of these features vary across space? Compare the use of intensifiers, colour terms, etc in DECTE with use, for example, in the SCOTS corpus.

(2) Questionnaires

- Use the *Indirect Grammaticality Judgement Questionnaire* (see Appendix 1) as a guide in order to investigate the use of typically Geordie features such as:
  - *Yous*-pronoun in subject and object position (*yous need to … versus I'll give it to yous*)
  - Negation Patterns (*divven't, dinnit, dinnae*,…)
  - Relatives (*what, whose, that,*…)
  - Vernacular –s (*I says to him, The young-uns gets away with all sorts*…)

- Prepare a series of sentences or a reading passage featuring a number of words that contain a potential /j/ sound before an /u/ vowel (e.g. *computer*, *beautiful*, *amusing*, *knew*, *refuse*, *review*, *cute*, *regular*, *enthusiastic*, *human*, *tube*, *during*, *suit*, *issue*, *visual*, *attitude*, *education*, *particular* etc.)

  Ask a range of speakers at your school / in your family to read the sentences or passage and note their pronunciation preferences. Do you notice any patterns?

  After which consonants is the /j/ sound present or absent, or where is it combined into a /ʃ/, /tʃ/ or /j/ sound? Are there any differences in speaker preference according to age?

- Using the *Language Identity Questionnaire* (see Appendix 2), interview 5 people from three areas of the country and compare their answers.

- Make copies of the *Sense Relation Networks* (SRN, Appendix 3) and ask at least two people to complete it. Leave the SRNs with them for a week and then arrange to interview them. (If the two people know each other well, you can interview them together). You should record the interview.
  - If they have given several words for certain concepts, ask them when they would use each word, or whether some are words they have heard but would not use themselves.
  - Ask them if there are any other words they can think of now, which they had not written down on the SRN, and make a note of these.

  When you have collected the SRNs and recorded the interviews, make a list of the words for each notion.
  - Do you think that they are local dialect, slang or colloquial?
  - If you have access to dialect dictionaries, look up some of these, if not, look them up in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, preferably the online version.
  - In class, compare the words that your informants provided. Is there any difference between words provided by older and younger people, males and females, different social groups?

- Make a list of words you associate with the dialect of the area you live in. Make your own version of the *Sense Relation Networks* (Appendix 3).
  - Interview other members of your family/community to see if they can add to your list.
  - Which words do you associate with older generations and which words are used by speakers of all ages?

  A good area of vocabulary to start with when investigating the use of local terms is words for emotions, states of mind or personality traits (*happy*, *angry*, *moody*, *grumpy*, *pleased*, *annoyed*, *drunk*, *attractive*, *unattractive*, *badly-behaved*, *stupid* etc.)

- The following words currently appear to be undergoing a shift in pronunciation — preferences seem to differ across the UK according to the age of the speaker.

  Test whether this is true in your community. Ask a sample of at least twenty people, half of them school age and half over fifty.

  You might like to give them a word list or a series of sentences containing the target words. Do you spot any definite tendencies? What are the newer, 'innovative' pronunciations in each case?

  Find out if people are aware of the differences and what opinions they have about the changes in pronunciation.

  You can check the age distribution of the different pronunciations of these words and others in the *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* edited by J. C. Wells (2008, 3rd edn. Longman: Harlow)

  - ***Associate***: the <c> in the spelling is traditionally pronounced with a /s/ sound; this is increasingly heard as a /ʃ/ sound.
  - ***Casual***: the <s> is traditionally pronounced with a /z/ sound followed by a /j/ sound; it is now far more often pronounced like the medial consonant in the word **leisure**.
  - ***Gradual***: the <d> in the spelling is traditionally pronounced with a /d/ sound followed by a /j/ sound; it is now far more often pronounced with a /dʒ/ sound and thus the last two syllables sound like **jewel**.
  - ***Issue***: the <ss> in the spelling is traditionally pronounced with a /s/ sound followed by a /j/ sound; it is now far more often pronounced with a /ʃ/ sound.
  - ***Schedule***: the initial consonant is traditionally pronounced with a /ʃ/ sound as in **sh**ed; it is increasingly pronounced with a /sk/ sound as in **sk**id.
  - ***Suit***: the initial consonant is traditionally followed by a /j/ sound thus rhyming with **cute**; it is increasingly pronounced without the /j/ sound thus rhyming with **coot**.
  - ***Necessary***: traditionally pronounced with three syllables with the final syllable sounding like the **<sri>** of **Sri** Lanka; increasingly pronounced with four syllables so that the final two syllables rhyme with **sherry**.
  - ***Ordinary***: traditionally pronounced as three syllables or four with a weak penultimate vowel so that the final two syllables virtually rhyme with curry; increasingly pronounced as four syllables with a stronger penultimate vowel so that the final two syllables rhyme with **sherry**.

