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A sociolinguistic study of UK varieties of English: a case study of Liverpool English

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To the city of Liverpool and its people,

who reminded me what I stand for.

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INTRODUCTION

According to scholars, "sociolinguistics is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon" (Trudgill, 2000: 21); in other words, it investigates the connection between language and culture, but it is also "the study of language in relation to society" (Hudson 1980: I). As the name suggests, it deals with linguistics in relation to a great number of "socially relevant forces and facts" (Spolsky, 1998: 4), such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, social status, place and region. As for the present dissertation, I will be taking into account the relationship that language has with place, identity and social status according to the theory of sociolinguistics.

First of all, sociolinguistically speaking, it is believed that language is closely connected to territory, as "sociolinguists have always been concerned with place […] and geography has often entered into explanations of variation" (Johnstone, 2011: 203). This is true, for instance, when it comes to national hymns, as they link language to nation, or when a certain language appears as the official language of a certain state/nation/region, or simply when it comes to state where a language originates from. In this regard, on the basis of the idea that "language chang[e] in different ways in different places" (Trudgill, 2000: 147), linguistic maps have been created in order to make this bond explicit on the basis of geopolitics, that is to say, languages have been linked to places. This dissertation will take into account the linguistic map of the United Kingdom, leading to the analysis of the varieties of English, which apparently confirm the strong union between languages and their originating places.

Regarding the connection between language and identity, it is worth mentioning that "identity is many things", and therefore, "there is a tremendous amount of literature on identity, distributed over several social-scientific disciplines" (Blommaert, 2005: 204). Among these social-scientific disciplines, sociolinguistics makes its appearance fostering the concept of "sonic geography" (Matless, 2005), according to which, "sound, in this instance a distinctive accent and/or dialect, affects the construction of local identity" (Boland, 2010). In other words, according to sociolinguistics, language is not just a mere

means of communication, but it actually contributes to the building of one's identity. Furthermore, since it is believed that "speakers produce and reproduce particular identities through their language use" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 369), language may also be considered as a means through which identities are performed and displayed. Therefore, it is believed that language is what enables communication within society and it actually helps the generation of identity by sharing values and cultures in order to create communities based on them. That is to say, according to sociolinguistics, language shapes identity and, in this regard, this dissertation will present the literature supporting this theory.

Clearly, "whenever we speak we cannot avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins" (Trudgill, 2000: 2) and this seems to be true as concerns the links taken into consideration so far. In other words, it might be said that the way we speak could tell our interlocutors where we are from, and therefore, a part of our identity might be disclosed. In this regard, Elinor Ochs (1992) talks about "indexicality" and "notes that linguistic structures become associated with social categories", meaning that, through interaction, linguistics become linked to society. This last point leads to the sociolinguistic idea that varieties of languages are not only geographically classified, but also socially classified, and therefore, the way we speak could reveal our social status. As it is the case for this dissertation, this bond between language and social status will be further analysed.

However, although the sociolinguistic theory which has been seen so far does actually present a certain level of strength, I would argue that some flaws are present as well. As a matter of fact, I would say that language does have a relationship with territory, but the latter is far from being a homogeneous entity, and therefore, this might weaken the connection with language. Furthermore, it has been said that language shapes identity, but it has also been said that "identity is many things" (Blommaert, 2005: 204), and therefore, it is not clear how much language is actually relevant in the field of identity. Last but not least, although it might be true that languages are socially classified, and therefore, people can detect speakers' social status, it is not clear what basis this social classification stands on. In other words, it is not clear whether this classification is reliable or not.

In order to analyse these potential flaws in the sociolinguistic theory, this dissertation is based on three main research questions. The first one regards the importance of territory in relation to language, and therefore, the sociolinguistic link between language and place will be investigated in order to understand whether it is as straightforward as it appears. The second research question takes into consideration the significance of languages in the field of one's identity, meaning that this dissertation will try to understand whether linguistic identity plays a relevant role within society. Last, but not least, the third question is concerned with the social classification of languages, that is to say, I will investigate this point in order to understand what this social classification relies on.

In order to answer the research questions mentioned above, I will use a case-study approach based on the Liverpool English (LE) variety, which "is the variety of English spoken in Liverpool and much of the surrounding county of Merseyside, in the north-west of England" (Watson, 2007: 351). As a matter of fact, I will first present the sociolinguistic theory and I will try to apply it to the LE variety in order to see whether it appears relevant when transferred to a concrete case and its environment. As some flaws are detected, I will try to use a linguistic approach in order to answer the questions arising; finally, I will try to give some answers by analysing the data obtained from the case study. The latter, as already mentioned, is based on the Liverpool English variety and it was conducted as a questionnaire for survey research supplemented by short face-to-face interviews. As matter of fact, in five months, from November 2016 to March 2017, I developed and delivered a questionnaire for Liverpool English speakers. Furthermore, taking advantage of the fact that I was living in Liverpool, I carried out some short face-to-face interviews as well, so that I could fill some gaps in the study. Overall, 178 Liverpool English speakers completed the questionnaire and I was able to carry out five short interviews with five LE speakers. The data obtained will be studied through both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis method, and they will be displayed through graphs; when necessary, some answers the participants gave will be reported.

Regarding the structure of this dissertation, it will be divided into main three sections. The first one (chapter 1) will deal mainly with sociolinguistic theory; it will explore the

role of language in sociolinguistics, and in particular, its role in relation to territory, identity and social status. As already mentioned, the literature will be then applied to the concrete case of Liverpool English (or Scouse) variety in order to see whether it fully explains the reality. That is to say, the role of Scouse will be analysed in relation to the city of Liverpool and in relation to Liverpool English speakers; furthermore, it will show whether the Scouse variety conveys a certain type of values or, in general, certain types of information on the basis of socially shared conventions.

The second chapter will try to answer questions arising from the first chapter. In order to do so, it deals with different varieties of English. It will start by presenting the standard form of English, before moving on to the analysis on the non-standard forms of English. In particular, it will deal with the difference between Northern and Southern England varieties in order to focus on the northern ones, which include Liverpool English. The second part of the chapter will deal with the Scouse variety, which will be analysed first from a historical viewpoint, and then from a linguistic point of view. The latter will permit some assumptions, which will help answer the research questions.

The third chapter aims at providing those answers which previous research might not have fully addressed. Generally speaking, the first part of the chapter will explain step by step the developing process of the survey, the way in which interviews were carried out and the instruments which were used in order to collect the answers; the second part will deal with the analysis of the data obtained both from the questionnaire and the interviews. Furthermore, the analysis of the data will be divided into two main stages: in the first one, the data will be displayed and analysed through a quantitative approach, in the second one, it will be used a qualitative approach based on a thematic analysis method. However, in both cases, assumptions will be made on the basis of the theory and by taking into account only what could be useful in order to answer the research questions. In addition, the third chapter will stress the importance of this combined analysis, which should facilitate the interpretation of the data by going beyond a mere statistical approach. As a matter of fact, "mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches […] for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and

corroboration" (Johnson et al, 2007: 123). At the end of this chapter, the theory presented in the first chapter and questions arising from the analysis will be addressed or with suggestions for further investigation.

CHAPTER 1- SOCIOLINGUISTIC THEORY APPLIED TO LIVERPOOL ENGLISH

This first chapter aims to give an overall idea of what sociolinguistics is, as this dissertation is based very much on this area of linguistics. According to Peter Trudgill (2000: 21), very broadly, "sociolinguistics is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon"; in other words, it investigates the connection between language and culture, but it is also "the study of language in relation to society" (Hudson 1980: I). Therefore, this thesis has been developed on the basis that language is much more than a mere means of communication, as it brings together many aspects of human interaction. In Spolsky's (1998: 4) terms, "language – any language – is full of systematic variation, variation that can only be accounted for by appealing, outside language, to socially relevant forces and facts". As a matter of fact, sociolinguistics deals with a great number of "socially relevant forces and facts" (Spolsky, 1998: 4), such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, social status, place and region. As it is the case for this thesis, it has been taken into account the relationship that language has with place, identity and social status according to the theory of sociolinguistics. The role of language and its power in these three connections will be investigated.

1.1 Sociolinguistics

Generally speaking, when it comes to stating what sociolinguistics is as a science, "the umbrella term 'sociolinguistics' had become at least potentially confusing" (Trudgill, 2002: 1). According to Cambridge Dictionary (2017), sociolinguistics is, by definition, "the study of how language is used by different groups in society". Yet again, according to Coupland and Jarowski (1997), sociolinguistics is defined as "the study of language in its social contexts and the study of social life through linguistics". Apparently, as it takes into consideration several features belonging to social sciences, this field is so wide – and becoming wider and wider – that sometimes it might be hard to define what does and what does not belong to it. Fishman (1999: 152) uses the "term sociolinguistic […] to embrace both the sociology of language and sociolinguistic. These two specializations constitute, respectively, the more sociological and the more linguistic aspects". Moreover, Fishman (1999: 152) states that "because neither traditional sociology nor traditional

linguistics has paid much attention to the potential boundary area between them, sociolinguistics perspective has developed to fill this gap". A few years later, as this field developed, in his book "Sociolinguistic Variation and Change" (2002), Peter Trudgill states that there are (at least) two different forms of sociolinguistics: linguistically motivated sociolinguistics and social-scientifically motivated sociolinguistics. The former is clearly a linguistics-led vision, which is interested in technical linguistic variation; the latter still uses linguistics as a basis, but it deals with what language is about when it comes to human beings in a particular geographical context. That is to say that, for instance, the first one might investigate the "'Short o' in East Anglia and New England" (Trudgill, 2002: 16); the second one might investigate, for example, how language shapes social status. The same kind of distinction is made by Spolsky (1998: 6), but he calls the two types of sociolinguistics with different names: he talks about micro and macro ends.

> At what is often called the micro end of sociolinguistics, the sociolinguist's goal might be to show how specific differences in pronunciation or grammar lead members of a speech community to make judgements about the education or economic status of a speaker. […] In other words, […] the medium (the variety chosen) becomes the message itself. At the other – the macro – end of the spectrum, sometimes labelled the sociology of language as distinct from sociolinguistics, the scholar's primary attention turns from the specific linguistic phenomena to the whole of a language or variety […]. In macro-sociolinguistics, we treat language (and a specific language) alongside other human cultural phenomena.

Apparently, there are many ways of defining sociolinguistics and its subfields, but the main two distinctions are clearly the ones made in order to divide sociolinguistics between a mainly social science and a mainly linguistic science. I would say that this dissertation belongs to what it has been defined as "social-scientifically motivated sociolinguistics" (Trudgill, 2002: 2), since it tries to investigate the relationships between language and territory, language and identity, and language and social class. Nonetheless, a linguistically motivated approach will be used to illustrate the varieties of English, knowledge of which will be necessary in order to answer my research questions. More specifically, the Scouse variety (Liverpool area) of English will be described and used as case study.

1.2 Language in sociolinguistics

In sociolinguistics, no matter how it is defined, as partially already mentioned, "language is not simply a means of communicating information […]. It is also a very important means of establishing and maintain relationships with other people" (Trudgill, 2000: 1). In other words, "the fundamental sociolinguistic question is posed by the need to understand why anyone says anything" (Labov, 1970a: 180). Clearly, in the field of sociolinguistics, language is the key point that links speakers to other people and to society in general. As a matter of fact, "the use of language […] is probably what sets us apart from other species, and what accounts for the peculiar ways of living together we can call society or community" (Blommaert, 2005: 4). That is to say, whether it is used as a basis or as the main topic, language is the essential and central instrument that brings human beings together by creating societies and communities. In Kramsch's (1998: 3) terms, "language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. […] [It] expresses cultural reality. […] Through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality". That is to say, "it is one of the many capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" (Hoijer, 1964: 455). In other words, language might be consider the fundamental instrument within the society in terms of communication, but also one of the main tools which convey and constitute elements of culture and values. This point, on which there seems to be no conflicting opinions, allows all sociolinguistic research to be carried out.

1.2.1   Dialects

Normally, "people from different social and geographical backgrounds use different kinds of language. [...] 'Kinds of language' of this sort are often referred to as *dialects*" (Trudgill, 2000: 2). That is to say that when analysing a language which is closely connected to a specific geographical environment, we are analysing a certain kind of dialect. However, we can talk about dialects even when we are analysing a certain kind of language which is used among people belonging to a particular social environment. In other words, we can call "dialect" the language used by people from Edinburgh, Scotland, but we can also call "dialect" the language used by businessmen in the United Kingdom. That means that we are dealing with two different types of varieties: "geographically identified varieties – 'dialects', regional accents" (the first type) and, as it is the case for

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the second type, "socially identified varieties often called 'sociolects' – class varieties, professional jargons, peer-group talk, age-, gender-, or ethnically marked varieties, etc." (Blommaert, 2005: 10).

> Sociolinguistics has demonstrated that 'languages' as commonly understood (i.e. things that have names such as 'English', 'French' 'Zulu') are sociolinguistically not the most relevant objects. These 'languages' are, in actual fact, complex and layered collections of *language varieties*, and the study of language in society should not be, for instance, a study of *English* in society, but a study of all the different varieties that, when packed together, go under the label of 'English'.

> (Blommaert, 2005: 10)

In other words, focusing on varieties is believed to be a good way to carry out sociolinguistic research. As already mentioned, later on this dissertation, I will illustrate the varieties of English in order to move on to the analysis of the Liverpool English (LE) variety and its speakers, who belong to the Liverpool area, Merseyside, England.

Clearly, according to the definitions above, it might be said that I will discuss a regional dialect, since I will take into consideration a variety of English which is closely connected to specific geographical coordinates. However, in calling Scouse "regional dialect", I would feel like stating that its status is not really so clear yet. "For some Scouse is an accent […] others argue it is a dialect" (Sairdais 2005; Honeybone 2007 in Boland 2010: 6). However, it is surely recognised as a variety of English, as it "is indisputable that Scousers sound and speak differently to other English people and especially those of the North West region in which Liverpool sits" (Boland, 2010: 6). Therefore, for the benefit of the study, I will use the term "variety" throughout the dissertation in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. Nonetheless, I will try to investigate its linguistic label within the British society.

1.3 Language and territory

Usually, when talking about a certain language/dialect/variety, geography is often involved in order to describe a given variety, meaning that there seems to be a strong relationship between language and geography. As a matter of fact, "sociolinguists have always been concerned with place. Be it nation, region, county, city, neighbourhood, or

block, place has long been adduced as a key correlate of linguistic variation, and geography has often entered into explanations of variation" (Johnstone, 2011: 203). For examples, "there were some scholars who suggested that perhaps a harsh physical environment could produce harsh sounds in a language" (Crowley, 1992). "This is clearly the result of language changing in different ways in different places" (Trudgill, 2000: 147). In other words, a language (or a dialect/variety) seems always to originate from a place, and depending on different sociolinguistic purposes, the place which might be taken into consideration could be a wide one (e.g. nation, region, county), or a smaller one (e.g. city, neighbourhood, block). That is to say, for instance, if sociolinguists want to investigate how the English language changes throughout the United Kingdom, they will have to take into consideration the entire country as a place; on the contrary, if they want to investigate how English changes from North Yorkshire to South Yorkshire, they will have to take into consideration only Yorkshire area in Northern England.

Furthermore, language has always had an important role in society in terms of political entity, meaning that, once again, language does not seem to be just a mere means of communication. As a matter of fact, historically, language has always played a particular role among a country's unity tools, as shown by the well-known example of the French Constitution (1958: art. 2), which states that French is the language of the Republic. The same article also states that the national emblem is the tricolour flag (blue, white and red), that the "Marsellaise" is the national hymn, the national motto is "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" and its principle is government of the people, from the people and for the people. As can be seen, in the Constitution of France, language is one of the principles of the Republic, listed among the other symbols of national unity within the geopolitical territory of France.

> As one of the "pillars" of nationalism, language was a key element of the political philosophy that justified the modern nation-state (Gal & Irvine 1995). The idea that a nation was bound together by a shared language […] partially shaped nineteenth century philologists' search.
>
> (Johnstone, 2011: 204)

Clearly, language and territory have always been linked in many ways, and "the most obvious example is the passionate singing of national anthems […] where "the nation"

comes together" (Boland, 2010). This is one of the most unambiguous examples where the language (the singing) brings together an entire community (the nation), which shares the same values of territoriality among its members. "The association of one language variety with the membership in one national community has been referred to as linguistic nationism" (Kramsch, 1998: 72). In other words, there seems to be a strong bond between language and territory, a bond which is also embodied in symbolic meaning when it is used on a national and/or regional scale.

Indeed, sociolinguists have always found interesting the field that this union created. That is why they soon begin to draw linguistic maps in different countries by linking language to geography.

> Mapping also links linguistic forms, to varying degrees, with the political world represented by boundaries among states, counties, and nations. All dialect atlas maps include political boundaries of one kind or another, be they national boundaries or smaller-scale political divisions, and most include some place-names or names of rivers and other features. In nineteenth-century accounts, dialect mapping was analogous to the mapping of political units in more specific ways, too.

> (Johnstone, 2011: 205)

Basically, the political and geographical world has been linked to the linguistic one, and every place (nation, county or city) has been linked to its language (or dialect/variety). In this way, the connection between language and territory has been made explicit. As it is the case for the United Kingdom, which has been mapped in many ways and it has been divided in areas.

> We have given these areas names such as 'Central North' and 'South Midlands' but a number of the regions are basically the areas dominated demographically, and therefore culturally and linguistically, by certain large cities and conurbations:
> North-east: Newcastle
> Merseyside: Liverpool
> North-west Midlands: Manchester
> West Midlands: Birmingham
> Central South-west: Bristol
> Home Counties: London

> Trudgill (2000: 151)

On the same model, languages have been linked to the areas, and therefore, the example above would become "North-east: Newcastle, Geordie; Merseyside: Liverpool, Scouse" and so on. As already mentioned, I will explore English varieties more specifically later on this dissertation (Chapter 2), but this simple preview gives the idea of how much, according to sociolinguistic theory, language and territory share a bond. Nonetheless, I will investigate this union and I will try to understand whether it is that strong as it appears.
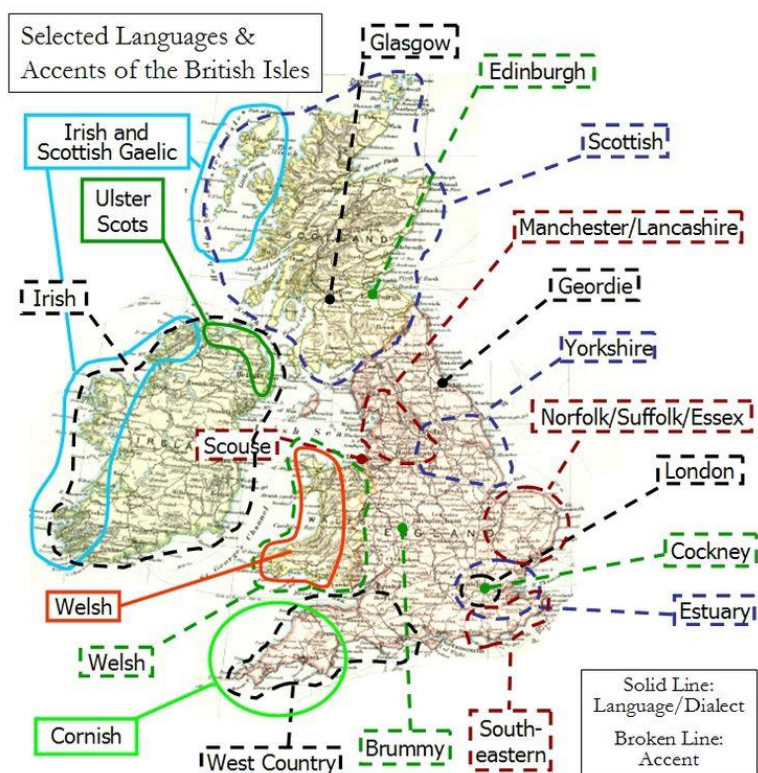
Map 1: Example of map of varieties of the British Isles[1]

### 1.3.1   Scouse and Liverpool

When it comes to the Liverpool English variety, there is no doubt that it belongs to the city of Liverpool, "to urban areas adjoining it, and to towns facing it across the River Mersey" (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 61). Although, geographically talking, this might be true, partially at least, a scientific analysis may lead to a more complicated outcome.

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[1] Google images

As a matter of fact, the Scouse variety of English is closely linked to the territory, which is limited, as already mentioned, to the city of Liverpool, since "it differs in a number of ways from other urban varieties, including those of the rest of Lancashire, the county which Liverpool stands" (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 61). That is to say, even though Liverpool was geographically part of the county of Lancashire – a status that changed in 1889 when Liverpool became an independent county borough – its particular way of sounding has always been confined to the city of Liverpool itself. However, when saying "city of Liverpool", we are not meaning much.

> There is also an important distinction between external and internal identifications of Scousers. In general, locals would not consider the resident of Wirral as proper Scousers due to their location across the River Mersey in close proximity to Wales.
>
> (Boland 2010: 8)
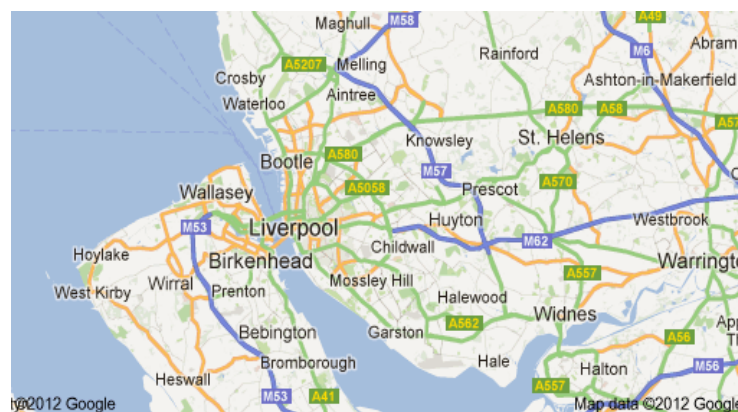
Map 2: Liverpool Map[2]

Clearly, when someone thinks about the city of Liverpool, Wirral Peninsula is included, as it is actually part of Liverpool, geographically talking at least. Still, as studies show, it seems to be slightly different when we need to analyse Scouse: "here a natural physical geographical feature that separates space – a river – leads to an important human geographical division between people" (Boland, 2010: 8) and, thus, speakers. On one

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[2] Google images

hand, this proves that language does have a strong relationship with territory, on the other hand, it shows how much talking about a specific territory is hard and it could lead to infinite possibilities of categorization. "Taking this point further, there are studies showing nuances in spoken Scouse across Merseyside: […] between Liverpool and Wirral, Liverpool and St. Helens, north and south Liverpool), […]" (Watson, 2006, 2007a, 2007b). Put differently, the process of territorialisation takes place, not only within the city of Liverpool, but also outside among its surroundings. Indeed, "the 'broadest varieties of Scouse may not be actually spoken in the inner city areas' of Liverpool, rather they are evident in northern and southern suburbs such as Norris Green, Croxteth and Speke, and fringe areas like Stockbridge Village, Huyton, Halewood and Kirkby (all in Knowsley)" (Grey, 2007: 206). Clearly, defining a territory which a language/dialect/variety belongs to is more complicated and, I would argue, less reliable than it seems.

Furthermore, another sticking point concerns the definition of who is and who is not actually a Scouse in relation to where they are from.

> Nationally acclaimed playwright Willy Russell tempers his Scouse status with this remark: 'Strangely I'm not really an authentic Liverpudlian because I was born in Whiston and was brought up for the first five years of my life in Rainhill'
>
> (Robinson, 2008).

> Then we have Scouse footballers even though they are technically not from Liverpool: Jamie Carragher (LFC) hails from Bootle, Sefton, Joey Bar- ton (Newcastle United Football Club) comes from Huyton, Knowsley; however, the most high profile are Steven Gerrard (LFC and England) and Wayne Rooney (Manchester United Football Club and England). Gerrard was born in Whiston, grew up in Huyton (both in Knowsley) and now lives in Formby in Sefton, so he has actually never lived in Liverpool and yet he is one of the most globally recognised Scousers.
>
> (Boland, 2010: 7)

Apparently, we are in the presence of a controversy that concerns who is a Scouser: some think a Scouser is someone who speaks Scouse and come from somewhere in Merseyside, others think a Scouser must be from Liverpool – the right part of it –, others think a

Scouser should sound Scouse. "Another aspect of debate on the legitimacy of true Scouser concerns being born in the city compared to length of time living the city" (Boland, 2010: 10). In other words, there seems to be quite a several number of conflicting points related to territory, and therefore, this matter will be investigated later in order to understand how much place is strong as a concept in the field of sociolinguistics.

Last, but not least, I would say that "if it is now recognised that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places" (Massey, 1991: 28). This principle might be applied, for example, to the United Kingdom in general, which is surely one of the home territories of the English language, but, within it, it would be necessary to take into account the difference between Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and their relative languages. The same principle might be applied to the city of Liverpool, which is, for example, divided "between those who follow Liverpool (LFC) and Everton Football Club (EFC)" (Kennedy and Collins 2006 in Boland 2010: 1). Or to the city of Manchester, which is divided between those who support Manchester United F.C. (Man. Utd) and Manchester City F.C. (Man. City). As a matter of fact, even saying "I am from London" does not actually mean much, as within the city of London various varieties are spoken, such as Cockney, Estuary English, Multicultural London English and Received Pronunciation. Therefore, it seems quite impossible to think about a place as a uniform and well-defined entity, as a matter of fact, "any continuous geographical space will always include some people who do not belong to the prevailing linguistic community, no matter how small we draw the units" (Stilz, 2015: 180).

As we can see, the list could go on forever and what I am arguing, and I will investigate later on this thesis when analysing the data collected for my research, is that there seems to be an inconsistency in the sociolinguistic relationship between language and territory. Given that a dialect – as Scouse might be conceived – is a language, this shows that identifying where a language comes from, might be quite intuitive. Still, it seems that when someone tries to find the speakers belonging to a certain place, they have to face many problems in terms of location and boundaries. This so-called originating place does not seem to be clear and effective, on the contrary, the process of localisation might actually appear quite forced, unnatural, built in order to follow something which is not

meant to be confined. In other words, territory may not fully fit in the sociolinguistic theory. I will therefore investigate this point, in order to understand whether that chosen territory is nothing but a general landmark, or if it does actually share a relevant bond with its language.