- Make a list of items of vocabulary that you associate with the older generation in your family/community.

  Vocabulary related to technology, fashion and lifestyle is particularly prone to change and therefore a good starting point — ask older members of your family/community for their contributions.

- Make a list of words or phrases that you use that would sound out of place if used by older speakers?

  Terms of approval and disapproval – words for 'good' or 'bad' – are very often readily identified with a particular generation and so might be an interesting area of research.

- Choose an aspect of speech that you know varies from speaker to speaker and according to context.

  You should probably choose a pronunciation variable, such as <-ing> words, or the pronunciation of <t> between vowels or <h> at the start of a word. You could choose a grammatical feature, such as the use of non-standard tenses or multiple negation, but you will find these are more difficult to study as you need large amounts of data - a /t/ sound between vowels might crop up hundreds of times in the course of a ten-minute conversation, but you will be lucky if you hear more than two or three negative constructions.

  Now attempt one of the following investigations:

  1. Select an individual speaker and monitor his or her speech in different contexts.
     - Record or monitor his or her speech in a formal context – you might like to prepare a word list or reading passage featuring several examples of the variable.
     - Also record or monitor an informal conversation or group discussion.
     - Do you notice any differences in the speaker's pronunciation of that variable in the different speech contexts?

  2. Select at least four speakers in your community, half of whom come from a different age, gender or social group (i.e. two boys / two girls, or two older speakers / two younger speakers etc.).
     - Record or monitor their speech in a formal context – you might like to prepare a word list or reading passage featuring several examples of the variable – or monitor their speech in an informal conversation or group discussion.
     - Do you notice any differences in individual speaker preferences according to their age, gender or social background?

- Using (your own version of) the *Lexicon Questionnaire* (Appendix 4) or the *Grammar Questionnaire* (Appendix 5), ask 5 younger and 5 older / 5 male and 5 female people in your area about their use of lexical / gramatical dialect features.

- Using the maps in Appendix 6, investigate how people perceive speech. As them to circle on the map:
  - areas where they think people speak alike. (Draw boundaries around the places where people have the same dialect.)
  - area(s) where they think the 'best' English is being spoken.
  - area(s) where they think the 'worst' English is being spoken.

(3) Media Research

- Make a list of non-standard grammatical constructions, such as verb tenses or negative statements, that you come across while listening to the radio or watching a television programme.

  Programmes that feature members of the public (radio phone-ins or 'reality' television shows) are ideally suited for this activity.

  Try and categorise each construction according to the following criteria:

  - Which constructions seem to be used more by younger speakers?
  - Which constructions seem to be used more by older speakers?

  - Which constructions do you hear very frequently?
  - Which constructions only occur very rarely?

  - Which constructions do you feel are peculiar to your area?

  - Which constructions never occur in formal situations?

- Choose an aspect of speech that you know varies from speaker to speaker and according to context.

  You should probably choose a pronunciation variable, such as <-ing> words, or the pronunciation of <t> between vowels or <h> at the start of a word. You could choose a grammatical feature, such as the use of non-standard tenses or multiple negation, but you will find these are more difficult to study as you need large amounts of data - a /t/ sound between vowels might crop up hundreds of times in the course of a ten-minute conversation, but you will be lucky if you hear more than two or three negative constructions.

  Now attempt the following investigation:

  Record several episodes from your favourite soap and compare the speech of two or more characters.

  Do their preferences vary for your chosen feature?

  If so, is this random variation or can you draw any conclusions about the way the actors are trying to convey aspects of their character's identity in terms of age, gender or class differences?

Appendix 1: *Indirect Grammaticality Judgement Questionnaire*

Thank you very much for participating in our survey. We are interested in language use in the Newcastle – Gateshead area. Please answer the following questionnaire using your 'gut instincts' as a native speaker of 'Geordie'.

Before we start, we would like to ask a few questions regarding your background as we need to know, for example, how long you've lived here, since this may impact upon our results:

- What is your name? _____
- How old are you? _____
- Please circle whether you are male or female **M / F**
- Please circle whether you are working class or middle class: **WC / MC**
- Where were you born and raised? _____
- Did you ever spend an extended amount of time outside Newcastle or Gateshead? **Y / N**
- If yes, where? _____
- What is your highest level of education? _____

Now let's move on to the actual survey itself. You are going to hear some sentences on tape and then the interviewer will show you the same sentences written down in questionnaire format and you will be asked to write down your views on them. The interviewer will also ask you a number of questions about your responses as you go along. If you have any questions about any aspect of the survey, she is there to help you through it, so feel free to ask her advice at any time.

Please rate the following sentences by circling **one option** from the following scale.

1 = People around here use this type of sentence frequently – it's very common.

2 = I have heard this type of sentence locally but it's not common.

3 = This type of sentence is not very common in the area but it doesn't seem too odd.

4 = This type of sentence would never be used here - it seems very odd.

For example, if you have heard the sentence represented below but it is not very common in your area, you would circle 2 in the scale below.

*Who do you think **that came** to see George yesterday?*

1----------(2)----------3----------4

Paying particular attention to the words in bold, please rate the following sentences by circling **one option** from the scale.

(1) Dan and Linda were having a big party. When everyone left, Linda was cleaning up the table. She offered a piece of left-over cake to Dan. Dan – already bursting at the seams – moaned and said "**I do not want to eat nothing no more**."

1----------2----------3----------4

Appendix 2: *Language Identity Questionnaire*

(See — Beal, Joan (2006). *Language and Region*. Routledge.)

1. Is there a name for people from your town or city (such as *Scouser* for Liverpool or *Geordie* for Newcastle)? If so, would you use this name to describe yourself?

   .....

   .....

2. What accent do you think you have? Can you think of any specific ways in which it is different? For instance, are there any words which are pronounced differently?

   .....

   .....

   .....

3. Are you proud of your accent or would you rather not have any accent at all?
   Do you think it is good to have an accent? Why or why not?
   Have you ever felt embarrassed about your accent? When? Why?

   .....

   .....

   .....

4. Would you prefer to have a different accent? If so, which one? Why?

   .....

   .....

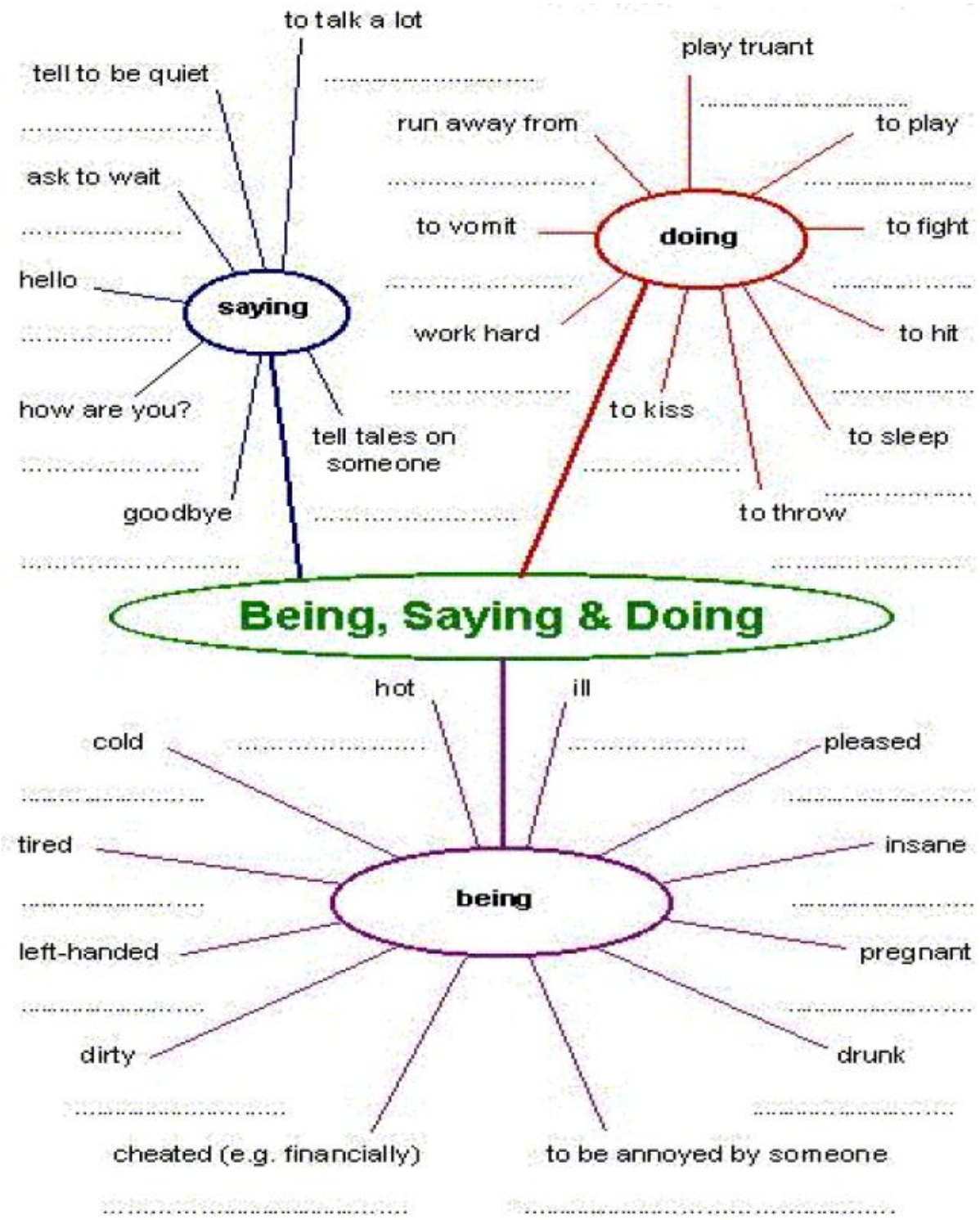
   .....