What really seems to be slightly more convincing is the constant reference to "sounding Scouse". As a matter of fact, "there are also "honorary Scousers" […] who developed a Scouse enunciation during their spell living in the city. […] This reinforced the importance of vocality in defining a Scouser" (Boland, 2010: 8). Sounding like a particular language seems to be more important, in terms of identity, than being from a specific place, and therefore, I am now moving to the analysis of the sociolinguistic principle according to which language shapes identity.

1.4 Language and identity

According to sociolinguistic theory, "speakers produce and reproduce particular identities through their language use" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 369), but what is identity? "Identity is who and what you are. That sounds simple and straightforward, and in everyday life, we find ourselves continually involved in identity rituals" (Blommaert, 2005). However, defining ourselves is everything but simple. In order to clarify the way(s) human beings create their own identity, Duszak (2003) says that "it is natural for people to make the distinction between *Us* and *Others (*or *Them)*. We have a sense of sharing things with some, who are like us, and not sharing things with others, who are unlike us". This is what Bucholtz and Hall (2004) call "sameness and difference". Apparently, the process of self-identification does not happen only within single individuals, on the contrary, it involves more participants. That is to say, in order to define ourselves, we do need to define others. "But who are *we*? And who is the *Other*?" (Duszak, 2003). According to Blommaert (2005: 203), "the 'who and what you are' is dependent on context, occasion, and purpose", and therefore, human identity is a fluid concept. This fluidity is evident in the smallest things, like, for example, if we are quite self-critical human beings, we will find ourselves often involved in criticising ourselves, but when it is someone else who tries to criticise us, then we might go for a defensive way of reacting. The same thing may happen, on a bigger scale, for instance, when we recognise that our own country has some

defeats by listing all the things that does not work, still, when abroad, we praise it filled with pride, "living up to its stereotypes, defending its values and virtues" (Blommaert, 2005: 203). These are quite simple examples of everyday life, but they give you a general idea of how identity is hard to define and how the process of identification needs more than one participant.

Studies confirm that identity is something always ongoing and everyone builds their own way of being through a long process of self-identification. Clearly, "identity is many things", and therefore, "there is a tremendous amount of literature on identity, distributed over several social-scientific disciplines" (Blommaert, 2005: 204). Furthermore, "identities of individuals and groups are not fixed but are constantly being constructed interactively" (McCormick, 2005: 303). I would say that this last word, "interactively", is the key of what sociolinguistics in the field of identity is about: it brings together more than one discipline. In the same way, as already mentioned, it brings together more than one participant, since "only by comparing ourselves with others we can build up our affiliations and our non-alignments" (Duszak, 2003). In other words, it seems that we do need to interact with other people within the society in order to define ourselves. At this point, a question arises quite spontaneously: in which way do we perform social interaction? Human beings socialise in many different ways for sure, however, the main instrument through which they interact with others is language for sure. That means, if identity is created by socialising and socialising is enabled by language, "identity is constructed through a variety of symbolic resources, and especially language" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 370).

Generally avoiding any existentialist ideas, according to Bucholtz and Hall (2004: 382), "language, as a fundamental resource for cultural production, is hence also a fundamental resource for identity production. This assertion challenges the common understanding of language as a mirror reflecting one's culture and identity". That is to say, based on this idea, language does not show simply who someone is, but it actually contributes to the making of someone's identity. By taking into consideration the mentioned-above principles of "sameness and difference" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 369), "we could simply say that *they* (*Others*) are those who can*not* speak *our* language" (Duszak, 2003). As a

matter of fact, "what is linguistically salient in the construction of difference and similarity may be […] named languages, dialects, lexical items, phonological and morphosyntactic features, discourse conventions, and genres" (McCormick, 2005: 303). In other words, if someone's language can be conceived as a trait of difference between people, it can be conceived as a trait fostering the creation of identity as well. This is what sonic geography advocates.

1.4.1 Sonic geography

According to the "theoretical device of "sonic geography"" (Matless, 2005), "the extent to which sound, in this instance a distinctive accent and/or dialect, affects the construction of local identity" (Boland, 2010). In other words, it investigates how much a given language/dialect influences someone's identity. As the name suggests, we are still talking about geography, and someone may argue that this is just another way of seeing territory. As a matter of fact, language can identify someone's nationality, and therefore, indicate the territory that person is from. Nonetheless, "Sonic geography" (Matless, 2005) does not take into account territory, but sound. As already mentioned, it advocates the predominance of "sounding like a certain language" over "being from a certain place" in order to link someone to a specific identity. Therefore, language plays a fundamental role.

> In discussing the various elements that give meaning and depth to identity, […] commenters have recognized the importance of language (Woodward 1997, p. 8; Paasi 2004, p. 477). Cox (2002, pp. 143-161) refers to […] language, customs and culture, [which lead to] the social construction of sense(s) of identity binding people together and the politics of difference separating "us and them".

> (Boland, 2010: 4)

> Sound operates by forming links, groupings, and conjunctions that accentuate individual identity as a relational project. The flows of surrounding sonority can be heard to weave an individual into a larger social fabric, filling relations with local sound, sonic culture, auditory memories, and the noises that move between, contributing to the making of shared spaces. This associative and connective process of sound comes to reconfigure the spatial distinctions of inside and outside, to foster confrontations between one and another, and to infuse language with degrees of intimacy.

> (LaBelle, 2010 in Kanngieser 2011: 1)

According to this vision, language is the instrument, which enables the creation of communities based on shared customs, cultures and values. In the same way, language enables the creation of differences, which allow speakers to understand who is "us" and who is "them", and that is what makes the process of self-identification start.

Clearly, all these hypotheses on language roles are possible due to its very nature. As already mentioned, it is certainly a means of communication, but it also conveys many aspects of human interaction.

> Semiotics, or the study of systems of meaning, offers a valuable perspective from which to view identity. Semiotics investigates the association created between social or natural objects and the meanings they bear. While language is often taken as the prototypical semiotic system, it is more complex than many other systems because it has social meaning as well as referential meaning. It is precisely this duality of language […] that makes it such a rich resource for semiotic production within human society.

> (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 377)

Therefore, it is definitely right to say that, at some extent, language shapes identity, as it brings people together, enables them to create their own identity by sharing (or not) values and cultures in order to create communities based on them. Nonetheless, as happens for territory, although language is an important tool in the identity field, it is hard to believe that it can be the only one.

> Language (in the sense of "a particular language") is not necessarily a core value in group identity. […] Speakers who command more than one language variety choose from their linguistic repertoire the language variety or strategy […] to enact different identities in different situations.

> (McCormick, 2005: 304)

> But speakers do not entirely locked into particular subject positions […]; as social actors move between different communities of practice in their daily lives different dimensions of identity come to the fore, including identities based on activities rather than categories.

> (Goodwin, 1990)

Therefore, I would argue that when it comes to defining identity, language can for sure help the general process of building someone's way of being; still, linguistic identity might not appear that categorical and straightforward in the sense that someone who speaks French is and feels 100% French. As already mentioned, "identity is many things" (Blommaert, 2005: 204), and therefore, many things (e.g. activities, ideas, experience, meeting other people, etc.) define human beings, who are unlikely to be confined into specific and static labels.

Furthermore, people do many different things that place them in many different contexts, which require different ways of talking and interacting depending on the people someone has to communicate with. As a matter of fact, for example, someone talks in a certain way when interacting with their friends, a way which is different from that used when interacting with their colleagues and/or managers/supervisors. That is to say, "place, role-relationships and topic, together these make up a set of typical domains. […] For instance, husband and wife might use one language to each other, but father and children might use another" (Spolsky, 1998: 34-35). Things are even more complex when someone is bilingual and/or multilingual. In other words, "identity […] operates at multiple levels simultaneously" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 586) and the status of "us" and "them" may actually change depending on contexts and participants. Changing the way of talking is, in a way, changing way of being: "identity is the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 586), and therefore, the "self" changes in relation to the "other". I would argue that "us" and "them"/the "self" in relation to the "other" does not actually exist, or better, I would say that there are many "us" and many "them" depending on contexts and times. "We avoid the reduction of identities to static, established categories" (Blommaert, 2005: 210): on the basis that identity is a fluid concept, arguing that language shapes identity may be, in my opinion, a statement too broad and almost groundless if it is not contextualised within a specific moment and/or participants. Moreover, it might be seen as an attempt to classify people on the basis of the language they speak, which might be dangerous, since, most of the times, the categorization – using Duszak's (2003) words – is often made by someone of the "others" looking at "us". However, this is something I will analyse later on this chapter.

1.4.2 Scouse and Scousers

Does speaking/sounding Scouse make someone Scouser? According to sonic geography and to the sociolinguistic principle of language shaping identity, the answer should be 'yes'. However, who is a Scouser? "the speaker of the Liverpool dialect is through Music Hall fame widely known as a Scouser" (Chandler 1957: 423). However, "what were the means by which Liverpool and its people became so firmly associated with Scouse?" (Crowley, 2012).

> Was 'scouse' originally lob's course – the dish of a fool or simpleton? Was it an English term used by Nordic (Scowegian perhaps) name for sailors' stew? And how did a term that evidently meant sailors in general – 'lobscousers' – come to mean Liverpool sailors specifically? Moreover, why did the shortened version of the name then come to designate people from the city in general? And why would 'Scouse', if its route did originate in the name of a stew, and then shift to a term for sailors, and afterwards the designation of people from Liverpool, finally come to mean the language/dialect/accent spoken in the city? […] it is simply not clear how and why most of these linguistic developments occurred. In other words, we don't know.
>
> (Crowley, 2012: 160)

> In its origins, scouse refers to a type of cheap food […]. Food, of course, is often an essential ingredient of identity: along with dress and religion, diet is the main badge of ethnicity […]. It figures prominently too in the construction of regional cultural stereotypes – black pudding is to the industrial north what scouse is to Liverpool. Few groups, however, choose to name themselves after a particular (and humble) dish.
>
> (Belchem, 2006: 35-36)

In other words, it may be true that a Scouser is someone who speaks Scouse, but historically, these terms developed quite recently and in a quite unknown way, and therefore, the connection between them may appear quite weak. However, some may argue that this is not that important, since at the moment "Scouse is widely known in the United Kingdom" (Trudgill 1999 in Juskan 2015: 1), it is "instantly recognisable today" (Belchem, 2006: 31) and its speakers, by the way they talk, as well.

I will analyse the main feature of Scouse variety later on dissertation, but at this point the question is: is speaking Scouse enough in order to define someone as Scouser? Is a Scouser just someone who speaks Scouse? According to Belchem (2006: 33) "the identity

is constructed, indeed it is immediately established, by how they speak rather than by what they say". Nonetheless, according to some, "it's pride in everything" (Liverpool Xtra 2008 in Boland 2010: 8), and therefore, speaking Scouse is certainly important at some extent, but it might not be the only necessary feature, which enable people to feel Scousers. As already mentioned, being Scouser seems to be something more than being from Liverpool, and it might be more than sounding Scouse too. I will investigate this point later in order to understand what being Scouser might mean, however, it is important to mention that "Liverpool has prided itself on a strong sense of community (e.g., self-help networks, community activism, informal labour markets, "burying our own dead)" (Meegan, 1989: 226). In other words, what seems to identify people from Liverpool, in addition to their "exceedingly rare" (Chandler 1957 in Belchem 2006) way of talking, might also be their strong sense of belonging to a community. That is to say, I will investigate whether what makes people feel Scousers is actually speaking Scouse or sharing some specific values. In other words, after investigating the relevance of territory in the field of linguistics, I will try to understand if identity is linked to the principle of sounding like a given language and, if yes, at what extent.

However, "whenever we speak we cannot avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins and the sort of person we are" (Trudgill, 2000: 2). That is to say, since "each community has sets of sound markers which reinforce its own identity" (Arkette 2004 in Boland 2010), every time we speak we do convey something about us, something that other people can use in order to understand something about us. The question is: what kind of information do people retrieve by listening to our way of talking? Where does this information come from? What is sure is that every time someone tries to define someone else by paying attention to their way of talking, they often end up guessing, or asserting, their social status.

1.5 Language and social status
As already mentioned, "whenever we speak we cannot avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins" (Trudgill, 2000: 2). As a matter of fact, the way we speak could convey information about where we are from, as seen when talking about the bond between language and territory, but it could also convey a part of our identity, as seen when taking

into account the link between language and identity. Elinor Ochs (1992) takes this point further and talks about "indexicality" and "notes that linguistic structures become associated with social categories". In Silverstein's (2003) terms, the "'indexical order' is the concept necessary to showing us how to relate the micro-social to the macro-social frames of analysis of any sociolinguistic phenomenon". In other words, "in identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values […] about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 594). That is to say, indexicality is the process through which language, in terms of sounds and grammar, allows people to link (or to index) speakers to (their supposed) values, culture, social-class and/or origins. Apparently, language can be seen as an instrument which not only allows someone to detect where a person may be from in terms of geography, but also in terms of social environment. Clearly, this principle may be applied to languages in general, and therefore, it would allow for assumptions such as "English: Britain/America", but it may become more interesting when it is applied to a smaller area. As a matter of fact, this reaction to spoken language on national/regional scale is studied through "perceptual dialectology (PD) […], [which] seeks to explore 'where people believe dialect area to exist, and the geographical extent of those areas, along with how these people react to spoken language'" (Montgomery & Beal 2011 in Leach et al. 2016: 193).

> The relationship between social and regional accent variation in Britain has often been modelled as having the form of an equilateral triangle (following Daniel Jones, ad reported in Ward (1929) where, however, the diagram takes the form of a cone). The base of the triangle is broad, implying considerable amounts of phonological variation between the different regional accents spoken by the lower social classes. Going upwards from the base, the increasing narrowness of the triangle implies decreasing regional variations between the accents of speakers higher up the social scale. Similarly, the point at the top of the triangle indicates the total lack of regional variation […] characteristic of the RP accent, spoken as it is by people by people at the top of the social scale.

(Trudgill, 2002: 173)

In other words, as already mentioned, varieties of English in Britain are geographically classified, but it seems as if they are also socially classified, and therefore, speakers can

identify each other by linking certain values to certain varieties. However, how can people recognize a given dialect/accent/variety of English? And if they do not speak the same dialect/language/variety of English, how can they know which values that language is associated with? In other words, it might be normal for someone from London to be able to recognize someone from East London, Cambridge, or Reading, since they are geographically close to each other, but how can someone from London be able to recognize someone from Leeds, Manchester or Liverpool? Kerswill and Williams (2002 in Leach et al. 2016: 195) talk about "cultural prominence" and state that "the general awareness of […] accents is likely to be higher due, for example, to greater presence of [those] varieties in the media". That is to say, accents which are more "famous" nationwide, thanks to their presence on the media, are more likely to be known. That is to say, a Londoner may recognize a Mancunian if Mancunian variety of English would be consistently present in the media. Therefore, if people can recognize a variety of English, that means that they can also place this variation in a mind triangle, like the one mentioned above, and they can make a guess as to which level of the social scale a speaker may stand.

However, is it really just as technical as that? What makes an accent "famous"? Is being a highly recognizable accent good? According to Hernández-Campoy (2005: 467), "different language varieties are often associated with deep-rooted emotional responses – social attitudes, in short – such as thoughts, feelings, stereotypes, and prejudice about people, about social, ethnic and religious groups, and about political entities". As a matter of fact, "there are some accents […] associated with groups who have had relatively little education" (Trudgill, 2000: 7), and therefore, "beliefs about language are also often beliefs about speakers" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 379). In other words, if an accent is recognizable, that means that it has been made famous by the media, which might or might not be a good thing. For example, in the case of Received Pronunciation (RP), it is not a surprise that it is recognized as "the accent of English English with the highest status" (Trudgill, 2002: 172), since "'Received' here is to be understood in its nineteenth-century sense of 'accepted in the best society'" (Huges & Trudgill, 1979: 2). "Typologically, it has its origins in the south-east of England" (Trudgill, 2002: 172) and

it may also be called "BBC English". RP speakers are traditionally linked to a high social status.

What happens when a language is associated with not-so-good values? For example, "there is some support for the idea that urban vernaculars are systematically downgraded. This is certainly the case with Birmingham, Liverpool and Glasgow, also to a lesser extent with Swansea, Cardiff, Leeds, Manchester and Bristol" (Coupland and Bishop, 2007: 80). As already mentioned, "beliefs about language are also often beliefs about speakers" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 379), and therefore, talking about a downgraded variety means talking about a speaker as someone who is "not at the top of the social scale". I will try to investigate how much this so-called "downgraded" status idea (and thus also the "prestigious" status idea) is rooted into society and whether it leads to consequences among speakers. In other words, I will try to understand if these beliefs are relevant in nowadays multicultural era and if speakers, for instance, feel the necessity to change their accents in order to better fit in the society. Some may argue that the answer is a straightforward "yes", since there is "the tendency for all social groups to move towards an RP accent in formal contexts" (Belchem, 2006: 32) in basically every language. As a matter of fact, also all social groups in Italy tend to move towards Standard Italian in formal contexts by not speaking too much with their regional accents or dialects. Therefore, it could be said that this shift is actually quite natural and it might not appear as a problem, since, as already mentioned, language changes as context changes. Nonetheless, changing accent or, more in general, way of talking, might be a problem if this shift is made in order to hide a part of someone's identity, as it is often associated with prejudices and stereotypes.

1.5.1. Liverpool English speakers and their externally-perceived identity
As already mentioned, "perceptual dialectology […] seeks to explore how people react to spoken language" (Montgomery & Beal 2011 in Leach et al. 2016: 193). Therefore, in order to investigate the sociolinguistic link between language and social status on the basis of the case study of this dissertation, I will try to understand how Liverpool English speakers are perceived by the rest of the UK. That is to say, I will try to understand how people react to Liverpool English (LE). As a matter of fact, it is true that Scouse variety

of English is widely known all across the UK; the aim of this paragraph is to understand what type of reaction people have when it comes to the hearing of Scouse.

> [William Roscoe] speaks excellent language but with a strong provincial accent which at once destroys all idea of elegance.
>
> (Colvin, 1971: 10-11)

> Liverpool is simply Liverpool. Its people – or at least the uneducated among them – have an accent of their own; a thick, adenoidy, cold-in-the-head accent, very unpleasant to hear.
>
> (Priestley, 1934: 200)

> […] He had forgotten the ugliness of the Liverpool accent: his ears were not attuned to its adenoidal whine, its flat vowel sounds and slurred consonants, its monotonous rhythms compounded of distant memories of Dublin slums and Welsh villages, but all debased, forced through nasal and oral passages chronically afflicted with catarrh. Liverpool had the ugliest English accent in the world […]. Thorneycroft wondered if his own speech had ever marked him as Liverpool-born. He hoped not.
>
> (Brophy, 1946: 21)

> The Liverpool accent […] is one of Britain's most recognisable urban accent today, especially the more identifiably working class accent.
>
> (Grey and Grant, 2007: 1)

Apparently, according to the examples above, when it comes to the hearing of Scouse, it seems that, generally speaking, it is quite an unpleasant accent to be heard. Without further investigating the meaning of "unpleasant" as an adjective, since judgements of this kind are subjective, I would rather focus on the effect that these kinds of statements have on speakers. By looking at the quotes above, it seems that every time Scouse is associated to its speakers, the latter are seen as "not elegant" (Colvin, 1971: 10-11), "uneducated" (Priestley, 1934: 200), part of the "working class" (Grey and Grant, 2007: 1) and some wish not to be considered as "Liverpool-born" (Brophy, 1946: 21). Clearly, these kinds of judgements are far from being a simple opinion on someone's way of sounding. In other words, it might be said that the reaction to spoken language is actually a reaction to a series of values, which a given language is associated with. In other words, as already mentioned, "linguistic structures become associated with social categories" (Elinor Ochs, 1992). That is to say, even though the first reaction may be to

language/sound, judgements do not seem to be on language/sound anymore, on the contrary, they seem to transfer to speakers.

I will talk about LE history later on this dissertation, when analysing the Scouse variety on a linguistic basis, but it may be important to mention that "while the city was considered by some the "global capital" of pop culture (being the home of the Beatles) in the 1960s, Liverpool fell on hard times in the following two decades and become associated primarily with unemployment, poverty, and crime" (Juskan, 2015: 1). As a matter of fact, "in the early 1980s, the Daily Mirror advised Liverpudlians to build a fence around their city and charge admission: 'For sadly, it has become a "showcase" of everything that has gone wrong in Britain's major cities'" (Belchem, 2006: 54). "Partly as a result of this, Scouse […] is both widely known in the United Kingdom and highly stigmatised" (Montgomery 2007 in Juskan 2015: 1). Apparently, Liverpool's past as a city which found it difficult to become the financial and cultural centre that is now has influenced the opinion that people have of Scouse and Scousers. It might appear as simple as that, but what happens to Liverpool English speakers in 2017? It is worth remembering that Liverpool has been named a European Capital of Culture for 2008, as proof that "from the middle of 1990s onwards, […] both economic conditions and the national image of the city have been improving to a certain degree" (Juskan, 2015: 1).

Despite the change mentioned above, it is a fact that the media still play on stereotypes; for instance, "former Premiership footballer David Thompson, […] identifies himself as a Scouse. When asked on live television how he was copying with football retirement the (somewhat annoyingly) played up to the Scouse stereotype by saying 'I'm a Scouser, I don't want a job'" (Boland 2010: 8). Therefore, given that Liverpool is not a hopeless "relatively minor backwater" (Crowley, 2012: 1) anymore, on the contrary, it is actually one of the most fruitful financial and cultural centres in Northern England, is this media role actually relevant? In other words, are Liverpool English speakers affected in some ways by the role of the media? According to Davis (2004 in Boland 2010: 7), "it is not uncommon for famous sons and daughters of Liverpool to deliberately lose or modify their accents in order to further their careers, examples include comedy actor Leonard Rossiter, former conservative MP Edwina Currie, television personality Cilla Black and

novelist Beryl Bainbridge". Therefore, as partly already mentioned, I will investigate whether this sort of linguistic shift people seem to make in order to hide their identity is actually present within the nowadays society and, if yes, for what reasons.

CHAPTER 2 – VARIETIES OF ENGLISH IN THE UK: A LINGUISTC APPROACH

As already mentioned, in this second chapter I will use a linguistically motivated approach in order to illustrate the main features of the different English varieties of the United Kingdom. More specifically, in the second part of this chapter, Liverpool English variety will be described and analysed. As already broadly mentioned, it is not very clear whether Liverpool English is conceived as a dialect or just an accent, with some arguing that "given the small number of grammatical features and the relatively few words that are local to Liverpool, it is simply a 'variant of standard English' (Knowles, 1973: 48). However, "who would decide how many terms or grammatical characteristics are required before a 'variant' can be classified as 'dialect' (or indeed even a 'language')? […] And on what basis could such decisions be taken?" (Crowley, 2012: 91). As already mentioned, for the benefit of the analysis and in order to keep it straightforward, I will use the umbrella term 'variety' throughout this chapter when referring to a type of English, which could be conceived as a dialect, as an accent or a variation.

2.1 Standard English

It is important to highlight that "British English has always been, and continue to be, a language of dialects" (Upton & Widdowson, 1996: x), and therefore, in order to understand the differences between the numerous varieties of English in the UK, I would start from the variety known as "standard". As a matter of fact, among the UK varieties of English, "the dialect used as a model is known as 'standard English', the dialect of educated people throughout the British Isles. It is the dialect normally used in writing, for teaching in schools and universities, and heard on radio and television" (Hughes & Trudgill, 1979: 8). In other words, Standard English may be considered as that variety of English which is used nationwide, a sort of "lingua franca" employed throughout the British Isles. Furthermore, "it is the variety taught to non-native learners" (Trudgill, 1999b: 118), and therefore, by covering also that field of education, which sort of goes beyond the UK borders, SE might be conceived as almost a language for international communication as well. However, its status is not only technical; as a matter of fact, reference to education is quite strong, and therefore, it embodies a symbolic role as well. That is to say, given the multiple functions that this variety is involved in, it is believed

that mastering SE "helps on get ahead" (Guy, 2011: 169) in terms of obtaining or further a career, as it "is often indicative of the likelihood that one will obtain excellent employment" (Baugh, 2011: 25). In other words, it is the variety used in education and national television/radio throughout the United Kingdom, it is used nationwide and it seems not to come from any regional area, and therefore, it is believed to be a very important skill in the field of employment and financial success.

However, since Standard English (SE) "has to do with passing exams, getting on in the world, respectability, prestige and success […], there is enormous confusion about terms such as 'standard', 'correct', 'proper', 'grammatical' or 'academic' English" (Stubbs, 2008: 1). In other words, it might convey the idea that it is the only variety of English that matters. Firstly, it is important to say that Standard English has not much to do with a prestigious pronunciation, like for example, as already mentioned, "RP [which] refers to an accent which is socially prestigious, mainly in England" (Stubbs, 2008: 4).

> During its long history, English has developed two **standard varieties**, that is, two forms, both of which are equally accepted by the societies of their respective countries. One is Standard British English in England (and Wales), the other is Standard American English in the US. The pronunciation varieties of languages are commonly referred to as **accents**. The standard or reference accent of England is traditionally referred to as **Received Pronunciation** (where *received* means 'accepted'), abbreviated to RP, […]. It is important to highlight that the various *dialects* of a language are distinguished on the basis of differences of *grammar and vocabulary*, whereas the term *accent* only refers to *pronunciation* differences. Therefore, Standard British English is a dialect, RP is an accent; Standard American English is a dialect […].
>
> (Katalin, 2008: 2)

However, "it is true that in most cases Standard English speakers do not have 'broad' local accents" (Trudgill, 1999b: 118), and therefore, it might be argued that they speak with a "standard" accent. The latter, however, has nothing to do with Received Pronunciation, which, as already mentioned, refers to a particular social environment. On the contrary. SE's accent might be considered a sort of "accent 0", which actually does not refer to any social or geographical/regional environment. Table 1 (Katalin, 2008: viii) provides as an example the pronunciation of some monophtongs of Standard British English:

	Front	Central	Back	
	unrounded	unrounded	unrounded	rounded
High/ close	[iː] FLEECE	-	-	[uː] GOOSE
	[ɪ] KIT	-	-	[ʊ] FOOT
Mid	[e] DRESS	[ə] COMMA [ɜː] NURSE	-	[ɔː] THOUGHT/ NORTH
Low/ open	[æ] TRAP	[ʌ] STRUT	[ɑː] BATH/ START	[ɒ] LOT

Table 1: Pronunciation of monophthongs of Standard British English

Secondly, it might be said that SE is "standard" in grammar, as it is the variety used in education – both between native English students and non-native English students. Therefore, it might be said that Standard English's high status is due to its numerous uses all across the different contexts in the British society, usually endowed with a certain degree of formality. Nonetheless, this does not mean that it is the "right" English, and therefore all the other varieties are "wrong"; on the contrary, "Standard English is only one variety of English among many" (Trudgill, 1999b: 123). However, it is for sure one of the most important, since it is used in all the already mentioned contexts across the country and "all communities agree that SE is the 'proper' medium for formal writing and public communication" (Labov, 1970b : 15). Therefore, it might be true that British society has embodied SE with a certain degree of importance and now its use is perceived as an indicator of social prestige, but, theoretically, it remains a variety of English among others.