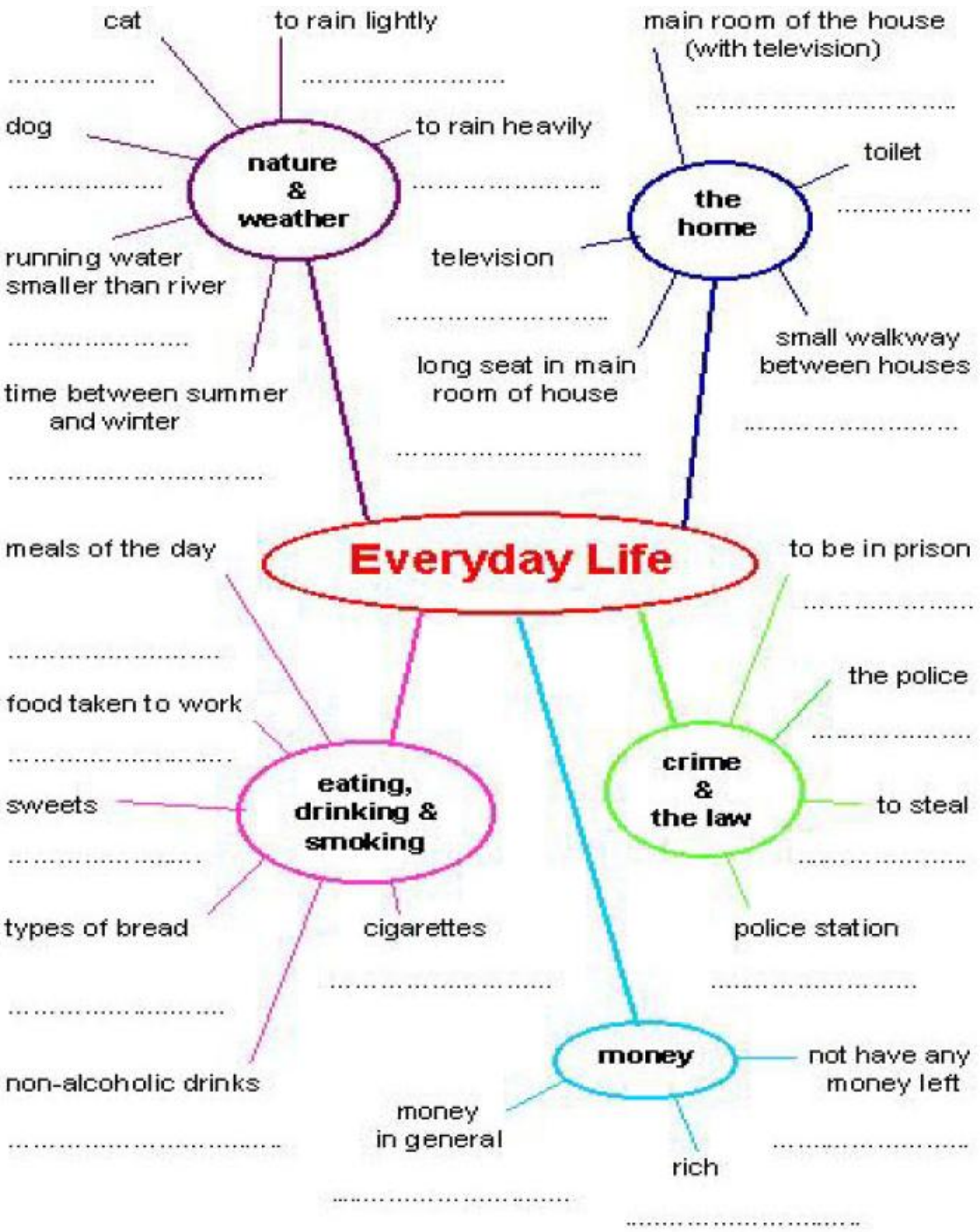
5. Is it necessary to speak with a local accent to 'belong' to your town or city?