Although a further consideration of SE will be presented later on this dissertation, it may be important to bear in mind this variety, which is, as already mentioned, present nationwide in Britain. As a matter of fact, it might be useful to know that there is a so-called "standard form" of English in order to analyse the other UK varieties of English. As already mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, "British English has always been, and continue to be, a language of dialects" (Upton and Widdowson, 1996: x), or a language of varieties. That is to say, as there is a "standard form" of English, there are non-standard forms as well.

2.2 Varieties of English in the United Kingdom

Generally speaking, except for the already described SE, the other varieties of English in the United Kingdom are considered as non-standard forms of English. As a matter of fact, this label makes sense only when associated with the one of Standard English, that is to say, as already mentioned, it is important to understand what "standard" means in order to comprehend the meaning of "non-standard". As mentioned earlier, "standard" does not mean "right", and therefore, "non-standard" does not mean "wrong". In other words, it may be said that non-standard forms of English are all those forms of English which differ from the "basic" form of English that SE is.

Although, as mentioned in the first chapter, the relationship between language and territory may appear quite inconsistent, it could be said there is certainly such a relationship when originating territories are conceived as nothing but general landmarks in a system of reference. This is what happens in the United Kingdom, where the different varieties of English are distributed among regions, counties, cities and cultural environments. For instance, as partly already mentioned, in England, which has been mapped in many ways, it was created a sort of system of references which helps identifying a region by linking it to one of the major cities of the area.

> We have given these areas names such as 'Central North' and 'South Midlands' but a number of the regions are basically the areas dominated demographically, and therefore culturally and linguistically, by certain large cities and conurbations:
> North-east: Newcastle
> Merseyside: Liverpool
> North-west: Manchester
> West Midlands: Birmingham
> Central South-west: Bristol
> Home counties: London
> Some of the other areas also have smaller cities as their focal points:
> Central Lancashire: Blackburn
> Humberside: Hull
> North-east Midlands: Lincoln
> Upper South-west: Gloucester
> Lower South-west: Plymouth
> East Anglia: Norwich

(Trudgill, 2000: 151)

Clearly, regions and their cities are used just as a broad system of categorization in order to identify the area of interest. Moreover, as can be seen, the extent of the place is, at a certain extent, arbitrary, and a smaller part of a given territory can always be taken into account. On a different level, the same thing happens when taking into consideration areas and their spoken varieties. As a matter of fact, "just as 'northern accent' is no more than a convenient label for a group of [...] local accents, something like 'Yorkshire accents' is simply a label for a group of accents which are even more local" (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979). However, this chapter will focus on the main features of very general areas on the basis of the previously mentioned principle of "perceptual dialectology (PD)" (Leach et al. 2016), a subfield of sociolinguistics which is focused on "where people believe dialect areas to exist, and the geographical extent of those areas" (Montgomery and Beal, 2001). As a matter of fact, "wherever one goes in England, or elsewhere in Britain, there are very obvious differences between the ways in which people speak in different places" (Upton & Widdowson, 1996: x). Perceptual dialectology aims at helping the process of identification through a system of categorization.

It is important to highlight that varieties of English "differ of course in phonological rules and such differences can produce a great deal of misunderstanding, but they do not register differences in the underlying semantic structure of the language" (Labov, 1969: 39). In other words, although some varieties may sound quite different from SE, or from one another, as already mentioned, this does not mean they are wrong, since they are actually still English, a different type maybe, but still English. Consequently, any kind of misunderstanding may be due for instance, to phonology, which may be responsible for possible mistakes of interpretation. However, these kinds of misunderstandings are not due to sematic, which remains unchanged; that is to say, meaning of nouns, verbs, adjectives and any other linguistic structures remain the same for every variety of English. Therefore, if there are, in a way, different types of English, how can someone understand which one belongs to an area and which one belongs to another area? Is the distinction, geographically speaking, clear or not? In addition, grammatically, lexically and phonologically speaking, are varieties of English distinctly different from one to another or do they share some similarities?

> Keep in mind that anywhere you go in England, what you find is not a patchwork of distinct dialectal areas with clear-cut boundaries. On the one hand, the limits of dialectal features in maps are abstractions, not discrete borderlines on one side of which people speak one way and on the other side of which they speak the other way; these boundaries simply indicate a region along which there is considerable variation of two competing forms […]. On the other hand, even the dialectal areas defined by these lines exhibit a kind of **continuum** of dialectal forms.
>
> (Katalin, 2008: 20)

In other words, it might be said that varieties of English are as similar as different, depending on where they are geographically placed. As a matter of fact, maps such as the one on the next page are very generic and borders are used as nothing but general guidelines, which may help to understand where a given variety is from. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that variety forms seem to be characterized by a so-called continuum of forms. The latter might be seen as an imaginary network in which varieties are linked one to another thanks to some common features, and, in the same way, they are separated by their differences. On this imaginary network, two varieties will be linked to each other, and therefore linguistically closer one to another, if they are also geographically close to each other. As a matter of fact, taking into account an imaginary starting point, "the further we get from our starting point the larger the [linguistic] differences will be" (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998: 5-8). That is to say, differences between varieties are better perceived if they are geographically distant, since the more they are territorially close, the more they might be similar to each other. In Trudgill's (1999: 7) terms, "dialects form a continuum, and are very much a matter of more-or-less rather than either/or. There is really no such thing as an entirely separate, self-contained dialect", meaning that the borders drawn in maps as the one on the next page have to be perceived as blurred and approximate. As already mentioned, varieties are different from each other on the basis of many linguistic features, but, in the same way, they are similar to each other due to many other linguistic features. Therefore, even when someone tries to understand when a certain variety belongs to, it is believed that they may be able to detect only the general originating area, rather than the specific city and/or region.

Map 3: English dialects[3]

As a matter of fact, "dialectal forms […] show an irregular distribution across England as a whole" (Hickey, 2004: 38). In other words, although they are characterized by a continuum of forms all across the country, varieties of English do present some differences in terms of linguistic features and some of them are easier than others to be detected.

> A comparison of the regional distribution of /bl/ with that of /bɛ/ in words such as *bellow* and *belder* and /m/ in *mawl* and *mumble* reveals that while there are areas in which all sounds are attested fairly frequently, there are some noteworthy differences. First, /bɛ/ is attested very infrequently or is absent altogether from the most high frequency /bl/ areas, namely Yorkshire, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk and Dorset. However, the region in which /bɛ/ most commonly occurs is Herefordshire (with one occurrence in Monmouthshire), where /bl/ is not found. Similarly, initial /m/ does not appear at all in the major /bl/

> areas of Cornwall and Suffolk but instead has Berkshire as one of its most productive areas.

> (Wright, 2012: 6)

> The use of **oo** or **uh** pronunciations in words such as SUN, BUS, and MOTHER clearly distinguishes Northern and North Midland speakers from those of the South and South Midlands. […] The **uh** sound is markedly different from **oo**, and its purest form sounds to many Northerners very similar to **a**. […] The o pronunciation now located in Kent and Sussex was formerly found much more widely. Wright (Dialect Grammar, para.101) records **o** in SUN in Buckinghamshire and in other similar words as far north as Cumberland and as far south as Devon.

> (Upton & Widdowson, 1996: 15)

As can be seen, there are some differences between Northern and Southern varieties of English. Clearly, the examples of differences presented above have been detected by linguists, who analysed them and provided scientific explanations. However, some traits are instantly recognisable even by those who do not have a linguistics background, since they are less specific and they come out more often, and therefore, they are easier to detect. One again, the difference appears quite explicit, since the analysis technique adopted is the contrast between North and South of England.

> We can also notice that many (particularly older) northern speakers, while they do not have /ʌ/, do have /u:/ rather than /ʊ/ in words such as *hook, book, look, took, cook.* They therefore distinguish pairs such as book and buck, which in the south are distinguished as /bʊk/ and /bʌk/, as /bu:k/ and /bʊk/.

> (Hughes & Trudgill, 1979: 28)

> For *be*, some dialects in the north of England have *is* generalized to all persons, while others, in the West Midlands for instance, have generalized *am*.

> (Trudgill & Chambers, 1991: 51)

Clearly, linguistically talking, there are some concrete differences between variety forms across UK regions. However, as already mentioned, the more varieties are geographically close to each other, the more they might be similar to each other, proving the existence of a continuum of forms. As a matter of fact, without taking into account Scotland, Wales and Ireland, which would present even greater differences, the major distinctions within

England appear to be between Southern and Northern England. Given that the two parts are clearly territorially distant, it may be conceived as a natural phenomenon – differences in language between the Northern and the Southern part of a given country are quite popular, for instance, in France and Italy as well. "As a matter of fact the Italian intonation system vary significantly with space" (Romano, 1997). Having said that, I will now move to the analysis of Northern England varieties in order to analyse more closely the area where Liverpool English is from.

2.3 Northern England varieties

Northern England area extends from the Scottish borders to the River Trent, even though it is quite impossible to set precise dividing lines. Geographically, the area is divided into three regions: North East and Cumbria, North West, and Yorkshire and The Humber. That is to say, it includes the counties of Cheshire, Cumbria, County Durham, Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and Lincolnshire. According to 2011 census, this area constitutes an overall population of 14.9 million. Furthermore, although

the entire UK's economy is led by the service sector, very generally, Northern England is still a working-class-led region mainly developed around the birth of factories in the 19th century. In Dave Russell's (2004: 3) terms, "quite simply, for someone raised in Croydon, Slough and the rapidly expanding commuter suburbs of Reading, the north of England represented 'authenticity', 'real life', 'difference', "working-class culture'".

Map 4: Northern England[4]

As already mentioned, in Britain, in terms of borders, the geographical reality is quite vague when it comes to separate regions one from another, meaning that borders might be considered kind of blurred. On a different level, the same thing happens to varieties of English, which are characterized by a so-called continuum of forms. This latter concept of continuum is valid also when taking into consideration a single part of the country, and therefore, it might be said that in the entire Northern England varieties are quite similar to each other. As a matter of fact, they do share some linguistic features.

> Pairs of words such as *put: putt, could: cud* which are distinguished in Welsh, Scottish, Irish and southern English accents are not distinguished in the north […], where words like *blood* and *good, mud* and *hood*, are perfect rhymes.
>
> (Hughes & Trudgill, 1979: 27)

> Despite occurring in Cornwall and with one instance in Devon, /sl/ is largely absent from these southern counties. Instead, it is most prevalent in northern counties, with Yorkshire being the most productive /sl/ region.
>
> (Wright, 2012: 12)

In other words, as can be seen in the examples above, the North is characterized by some common features, which can help one to recognize a speaker, when the latter is from a Northern county. To sum up, it can be said that, for example: northerners "have /u:/ rather than /ʊ/ in words such as *hook, book, look, took, cook"* (Hughes & Trudgill, 1979: 28); "/sl/ […] is most prevalent in northern counties, with Yorkshire being the most productive /sl/ region" (Wright, 2012: 12); and due to pronunciation, "words like *blood* and *good, mud* and *hood*, are perfect rhymes" (Hughes & Trudgill, 1979: 27).

Furthermore, these common characteristics are not only phonological, but also grammatical, lexical and of syntax. In this regard, it is important to highlight that, as a matter of fact, while "all users of RP speak SE […], only a minority of SE use RP" (Stubbs, 2008:4). That is to say, it is perfectly possible to speak any varieties of English and, at the same time, use SE, which as already mentioned, has not much to do with pronunciation, but rather with grammar. However, there are a few exceptions. For instance, "the contrast between WE TWO and US TWO: US TWO is often found in parts

of the North […] although 'correct' Standard English requires WE TWO" (Upton & Widdowson, 1996: 63). Another example is "*I was sat, I was stood* [which] are widely used in parts of the north and west of England rather than *I was sitting, I was standing*" (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 60), which is the standard form of the progressive meaning. In other words, despite grammar being quite 'standard' even in non-standard varieties of English in the north of England, as can be seen, some differences do exist.

From a lexical point of view, the situation may appear harder to decode, given the infinite amount of words that a language generally provides. As a matter of fact, things may be easier when taking into consideration a single variety of English, so that it can be compared to all the others, but it is more difficult when it comes to taking into consideration a large range of varieties. In other words, Northern England presents a huge number of varieties of English, and lexis is usually what changes the most within them. Nonetheless, "note that the variation in the area of lexis (vocabulary) tends to be restricted to two types. The first is the presence of archaic words no longer found in mainland Britain, e.g. the use of *bold* in the sense of *misbehaved* or *wench* as a non-derogative term for *woman*. The second type contains flora and fauna words" (Hickey, 2002: 12). For instance, the word "FLEA is strongly established, […], [but] LOP, together with a variant LOPPERD [was] recorded in Yorkshire. […] Other FLEA-words are FLAYTH, recorded as a plural form in Lancashire, FLEFF in Lancashire, Cheshire and Staffordshire, and probably the curious plural FYOFF in Shropshire" (Upton & Widdowson, 1996: 123). Another example is the word "BROOM [that] has been recorded meaning 'gorse' in Northumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Suffolk" (Upton & Widdowson, 1996: 137). Clearly, the list could go on forever, since, as already mentioned, vocabulary does change all across the UK varieties of English, and therefore, Northern England's varieties may generally differ from Southern England's in many fields of vocabulary, but also within Northern England, lexis is massively diverse depending on the micro-area taken into consideration.

Clearly, this is a very general analysis and, when deeply studying a specific variety, such as the one originating from Newcastle or Leeds for instance, it will be clear that every

variety is different from another one in many features. Having said that, I will now move to the linguistic analysis of Liverpool English, which is the case study of this dissertation.

2.4 Liverpool English (Scouse)

As already mentioned, Liverpool English is the case study of this dissertation and it is worth mentioning that is famous all across the United Kingdom for many reasons I will try to explain. First of all, it has to be said that "Liverpool English (LE) is the variety of English spoken in Liverpool and much of the surrounding county of Merseyside, in the north-west of England" (Watson, 2007: 351). Furthermore, "one thing that is commonly claimed about Liverpool English is that it is not quite like its neighbours. While it certainly shares many characteristics with the varieties of English that are spoken nearby, there are also several salient linguistics features which […] are not found in surrounding varieties (such as South Lancashire English, Manchester English and Cheshire English)" (Honeybone, 2007: 1). Thus, in this part of the dissertation, I will analyse the main linguistic features of "Scouse", a term that "can be used for the variety of English spoken in the city of Liverpool, and in the surrounding areas of Merseyside" (Knowles, 1973: 14). This rich-in-history term will be briefly described as well in order to illustrate this variety of English, which represents the case study of this thesis, as exhaustively as possible.

2.4.1 Historical background

In the field of sociolinguistics, and linguistic in general, one of the major principles is that "languages have a story to tell" (Hyman, 2001: 22). In other words, like people or countries, languages have a past, a present and a future. This is true for what concerns the linguistic side of languages, meaning that linguistic features changes over time, which is what diachronic linguistics takes care of. As a matter of fact, while synchronic linguistics "implies that historical consideration are irrelevant to the investigation of particular temporal states of a language" (Lyons, 1981: 54), diachronic linguistics is based on the idea that "languages are in a perpetual state of change", since "all languages change over time" (Crowley, 1992: 28-38). According to this idea, it might be said that Liverpool English spoken today is different from Liverpool English of the past, and therefore, today Liverpool English is the result of the past LE.

> An incidenta1 reference to early Liverpool speech is made by R.Syers in a History of Everton published in Liverpool in 1830. He refers to an argument which took place in about 1750 between Thomas o'th H____'s and one William Ripley. In the exchange, Ripley, who is described as an "eminent grocer of Liverpool, shouted "Thou liest!". William R., a. legitimate legislator of Everton", then asked,"Dus ta' ca' Tummus o'th H____'s a liar?" When Ripley replied "Aye", R. exclaimed, "then thou'rt a bear!".

<div align="right">(Knowles, 1973: 16)</div>

As can be seen, Liverpool English has quite ancient origins and, although it developed over time, some features have remained unchanged; as a matter of fact, for instance, "ta'" (thank you) is still used by speakers in Liverpool as it was in 1750. Therefore, in a way, it can be said that diachronic linguistics would make sense in the case of Liverpool English. Nonetheless, this side of linguistics is not very relevant to this thesis, since its aim is to answer some sociolinguistic questions which are relevant in 2017, and therefore, when analysing the linguistic features of Liverpool English, a synchronic approach will be taken into account.

2.4.1.1 A diachronic approach

As already mentioned, the major linguistic features of Liverpool English will be illustrated through a synchronic approach. However, the principle of diachronism may be applied, in a way, to the history of Scouse language as such. In other words, a diachronic approach may be used in order to investigate the origins of the term "Scouse", which may lead to the discovering of some particular linguistic features. As a matter of fact, in the above piece of dialogue reported by Knowles in his PhD dissertation (1973), there is no trace of the term "scouse", which is now massively known all across the UK. I will try to provide some historical background in order to clarify what this term was/is and how it is linked to the Liverpool variety of English.

In the history of Liverpool English, I would say that the city of Liverpool itself has influenced the development of the variety. As a matter of fact, Liverpool was, and still is, one of the major harbours in the United Kingdom, a place where different people, coming from different places, meet.

> After London, the north-west of England is the most populated of all regions in England and Wales, with the population of Liverpool standing at around 450,000. LE itself is said to have developed in the middle of the 19th century, after rapid immigration from Ireland during the Irish potato famines of 1845-1847.

> (Watson, 2007: 351).

As mentioned above, the area where the city of Liverpool stands is one of the most populated in England and Wales, and it was also one of the places where Irish immigrants went to escape starvation during 1845-1847. "As a great seaport and commercial centre, Liverpool underwent exponential growth, attracting long-distance migrants, primarily the Irish, but also significant numbers of Welsh and Scots, to its various labour markets" (Belchem, 2006: 40). Therefore, "the language of Liverpool must have been affected by the pattern of immigration to Liverpool (predominantly Irish but including other significant elements) in the mid to late nineteenth century" (Crowley, 2012: 39). In other words, it can be said that actual history influenced linguistic patterns of the society.

> The 1841 census records state that 17.3 per cent of the population of the city of Liverpool were Irish, and that by 1861 the figure had shifted to 24.5 per cent. […] The 'Anglo-Irish' influence must have been. So to speak, pronounced. But the census figures also tells us that, in 1841, a total of 44.9 per cent of population were immigrants; thus 27.6 per cent of the population was from outside Liverpool but not from Ireland.

> (Crowley, 2012: 20-21)

That is to say, linguistically talking, Liverpool English, historically, has always been a language of immigrants, a language made by different people speaking different varieties of English, who met and influenced each other as humans and as speakers as well. As already mentioned, this kind of open-to-change behaviour was for sure due to the city itself which, being a port, is by definition a place where different people easy come and easy go. As a matter of fact, "Liverpool [was seen] as a locus of both international and national trade […] in which element of both cosmopolitanism and tradition combined to produce new […] cultural practises and patterns" (Crowley, 2012: 3-12). In other words, as products, money and job opportunities were at the centre of the market, language was for sure the tool which made all the exchanges possible. On a different level, language

itself was the main commodity, which was constantly upgraded and enriched by the different speakers who found themselves in Liverpool. In this way, economy was growing and changing together with culture, and consequently, language.

However, if, in a way, thanks to this diachronic approach focused on history, it can be explained, for instance, why "there are some phonological similarities between LE's phonological system and those of Irish Englishes" (Watson, 2007: 351), it is not clear where the term "scouse" come from yet.

2.4.1.2 The term Scouse

As a matter of fact, it has been "demonstrated [that] 'Scouse' emerged as a category used to name the language of Liverpool at a very recent date" (Crowley, 2012: 87). "As accent and/or identity label, scouse does not figure in nineteenth-century accounts of Liverpool" (Belchem, 2006: 33).

> Skeat has no entry for the term with this meaning in his Etymological Dictionary of the English Language (1882), nor does Wright in his English Dialect Dictionary (1898-1905), and there is nothing in the first five editions of Partridge's slang dictionary (1937-1961). The 1989 edition of the OED does include the term in this sense, with the definition: 'the dialect of English spoken in Liverpool'.
>
> (Crowley, 2012: 87)

Therefore, if the term 'scouse', and consequently the term 'scouser', is quite recent, how were speakers from Liverpool called? Liverpool Echo (Belger, 2017a) wrote that "leading historians agree the term [Scouse] only started being widely used to describe the city's inhabitants in the mid-20th century. Some experts claim that in Victorian times, locals were actually called something that sounds far posher - "Liverpolitan ". Apparently, before witnessing Liverpool falling on hard times in the 1960s, people from Liverpool where simply called Liverpolitan and there was no reference to the local stew. However, the shift from Liverpolitan to Scouse was not straightforward, on the contrary, "although there were no Scousers in the 1940s, there were 'Dicky Sams' (Crowley, 2012: xiii). As a matter of fact, "a second nomenclature had to be found for the Liverpolitan born within the sound of St. Nicholas's church – Dicky Sam" (Chandler, 1957: 423).

Liverpudlians […] deployed a variety of names to identify themselves, but scouse did not feature among them. One common practice in the early nineteenth century was to add some forename (usually Dick) to that of the town's emblem, the mythical liver bird, guardian of 'shipping and sailors, commerce and counting-houses, […] and all other ingredients that contribute to the filling up of his "pool"'. For reasons which remain obscure […] Dick Liver was replaced by Dick(e)y Sam […]. 'I am myself a Liverpool man, or Dicky Sam, as we love to call our native-born inhabitants', J.A. Picton, the distinguished architect and local historian, introduced himself […] in 1888. Dicky Sam gradually fell out of use, leaving Liverpudlians without an eponym until the advent of radio […]. By this time, 'whacker' or 'wacker' – probably derived from army slang – was the emerging generic term for Liverpudlians […]. After a brief period of interchangeability, […] scouse has now firmly established its supremacy.

(Belchem, 2006: 34-35)

As can be seen, Scouse is the last name that was given to Liverpool people and their speech. As already mentioned in the first chapter, "Scouse has a culinary etymology, truncated from Lobscouse, which is a popular local stew of meat and vegetables and, likewise for Cassoulet, Paella and Bouillabaisse, is the signature dish of place" (Boland, 2010: 5). The reason why it has been chosen among the others is quite obscure, but it was probably due to the popularity of the dish, which was consumed by sailors arriving in Liverpool looking for something hot to eat. However, as already mentioned, since at the moment "Scouse is widely known in the United Kingdom" (Juskan, 2015), it is "instantly recognisable today" (Belchem, 2006) and its speakers, by the way they talk, as well. Therefore, I will now move to the linguistic analysis of Liverpool English, "a variety closely associated with the urban area in and around Liverpool and which is clearly not simply part of the Lancashire-to-Cheshire traditional dialect continuum" (Honeybone, 2007: 9).

2.4.2 A synchronic approach

In this section, I will try to present the main linguistic features of Liverpool English (Scouse) and, as already mentioned, I will use a synchronic approach, "without reference to history" (Crowley, 1992: 21). It is important to mention Knowles Gerald, who, in his pioneering Ph.D. dissertation submitted for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy at the University of Leeds in 1973, described LE in every many linguistic aspects, including

phonology, grammar and lexis. However, in this dissertation, I will take into account only the linguistic features that are believed to be relevant to this sociolinguistic analysis.

From a lexical point of view, the Scouse variety of English does present some differences from SE, but they are usually used by older generations or in very informal contexts. As a matter of fact, words like "me mitts" (my hands), "me webs" (my feet), "five nicker" (five pounds) (Spiegl, 2015) are very "traditional" and it would be necessary to dedicate an entire study to analyse their use nowadays. Nonetheless, words like "ta'" (thank you) and "la" (lad) are for sure used in ordinary Liverpool English, but they are also known nationwide, and therefore, they are perceived as distinctive traits, but they do not really create any particular misunderstandings.

From a grammatical point of view, it could be said that Scouse, like any other variety of English, does not differ very much from the Standard English grammar. As already mentioned, while "all users of RP speak SE […], only a minority of speakers of SE use RP" (Stubbs, 2008: 4), meaning that it is perfectly possible to speak any varieties of English while using SE, which as already mentioned, has not much to do with pronunciation, but rather with grammar. Therefore, for what concerns Liverpool English, even in sentences like "Give yer chin a rest" (Please be silent), "I wudden mind" (Yes, please/I wouldn't mind), "Ee's got both legs in one knicker" (He is not playing well) (Spiegl, 2015), it can be witnessed how grammar appears to be quite standard. Nonetheless, "the grammatical plural <u>yous</u> (second person plural) is knows passively throughout Merseyside, but it is not much used" (Knowles, 1973: 24). That is to say, as previously mentioned, some differences in grammar are actually present, still, they are not much used and, although some exceptions exist, as in many other UK varieties, grammar appears quite standard.

According to Patrick Honeybone and Kevin Watson, two contemporary researchers in the field of Liverpool English, what really makes Liverpool English highly recognisable is its accent/pronunciation, "which is not particularly close to RP. It is the accent that is popularly called 'Scouse', and it is spoken throughout the city of Liverpool and many other parts of urban Merseyside" (Honeybone and Watson, 2006: 2). It "is known to have

intonational similarities to other northern English accents, and also to share features with varieties of Irish English" (Watson, 2007a: 358), but "it also differ from them in several interesting ways" (Honeybone and Watson, 2006: 2). As already mentioned, the similarities with other northern English accents may be explained by referencing to the continuum of forms, and the Irish influences may be explained by taking into consideration the history of the city of Liverpool, which housed Irish immigrants during the Irish potato famines. However, LE also developed some characteristic on its own and one of the most well-known is the so-called concept of "lenition", which "is not very well defined" (Crowley, 1992: 39).