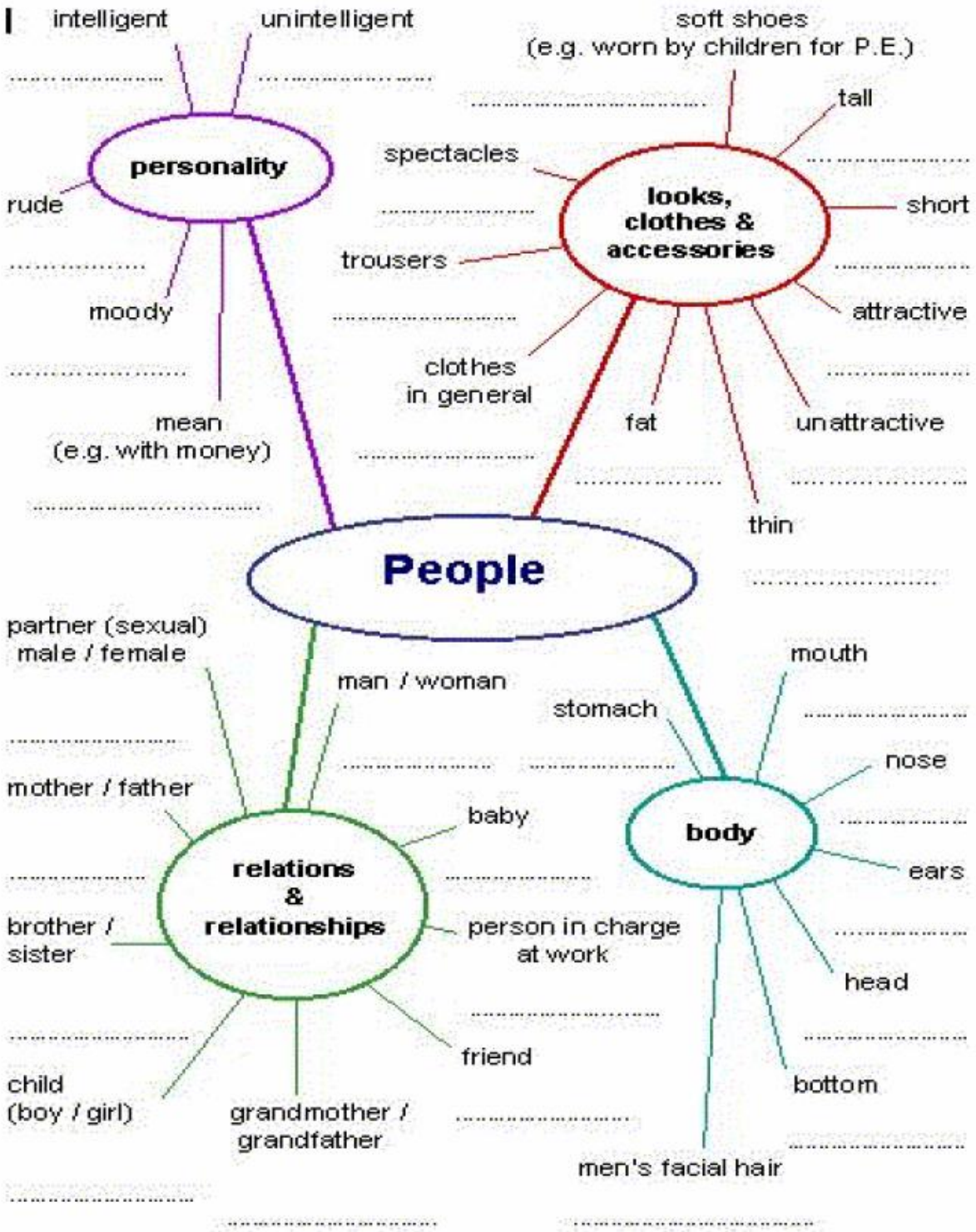
   .....