> The term `lenition' is used to group together a number of segmental processes which are perceived to have certain properties in common. These properties include a similar set of conditioning environments and the perception that the processes involve some kind of phonological weakening. Classic lenition processes include: `spirantization' (e.g. t → s), `voicing' or `sonorization' (e.g. f → v), `debuccalization' (e.g. s → h) and `degemination' (e.g. kk → k).
>
> (Honeybone, 2001: 226)

In other words, "the technical term 'lenition', from Latin *lenis,* describes a process of phonological 'weakening' along a certain trajectory" (Juskan, 2015: 2), and "is arguably one of the most characteristic features of Liverpool English, and one which forms a major part of the variety's stereotype" (Watson, 2007a: 352). That is to say, on many occasions, plosives like /p, t, k, b, d, g/ are turned into affricates and fricatives. In Honeybone's (2007: 18) terms, "lenition is a synchronic, variable process whereby underlying plosives are realised as affricates and fricatives in certain specific prosodic and melodic environments. It means that the plosives […] might be pronounced as follows.

Crime	[kxɾaːm]
Expe**c**t	[ɛxspɛxt]
Dee**p**	[dðiːɸ]
Time	[tθaːm]
Nigh**t**	[naɪθ]
Sto**p**	[stɒɸ]
Lea**d**	[liːð]

Honeybone and Watson (2006) provided other examples:

Right	[raɪθ]
Kit	[kɪθ]
Could	[kʊð]
Lad	[lað]
Back	[bax]
Dock	[dɒx]

"We can just note that the phonological processes involved are variable affrications and spirantisations ('fricativisations'), and can best be understood as involving stages of phonological lenition, on a scale from plosive to affricate to fricative, and that fricatives are frequent in […] word-final and foot-medial positions" (Honeybone, 2007: 19). That is to say, lenition usually depends on where the plosives are placed in a given term, however, the general process of weakening does take place quite often and it is one of the most famous features of Liverpool English. Furthermore, it might be argued that it is the phenomenon which may explain some comments such as: "Liverpool accent […] [is] forced through nasal and oral passages chronically afflicted with catarrh" (Brophy, 1946: 21). As a matter of fact, lenition may sound quite harsh and fricativisation might give the impression that speakers are talking through catarrh. However, although a certain type degree of rationalisation is possible, statements like the one above are still quite subjective.

Another important feature of Liverpool English is that it "is resolutely non-rhotic" (Honeybone, 2007: 15), that is to say, "post-vocalic /r/ is absent […], so that words like *car, farm, park*, are r-less" (Watson, 2007a: 352). This characteristic is functional when it comes to another main feature of Scouse, which is "the absence of contrast between SQUARE and NURSE" (Honeybone, 2007: 16). That is to say, "for most speakers of Liverpool English the vowel /ɛ:/ is found in words such as *nurse bird, verse, square, hare, pair* (which means that it has a wider distribution that does the close equivalent, /eə/, in RP)" (Honeybone and Watson, 2006). In other words, if in RP words like *square* and

nurse are pronounced by using, respectively, [ɛə] and [ɜː], in Liverpool English, the same two words, will be pronounced as [skwɛː] and [nɛːs]. As a matter of fact, the same thing will happen with *fare* ([fɛː]) and *fur* ([fɛː]) in order to highlight the importance of the non-rhotic trait, which emphasise this phonological phenomenon and, together with lenition, make Liverpool English highly detectable and well-known all across the UK.

Last, but not least, I would highlight that Knowles (1973) provided some material also for Scouse intonation (or voice quality) and he argued that "LE pitch range is narrower than other varieties of English" (in Watson, 2007: 358). However, "dialect literature cannot represent this, and therefore cannot provide a tool for investigating the salience of these types of feature" (Honeybone and Watson, 2013: 316). Nonetheless, I would argue that Liverpool English does have a strong voice quality, and therefore, even though Scouse intonation will not here be analysed, it is important to be aware that, for instance, very broadly speaking, "the fairly rapid fall to end all clauses" (Pace-Sigge, 2003: 4) is one of the major characteristics of Liverpool speech. As a matter of fact, this "Scouse contrast of 'fall' and 'rise-fall'" (Knowles, 1973: 176) "gives an explanation for the sing-song melody" (Pace-Sigge, 2003: 6), which, together with the other linguistic features, makes it very recognisable.

In order to keep the analysis simple, it is important to say that, the Liverpool English which has been taken into consideration in this study is "a fairly broad accent" (Honeybone & Watson, 2006). However, "someone living in the border area may use more Liverpudlian features one minute, and more Lancashire features the next" (Honeybone, 2007: 3), since the continuum of forms is an always-valid concept, no matter how big the given territory is. As a matter of fact, Liverpool Echo (Lally, 2017) for instance, published an article about the different types of Scouse accent underlining how much speakers can actually hear the difference. Nonetheless, for the benefit of the study, a broad Scouse speech is here taken into consideration.

2.4.3 Conclusions and unanswered questions

At this point of the study, the linguistically led analysis technique we have been using throughout this chapter allows for some assumptions. For instance, as already mentioned,

the diachronic approach applied on history explained why "there are some phonological similarities between LE's phonological system and those of Irish Englishes" (Watson, 2007: 351). However, synchronic linguistics provided answers as well. As a matter of fact, it has been argued that the phenomenon of lenition may explain why people find Liverpool English quite harsh and "unpleasant", even though, of course, comments are always embodied with a certain degree of subjectivity. Moreover, it has been said that, regarding Scouse intonation, "the sing-song melody" (Pace-Sigge, 2003: 6) may be explained by taking into consideration the narrowness of LE pitch range. Nonetheless, although linguistics may actually help the study, some issues remain to be investigated.

As a matter of fact, as already mentioned, it is not clear whether Liverpool English is conceived as a dialect or just an accent, with some arguing that "given the small number of grammatical features and the relatively few words that are local to Liverpool, it is simply a 'variant of standard English' (Knowles, 1973: 48). Still, "who would decide how many terms or grammatical characteristics are required before a 'variant' can be classified as 'dialect' (or indeed even a 'language')? (Crowley, 2012: 91). Linguistics seem not to have an answer yet, even though Liverpool Echo (Belger, 2017b) announced "Scousers will have their own dictionary when a new book of more than 2,000 local words comes out [in September]. Tony Crowley, author of 'The Liverpool English Dictionary', has been collecting local terms for more than three decades". Clearly, Liverpool English status needs to be further investigated, and therefore, I will try to find an answer when analysing data in the following chapter.

Another issue that needs further investigation regards the social status that Liverpool English has within the society. As a matter of fact, "linguists have endeavored for many years to show that differences in language are matters of social convention established by historical processes which shift continually the social prestige of dialect variants" (Labov, 1970b: 1). That is to say, as already mentioned, British society, for instance, has embodied SE with a certain degree of importance and now its use is perceived as an indicator of social prestige. In the same way, apparently, British society has embodied non-standard varieties with a certain degree of degradation. As a matter of fact, "there is some support for the idea that urban vernaculars are systematically downgraded" (Coupland and

Bishop, 2007: 80). However, it has also been said that SE is actually just a variety of English among others, and therefore, all the numerous varieties of English should share the same level of importance. As a matter of fact, this last assumption is not clear yet, and therefore, this concept is worth being investigated in order to understand if speakers within the society do actually consider all varieties of English sharing the same degree of prestige, or if varieties of English and their use are perceived as really socially different from one another.

CHAPTER 3 – A CASE STUDY OF LIVERPOOL ENGLISH

As previously mentioned, Liverpool English is the case study of this thesis. In order to answer my research questions on language and territory, language and identity, and language and social status, I developed a questionnaire on Scouse, which I delivered to Scouse natives, since I lived in Liverpool, Merseyside, for five months, from November 2016 to March 2017.

3.1 Methodology
The idea for this dissertation came up at the beginning of September 2016, when I started to collect material on sociolinguistics. However, the questionnaire was developed only in December 2016, when I was already living in Liverpool, Merseyside, and the final version of the questionnaire was ready only at the beginning of March 2017. During the first part of the developing process I interacted with my supervisor via e-mail, since she was based in Padua, Italy, and we managed to obtain a first draft of the questionnaire at the beginning of February. The latter included an introduction stating the purpose of the questionnaire, a consent section, 14 close-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. At that point, once I created an online Google Survey, I needed to pilot it in order "to detect any flaws" (Burgess, 2001: 15), and therefore, I forwarded it to three people: two of them were Liverpool English native speakers, the other one was a professor of sociolinguistics working within the University of Liverpool. They were asked to complete the questionnaire and to answer some questions that would help me understand if questions were long enough, if they were clear/in a clear order, if some of them needed to be deleted or added, if some of them were inappropriate and/or offensive, and if the overall questionnaire was too long or too short.

The answers I got from the Pilot Study helped me develop the draft. As a matter of fact, one of the Liverpool English speakers stated she was confused, since she found the collocation "speak Scouse" or "speaking Scouse" quite often, and that made her feel that Scouse was conceived like another language, and in her opinion, it was not. Although the other LE speaker did not express this concern, in order to make the questionnaire as precise as possible and in order to avoid misunderstanding with any kind of sample, I

decided to insert an explanatory note at the beginning of the introduction: "Please, note that I will use the word "Scouse" throughout the questionnaire to simplify the several possible meanings of the word (e.g. Scouse colloquialisms/Scouse slang/Scouse variations/Scouse accent/etc.)". Furthermore, it was suggested to add a question about the participants' parents in order to understand where they are from, meaning that I could understand better the kind of linguistic environment the participants grew up in. On the same line of reasoning, it was said that it would be useful to know the participants' employment in order to explore the link between language and workplace. In addition, it was suggested that the close-ended question "How would you describe yourself?" would permit more than one answer which would allow the participants express as many "identities" as they wanted (e.g. English, Scouse, British). Therefore, another question was added in order to investigate which one of the previous answers would describe them best. Finally, people stated that a direct question on the reaction to the Scouse accent would actually be appreciated. However, as this could be a sensitive issue, I decided that I did not want to be too direct, since it is important "not [to] ask questions which may offend" and "leading questions […] should be avoided" (Burgess, 2001: 12-14). Thus, a question such as "What is the reaction that people have to Scouse?" would imply that people definitely have a reaction to Scouse, and therefore it might be conceived as a leading question based on personal assumptions. Thus, data might become compromised. Eventually, I decided to add the open-ended question "Have you ever felt the need to modify your way of speaking when talking with people who are not from Liverpool?". Whilst this created a risk that the participants would answer just "yes/no" making the question useless, I decided that if people could answer by explaining why they change their way of talking, that would mean that the issue was actually relevant and worth investigating. At the end of the pilot study, the survey was made up with an introduction, a consent section, 17 close-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions.

At this point, I sent the draft back to my supervisor, who revised it and made another couple of changes, such as permitting more than one answer to questions number 10 ("Where do you speak Scouse?"). The final version of the questionnaire was ready only in mid-February 2017, and therefore, I started to deliver it around that time. In order to collect answers, it was mainly spread via the internet; I actually send it via e-mail to the

students attending the modules I was teaching in at the University of Liverpool, making it clear they could fill in it only if they were Scouse natives. On the same occasion, I asked them to forward it to as many other Liverpool English natives as they could. I asked the same thing to my traineeship supervisor, whose partner is a LE native and he is also a teacher at the Liverpool City College, and therefore, he could help the delivering process. Furthermore, I posted the survey also on the Facebook group "Italiani a Liverpool", asking people to forward it to Scouse natives; on this occasion, I was reached by an Italian man, whose partner was teaching at the Liverpool City College and would be happy to send it to her students. By the end of the month, I collected a total amount of 178 answers. The questionnaire follows:

1. How old are you?

   under 18
   18-25
   25-40
   over 40

2. Please select your gender

   M
   F

3. Where do you live?

   Liverpool, Merseyside
   Another city in the UK
   Abroad

3a. If you answered "Another city in the UK" or "Abroad" to the question above, please specify:

4. Where are your parents from?

   Liverpool, Merseyside
   Another city in the UK
   Abroad

4a. If you answered "Another city in the UK" or "Abroad" to the question above, please specify:

5. What is your current occupation? (e.g. student and/or waiter, receptionist, teacher)

6. What is Scouse for you? (More than one answer allowed)

Your language
The best way to express yourself
An accent
A variety of English language
Other

7. Would you say that you speak Scouse?

   Yes
   No
   Other

8. Would you say that you are Scouser?

   Yes
   No
   Other

9. Who do you speak Scouse with?

   Friends
   Relatives
   Friends and relatives
   Teachers and/or employers
   Friends, relatives, teachers and/or employers
   Everyone
   Other

10. Where do you speak Scouse? (More than one answer allowed)

    At home
    In shops and restaurants
    In public places (bank, doctor's surgery, church)
    Everywhere
    Other

11. Do/Did you speak Scouse at school?

    Yes
    No
    Occasionally
    Only with classmates

12. Do you speak Scouse at work? (Please answer this question only if you work)

    Yes, everyday with everyone
    Occasionally, with everyone
    Yes, but only with colleagues
    Occasionally, only with colleagues
    No, never

13. How would you describe yourself? (More than one answer allowed)

English
British
Scouse
Other

13a. If you gave more than one answer to the question above, state which one describes you best:
1 English
2 British
3 Souse
4 Other

13b. If you selected "Other", please specify:

14. On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being "not important" and 5 being "very important", how much do you think speaking Scouse is important to build your identity as a Scouser?

1   2   3   4   5

15. On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being "not true" and 5 being "very true", how true do you think the statement "We're not English, we are Scouser!" is?

1   2   3   4   5

"Liverpool has a unique spirit arising from its unique position, which, over the centuries, has brought people from most countries of the world to live in this city. This diversity combines with a strong sense of place and identity to create unity alongside difference. Liverpool people have wit, energy and humour, an unbeatable spirit in the hard times, a well-known generosity in the good times. The people are Liverpool's great strength". (Russell 2007)

16. Which other factors, together with speaking Scouse, make you feel like a Scouser? (More than one answer allowed)

Living in Liverpool
Pride
Humour
Other

17. What does it mean to you "being a Scouser"? (More than one answer allowed)

Resilience
Generosity and solidarity
Tolerance
Living in Liverpool
Other

18. Have you ever felt the need to modify your way of speaking when talking with people who are not from Liverpool? (Open-ended question)

19. Please add any additional comments here. (Open-ended question. Optional)

A related point to consider is that face-to-face discussions were not planned at the beginning, however, after taking a first look at the answers, my supervisor thought I could take advantage of my last weeks in Liverpool to carry out some interviews. As a matter of fact, the answers to the two open-ended questions permitted further investigation regarding the reaction people have to Liverpool English and why. Therefore, in order to fill potential gaps within the study, I asked five LE natives if they could answer some questions on Scouse. Fortunately, they all agreed to meet and the study was eventually enhanced and a bigger number of considerations was permitted. It is worth mentioning that in order to make the participants feel comfortable, face-to-face interviews were carried out as small conversation, even though they were obviously led so that people would answer the following questions:

1. Generally speaking, is it important to you to speak Scouse?
2. On the questionnaire, many people stated they modify their way of speaking in order to sound more professional, or because people who are not from Liverpool look down on Scouse and they do not generally like it. Do you think it is true?
3. A girl who is living in Australia stated that when she first arrived there her boss asked her to speak English many times. Would you get offended?
4. Why do you think Scouse appears so problematic sometimes?

It is also important to take into account a certain degree of indeterminacy. Although I actually lived in Liverpool, as "ethnographers need to immerse themselves in the social world they are studying" (Richards et al., 2012: 219), five months might not be enough in order to make assumptions about a particular social community. Nonetheless, mine is not really an ethnographic study, as already mentioned, it deals with sociolinguistics, and therefore, language itself is the main topic, which actually works as a filter and allows for all the other lines of argument. Furthermore, it is essential to take into account a certain degree of indeterminacy in the field of answers as well, since "the number of aspects of context (external to the individual) which may be relevant is without limit and may change instantly" (Richards et al., 2012: 218).

> In an interaction's moment-to-moment development, the parties, singly and together, select and display in their conduct which of the indefinitely many aspects of context they are making relevant, or are invoking, for the immediate moment.
>
> (Schegloff, 1987: 219)

In other words, context and moment need to be taken into account when analysing data in order to obtain results which are as objective as possible. In this case, as already mentioned, the questionnaire was spread via the internet and it was completely anonymous, and therefore, the participants are believed to have answered in comfort and without being afraid of being judged for whatever reason. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews were conducted in public and friendly environments, such as bars and pubs, in order to make the participants feel comfortable even on that occasion.

Regarding research methods, mine is mixed method study, which is "a quantitative survey supplemented by qualitative interviews" (Small, 2011: 58).

> Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.
>
> (Johnson et al, 2007: 123)

That is to say, I will now move on to the analysis of the answers that 178 participants gave to the questionnaire. In the first part of this chapter I will provide some data which will be analysed by using a quantitative viewpoint (e.g. by using graphs and tables). In the second part, I will use a quantitative analysis technique again in order to present the data obtained from the answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, but I will then go through the same questions by using a qualitative analysis technique.

3.2 Quantitative analysis of the close-ended questions

As quantitative analysis is by definition quite mathematical and statistical, quantitative questionnaire data are analysed "by means of submitting them to various statistical procedures" (Dornyei, 2003: 114). As a matter of fact, in this part I will go through the first part of the questionnaire, mainly made up of close-ended questions, and I will present some of the graphs and percentages obtained. The main aim is to see whether the theory, which has been presented in the previous chapters, is confirmed or not. In order to do so, questions, and their answers, may not appear in chronological order.

Furthermore, another important consideration has to be made when considering the term "Scouse"; as already mentioned, it is not clear if it designates a dialect or an accent. For the benefit of the study, as already mentioned, participants were told that the word "Scouse" would be used throughout the questionnaire to simplify the several possible meanings of the word (e.g. Scouse colloquialisms/Scouse slang/Scouse variations/Scouse accent/etc.). However, as already mentioned, it "is indisputable that Scousers sound and speak differently to other English people and especially those of the North West region in which Liverpool sits" (Boland, 2010: 6). Therefore, in order to investigate this point, the participants were asked to answer the question number 6: "What is Scouse for you?"
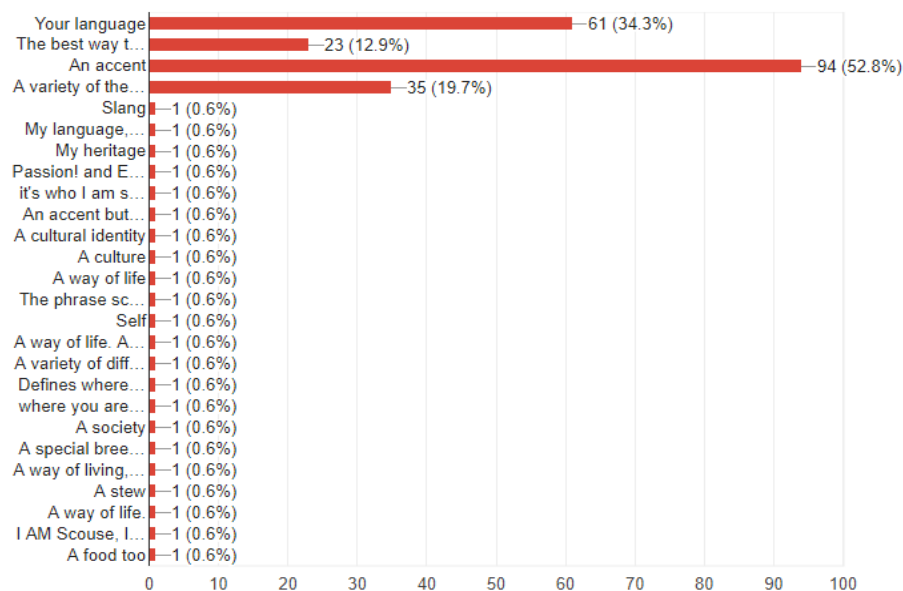
Figure 1: How Scouse is conceived

As can be seen, the majority of the participants (52.8%) would classify Scouse as an accent, followed by 34.3%, who would say it is their language. Bearing in mind that this question has been asked before any other questions regarding Scouse, it has to be remembered when it comes to the analysis of the questions which involve Scouse as a means of communication. In other words, this data show that, among the 178 people who completed the questionnaire, the majority of them think Scouse is an accent, others think it is their language. Therefore, it is believed that these people answered all the questions

regarding Scouse by having these ideas in mind: the analysis should take this into account too.

The next graphs will deliver some information about sample's records such as age and gender in order to give an idea of the people who completed the survey and help the analysis.
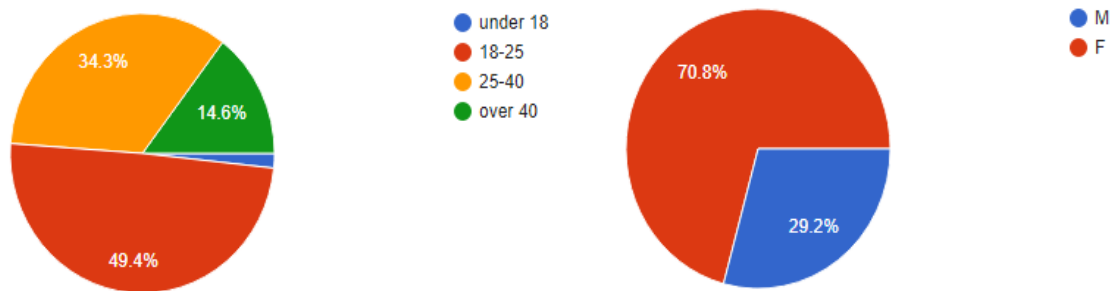
Figure 2: Participants' records (age and gender)

According to the answers to question number 1 (How old are you?) and number 2 (Please select your gender), as shown by the graphs above, the majority of the participants (49.4%) are young women aged between 18 and 25 years old. It has to be said that, since I worked as an Italian teaching assistant at the University of Liverpool, it is quite obvious that the majority of the participants are undergraduate and postgraduate students. As already mentioned, as I developed the questionnaire, I started to circulate it within the University environment, mainly by involving students. However, as can be seen in the graph on the left, 34.3% of the participants are aged between 25 and 40 years old, and 14.6% are over 40 years old. Overall, the questionnaire seems to have been completed by quite a heterogeneous group of participants in terms of age. Regarding the gender of the participants, clearly, a great majority of them (70.8%) are women; however, I would argue that this fact is not that relevant, since my research questions are not based on gender and are not linked in any ways to any differences between men and women.

Regarding information on the participants, according to answers given to question number 5 "What is your current occupation? (e.g. student and/or waiter, receptionist, teacher), the majority of the participants (44 out of 178) are students, followed by 12 bartenders, 7 teachers, and 7 chefs. Among the other 108 participants left, many said they are working in the hospitality and catering sector, but we also find administrators, some who define themselves "business owners", consulters, sale assistants, advocates, marketing managers, housewives, lecturers and many students who are also tutors, babysitters, waiters and working in the field of customer service. In other words, regarding the occupation of participants, the groups of people who took part in the survey seems to be quite heterogeneous, even though students seem to constitute the majority.

The next figures will help the answer to my research question about the sociolinguistic link between language and territory, meaning that they will help understand if this bond is as strong as the theory claims. Figure 3 is related to question number 3 (Where do you live?) and Figure 4 is related to question number 4 (Where are your parents from?).
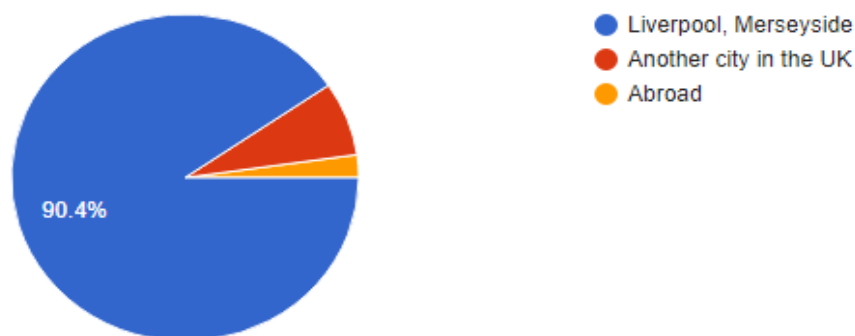
Figure 3: Where the participants live
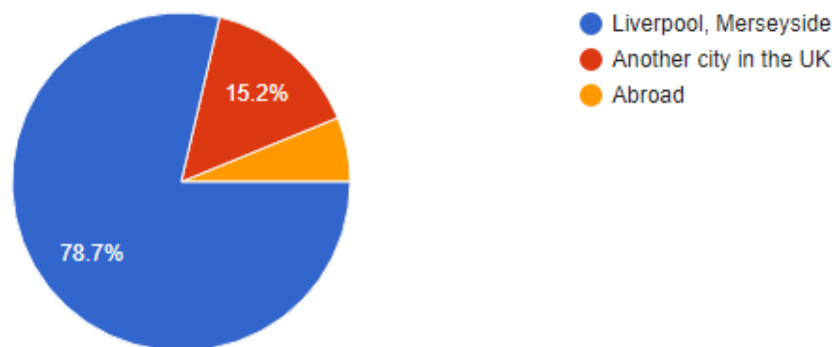
Figure 4: Where the participants' parents are from

According to these graphs, the great majority of the participants (90.4%) live in Liverpool, Merseyside and 78.7% of the participants have parents from Liverpool, Merseyside. Therefore, it may be assumed that the survey was completed mainly by people, who were born and raised in Liverpool from parents, who are from Liverpool themselves. According to the sociolinguistic theory presented in Chapter 1, every place has been linked to its language and, as already mentioned, the UK has been mapped in many ways. As a matter of fact, Scouse variety of English belongs to the city of Liverpool, "to urban areas adjoining it, and to towns facing it across the River Mersey" (Hughes and Trudgill, 1979: 61). However, as has been argued, this bond may not be as straightforward as it seems. As already mentioned, there seems to an inconsistency in the sociolinguistic relationship between language and territory. The latter might be conceived as nothing but a general landmark, since when someone tries to find its relative speakers, they have to face too many problems in terms of location and boundaries (e.g. relationship between Liverpool and Wirral, Liverpool and St. Helens).

This argument has apparently been confirmed in question number 3, since the 7.3% of participants who gave "Another city in the UK" as answer, in question 3a they have been asked to specify, and a few answered "St. Helens" and "Wirral". Given that, geographically, both St. Helens and Wirral are part of the metropolitan area that Liverpool is, it seems clear that territory is something hard to define and different people can

perceive the same area in different ways. Therefore, a territory might actually be conceived as just a general landmark.