   .....

Appendix 3: *Sense Relation Networks*




Everyday Life
nature & weather
cat
to rain lightly
dog
to rain heavily
running water smaller than river
time between summer and winter
the home
main room of the house (with television)
toilet
television
small walkway between houses
long seat in main room of house
eating, drinking & smoking
meals of the day
food taken to work
sweets
types of bread
cigarettes
non-alcoholic drinks
crime & the law
to be in prison
the police
to steal
police station
money
not have any money left
money in general
rich


People
personality
intelligent
unintelligent
rude
moody
mean
(e.g. with money)
looks,
clothes &
accessories
soft shoes
(e.g. worn by children for P.E.)
tall
spectacles
short
trousers
attractive
clothes
in general
fat
unattractive
thin
relations
&
relationships
partner (sexual)
male / female
man / woman
mother / father
baby
brother /
sister
person in charge
at work
friend
child
(boy / girl)
grandmother /
grandfather
body
mouth
stomach
nose
ears
head
bottom
men's facial hair

Appendix 4: *Lexicon Questionnaire* (Lourdes Bourbano-Elizondo)

(See — Beal, Joan (2006). *Language and Region*. Routledge.)

Full name: _____

Age: _____

Male ☐ / Female ☐

INSTRUCTIONS:

- ✓ Before beginning to answer the questionnaire, do not forget to complete the section above with your personal details.
- ✓ When completing the questionnaire, bear in mind that you are dealing with dialect words, that is, words that are typical of your area.
- ✓ Read each question carefully before answering it.
- ✓ Write down as many answers as you can think of whenever it is required.
- ✓ If you do not know the answer of a question, just mark the "I don't know" option represented by '(???)'.

Let's see if you know these dialect words !

1. What is *a gowk*?

a). a hamster b). a cuckoo c). a pigeon d). ???

2. What is *a cuddy*?

a). a small bird b). a donkey c). a hug d). ???

3. What is *a paddock*?

a). a frog or toad b). a narrow path c). a parrot d). ???

4. What do you call a small river?

a). burn b). beck c). pond d). ???

5. What are you doing if you *hoy* a ball?

a). bounce it b). blow it up c). throw it d). ???

And if you *chuck* it?

a). bounce it b). blow it up c). throw it d). ???

6. If a dog is *louping*, what is it doing?

a). turning around and around happily
b). jumping
c). digging a hole to hide a bone
d). ???

7. What are your words for staying away from school without your parents or teachers' authorisation? (Give your own answers.)

_____

8. What do you think *gadgie* means?

a). an old car b). a hook c). a bloke or an old man d). ???

And *bairn*?

a). garage b). child c). an old horse d). ???

9. If someone tells you that you are quite *glaky*, what is he calling you?

a). thick, stupid b). cheeky c). clown d). ???

10. What do you call someone who writes with his left hand? (Give as many answers as possible.)

_____

_____

11. What do you say to your friends in the middle of a game if you want to take some time out?

a). I need a barley
b). I need some overtime
c). I need a skinch
d). Others: _____

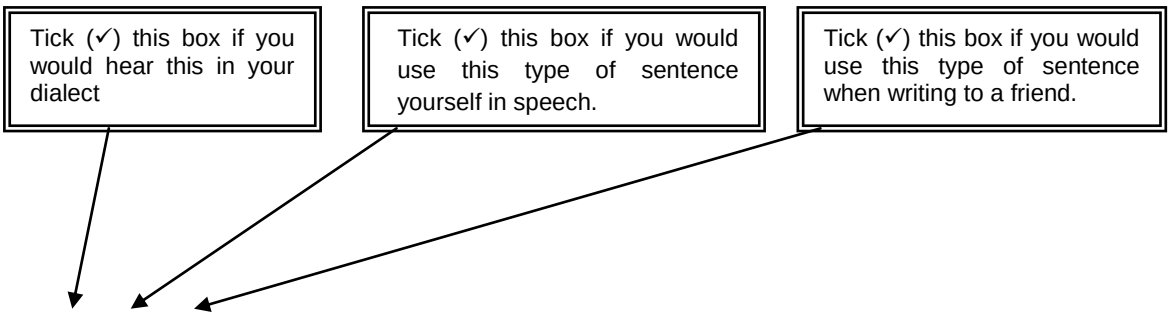
12. What is *a netty*?

a). a toilet
b). a laundry room
c). a small fishing net
d). ???