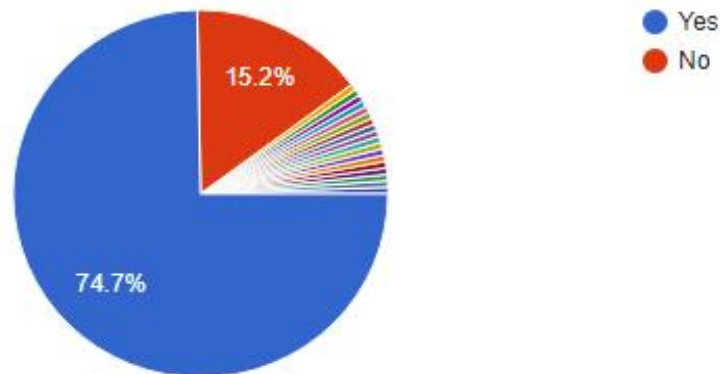Further confirmation comes with answers to the question number 7: "Would you say that you speak Scouse?"

Figure 5: Scouse speakers

According to the pie chart above, 74.7% of the participants answered "yes". Statistically, they do constitute the majority, however, it is an interesting figure when compared to the other data. As a matter of fact, 90.4% of the people who completed the survey currently live in Liverpool, and 78.7% have parents from Liverpool as well. Therefore, by looking at this chart, it is interesting to see that only the 74.7% of the participants state they speak Scouse, a percentage which is lower than the one of the people living in Liverpool and lower than the one of the people having parents from Liverpool as well. Even by taking into account the participants who stated "sometimes" and "slightly", this data seem to confirm the hypothesis that, when it comes to language, territory might not be that relevant and the process of localisation seems quite forced. In other words, it can be witnessed that people born and raised in Liverpool by parents from Liverpool may not actually speak Scouse: living in Liverpool does not seem to be enough in order to speak Scouse.

I will now move on to the analysis of answers which should help me answer my research question about language identity. As already mentioned in the first chapter, according to sociolinguistic theory, "identity is constructed through a variety of symbolic resources, and especially language" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 370). The latter enables communication with other individuals, and therefore, "by comparing ourselves with others we can build up our affiliations and our non-alignments" (Duszak, 2003). In other words, it is believed that language contributes to the making of someone's identity, as is brings people together, enables them to build their own identity by sharing (or not sharing) values in order to create communities based on them. What I argued is that when it comes to defining identity, language can definitely help the general process of building someone's way of being; still, linguistic identity might not appear that categorical.

In this regard, interesting data come from the answers given to question number 8: "Would you say that you are Scouser?"
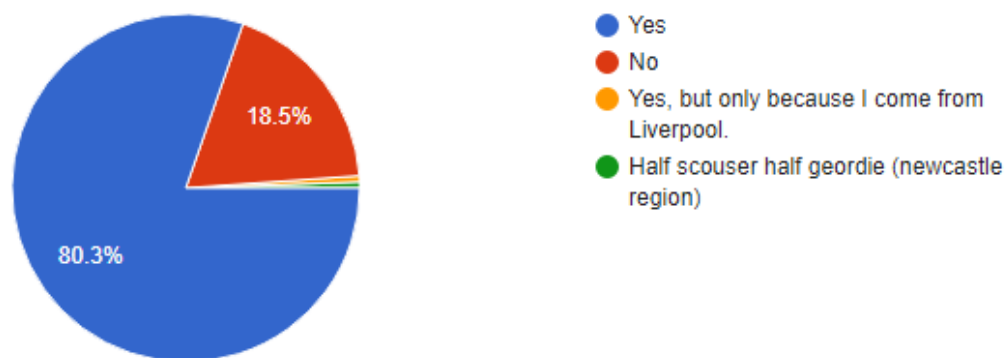
Figure 6: Percentage of people defining themselves Scousers

As can be seen, the majority (80.3%) of the participants answered "yes", and therefore, they consider themselves Scousers. This data is quite revealing, when compared to the one from the previous chart from question number 7. As already mentioned, 74.7% of the

participants said they speak Scouse, but the percentage of the people who said they are Scouser is higher (80.3%). That is to say, there seems to be a kind of rupture in the link between language and identity. In other words, it seems like speaking Scouse is not a prerogative to be a Scouser, even though, by taking a simple look to percentages, it might appear quite relevant. However, this lack of straightforwardness might actually confirm that, as already mentioned, even though it is surely right to say that, at some extent, language shapes identity, "language (in the sense of "a particular language") is not necessarily a core value in group identity" (McCormick, 2005: 304) and "speakers do not entirely locked into particular subject positions" (Goodwin, 1990). In other words, it seems that strict assumptions like, for instance, "I speak English, and therefore I am English" may not be entirely reliable, since someone may be a native English speaker, but this does not mean they cannot consider themselves Italian, Spanish or Chinese as well.

This concept of fluid identity has been investigated through questions number 13 (How would you describe yourself?) and 13a (If you gave more than one answer to the question above, state which one describes you best), here reported by figures number 7 and 8.
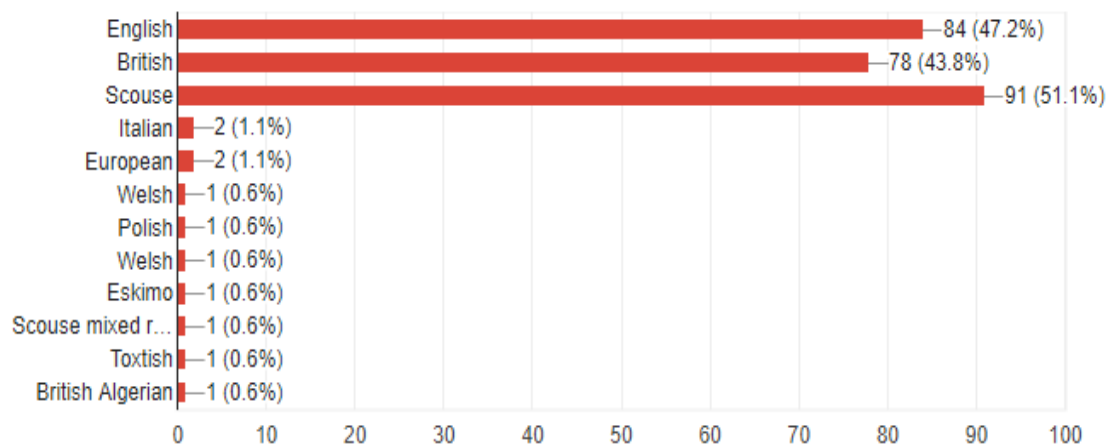

Figure 7: How the participants describe themselves

As can be seen, the majority of the participants (51.1%) answered "Scouse", and therefore, it might be assumed that language does shape identity, since the majority of the people who completed the survey (74.7%) said that speak Scouse in question number 7

(cfr. Figure 5). Nonetheless, it is remarkable to see that 47.2% of the participants answered "English" and 43.8% gave "British" as answer. Apparently, there is not a strong majority, even 51.1% is just slightly higher than 47.2%. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that question number 13 allowed more than one answer, and that is why, as can be seen, percentages are very similar to each other and there are also many answers which have nothing to do with the alternatives provided (e.g. Italian, European, Welsh, Scouse mixed race, Eskimo). Clearly, linguistic identity seems quite hard to define and people unlikely feel like being put in just one label. However, question number 13a tried to take this point a bit further: "If you gave more than one answer to the question above, state which one describes you best":
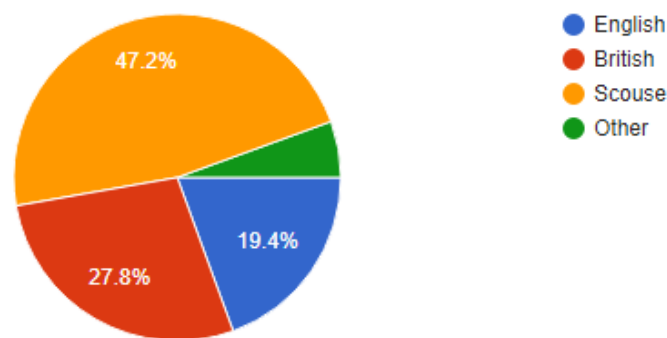
Figure 8: Prevailing identities

Apparently, although the answers appear quite heterogeneous, the majority of the participants (47.2%) answered "Scouse", meaning that, eventually, the linguistic background may be actually relevant in order to define one's identity. However, it is a revealing figure, since the percentage of the people stating that Scouse is what describe them best (47.2%) is lower than the percentage of the people stating they would describe themselves as Scouse (51.1%). It seems like there is an amount of people who, even though they would say they are, for instance, English and Scouse, when they have to make a choice between the two options, they would prefer to say English. Even when looking at people who selected "Other", who in question number 13b have been asked to specify (If you selected "Other", please specify), it seems like identity is far from being a

straightforward concept. As a matter of fact, people answered "I have spent much of my life in Europe (studying), and my partner is German", "Eskimo" and "Mixed". Apparently, the data seem to confirm that "identity […] operates at multiple levels simultaneously" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 586), and therefore, it should be "avoid[ed] the reduction of identities to static, established categories" (Blommaert, 2005: 210).

However, it can be seen that there is indeed a majority of people who consider themselves Scouse (51.1%) and 47.2% of people feel that, among all other options, Scouse is what describes them the best. In order to understand how much language is actually relevant in this proceed of identification, participants have been asked to answer question number 14: "On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being "not important" and 5 being "very important", how much do you think speaking Scouse is important to build your identity as a Scouser?"
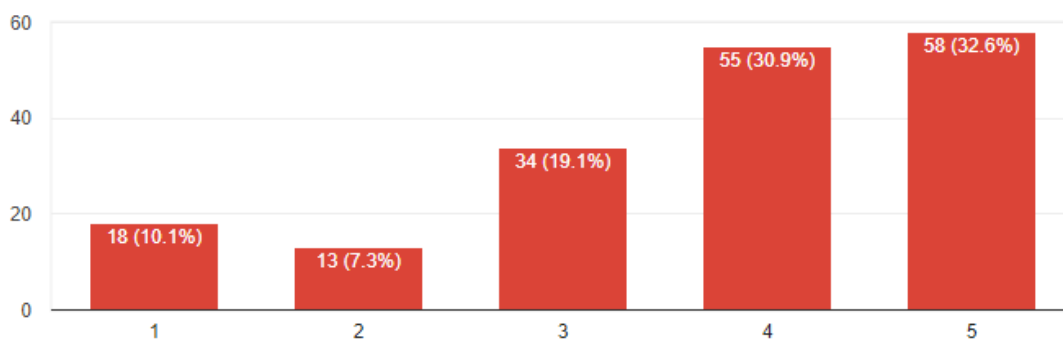

Figure 9: Importance of speaking Scouse in order to be a Scouser

Although the majority of the participants (32.6%) answered "very important", meaning that speaking Scouse is actually relevant in order to be considered a Scouser, there is not an absolute majority (more than a half). Therefore, this assumption does not seem very much reliable and, once again, data seem to confirm that language is important, as the 30.9% of the participants agree on by selecting "4", but it is very hard to decide at what extent. In other words, it seems that speaking Scouse, or, in general, any other language, might actually not be enough in order to build a certain social identity. Apparently, at this stage, something has been left unspoken.

According to the sociolinguistic theory presented in chapter 1, "identity is the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 586), that is to say, "for instance, husband and wife might use one language to each other, but father and children might use another" (Spolsky, 1998: 34-35). As a matter of fact, "social actors move between different communities of practice in their daily lives" (Goodwin, 1990). In other words, some conceive identity as something which seems more explicit only when put in comparison with something else. In order to investigate this viewpoint, the participants were asked to answer question number 15: "On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being "not true" and 5 being "very true", how true do you think the statement "We're not English, we are Scouser!" is?"
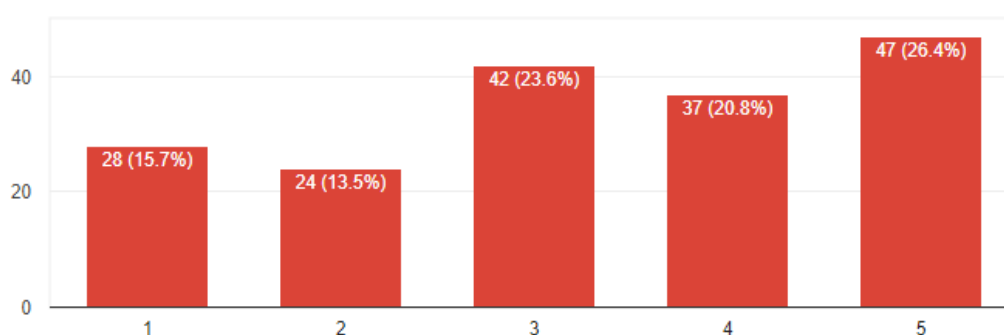

Figure 10: Truthfulness of the statement "We're not English, we are Scouser!"

As can be seen, the majority of the participants (26.4%) answered "very true", meaning that Scousers do actually feel different from the other English people. That is to say, this could confirm the idea of identity as something that needs comparison. Nonetheless, once again, an absolute majority has not been reached, with 15.7% of the participants feeling that the statement is actually not true, a percentage which is not much lower than 26.4%. Therefore, it seems hard to confirm the theory and it seems like language alone cannot really define someone's way of being.

What I am arguing is that self-identification might need something more than language, since it is a very wide concept, unlikely to be limited to the principle of sounding like a

given language. As already mentioned, language is what enables people to create their own identity by sharing (or not sharing) values and cultures in order to create communities based on them. Apparently, values and cultures seem to be in the spotlight, rather than language, which may be just the starting point. Therefore, on this case study, the question is: is a Scouser just someone who speaks Scouse? Previously, it has been said already that the answer seems to be "no", since there were more people who consider themselves Scousers (80.3%) than people who would say they speak Scouse (74.7%). That is to say, there is a certain amount of people who consider themselves Scousers, even though they would not say they speak Scouse. In order to make sense of this sort of gap, the participants were asked to answer the question number 16: "Which other factors, together with speaking Scouse, make you feel like a Scouser?"
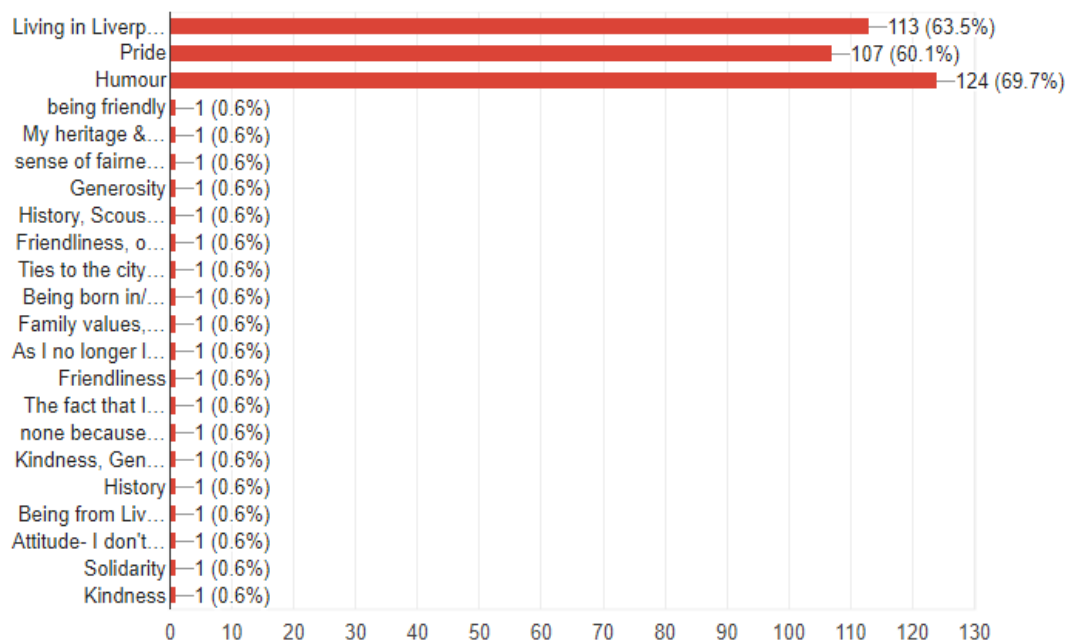

Figure 11: Other relevant factors which make one feel like a Scouser

As can be seen, the great majority of the participants (69.7%) said that, together with speaking Scouse, it is humour, which make them feel like Scousers. As already mentioned, Scouse humour is very well-known all across the UK; as a matter of fact, for instance, according to Grant (no date), "Scouse books need in the main to be seen as being offered to the reading public as examples of humour". Therefore, it could actually be that

people identify themselves through this behavioural viewpoint. In addition, 60.1% of people answered "Pride", followed by a series of answers such as "friendliness", "generosity", "solidarity", "kindness" and "history". That is to say, the data seem to confirm that "Liverpool has prided itself on a strong sense of community (e.g., self-help networks, community activism, informal labour markets, "burying our own dead)" (Meegan, 1989: 226). As a matter of fact, "much has been made of Liverpool's exceptionalism, with most emphasis placed on the distinctive characteristics of Liverpudlians themselves: their culture, language, humour and identity" (Pooley, 2006: 171-172). In other words, Scousers seem to present a strong sense of belonging to a community of people who wanted to give the city of Liverpool a second chance, and therefore, their identity is built by the sharing of specific values (e.g. pride, humour, solidarity). The latter, according to the results obtained by questions number 7 and 8, appear to be more relevant than language as factors which contribute to the identity building.

At this point, the question is: what is a Scouser? In order to give this reasoning a certain closure, the participants were asked to answer question number 17: "What does it mean to you "being a Scouser"?
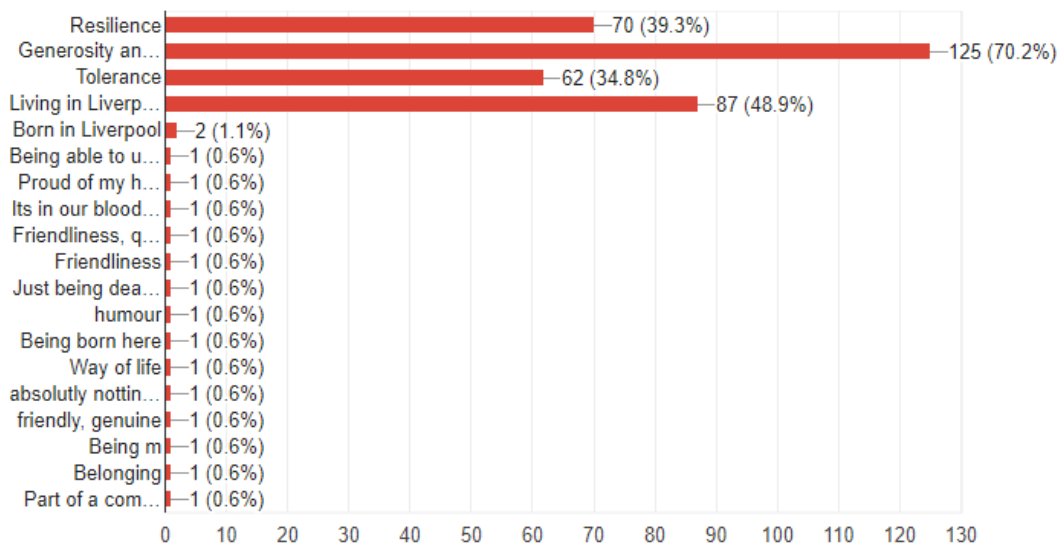

Figure 12: Meaning of being a Scouser

As can be seen, the majority of the participants (70.2%) answered that what makes them feel Scouser are the values of generosity and solidarity. This is worth comparing to the answer obtained in question number 14, where only the 32.6% of participants said speaking Scouse is very important in order to build their identity as a Scouser. Apparently, inner values dominate when it comes to identity, and this might explain why in question number seven, 74.7% of participants said they speak Scouse, but in question number eight, 80.3% of participants answered that they felt like Scouser. This gap may be filled by this sense of community based on certain values which set Liverpool and its inhabitants apart.

Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that, in this case, 48.9% of the participants answered "Living in Liverpool"; in this way, statistically speaking, the importance of territory seems to hold a position higher than the importance of language, holding the lowest position with 32.6% of agreement, but lower than the importance of community values, with the highest position with 70.2% of agreement. Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that in question number 16 (Which other factors, together with speaking Scouse, make you feel like a Scouser?), 63.5% of participants answered "Living in Liverpool". To a certain extent, territory seems to be linked to identity, rather than to language, since, according to the data, people say that living in Liverpool is very important in order to feel like a Scouser/be a Scouser. At this point, the importance of territory is not clear and need to be further investigated.

Before moving to another part of the analysis, it is worth making some considerations. As already argued, when it comes to language, territory might not fully explain the sociolinguistic link between language and place. In order to take this point further, I would start by reporting graphs from question number 3 (Where do you live?), figure 3, number 4 (Where are your parents from?), figure 4, and number 7 (Would you say that you speak Scouse?), figure 5, one more time to be thorough.
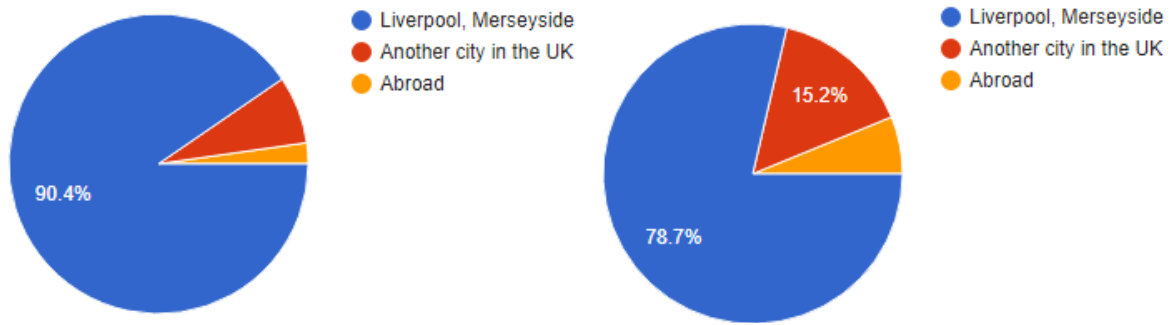
On the left, figure 3: Where the participants live
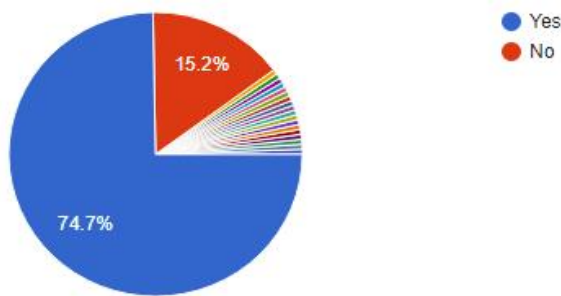*On the right, figure 4: Where the participants' parents are from*

Figure 5: Scouse speakers

According to the reported graphs, as already mentioned, the great majority of the participants (90.4%) live in Liverpool, Merseyside, and 78.7% of the participants have parents from Liverpool as well, meaning that the survey was completed mainly by people who were born and raised in Liverpool by parents who are from Liverpool themselves. However, only 74.7% of the participants answered they speak Scouse, a percentage which is lower than that of people living in Liverpool, and lower than that of people with parents from Liverpool as well. In other words, according to this data, living in Liverpool does not seem to be enough in order to speak Scouse, meaning that territory may not fully explain the link between language and territory. Nonetheless, things may be slightly different when it comes to the comparison of the first two charts (questions number 3 and 4) with the chart obtained from question number 8: "Would you say that you are Scouser?"
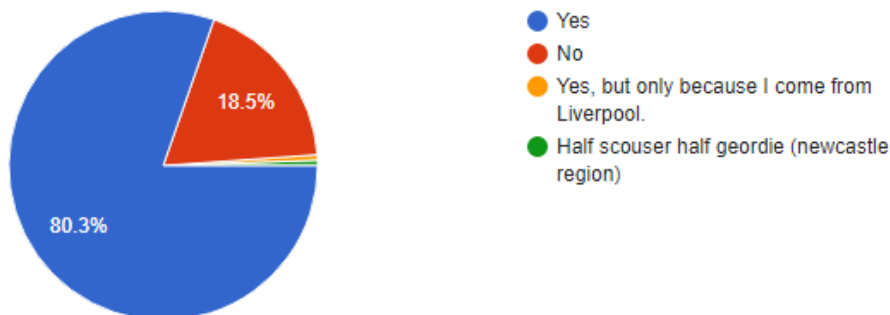
Figure 6: Percentage of people defining themselves Scousers

According to this chart, 80.3% of the participants answered "yes" and, as already mentioned, this figure is revealing when compared to that from question number 7. However, I would say that, even when compared with the charts from questions number 3 and 4, it invites reflections. As a matter of fact, 90.4% of the participants live in Liverpool, 78.7% have parents from Liverpool as well, and 80.3% say that they are Scousers. That is to say, all the participants who live in Liverpool and have parents from Liverpool define themselves as Scousers, even if they do not speak Scouse. As reported in the chart above, a person answered "Yes, but only because I come from Liverpool", confirming this reasoning. However, some may argue that 90.4% of the participants live in Liverpool, but only 80.3% would say they are Scouser, meaning that there is 10% gap. On the other hand, this gap may due to the fact that only 78.7% have parents from Liverpool as well. As a matter of fact, the 78.7% value is very close to 80.3%, and therefore, the data seem to make sense. Clearly, when put in these terms, the importance of territory appears higher than before, even though the relation here is between territory and identity, rather than language and identity. However, if identity goes through language, and language is linked to territory, it is very hard to understand the relevance of the latter, as the data seem to be conflicting.

I will now move to the analysis of the answers which may help understand the sociolinguistic link between language and social status. According to the literature,

"whenever we speak we cannot avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins" (Trudgill, 2000: 2), meaning that, as already mentioned, language allows people to link (or to index) speakers to (their supposed) values, cultures, social-class and/or origins. In other words, as already mentioned, people react to spoken language and they can detect where a person may be from in term of geography, but also in terms of social environment. Even though I will analyse social perception of Scouse later on this dissertation, it has already been said that, apparently, the general idea is that it is quite an unpleasant accent associated with uneducated working-class people. This assumption will be investigated in the second part of the analysis, but it is worth bearing this in mind, since I will try to understand how often and with whom Scousers speak Scouse.