Appendix 5: *Grammar Questionnaire* (Lourdes Bourbano-Elizondo)

(See — Beal, Joan (2006). *Language and Region*. Routledge.)

Please tick more than one box if necessary. Feel free to write comments beside the sentences.



1. ☐ ☐ ☐ When are yous two going home?
2. ☐ ☐ ☐ What are thou / tha doing?
3. ☐ ☐ ☐ Ye can get lost, Kevin!
4. ☐ ☐ ☐ Give us a pen, I want to write a letter.
5. ☐ ☐ ☐ This is wor car.
6. ☐ ☐ ☐ This is me cup.
7. ☐ ☐ ☐ The radio what I bought yesterday isn't working properly.
8. ☐ ☐ ☐ The man what I was talking to is my boss.
9. ☐ ☐ ☐ My cousin which got married last year is getting divorced.
10. ☐ ☐ ☐ Their new house is much more bigger than the old one.
11. ☐ ☐ ☐ These are the most beautifullest paintings I've ever seen.
12. ☐ ☐ ☐ I can't find nothing in this mess.
13. ☐ ☐ ☐ Never mind, I'll manage but.
14. ☐ ☐ ☐ I've never heard of him like.
15. ☐ ☐ ☐ I dinnet like him.

16. ☐ ☐ ☐ Ye divvent like him, div ye?

17. ☐ ☐ ☐ There was ten kids playing in the street.

18. ☐ ☐ ☐ The carpets was soaked.

19. ☐ ☐ ☐ They was soaking.

20. ☐ ☐ ☐ We was walking along the road when it happened.

21. ☐ ☐ ☐ It were too cold out.

22. ☐ ☐ ☐ You wasn't listening to what I said.

23. ☐ ☐ ☐ I'll put the kettle on, for to make some tea?

24. ☐ ☐ ☐ He must can do it.

25. ☐ ☐ ☐ He wouldn't could've worked, even if you had asked him.

26. ☐ ☐ ☐ I can't play on Friday. I work late. I might could get it changed, though.

27. ☐ ☐ ☐ I've broke a plate.

28. ☐ ☐ ☐ I come this morning, but you weren't in.

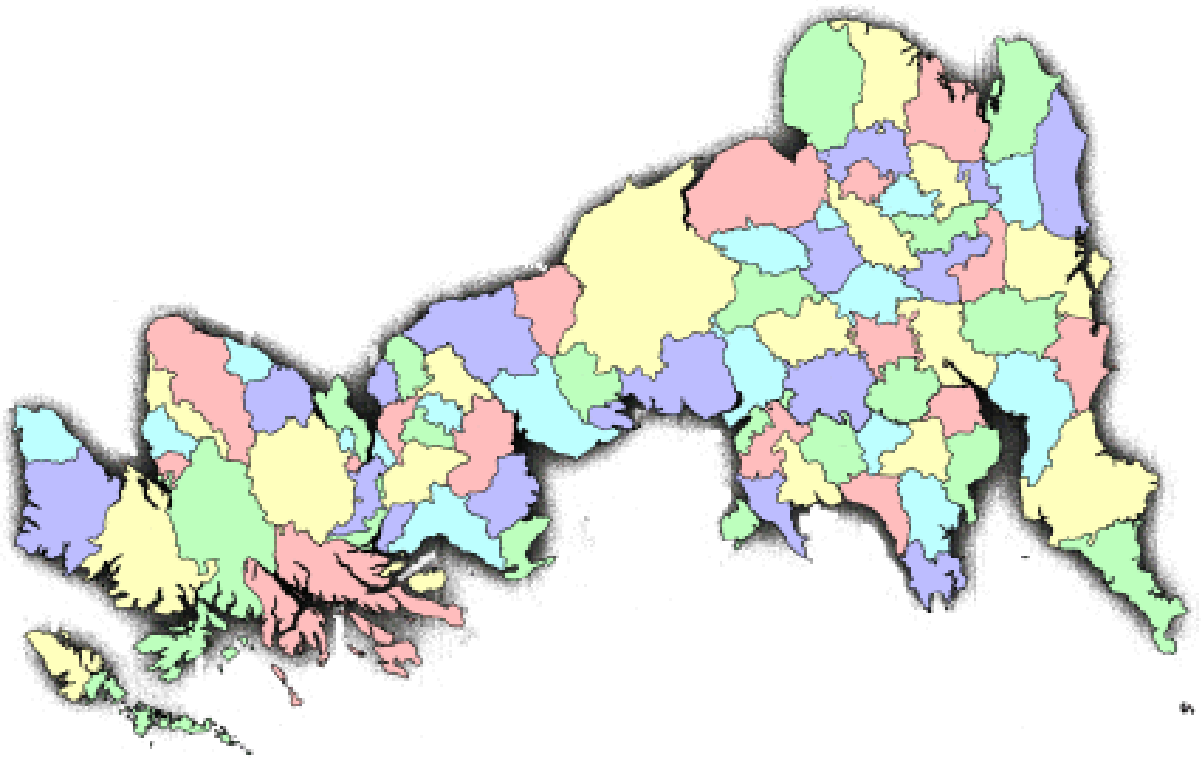
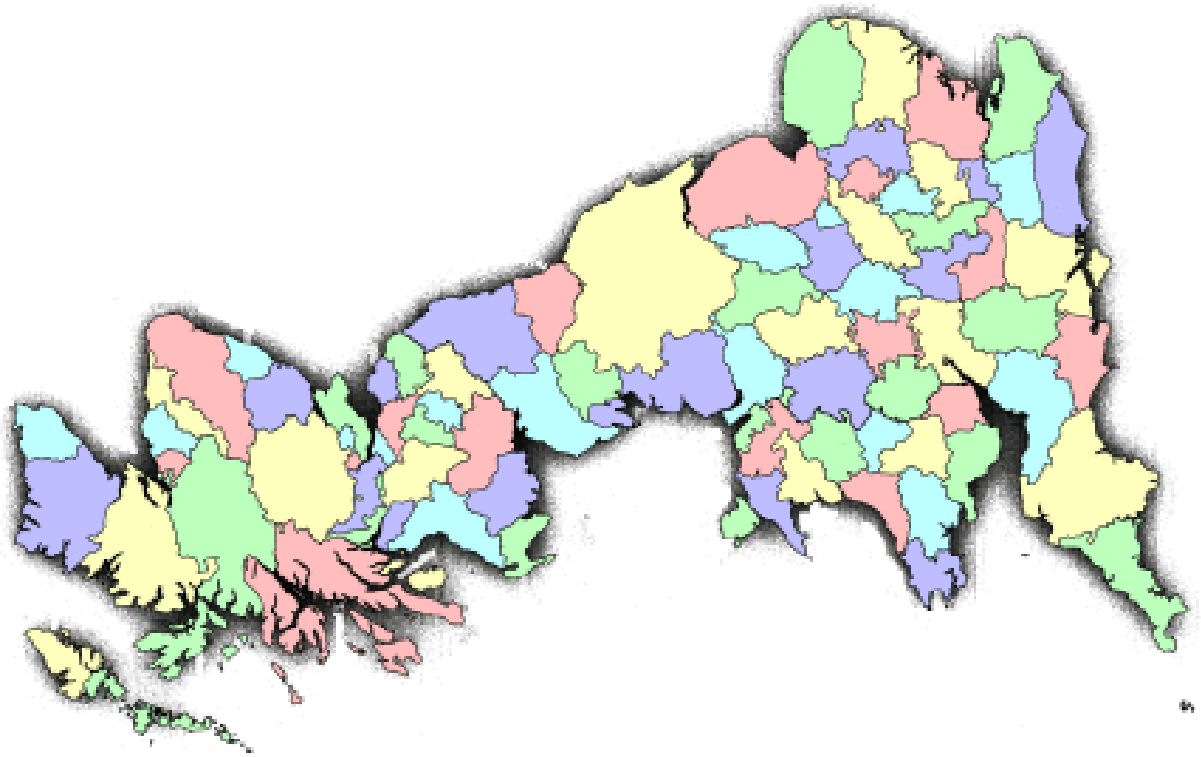
29. ☐ ☐ ☐ He done it all right.

30. ☐ ☐ ☐ I had forgetten to buy the onions.

31. ☐ ☐ ☐ He give us a pound for doing it.

32. ☐ ☐ ☐ We had went to the coast for the day.

33. ☐ ☐ ☐ I seen Albert on Tuesday.

34. ☐ ☐ ☐ We usually gan down the pub on Thursday's.

Appendix 6: *Perceptual Dialectology Survey*