First of all, I would like to recall that participants were asked to answer question number 6 ("What is Scouse for you?") before answering any other questions about Scouse.
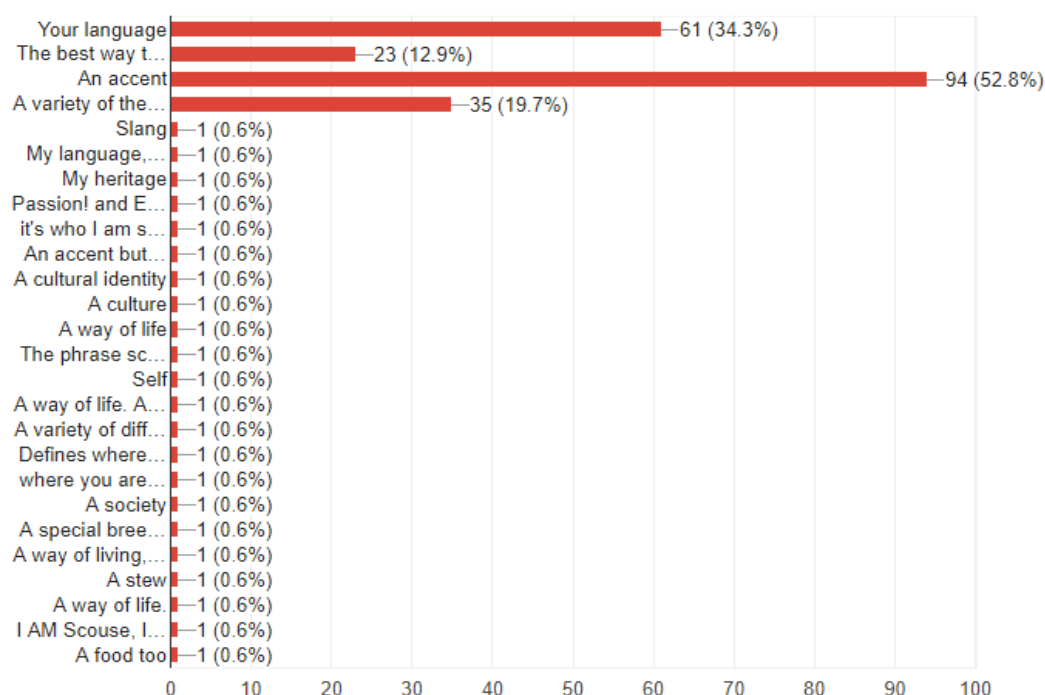

Figure 1: How Scouse is conceived

As can be seen, the majority of the participants (52.8%) answered "an accent", and therefore, it is believed that questions about Scouse have been answered while perceiving Scouse as an accent.

In order to investigate the social environment where Scouse is spoken, the participants have been asked to answer question number 9: "Who do you speak Scouse with?"
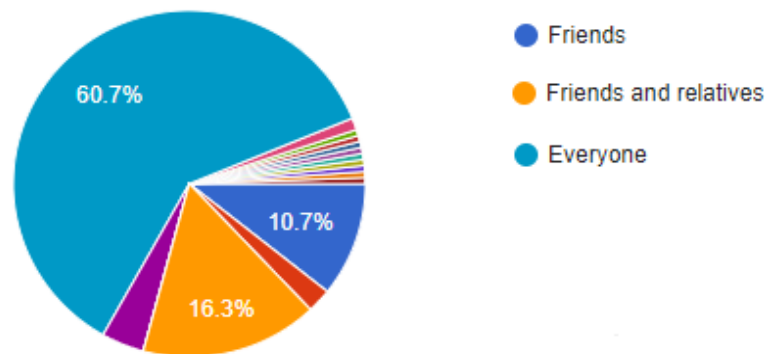

Figure 13: Percentage of people who Scousers are likely to speak LE with

As the chart above shows, the majority of the participants (60.7%) answered "everyone". Given that, as already mentioned, the majority of the people who completed the questionnaire perceive Scouse as an accent, this data might mean that 60.7% of people do not change their way of talking depending on interlocutors. This data is remarkable, since this kind of behaviour might confirm the idea that Scousers feel as if they belong to a community they are proud of, and therefore, they like to show that by speaking Scouse freely. Furthermore, it might also confirm the idea that Scouse is conceived just as an accent, since speakers define themselves as people speaking English with a Scouse accent. This latter point will be further investigated.

However, a consistent percentage of participants (27%) answered they speak Scouse with friends (10.7%) and friends and relatives (16.3%). That is to say, some people prefer to speak Scouse only within domestic and informal environments. At this point of the research, it is not possible to understand why this happens and whether this idea of

changing accent depending on the audience is the result of a conscious choice or a spontaneous behaviour. Therefore, I will further analyse this point later on this chapter.

In order to understand where people speak Scouse in terms of physical space, the participants have been asked to answer question number 10: "Where do you speak Scouse?"
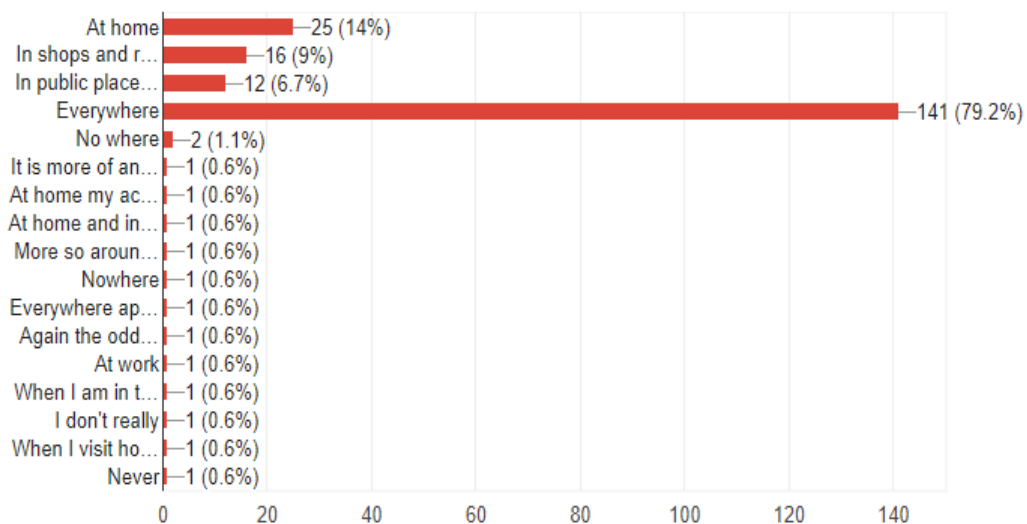

Figure 14: Places where Scouse is spoken

As can be seen, a great majority of the participants (79.2%) answered "everywhere". That is to say, it seems as if, once again, either Scouse speakers use Scouse to convey their pride or they conceive Scouse only as an accent, and therefore, they obviously say they speak it everywhere, meaning that they speak English with a Scouse accent. In this regard, it is important to highlight that a few people seemed to be confused by the question, as answered "it is more of an accent than a language itself" and "at home my accent is slightly more Scouse than when I go out". Given that people were probably confused by the association of the verb "to speak" with "Scouse", which gave the idea of Scouse being a language itself, it is remarkable that people feel the need to specify that in their opinion, it is just an accent. However, even though, as already mentioned, participants were told that the word "Scouse" would be used throughout the questionnaire to simplify the several possible meanings of the word (e.g. Scouse colloquialisms/Scouse slang/etc.), this point will be further investigated later on the analysis.

Although the majority of the participants do not seem to make any distinction in terms of places when it comes to speaking Scouse, it is interesting to see that 14% answered they speak Scouse at home and a few people left comments such as "at home my accent is slightly more Scouse than when I go out"; "at home and in friends' houses"; "more so around friends and family so home or out with friends"; "everywhere apart from at work. Tailor my accent towards the customers to provide a more professional service"; "when I visit home (Liverpool)". That is to say, a total amount of 30 people does feel the need to modify their way of talking depending on which context they are in. As per question number 9, some speakers seem to prefer to speak Scouse/with a Scouse accent only when in domestic and informal places. As mentioned earlier, this might be conceived as a normal behaviour, since, language changes as context changes, and as a matter of fact, there is "the tendency for all social groups to move towards an RP accent in formal contexts" (Belchem, 2006: 32). Nonetheless, changing accent or, more in general, way of talking, might be a problem if this shift is made in order to hide a part of someone's identity, as it is often associated with prejudices and stereotypes. As already mentioned, at this point of the research, it is not really possible to understand whether it is the result of a conscious choice or a spontaneous behaviour. Nonetheless, the data so far seem to confirm that some people do actually feel a sort of pressure on their way of speaking, a pressure which appears to be higher in formal situations (e.g. workplace).

In order to further investigate the use of Scouse in formal environments, the participants have been asked to answer the question number 11: "Do/Did you speak Scouse at school?"
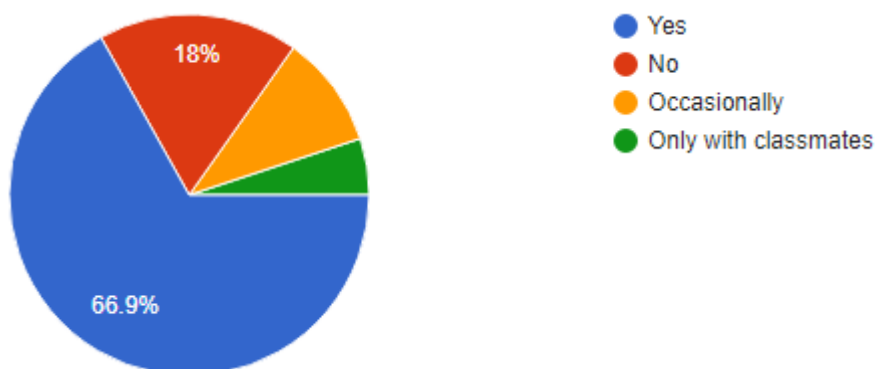

Figure 15: Percentage of people speaking Scouse at school

According to the chart above, 66.9% answered "yes", and therefore, the majority of the participants said that they do/did speak Scouse/with a Scouse accent at school. This data invites reflections for two reasons. On one hand, some may argue that, given that the majority of the participants were born and raised in Liverpool, they probably attend/ed a school located within the city of Liverpool, and therefore, this data may not actually be useful. As a matter of fact, it may be argued that schools in Liverpool are statistically attended mainly by local students and teachers, who are likely to speak Liverpool English and probably grew up in a social environment where LE is spoken. That is to say, formality does not seem to be actually perceived, since the environment may be very local and strictly linked to the city of Liverpool itself. On the other hand, it is actually interesting to notice that, 90.4% of the participants live in Liverpool, 78.7% have parents from Liverpool, but only 66.9% speak/spoke Scouse/with a Scouse accent at school. Apparently, a certain degree of formality is perceived within the education system, and therefore, it seems as if some Scouse speakers change their way of speaking in order to fit better into this type of environment. Once again, at this point of the research, it is not clear why this happens, and yet, it seems to be clear that a change actually happens. This kind of shift appears even more explicit when analysing question number 12: "Do you speak Scouse at work?". It is worth mentioning that this question was answered only by workers (170 participants), and therefore, people who do not work could not alter results.
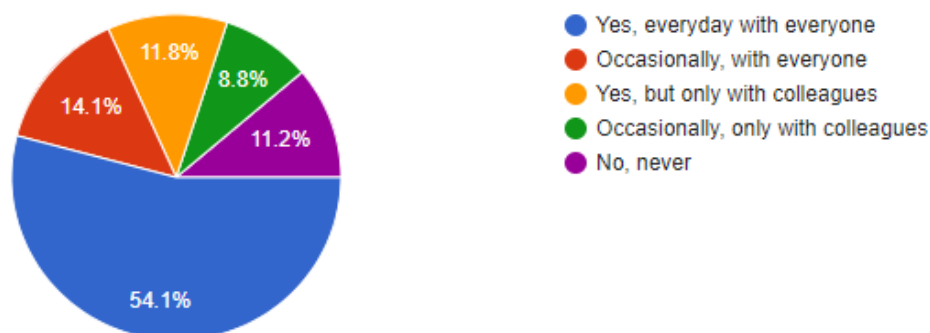

Figure 16: Percentage of people speaking Scouse at work

As can be seen, the majority of the participants (54.1%) answered "yes, every day with everyone". However, the percentage is lower than the percentage of people who said they speak/spoke Scouse/with a Scouse accent at school (66.9%), meaning that within the work environment, more Scouse speakers feel like they need to change way of talking. Furthermore, I would also highlight that 54.1% is only slightly above the majority threshold and that 14.1% said they speak Scouse at work with everyone, but only occasionally.

In addition, 11.8% of the participants stated they speak Scouse only with colleagues and 8.8% said they speak Scouse only with colleagues and only occasionally, meaning that 20.6% (35 participants) prefer to speak Scouse/with a Scouse accent only with people who share the same social status. Furthermore, 11.2% said they never speak Scouse at work. As already mentioned, it seems like when it comes to work, this change of speaking way happens more often in order to (quoting a participant) "provide a more professional service". I would say that this data is actually quite interesting, since, as already mentioned, the people who completed the survey stated that they are currently working as bartenders, teachers, chefs, many said they are working in hospitality and catering sector. Others said they are working as administrators, consulters, sale assistants, advocates, marketing managers, housewives, lecturers and many students said they are also working as babysitters, waiters and in the field of customer service. In other words, as already mentioned, regarding the occupation of participants, the group of people who took part in the survey seems to be quite heterogeneous, and therefore, it means that people tend not to speak Scouse throughout the different workplaces.

Apparently, the data seem to confirm that there is "the tendency for all social groups to move towards an RP accent in formal contexts" (Belchem, 2006: 32), which is, as already mentioned, quite normal, as language changes as context changes. However, it has also been said that it might be a problem when this shift is made in order to hide a part of one's identity, as it is often associated with prejudices and stereotypes. Therefore, in order to investigate the reason why a percentage of Scouse speakers prefer not to speak Scouse/with a Scouse accent in formal context, I will now move to the analysis of the

open questions of the questionnaire (question number 18 and 19) and of the brief interviews I carried out.

3.3 Methodology for the analysis of the open-ended questions (thematic analysis)

As already mentioned, in order to understand why a percentage of Scouse speakers prefer to not speak Scouse/with a Scouse accent in formal context, the participants were asked to answer question number 18 ("Have you ever felt the need to do modify your way of speaking when talking with people who are not from Liverpool?"). Furthermore, the survey provided also question number 19 ("Please add any additional comments here"), which was actually optional as a field. Fortunately, the participants felt comfortable enough to share quite a consistent amount of comments, which allowed for further investigation in this regard. As mentioned earlier, I also asked five people to answer a few questions on the topic, namely: "Generally speaking, is it important for you to speak Scouse?"; "On the questionnaire, many people stated they modify their way of speaking in order to sound more professional, or because people who are not from Liverpool look down on Scouse and they do not generally like it. Do you think it is true?"; "A girl who is living in Australia stated that when she first arrived there her boss asked her to speak English many times. Would you get offended?"; "Why do you think Scouse appears so problematic sometimes?". Interviewees were all Scouse natives and they belong to the social environment of the University of Liverpool, since they are students and teachers. As already mentioned, the interviews were carried out in informal contexts such as pubs and bars in order to create a sort of bond with participants and make them feel comfortable enough to share their thoughts. Furthermore, it has to be said that the interviews were carried out more as small conversations, which were of course driven in order to answer the questions I already listed. Consequently, language of the answers is really informal, meaning that it includes abbreviations and slangs, which, if necessary, I will report.

For the benefit of the study, I decided to put together the answers to question number 18, the comments left to question number 19 and the answers I obtained from the interviews. In other words, I analysed all the short paragraphs I obtained as a single part of the study. However, before proceeding with the analysis, I went through what is called "data reduction" (Alhojailan, 2012: 43), which is "a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts,

focuses, discards, and organizes data […] through selection, through summary of paraphrase, through being subsumed in larger pattern" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 11). According to this, I went through the answers and organized them by keeping only the comments which were useful to the study and allowed for the identification of emerging themes, and therefore, I did not take into account short answers such as "yes", "no" or "sometimes". As a matter of fact, they would be useful only as quantifiers such as the answers provided in questions like those from 1 to 17.

It is important to highlight that for the analysis of the open-ended questions and of the answers to the interviews, I used a thematic approach, that is to say, I carried out a thematic analysis. In order to understand what a thematic analysis is, it has to be clarify what the term "theme" means in this context. According to Ayres et al. (2003), "theme is used as attribute, descriptor, element, and concept", "as an implicit topic that organizes a group of repeating ideas, it enables researches to answer the study questions" (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). In other words, it could be said that a theme might be conceived as a folder which groups all its related topics useful to the study. Clearly, a theme might be related to another one, and therefore, we will have sub-themes, or sub-folders. Furthermore, "theme refers to a more implicit and abstract level, which requires interpretation" (Sandelowski and Barroso 2003 in Vaismoradi et al. 2016), and therefore, thematic analysis might be consider as a process which go through the answer by exploring their real meaning on the basis of the research questions. That is to say, a certain degree of interpretation is required in order to understand what the participants wanted to say and how this could be useful to the study, meaning that, at a certain extent, thematic analysis goes beyond the linguistic and literal interpretation of the answers. In other words, it takes into consideration terms as a label for concepts, rather than terms themselves.

3.3.1 Themes identification
During the first phase the process of themes identification, I went through the answers in order to identify the emerging themes, which were then turned into codes, which helped the quantification process of the data. As a matter of fact, "coding will allow the researcher to review the whole of the data by identifying its most significant meaning or

to put it simply what it the data trying to say" (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In other words, I went through the data a few times in order to organize them and understand which issues were worth analysing on the basis of my research questions; "this phase involved highlighting the sentences from each participants that could be used […] and then breaking data into smaller segments or themes" (Alhojailan, 2012: 43-44). In order to do so, I created a single file containing all the answers and I analysed it by using AntConc and TermoStat Web so that I could see which terms were the most used, and therefore, which topics were the most discussed. On the basis of that, I read the file a few more times in order to be able to paraphrase even the comments which did not include any of the relevant terms, since, as already mentioned, thematic analysis goes beyond the literal interpretation of the answers. After this process, I presented the themes I identified to my supervisor in order to "build reliability in themes analysis coding" (Hosmer, 2008: 52), since "it has been suggested that the researcher should involve an outside reviewer during this early stage to evaluate and identify themes" (Alhojailan, 2012: 44). She went through the answers too and then we managed to compare our results; we eventually came up with four themes. The first theme (T1) regards the word "accent"; that it to say, in many cases the participants referred to Scouse as an accent, rather than a dialect or something which may be conceived as a language itself. Theme number 2 (T2) has been labelled "comprehension problems", as it refers to all those comments which talk about the difficulty linked to communication that apparently Scouse may enable. The third theme (T3) identifies all the comments which refer to the negative attitudes that are linked to Scouse speakers; a sub-theme (T3.1) concerns the role of medias in this regard. The fourth and last theme (T4) is about the concept of identity, which has been divided in four sub-themes: the first one (T4.1) which concerns the idea of community; the second one (T4.2) which regards all the qualities linked to Scouse identity; the third one (T4.3) which identify all the referenced to Scouse humour; and the last one (T4.4) which regards the references to Scouse pride.

Regarding data display, "data may be displayed using a variety of techniques in order to facilitate its analysis" (Alhojailan, 2012: 45). As it is the case for this part of the dissertation, when necessary, I will report some sentences followed by one of the thematic codes (e.g. T1) in order to support the analysis. When necessary, I will also indicate the

number of times a certain concept/theme was mentioned and/or referenced to. Furthermore, it might to important to mention that sub-themes will be treated in the same way of themes, and therefore, data display and analysis will be carried out on the same model. Having said that, I will now move to the analysis of themes.

3.3.2 Theme 1 – Accent

The first theme deals with the status of Scouse as a variety of English. As already mentioned, "for some Scouse is an accent […] others argue it is a dialect" (Sairdais 2005; Honeybone 2007 in Boland 2010: 6). Some argue that "given the small number of grammatical features and the relatively few words that are local to Liverpool, it is simply a 'variant of standard English' (Knowles, 1973: 48). However, "who would decide how many terms or grammatical characteristics are required before a 'variant' can be classified as 'dialect' (or indeed even a 'language')? […] And on what basis could such decisions be taken?" (Crowley, 2012: 91). In other words, it is not clear if it considered an accent or a dialect, and it does not seem actually easy to understand either. That is why I have been referring to it as a variety of English throughout this dissertation.

What emerged from the questionnaire is a general idea of considering Scouse simply as an accent, rather than a dialect or a language itself. As a matter of fact, according to the data, 31 references to Scouse as an accent have been registered. Interestingly, this theme emerged quite spontaneously, since open questions did not actually ask nothing about the status of Scouse itself, but the way people expressed themselves was revealing. Actually, the need of specify what Scouse is was witnessed in question number 10 already, when a participant stated: "it is more of an accent than a language itself". Here I present some other examples taken from the answers to the open questions:

- "Sometimes I have to moderate my accent **[T1]**"
- "Guests from other city's do not take kindly to a scouse accent **[T1]"**
- "I just see Scouse as an accent **[T1]**"
- "'speak Scouse' isn't a thing. We speak English with a Scouse accent! **[T1]**"
- "Scouse isn't a different language it is a dialect, we speak 'English' but in our own unique way, depending on which part of Merseyside you come from determines how broad your accent is **[T1]"**
- "Tone down accent **[T1]** and speak less localised slang"

As can partially be seen, the participants used quite often the collocations "my/the accent" and "scouse accent/s" and one of them explicitly stated: "Scouse isn't a different language, it is a dialect, we speak 'English' but in our own unique way". Furthermore, even when not directly referring to the word "accent", it seemed as if this idea was in the participants' mind. For instance, some used the phrasal verb "tone it down" and the verb "downplay" in order to answer the question number 18 ("Have you ever felt the need to modify your way of speaking when talking with people who are not from Liverpool?"). In other words, given that, as already mentioned, this theme emerged spontaneously, and even though Scouse status is not formally clear yet, I would argue that Scouse speakers do not have any doubt: they consider themselves English speakers with a Scouse accent.

3.3.3 Theme 2 – Comprehension problems

At this point, if Scouse is just an accent, at least according to Scouse speakers, why do some people feel the need to modify their way of speaking when talking with people who are not from Liverpool? A first answer has been given by the second theme which, as already mentioned, has been labelled "comprehension problems", as it refers to all those comments which talk about the difficulty linked to communication that apparently Scouse variety of English may enable. According to the data, 69 references to comprehension problems have been detected, making the theme number 2 the most numerically discussed within the survey. Some examples follow:

- "Yes if they don't understand haha. Sometimes need to speak slower and more clearly, more 'English' **[T2]**"
- "I modify my speech naturally, since scouse is much harder for non-natives to understand **[T2]** - though it is not an active choice"
- "Yes. I avoid words and phrases if i doubt that the person with whom I am speaking will not understand **[T2]**"
- "Sometimes for clarity / communication **[T2]**"
- "Slow, more clear and less slang **[T2]**"
- "Occasionally as sometimes people can't understand the accent at times. [T1] **[T2]**"
- "Sometimes if they cant understand the accent [T1] **[T2]**"
- "Sometimes its necessary as people don't understand the accent. [T1] **[T2]**"

As can partially be seen, the participants use the verb "understand" quite often (35 times), followed by the word "slow" (23 times) used in constructions such as "talk slower", "slow

down my speech" and "slow it down". In other words, Scouse speakers seem to realise that their way of speaking may be a problem in terms of communication, and therefore, they tend to modify some features (e.g. speed of speech) in order to be more clear and better understood. Furthermore, as can be seen in the last three examples above, they seem to be aware that what people do not understand is actually the accent, which seems to be "much harder for non-natives to understand".

At this point the question is: why is Liverpool English so hard to understand? As already mentioned, "one thing that is commonly claimed about Liverpool English is that it is not quite like its neighbours. While it certainly shares many characteristics with the varieties of English that are spoken nearby, there are also several salient linguistics features which […] are not found in surrounding varieties (such as South Lancashire English, Manchester English and Cheshire English)" (Honeybone, 2007: 1). In the second chapter, I tried to go through the main linguistic features which make Scouse such a peculiar variety of English. As already mentioned, history provides some evidences that LE was mixed with a bit of Irish language during 1845-1847, when Irish immigrants moved to Liverpool in order to escape starvation. Furthermore, it has been said that Liverpool English has always been a language of immigrants made in the harbour city that Liverpool is. More specifically, in terms of linguistics, it has been seen that it "is clearly not simply part of the Lancashire-to-Cheshire traditional dialect continuum" (Honeybone, 2007: 9), indeed, it presents some interesting characteristics. As already mentioned, although some differences are present, lexis and grammar are actually quite standard and what really makes Liverpool English highly recognisable is its accent/pronunciation, "which is not particularly close to RP" (Honeybone & Watson, 2006: 2). As a matter of fact, the non-rhotic trait, together with lenition and "the sing-song melody" (Pace-Sigge, 2003: 6), make LE highly detectable and famous all cross the UK. Thus, these phonological features may justify why speakers modify the speed of their speech or, more generally, they try to be clearer when it comes to alter their way of talking for the benefit of communication. In other words, due to its particular linguistic features, Scouse appears very hard to understand for non-natives, and therefore, Liverpool English speakers seem to try to make it easier by working on phonology and sound.

Nonetheless, if Scouse is just an accent, as many speakers felt the need to point out in the survey, and since it has not been proven otherwise, it is clear that something is left unspoken. As a matter of fact, data obtained from answers to the first 17 questions seem to confirm that there is "the tendency for all social groups to move towards an RP accent in formal contexts" (Belchem, 2006: 32), and therefore, this shift does not seem to be due only to a matter of clarity of communication. In other words, there might be another reason which might explain why Scouse speakers modify their way of talking.

3.3.4   Theme 3 – Negative attitudes

The third theme (T3) which has emerged from the analysis of the open-ended questions may be another reason for which Scouse speakers tend to modify their way of talking. As already mentioned in the first chapter, it seems that every time Scouse variety of English is associated to its speakers, the latter are seen as "not elegant" (Colvin, 1971: 10-11), "uneducated" (Priestley, 1934: 200), part of the "working class" (Grey and Grant, 2007: 1) and some wish not to be considered as "Liverpool-born" (Brophy, 1946: 21). As a matter of fact, it looks like these kinds of judgements do influence Scouse speakers, since the third theme, which emerged without the need to ask an explicit question in this regard, is about the negative attitudes that people have toward Liverpool English and its speakers. According to the data, 17 references to the negative attitudes have been found. Some examples follow:

- "People look down on scouse **[T3]**"
- "English people tend not to like Scousers **[T3]**"
- "for fear that my accent [T1] wouldn't have been seen as very professional **[T3**]"
- "Sometimes- If they skit your accent [T1] **[T3]**"
- "Guests from other city's do not take kindly to a scouse accent [T1], it makes them feel you are lesser qualified therefore lose faith **[T3]**. I find myself having to alter my speak to suit others"
- "I feel you can be judged **[T3]**"
- "Southerners assume we're stupid **[T3]**"
- "Well, I don't know. I do not really modify my accent [T1] too much, maybe I talk slower to make people understand me [T2], or with people I can see they are kind of posh. I think scouse it is that kind of thing that people hear and they say "Oh, scouse!" and they immediately think about the association to thieves and stereotypes of stupid people **[T3]**"

- "It might be linked to the general idea that people have about Liverpool. The stereotype says that it is populated by Scouse, who are always depicted link uneducated people. **[T3]**"

As can be seen, people seem to be aware that the way they speak may compromise their status, as Scouse is often associated with degrading stereotypes about Scouse people, which do not make LE speakers feel comfortable when interacting with people who are not from Liverpool. That is to say, if on one hand, Scouse speakers modify their way of talking since they recognise LE might be hard to understand, on the other hand, some speakers feel that Liverpool English is associated with Scouse speakers, who are often seen as "less qualified", "not very professional", "thieves" and "uneducated". Therefore, data seem to confirm the theory according to which "in identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values […] about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 594). In other words, it seems to confirm that people do make assumptions about someone's identity and/or social status on the basis of how they speak/sound.

3.3.4.1 Theme 3.1 – Media

At this point, it is necessary to understand where these stereotypes come from and what makes Scouse highly detectable within the British society. As already mentioned, Kerswill and Williams (2002 in Leach et al. 2016: 195), talking about "cultural prominence", state that "the general awareness of […] accents is likely to be higher due, for example, to greater presence of [those] varieties in the media". Data seem to confirm this point, since a sub-category of the third theme (T3.1) has emerged and it deals with the role of the media when it comes to Scouse variety. Some examples follow:

- "Most have never visited the city or spoken to many Scousers so they judge it based on media coverage. **[T3.1]**";
- "I think it has something to do with the image that the Medias sell about scouse people **[T3.1]**, who are usually considered kinda stupid and embarrassing [T3]. When it comes to job interviews I definitely tend to hide my accent. [T1]";
- "I think it's a social thing. I mean, on the telly **[T3.1]** I always get so embarrassed when I see or hear someone talking scouse, especially because most of the time the people who are interviewed appear kind of stupid [T3],

as the stereotype wants them to be. As a result, for instance, I do try to control myself in order to sound as English as possible when it comes to certain formal events… I do not want to get compromised".

As can be seen, it seems that the media do play a certain kind of role in the building of stereotypes related to Scouse speakers. As a matter of fact, Liverpool and its speakers are present in the media nationwide. For instance, as already mentioned, "former Premiership footballer David Thompson, […] identifies himself as a Scouse. When asked on live television how he was copying with football retirement the (somewhat annoyingly) played up to the Scouse stereotype by saying 'I'm a Scouser, I don't want a job'" (Boland 2010: 8). Examples of this kind appear to be quite recurring, and this is what makes Liverpool English highly recognisable within the UK.

Furthermore, it has to be said that LE is for sure recognisable on the basis of how it sounds, but the media have been able to associate LE to a certain kind of people. By "identifying interrelations among factors and variables" (Alhojailan, 2012: 45), it might be argued that it may not be coincidence that every time theme 3.1 appears is very often associated with theme 3, meaning that the media always convey negative attitudes when it comes to Scouse and its speakers. Apparently, the media are still making fun of the hard times is which the city of Liverpool fell "in the 1960s […] and became associated primarily with unemployment, poverty, and crime" (Juskan, 2015: 1): "a "showcase" of everything that has gone wrong in Britain's major cities'" (Belchem, 2006: 54). As already argued, Liverpool's past as a city which found difficult to become the financial and cultural centre seems to have influenced the opinion that people have of Scouse. As a matter of fact, Hannah Leach, Kevin Watson and Ksenia Gnevsheva (2016: 192-211) stated something similar when saying that "Liverpool was correctly identified most often (66.6%), which is expected, given that Liverpool is not only culturally prominent but also has a distinctive phonology" at the end of their study on cultural prominence. In other words, Liverpool English is both phonologically and culturally exposed. As a result, as can be seen in some of the examples taken from the questionnaire, Scouse speakers try to hide their accents when it comes to job interviews and try to sound as English as possible when it comes to certain formal events, as they do not want to get compromised. Clearly, phrases like "I hide my accent" and "I do not want to get compromised" are worth to be

highlighted, since they reflect the behaviour of a percentage of people, who are afraid to actually show where they are from, even though it is 2017 and Liverpool is now one of the major financial and cultural centres in the UK.

It is important to say that this does not mean that people do not change their way of speaking because they think Liverpool English is hard to understand, but they do that only because they feel judged. That is to say, it does not mean that T2 is not true or that T2 is just a coverage for T3. On the contrary, on the basis of linguistics and phonology, it is actually true that Scouse is quite uncommon, and therefore, it might be hard to understand. However, it is not easy to draw a line in order to understand if someone is speaking differently for the benefit of communication or if they are modifying their accent to not give away too much of their identity. As already mentioned, language changes as context changes, and therefore altering the way someone speaks may not be a problem, but it could actually be a problem if, as can be seen in the examples above, this shift is made in order to hide a part of someone's identity, as it is often associated with prejudices and stereotypes.

3.3.5 Theme 4 – Identity

Directly linked to theme number 3, when speaking about hiding someone's part of identity, it is theme number 4 (T4). As already mentioned, according to the sociolinguistic theory, "speakers produce and reproduce particular identities through their language use" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 369). That is to say, theory advocates that language shapes identity to some extent. The fourth emerging theme, slightly anticipated by the third theme, seems to confirm this idea, since 15 references to language as a resource for identity production have been found. Some examples follow:

- "Sometimes I have to slow down or try and reduce my accent [T1] because they can't understand me [T2], but I never do it to hide my identity. **[T4]**";
- "Living abroad, i really have to slow down and tone down my accent [T1] for those who arent used it [T2]. It can actually be very upsetting, people have screamed at me in work to 'speak english' and thats embarrassing. Then i come home to Liverpool and my accent is slower and people tell me im not from liverpool when i was born, raised, lived and worked there for 25 years. **[T4]**";

- "I think it is important to keep your heritage. And when you speak Scouse with people that are from the same area, it creates a kind of shared identity. **[T4]**".

As can be seen, someone's identity appears to be linked to the way they speak. Apparently, the way someone speaks fosters the process of identity creation. Furthermore, date seem to confirm the theory of sonic geography, according to which "sound operates by forming links, groupings, and conjunctions that accentuate individual identity as a relational project. […] This associative and connective process of sound comes to reconfigure the spatial distinctions of inside and outside, to foster confrontations between one and another, and to infuse language with degrees of intimacy" (LaBelle, 2010 in Kanngieser 2011: 1). As a matter of fact, this is the theory behind one of the statements above, which talks about "shared identity". In other words, it seems to be true that language shapes identity and that sounding like a certain language/accent allows people to understand where someone is from.

Interestingly, every time the participants talked about their identity, they mentioned processes which involved other people. In other words, even when talking about language and identity, people feel the need to talk about conversations they have with other people, meaning that it might be true that identity is created by socialising. Therefore, this seems to confirm that the process of self-identification involves more than one participant. That is to say, as already mentioned, it is through interactions with other human beings that people can identify themselves, since, in Duszak's terms (2003), they "make the distinction between *Us* and *Others (*or *Them)*. We have a sense of sharing things with some, who are like us, and not sharing things with others, who are unlike us". This concepts has actually emerged in the fourth theme, as many of the participants, in order to define themselves, referred to the behaviour that "they" have toward them. Some examples follow:

- "I used to downplay my accent [T1] when younger. There was a lot of anti-Scouse **[T4]** prejudice at the time. [T3]";
- "Guests from other city's do not take kindly to a scouse accent [T1], it makes them feel you are lesser qualified therefore lose faith [T3]. I find myself having to alter my speak to suit others **[T4]**";
- "Southerners assume we're stupid [T3] **[T4]**"

- "Well, I don't know. I do not really modify my accent [T1] too much, maybe I talk slower to make people understand me [T2], or with people I can see they are kind of posh. **[T4]**";
- "It is certainly true that people in other parts of the country can express hostile opinions about people from Liverpool [T3] **[T4]**";
- "yes, because English people tend not to like Scousers [T3] **[T4]**".

As can be seen, people seem to display spontaneously this concept of "us and them", confirming that "identity is the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 586). As a matter of fact, the participants, when saying something like "to suit others", "southerners", "they are kind of posh", "people in other part of the country" and "English people", they are making a distinction between two – or more – types of people. At the end of this process, their identity is perceived as the result of this contrast, and therefore, it might be said that they are not what the others are.

At this point, some may argue that this point may be just another way of looking at the relationship between language and identity. As a matter of fact, "sameness and differences" (Bucholtz and hall, 2004: 369) may actually pass through language, since, as already mentioned, it "could simply [be] sa[id] that *they* (*Others*) are those who can*not* speak *our* language" (Duszak, 2003). On the basis of the sociolinguistic theory, this is clearly true, but I would argue that it is only partial. As a matter of fact, it has already been said that identity is a concept too wide to be limited to language/sounds, even though language enables socialisation, and therefore, makes the process of self-identification start. Consequently, others may say that this "us and them" concept is not linked only to language.

3.3.5.1 Theme 4.1 – Community

As already mentioned, some may say that the "us and them" concept may for sure be seen from a linguistic point of view, but it may be necessary to add something else. As a matter of fact, statements such as "Southerners think we're stupid", "English people tend not to like Scousers" and "People look down on scouse" allow for the creation of an "us". In other words, Scouse speakers feel united under the feeling of not being entirely socially accepted on the basis of how they speak, and therefore, they talk about a "we" (us). This could mean that T3 and T4 may be connected and they lead to the creation of T4.1, which eventually highlight this sense of unity among people who share the same status. This

feeling has actually been found 9 times in the thematic analysis I have been carrying out. Some examples follow:

- "I love that others love my city and hope they see its full beauty - she is like our mother we her children **[T4.1]**";
- "Within UK scousers seem to be either loved or hated. I can especially see after being away for a while, the beauty of our city and the people in it. **[T4.1]** There is a certain type of energy there which is hard to move away from";
- "Liverpool is a fantastic place and the people help to bring this to a wider populous **[T4.1]**";
- "A scouser isnt just someone who uses slang but someone is born in liverpool. More of a community thing than verbal **[T4.1]**".

Clearly, identity may pass through language, but it does not stop there. The examples above show how the "us and them" process allows for the creation of a community (an "us"), where the focus is on people, rather than on language. The last example is actually quite explicit. Moreover, it is worth highlighting that the participants spontaneously use the plural when they have to talk about Scousers, or they talk about them as a single entity, meaning that this feeling of belonging to something is believed to be shared by the entire community. Once again, the theory according to which "Liverpool has prided itself on a strong sense of community (e.g., self-help networks, community activism, informal labour markets, "burying our own dead)" (Meegan, 1989: 226) seems to be confirmed. Taking this point further, it might be point out that this sense of association may due to the separation that British society seems to have created when talking about Liverpool and its people. In other words, if the concept of "us and them" enables the process of self-identification, it might also be argued that it enables the creation of small communities, namely the "us", the "them" and everything in between.

Arguably, this may be the direct result of indexicality, which "is the concept necessary to showing us how to relate the micro-social to the macro-social frames of analysis of any sociolinguistic phenomenon" (Silverstein, 2003). As already mentioned and investigated in T3, indexicality allows people to link (or to index) speakers to certain values, cultures, social-class and origins, meaning that language can be seen as an instrument which not only allows someone to detect where a person may be from in terms of geography, but also in terms of social environment. It has previously been said, when talking about

speaking differently in different contexts, that it is not easy to draw a line in order to understand if someone is changing their speech for the benefit of communication or if they are modify their accent to not give away too much of their identity. This is for sure still true, however, the creation of this strong sense of community, which appears to rely very much on the contrast between "us and them", may be an indirect answer. As a matter of fact, this is a behaviour which can be found not only within the Merseyside, but also within the Newcastle area for example, where Geordie variety of English seems to enable a similar kind of reactions.

3.3.5.2 Theme 4.2 – Qualities and values

Whenever it comes to society or, as it is the case, small communities, identity is clearly involved. As already mentioned, "only by comparing ourselves with others we can build up our affiliations and our non-alignments" (Duszak, 2003), and therefore, on the latter people build their bonds. In other words, it is believed that within the same community, people may share some common affiliations and/or values and characteristics: this is what has emerged from the analysis of the open-ended questions of the questionnaire. Some examples of the sub-theme T4.2 follow:

- "I'm proud of where I'm from. Liverpool and its people [T4.1] are unique, genuine and caring **[T4.2]**. No matter where you are from you'll be welcomed here. I only have a lilt of an accent [T1] but its definitely there";
- "With the idea of a Scouse, I always associate them with friendliness and being welcoming **[T4.2]**. I have never felt more accepted in a city outside from home";
- "Being Scouse isn't just about living in or being from Liverpool - it's a unique culture which is based on diversity, humour and generosity **[T4.2]**";
- "Not everyone who is born or raised in Liverpool, I believe, can call themselves a 'scouser". It's a way of living, helping others, looking after the people around you **[T4.2]**";
- "We tend to be kind, friendly, chatty, helpful, help someone in need and generous **[T4.2]** - things that other cities lack as a whole [T4]";
- "Certain scouse concepts like being sound and not being a shithouse, this is very important to me. **[T4.2]**".

As can be seen, Scouse community is based on qualities and values, rather than language. Apparently, in order to be considered a Scouser, it is important to be "genuine and caring". "friendly and welcoming", "generous", "chatty", "helpful" and "sound" (cool).

Clearly, the same thing that happened when discussing the concept of Scouse identity is happening here: as being a Scouser is more than just speaking Scouse, for being part of the Scouse community, speaking Scouse is not enough. Once again, as happened for questions number 7 and 8, it seems to be true that "much has been made of Liverpool's exceptionalism, with most emphasis placed on the distinctive characteristics of Liverpudlians themselves: their culture, language, humour and identity" (Pooley, 2006: 171-172).

Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting the paradox which seems to be in place. According to the data, it seems that the media are showing a side of Liverpool community which is completely different from the idea that Scouse people are conveying. Clearly, it is not possible to decide who is wrong and who is right, given that maybe there is no wrong nor right. However, it is evident that there is a bit of confusion, and one of the participants explained the situation quite well: "It is due to stereotypes I think. As I said before, some think all scousers are thieves or something **[T3]**. It might be a little stupid to say, but I think people have a fear of the unknown, you know, and scouse is a very slang-driven way of talking, and they just do not get it **[T2]**. Still, Liverpool is known for being one of the most friendly **[T4.2]** places in the UK… so it is kind of a paradox". A paradox which becomes even more explicit when analysing the third sub-theme of theme 4.

3.3.5.3 Theme 4.3 – Humour

The third emerging sub-theme of theme 4 (T4.3) is related to Scouse humour, which is actually very famous all across the UK, as a matter of fact, "Scouse books need in the main to be seen as being offered to the reading public as examples of humour" (Grant, no date). This particular theme has already witnessed in question number 16, where the large majority of the participants (69.7%) said that, together with speaking Scouse, it is humour, which make them feel like Scousers. However, in question number 16, "humour" was actually one of the alternatives provided which the participants could choose from, but there was nothing like that in the open-ended questions. Despite this, the people who completed the survey and took part in the interviews referenced to it in a completely spontaneous way. Some examples follow:

- "Being Scouse isn't just about living in or being from Liverpool - it's a unique culture which is based on diversity, humour and generosity [T4.2] **[T4.3]**. There's a reason we have just been voted the kindest city";
- Although it has some pretty places it's not generally postcard perfect but the beauty runs much deeper than that in my opinion. Nothing like Scouse humour and generosity :) [T4.2] **[T4.3]**";
- Scouse humour **[T4.3]** is the best in the world. Scousers are often very friendly too [T4.2] and there are many good people here";
- When I want to be funny, I say something in Scouse, so it is part of my humour. **[T4.3]**";
- I like to use it with friends. Also, if I want to express a particular thing, I usually prefer Scouse, it gives better the idea and it is funny **[T4.3]**".

Clearly, Scouse humour appears to be quite rooted in Scouse identity, which is, therefore, not based only on generosity and kindness. Furthermore, it actually seems to be the reason for an inverted shift from RP/SE to LE, as shown in the last two examples. As a matter of fact, some of the participants seem to prefer Scouse when they want to be funny, probably using the stereotypes against them in order to make them better things. At least, this is what happens in the examples below ([T4.3]):

- "Certain scouse concepts like being sound and not being a shithouse, this is very important to me. [T4.2] **([T4.3])**";
- "A very spoken and seemingly civil lady once said when I told her that I was from Liverpool 'you are lucky you don't speak with that horrid accent' [T1], I told her much of my family speak with that horrid accent [T1] **([T4.3])**";
- "The eighties I think was crucial, and above all Hillsborough [T3]. What has to be remembered is not just the vile lies that the Sun printed [T3.1], but that they were printed knowing that there were people all over the country that would believe them. My family didn't live in Liverpool in 1989 and it really affected my Dad that people all around him believed what was said and we moved to Liverpool not long after **([T4.3])**".

Clearly, I am not saying that this is the prototype of Scouse humour, but it is an example of that for sure. Therefore, even unconsciously, Scousers seem to give away a bit of this behaviour, confirming that humour is actually among the most important qualities of the community. Furthermore, taking this point further, I would argue that this may actually be the reaction of a community to stereotypes against them. As a matter of fact, for instance, the comment above about Hillsborough refers to what happen at Hillsborough football stadium in Sheffield in 1989. According to history, during the 1888-89 FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, there was a human crush which

registered a consistent number of fatalities and injuries. Right after that, The Sun Magazine published an article arguing that that disaster was Liverpool's fans fault. Clearly, this is just an example and it is date back in the 1989, but it is still a proof that there was and to at some extent there is a certain kind of behaviour toward Liverpool people. As a matter of fact, participants stated that every time someone from Liverpool is on the media, they are always depicted as embarrassing and uneducated, no matter it is 2017 and Liverpool is the home of three Universities and it has been named capital of culture in 2008. Apparently, Scousers' reaction to all this paradoxical behaviour may be humour, which may actually be seen "as a social practice" (Barton, 1990: 2), as an instrument of resilience and source for what has been called "friendliness" and "kindness".

3.3.5.4 Theme 4.4 – Pride

A sort of answer to what has been said so far seems to come with the fourth and last emerging sub-theme of theme 4 (T4.4), which deals with the references to Scouse pride. As already mentioned, according to some, being a Scouse is more than speaking Scouse, "it's pride in everything" (cited in Liverpool Xtra 2008 in Boland 2010: 8). Even this theme was already found in question number 16, where 60.1% of people answered "Pride", making the latter one of the major factors which make people feel Scousers. This idea of being proud has been found going through the answers and some examples here follow:

- "It's always good to just be yourself and not be ashamed of where you come from [T4] **[T4.4]**";
- "Anyone born in Liverpool is considered a Scouser. However its my opinion and experience that people from working class roots (such as myself) who are proud to be known as Scousers **[T4.4]**";
- "I love that others love my city and hope they see its full beauty - she is like our mother we her children [T4.1]. We want to make her proud, represent her and she loves us back with our own unique bond and language. **[T4.4]**";
- "I think its great people take pride in being scouse **[T4.4]** and having a scouse identity [T4]";
- "If you are born and bred here you just speak scouse to a stonger or lesser degree - its not really a choice per se - you can opt into the Liverpool culture and be proud and defend where you live. **[T4.4]**";
- "I am definitely proud **[T4.4]**".

Apparently, pride does belong to the community of Scousers. Although everything going on with the media, the past and the times they feel they have to modify their way of speaking, Scouse speakers appear to be proud of their status and their community. In a way, it might be argued that it is actually this feeling of pride which enabled the creation of a community, and therefore, it seems like the circle comes to a close, since everything it has been taken into consideration so far is filled with pride (e.g. identity, sense of community, qualities and humour). On the other hand, it might be that everything mentioned so far is what makes Scousers proud.

Anyway, theory seems to be confirmed, and therefore, it seems true that when it comes to identity, language is for sure part of the process of identification, but things do not stop there. Theme 4 and its four sub-themes show how someone's identification passes through many stage, among which language recognition is just the first step before moving to the acknowledgement of "us and them" in order to create communities which are built on shared values and qualities.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has taken into account the sociolinguistic relationship that language has with place, identity and social status. In order to verify these links, a case study of Liverpool English has been used. The first chapter addressed the sociolinguistic theory in order to explore the role of language as concerns territory, identity and social status. In order to do so, Liverpool English variety was used as means of verification, meaning that theory was applied to a specific language and its characteristics. At the end of this process, some questions arose. First of all, regarding the link between language and territory, the latter did not appear to be a homogenous entity; on the contrary, it was argued that "if it is now recognised that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places" (Massey, 1991: 28). This point was strengthened by taking into account the city of Liverpool, which appears far from being a uniform entity, since, for instance, "the 'broadest varieties of Scouse may not be actually spoken in the inner city areas' of Liverpool, rather they are evident in northern and southern suburbs such as Norris Green, Croxteth and Speke, and fringe areas like Stockbridge Village, Huyton, Halewood and Kirkby (all in Knowsley)" (Grey, 2007: 206). Consequently, the strength of territory was put in doubt. In other words, if territory appears somehow weak when it comes to language, in the sense that it does not seem to be possible to link a language to a place in a very precise way, it might be argued that the entire bond is not as strong as it appears.

Another question arising in the first chapter concerns the link between language and identity. In this regard, "sonic geography" (Matless, 2005) fosters the idea that "sound, in this instance a distinctive accent and/or dialect, affects the construction of local identity" (Boland, 2010). However, even though this principle may be somehow true, identity is believed to be a very wide concept, as it is "many things" (Blommaert, 2005: 204), and therefore, it is not clear how much language is actually linked to it, and therefore, how much this bond may be concrete on the basis of sociolinguistics.

Last, but not least, the first chapter explored the relationship between language and social status, showing that varieties of languages are socially classified. As a matter of fact, regarding the Liverpool English variety, people seem to describe it as quite an unattractive

accent, "a thick, adenoidy, cold-in-the-head accent, very unpleasant to hear" (Priestley, 2934: 200), "forced through nasal and oral passages chronically afflicted with catarrh" (Brophy, 1946: 21). Furthermore, when it comes to describing its speakers, the latter seem to be seen as "not elegant" (Colvin, 1971: 10-11), "uneducated" (Priestley, 1934: 200), part of the "working class" (Grey and Grant, 2007: 1) and some wish not to be considered as "Liverpool-born" (Brophy, 1946: 21). Clearly, even though the first reaction may be to language/sound, judgements do not seem to be merely based on language/sound anymore, but rather on speakers. What is not clear is what these judgements are based on and whether they have consequences within society.

The second chapter tried to answer the questions arising by presenting the linguistic features of Liverpool English and its history. As a matter of fact, "the language of Liverpool must have been affected by the pattern of immigration to Liverpool (predominantly Irish but including other significant elements) in the mid to late nineteenth century" (Crowley, 2012: 39), and therefore, history can explain why "there are some phonological similarities between LE's phonological system and those of Irish Englishes" (Watson, 2007: 351). Furthermore, the linguistic phenomenon of lenition may explain why people find Liverpool English quite harsh and "unpleasant"; and "the sing-song melody" (Pace-Sigge, 2003: 6) may be explained by taking into account the narrowness of LE pitch range. Nonetheless, all the other questions were left unanswered and another issue made its appearance, as it is not clear whether Scouse should be considered as an accent or as a variety/dialect.

The third chapter dealt with the case study of Liverpool English, based on a questionnaire supplemented by short face-to-face interviews. The data obtained were analysed through both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis method which allowed for some assumptions on the basis of the research questions. First of all, regarding the relationship between language and territory, the data seem to confirm the multiple identities that places have; as a matter of fact, for instance, people living in The Wirral or in St. Helens, two boroughs of the city of Liverpool, when asked, stated they live in "another city in the UK". Furthermore, even though 90.4% of the participants live in Liverpool, and 78.7% have parents from Liverpool as well, only 74.7% speak Scouse, meaning that living in

Liverpool is not enough in order to speak LE. Clearly, at the end of the study, territory appears as a heterogeneous entity, and therefore, the sociolinguistic link with language appears weaker than often presented in the theory, since when someone tries to find the speakers of a given place, they have to face many difficulties in terms of location and boundaries. However, I would say that language and territory do somehow share a bond, but territory might be conceived as a general landmark, which helps the process of localisation of a language, but it is not static. In other words, for instance, in the United Kingdom, the different varieties of English are distributed among regions, counties, cities and cultural environments, and therefore, using places as a broad system of reference certainly help understand where a variety is from.

Regarding the role of language in the field of identity, the data displayed that 74.7% of the participants speak Scouse, but 80.3% describe themselves as Scousers; moreover, only 32.6% of the people who completed the questionnaire stated that speaking Scouse is very important in order to build their identity as a Scouser. Apparently, although language may have a role in the building of someone's way of being, it does not seem fundamental. As a matter of fact, 70.2% of the participants answered that what makes them feel like a Scouser are the values of generosity and solidarity. That is to say, inner values seem to dominate when it comes to identity, as shown by the thematic analysis which detected four major sub-themes under the umbrella theme of identity: community, qualities and values, humour and pride. This reasoning would explain why 74.7% of the participants speak Scouse, but 80.3% describe themselves as Scouser: identity seems to be built on shared values, and therefore, one can be Scouser, or have any other kind of identity, even if one does not speak Scouse, or any other kind of language, as long as they share the community's principles.

Regarding the connection between language and social status, the first part of the third chapter shows that there is "the tendency for all social groups to move towards an RP accent in formal contexts" (Belchem, 2006: 32); the second part of the chapter tried to understand why. Apparently, the thematic analysis provided two possible answers: the first one supports the idea that due to its particular linguistic features, Scouse appears very hard to understand for non-natives, and therefore, Liverpool English speakers seem to try

to make it easier by working on phonology and sound; the second hypothesis is based on the fact that people seem to be aware that the way they speak may negatively affect their status, as Scouse is often associated with degrading stereotypes about Scouse people. This last concept does not make LE speakers feel comfortable when interacting with people who are not from Liverpool. Furthermore, this last point allowed for more investigation in order to understand why, and on the basis of what, Liverpool English is associated with inglorious stereotypes. In this regard, the thematic analysis found a recurring association between the expression of the mentioned-above negative attitudes and the role of the media. Apparently, the media still make fun of the hard times into which the city of Liverpool fell "in the 1960s […] and became associated primarily with unemployment, poverty, and crime" (Juskan, 2015: 1): "a "showcase" of everything that has gone wrong in Britain's major cities'" (Belchem, 2006: 54). As consequence, some of the participants left comments such as "I do try to control myself in order to sound as English as possible when it comes to certain formal events. I do not want to get compromised", meaning that this media phenomenon has some repercussions within the society, even though it is 2017, Liverpool is the home of three Universities and it has been named capital of culture in 2008.

At the end of this dissertation, the data seem to show that the sociolinguistic relationship between language and territory is not as strong as it might seem; language clearly shapes somehow identity, but inner values seem to be more relevant. In addition, languages are socially classified on the basis of media coverage, which alters the reaction to a certain language within society, making people change their way of speaking. Nonetheless, some issues remain unanswered and invite further investigation. For instance, the data seem to show that, in the field of identity, the participants referred to territory as an important factor which contributes to their self-identification process. That is to say, the relationship between territory and identity seems stronger than that between language and identity; however, if identity goes through language, and language is linked to territory, it is very hard to understand the relevance of the latter, as the data seem to be conflicting and seem to foster future investigation.

Another issue concerns the link between language and social status. As already mentioned, Liverpool English speakers alter their way of speaking and the data show that this for two main reasons: the first one concerns the fact that LE appears to be hard to understand for non-native LE speakers, the second one concerns the role of the media within society. Although it is actually true that Scouse is quite uncommon, and therefore, it might be hard to understand, it is not easy to draw a line in order to understand if someone is speaking differently for the benefit of communication or if they are modifying their accent so as not to give away too much of their identity. As already mentioned, language changes as context changes, and therefore altering the way someone speaks may not be a problem, but it could actually be a problem if, as can be seen in the examples above, this shift is made in order to hide a part of someone's identity, as it is often associated with prejudices and stereotypes. It might be worth investigating how much this shift is made for the benefit of communication and how much it is made due to social conventions.

Last, but not least, at the end of this dissertation is not clear whether Scouse should be considered as an accent or as a variety/dialect, with some arguing that "given the small number of grammatical features and the relatively few words that are local to Liverpool, it is simply a 'variant of standard English' (Knowles, 1973: 48). However, "who would decide how many terms or grammatical characteristics are required before a 'variant' can be classified as 'dialect' (or indeed even a 'language')? […] And on what basis could such decisions be taken?" (Crowley, 2012: 91). The data show that the majority of the LE speakers (52.8%) consider it as an accent. Nonetheless, the Liverpool Echo (Belger, 2017b) announced "Scousers will have their own dictionary when a new book of more than 2,000 local words comes out [in September]. Tony Crowley, author of 'The Liverpool English Dictionary', has been collecting local terms for more than three decades". That is to say, Liverpool English has its own dictionary, and therefore, can it be considered as an accent? It might be worth mentioning that while in the pilot study one of the LE speakers expressed their concern regarding the collocation "speak Scouse", another did not show the same distress, meaning that its role may actually not be clear and worth investigating.

What emerges from this dissertation is the difficulty of drawing precise linguistic borders; as matter of fact, "any continuous geographical space will always include some people who do not belong to the prevailing linguistic community, no matter how small we draw the units" (Stilz, 2015: 180). This might be considered a consequence of the impossibility of confining speakers, or people in general, into specific and static linguistic labels or identities, as they lead to assumptions on a social level. The latter seem to have negative consequences within society, since it appears as if they do not refer only to language, but rather to speakers, who do not feel comfortable with the way they speak. Apparently, assumptions about language become assumptions about speakers through a process which links a given language to certain stereotypes. Therefore, if places, in the field of sociolinguistics, can be considered only as general landmarks, in the same way, linguistic identity should be considered only as a part of the much wider concept of identity. In this way, in my humble opinion, by resizing the importance of linguistic identity, the values and stereotypes linked to a certain language would be resized as well, and therefore, maybe the impact that they have within society might be reduced too and people would not have to change the way they speak or the way they are.

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APPENDIX 1 – DATA OBTAINED FROM THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

18. Have you ever felt the need to modify your way of speaking when talking with people who are not from Liverpool?

Yes if they don't understand haha. Sometimes need to speak slower and more clearly, more 'English'.

Not really.

I modify my speech naturally, since scouse is much harder for non-natives to understand - though it is not an active choice

Yes. I avoid words and phrases if i doubt that the person with whom I am speaking will not understand

Yes, for fear that my accent wouldn't have been seen as very professional and for this reason I've lost the Scouse accent that I had as a child.

Yes, many times. People look down on scouse

yes, because English people tend not to like Scousers

Yes, but only as i work with hard of hearing patients so pronunciation is important. Accent doesnt help this

Yes when living in America

Yes definitely. And not just because other people might not understand me but because language changes depending on context amongst other things .

Sometimes its necessary as people don't understand the accent.

Yes when talking to people from other countries.

Sometimes for clarity / communication

Slow, more clear and less slang

Occasionally have to repeat myself!

Some time, will speak more slowly and less abbreviations

No, though i have had to explain what certain colloquialisms meant ("shady" meaning mean/sly)

Sometimes need to repeat myself or slow down speech

Sometimes. Slowing down my speech and annunciating better

Sometimes, only so they can understand what I'm saying

Asked to speak a little slower

Talk slower

Yes, slow down pronunciation

Yes, sometimes. I need to tone it down when teaching, but it never really leaves!

Occasionally as sometimes people can't understand the accent at times.

Yes, less slang words

Only to slow it down, sometimes i speak too fast

Yes, i wouldn't expect everyone to understand certain words and phrases!

Very rarely

Yea, there are certain phrases that people from Liverpool just don't understand

Yes, sometimes having to talk slightly slower.

Always the point where it is problematic to speak to others.

Yes always

Yes, when I first moved to Australia at a young age I tried (and failed) to completely change my accent, and I can't give you a reason why. Nowadays I do it subconsciously, it just fades out, and that because I find people understand me better, I'm not having to repeat myself HA

I sometimes have to translate words to normal English.

Yes, scousers speak very fast and use a lot of slang so working in hospitality requires me to slow my speech down and concentrate on pronunciation

No I'd rather let them look confused

working in hospitality serving some1 old not from Liverpool or foreigner in case they dont understand

Yes. You can't say things like 'boss'

yes because they dont understand what you say

Yes, I wouldn't say 'ta' I'd be more likely to say 'thanks'. Little phrases would change to general way of speaking.

Some people will ask what words mean

Sometimes if they cant understand the accent

Yes, I speak slower and more clearly

Sometimes I have to slow down or try and reduce my accent because they can't understand me, but I never do it to hide my identity.

Yes, speaking with Americans. Americans don't usually get common English terms or Scouse terms

Yes, or to explain what something means

Speaking slower

Only once, and only a minor part of my speech

Yes, when backpacking I would have to change certain words to be understood.

yes as they sometimes find it hard to understand

No but if they dont speak English as a first language ill speak slower because ive been told i speak too fast

Living abroad, i really have to slow down and tone down my accent for those who arent used it. It can actually be very upsetting, people have screamed at me in work to 'speak english' and thats embarrassing. Then i come home to Liverpool and my accent is slower and people tell me im not from liverpool when i was born, raised, lived and worked there for 25 years.

Maybe I speak a little slower and more clearly, use less slang words

It's always good to just be yourself and not be ashamed of where you come from

Yes as they can't understand me

Sometimes- If they skit your accent

Only speaking slower.

Yes I regularly speak to people from the Bristol area who seem to always struggle to understand.

I used to downplay my accent when younger. There was a lot of anti-Scouse prejudice at the time.

I have slowed down as we speak really quickly

When they don't understand

19. Please add any additional comments here.

Sometimes I have to moderate my accent so people can understand me

I'm proud of where I'm from. Liverpool and its people are unique, genuine and caring. No matter where you are from you'll be welcomed here. I only have a lilt of an accent but its definitely there.

Anyone born in Liverpool is considered a Scouser. However its my opinion and experience that people from working class roots (such as myself) who are proud to be known as Scousers. People from Liverpool usually class themselves as Scousers or Liverpudlians

I love that others love my city and hope they see its full beauty - she is like our mother we her children. We want to make her proud, represent her and she loves us back with our own unique bond and language.

With the idea of a Scouse, I always associate them with friendliness and being welcoming. I have never felt more accepted in a city outside from home.

People find it difficult to understand and are not familiar with some scouse terms

Being Scouse isn't just about living in or being from Liverpool - it's a unique culture which is based on diversity, humour and generosity. There's a reason we have just been voted the kindest city

Guests from other city's do not take kindly to a scouse accent, it makes them feel you are lesser qualified therefore lose faith. I find myself having to alter my speak to suit others

It can be a difficult accent not from England to understand. Even in English speaking countries like America they struggle to understand. Within UK scousers seem to be either loved or hated. I can especially see after being away for a while, the beauty of our city and the people in it. There is a certain type of energy there which is hard to move away from. Although it has some pretty places it's not generally postcard perfect but the beauty runs much deeper than that in my opinion. Nothing like Scouse humour and generosity :)

Sometimes people have struggled to understand me with my scouse accent so I have had to tone it down.

Not everyone who is born or raised in Liverpool, I believe, can call themselves a 'scouser". It's a way of living, helping others, looking after the people around you. Some can claim these things but never actually contribute to our great city. Liverpool is a fantastic place and the people help to bring this to a wider populous. Hope you nail your dissertation. Best of look with it all !! Richie

People struggle to understand the speed of scouse accents and so I feel like I need to "tone it down" when I speak to people not from Liverpool

A scouser isnt just someone who uses slang but someone is born in liverpool. More of a community thing than verbal.

Scouse humour is the best in the world. Scousers are often very friendly too and there are many good people here. Many students and foreigners fall in love with the city because the city can become like a friend once you get to know it :)

I love your idea, good luck with your dissertation!

Scouse isnt a language, its a way of life

I may be scouse and proud but I have no problem with speaking with an easy to understand English accent/vocabulary. in fact I enjoy it. Scouse is often a lazy way to speak. 'and that' is a common end to a sentence which can sometimes act as an escape from thoroughly explaining an idea or a concept to another individual.

YNWA

Simply because they do not understand the lingo

Having to explain how we use the word 'boss' is a good example. The accent, mine isn't thick but I have had to tone it down for some people to understand

Occasionally had to modify speech to help people understand. Especially slowing speech.

Only slightly so they understand

I feel you can be judged

I just see Scouse as an accent and Scouser as a name for people from Liverpool - I think its great people take pride in being scouse and having a scouse identity, but I think the things scouse people say about Liverpool is what other people say about their own cities too

Survey leads answers as if Scouse is a language - "speak Scouse" isn't a thing. We speak English with a Scouse accent!

i was born and grown up in liverpool, this city is a disgrace, why are you wasting your time with this research. Capital of culture 08 was a massive load of shit

Tone down accent and speak less localised slang

Talk slower, use different slang phrases

Southerners assume we're stupid

I grew up in Knowsley Village which is on the outskirts of Liverpool. My Scouse accent is mild. Although people form outside Liverpool all identify me as a Scouser I sometimes feel that other Scousers see me as a 'Wooly Back' (are you familiar with this term?) or a 'plastic Scouser'. This has made me feel alienated at times.

Usually when speaking with a non-scouser I do have to expand on what I am talking about, especially when talking about family or past-times.

If you are born and bred here you just speak scouse to a stonger or lesser degree - its not really a choice per se - you can opt into the Liverpool culture and be proud and defend where you live. We tend to be kind, friendly, chatty, helpful, help someone in need and generous - things that other cities lack as a whole

Scouse isn't a different language it is a dialect, we speak 'English' but in our own unique way, depending on which part of Merseyside you come from determines how broad your accent is. I come from Wallasey and consider myself to have a moderate accent, but there seems to be a new pattern emerging among younger scousers who speak in a stronger more gutteral way, my accent is more in common with how the Beatles spoke...

Being from Liverpool is great, and we only receive backlash from people in other cities because they are jealous. Most have never visited the city or spoken to many Scousers so they judge it based on media coverage.

Interviews:

1. *"Generally speaking, is it important for you to speak Scouse?"*

Interviewee no. 1: Not really, but I do generally speak Scouse at home with my family, so it kinda links me to them. Also, when I want to be funny, I say something in Scouse, so it is part of my humour.

Interviewee no. 2: Not that much, but I like to use it with friends. Also, if I want to express a particular thing, I usually prefer Scouse, it gives better the idea and it is funny.

Interviewee no. 3: I think it is important to keep your heritage. And when you speak Scouse with people that are fro the same area, it creates a kind of shared identity.

Interviewee no. 4: Yes, I mean, not that much, but I am definitely proud.

Interviewee no. 5: I can't say that it is important for me to sound scouse, because I don't, but parts of how I think and feel, it is very important for me to keep these in line with an idea of scouseness. Certain scouse concepts like being sound and not being a shithouse, this is very important to me.

2. *"On the questionnaire, many people stated they modify their way of speaking in order to sound more professional, or because people who are not from Liverpool look down on Scouse and they do not generally like it. Do you think it is true?"*

Interviewee no. 1: Yes, definitely. I think it has something to do with the image that the Medias sell about scouse people, who are usually considered kinda stupid and embarrassing. When it comes to job interviews I definitely tend to hide my accent.

Interviewee no. 2: Yes, I think it's a social thing. I mean, on the telly I always get so embarrassed when I see or hear someone talking scouse, especially because most of the time the people who are interviewed appear kind of stupid, as the stereotype wants them to be. As a result, for instance, I do try to control myself in order to sound as English as possible when it comes to certain formal events… I do not want to get compromised.

Interviewee no. 3: When I was younger, I tried to hide it, yah. But I think it's because of the stereotype that all scousers are thieves and stuff like that. Still, people did not really understand me sometimes, so I modified the way I usually spoke. I have kinda lost it though.

Interviewee no. 4: Well, I don't know. I do not really modify my accent too much, maybe I talk slower to make people understand me, or with people I can see they are kind of posh. I think scouse it is that kind of thing that people hear and they say "Oh, scouse!" and they immediately think about the association to thieves and stereotypes of stupid people. Also, I think it is a bit harsh to hear.

Interviewee no. 5: It is certainly true that people in other parts of the country can express hostile opinions about people from Liverpool. A very spoken and seemingly civil lady once said when I told her that I was from Liverpool 'you are lucky you don't speak with that horrid accent', I told her much of my family speak with that horrid accent, but to be fair snobbery in England is not just attitude expressed against Scousers.

3. *"A girl who is living in Australia stated that when she first arrived there her boss asked her to speak English many times. Would you get offended?"*

Interviewee no. 1: Woah! Well, it was not nice, but I think it depends on the level of my use of slang or accent. If it is too strong, it might get hard to understand I think.

Interviewee no. 2: Wow! Not sure, but I will definitely feel weird and I will try to change my accent. Scouse might be hard to understand though, if someone cannot control it.

Interviewee no. 3: Well, I would say his boss was not that right. When I modify my way of speaking I do it to sound more English, but I definitely speak English.

Interviewee no. 4: I would just laugh probably. This is funny.

Interviewee no. 5: I'd probably think he was a bit of an idiot.

4. "Why do you think Scouse appears so problematic sometimes?".

Interviewee no. 1: It might be linked to the general idea that people have about Liverpool. The stereotype says that it is populated by Scouse, who are always depicted link uneducated people.

Interviewee no. 2: I would say it is because of the stereotype that makes us appear like we are all stupid and uneducated. Certainly, Scouse is definitely hard to understand sometimes, and this does not help.

Interviewee no. 3: It is due to stereotypes I think. As I said before, some think all Scousers are thieves or something. It might be a little stupid to say, but I think people have a fear of the unknown, you know, and scouse is a very slang-driven way of talking, and they just do not get it. Still, Liverpool is known for being one of the most friendly places in the UK… so it is kind of a paradox.

Interviewee no. 4: As I said, it might be harsh to hear, and therefore, difficult to understand, as we speak very fast. People are not generally used to it I guess.

Interviewee no. 5: The eighties I think was crucial, and above all Hillsborough. What has to be remembered is not just the vile lies that the Sun printed, but that they were printed knowing that there were people all over the country that would believe them. My family didn't live in Liverpool in 1989 and it really affected my Dad that people all around him believed what was said and we moved to Liverpool not long after.

APPENDIX 2 – ITALIAN SUMMARY

La mia tesi di laurea, un elaborato scritto in lingua inglese, propone un'analisi di alcuni dei principi su cui si basa la sociolinguistica. Quest'ultima è quella parte della linguistica che si occupa della lingua intesa come fenomeno culturale (Trudgill, 2000: 21); in altre parole, studia le connessioni che la lingua intrattiene con la società (Hudson, 1980: I), o meglio, con entità e fatti socialmente rilevanti (Spolsky, 1998: 4). Tra questi, l'identità di genere, l'identità sessuale, l'appartenenza etnica, il ceto sociale, lo status sociale, il luogo e la regione. Per quanto riguarda la tesi in oggetto, sono stati presi in considerazione i legami che la lingua ha con il territorio, l'identità e lo status sociale.

Sulle basi della teoria, si ritiene che una data lingua sia strettamente collegata al territorio, tant'è che i sociolinguisti hanno sempre considerato la geografia nell'ambito delle varianti linguistiche (Johnstone, 2011: 203). Si pensi per esempio agli inni nazionali che collegano la lingua alla nazione, o quando una determinata lingua è dichiarata lingua ufficiale di un/a determinato/a Stato/nazione/regione, o semplicemente quando si tratta di dover definire da dove ha origine un dato idioma. L'ultimo punto, e dunque l'idea che le lingue cambiano a seconda dei luoghi (Trudgill, 2000: 147), ha permesso la creazione di cosiddette mappe linguistiche che mirano alla rappresentazione esplicita della connessione delle lingue con il mondo geopolitico. In questa tesi, è stata presa in considerazione la mappa linguistica del Regno Unito che ha portato all'analisi delle diverse varietà linguistiche dell'inglese.

Per quanto riguarda il rapporto tra lingua e identità, è opportuno ricordare che l'identità individuale si traduce in molte cose e c'è un'enorme quantità di pubblicazioni in molteplici ambiti delle scienze sociali. Tra queste, la sociolinguistica, la quale promuove il concetto di geografia del suono (Matless, 2005), fondata sul principio che il suono, in questo caso un particolare accento e/o dialetto, gioca un ruolo nella costruzione di un'identità locale (Boland, 2010). In altre parole, la lingua e, per estensione, il linguaggio, non sono solamente dei mezzi di comunicazione, ma contribuiscono di fatto al processo di sviluppo dell'identità umana. Inoltre, si sostiene che i parlanti producano diverse identità attraverso l'uso della propria lingua (Bucholtz e Hall, 2004:369), il che dà origine all'idea che attraverso una data lingua venga rappresentata l'identità. Pertanto, sebbene

la lingua possa essere intesa come uno strumento in grado di mettere in moto i processi di comunicazione all'interno della società, questi processi portano alla condivisione di valori e culture su cui si fondano le diverse comunità. Ed è proprio nella comunità, nello scambio di valori con altri individui, che l'essere umano si identifica. In breve, la sociolinguistica supporta il principio secondo il quale la lingua dà forma all'identità linguistica e individuale.

Fino ad ora, pare chiaro che il principio secondo il quale ogni qualvolta parliamo, in qualche modo, comunichiamo ai nostri interlocutori qualcosa delle nostre origini (Trudgill, 2000: 2) possa essere considerato vero. Di fatto, il modo in cui ci esprimiamo potrebbe comunicare da dove veniamo, e quindi parte della nostra identità potrebbe essere rivelata. A questo proposito, Elinor Ochs (1992) parla di "indexicality" per definire il processo che vede le strutture linguistiche entrare nel merito delle categorie sociali. Su quest'ultimo punto, la sociolinguistica sostiene che le varietà di una lingua non siano classificate solamente dal punto di vista geografico, ma anche da quello sociale; di conseguenza, il modo in cui parliamo, potrebbe rivelare il nostro status sociale.

Sebbene i concetti presentati finora siano assodati sotto vari aspetti dal punto di vista teorico, una volta messa a paragone con il caso concreto dell'inglese di Liverpool (o Scouse) nel primo capitolo, la teoria sembra aver presentato alcune carenze. Di fatto, anche se una lingua intrattiene senz'altro un certo tipo di rapporto con il territorio, quest'ultimo sembra lontano dall'essere un'entità omogenea, e quindi l'intera connessione sembra risentirne, in quanto sembra impossibile collegare una data lingua ad un dato luogo in maniera precisa. A conferma di ciò, prendendo in considerazione la città di Liverpool e i parlanti dell'inglese di Liverpool, sembra, per esempio, che le più forti varietà di Scouse non siano parlate nelle aree del centro città, ma bensì nei sobborghi a nord e a sud della città come Norris Green, Croxteth e Speke, e nelle zone periferche come Stockbridge Village, Huyton, Halewood e Kirkby" (grey, 2007:206). Inoltre, le zone della penisola di Wirall e St. Helens, seppur parte dell'aerea metropolitana di Liverpool, non sono considerate parte della stessa. Di conseguenza, essendo il territorio un'entità dotata in qualche modo di varie interpretazioni, il rapporto con la lingua sembra uscirne indebolito.

Inoltre, per quanto si possa dire che una data lingua dia forma all'identità individuale, quest'ultima è il risultato dell'interazione di molti fenomeni (Blommaert, 2005: 204); ne deriva che non è chiaro quanto in realtà una lingua sia rilevante nel campo dell'identità, e quindi quanto questo rapporto sia effettivo.

Infine, sebbene possa essere considerato vero il principio secondo il quale le lingue sono classificate a livello sociale così che i parlanti possano identificare lo status sociale di altri parlanti, non è chiaro su quali basi questa classificazione sia fondata, e quindi la sua veridicità potrebbe essere messa in dubbio. Per esempio, l'inglese di Liverpool sembra essere descritto come un accento sgradevole e nasale; il fenomeno degno di attenzione è il fatto che, di riflesso, i suoi parlanti sono considerati non eleganti (Colvi, 1971: 10-11), poco istruiti (Priestley, 1934: 200) e appartenenti alla classe operaia (Grey e Grant, 2007: I). A quanto pare, anche se la prima reazione è data dall'esposizione alla lingua, i giudizi che ne scaturiscono passano ben presto ad essere giudizi sui parlanti. Quello che non è chiaro è su cosa quest'ultimi siano basati e se abbiano delle conseguenze a livello di interazioni sociali.

Il secondo capitolo ha tentato di rispondere alle domande di ricerca tramite l'utilizzo delle caratteristiche linguistiche dell'inglese di Liverpool. L'analisi ha evidenziato che la storia della città ha giocato un ruolo fondamentale nello sviluppo della lingua, in quanto alla fine del XIX secolo, Liverpool ha accolto un'ondata migratoria di vario genere, ma prevalentemente irlandese (Crowley, 2012: 39) a causa della grande carestia verificatasi in Irlanda tra il 1845 e il 1852. Di conseguenza, questo spiegherebbe perché ci siano alcune somiglianze fonologiche tra l'inglese di Liverpool e quello irlandese. Inoltre, il fenomeno linguistico della lenizione (o ammorbidimento), che si traduce in una fricativizzazione delle occlusive, spiegherebbe parzialmente perché l'inglese di Liverpool sia considerato sgradevole da ascoltare. Infine, la cantilena potrebbe essere spiegata tramite la presa in considerazione della strettezza della scala di estensione propria dell'inglese di Liverpool. Tuttavia, nel corso del secondo capitolo è sorta un'altra questione: non sembra chiaro se la varietà d'inglese in oggetto debba considerarsi un accento o un dialetto/varietà di inglese.

Il terzo capitolo ha affrontato il caso studio sull'inglese di Liverpool, la varietà d'inglese parlata a Liverpool e nella circostante contea del Merseyside, nel nord-ovest d'Inghilterra (Watson, 2007: 351). Il caso studio in oggetto è stato condotto sotto forma di questionario online e incrementato da interviste faccia a faccia che hanno avuto luogo tra novembre 2016 e marzo 2017, durata della mia permanenza a Liverpool. In totale, sono state collezionate 178 riposte al questionario e 5 interviste con nativi della varietà d'inglese studiata. I dati ottenuti sono stati analizzati attraverso metodi di analisi quantitativa e qualitativa che hanno permesso l'elaborazione di alcune supposizioni sulla base delle domande di ricerca. Innanzitutto, per quanto riguarda il rapporto tra lingua e territorio, i dati sembrano confermare le molteplici identità di un dato luogo; per esempio, alcune delle persone che hanno completato il questionario, pur vivendo in St. Helens o nella penisola di Wirral, quando gli è stato chiesto dove vivessero, hanno risposto "in un'altra città del Regno Unito" piuttosto che Liverpool. Inoltre, anche se il 90,4% dei partecipanti ha dichiarato di vivere a Liverpool, e il 78,7% ha sostenuto che anche i loro genitori sono da Liverpool, solo il 74,7% ha dichiarato di parlare Scouse. Alla luce di ciò, sembrerebbe che vivere a Liverpool non fosse una prerogativa assoluta per poter parlare Scouse, pertanto il rapporto tra lingua e territorio appare più debole di come viene spesso descritto dalla teoria. Quando si tratta di individuare i parlanti di una lingua all'interno di un determinato luogo, il processo viene spesso interrotto da problematiche che si traducono in difficoltà nel tracciare confini tra un luogo e i suoi sotto-luoghi in relazione ai parlanti. Tuttavia, nella mia modesta opinione, credo sia lecito sostenere che lingua e territorio siano in qualche modo legati, a patto che quest'ultimo sia inteso solamente come un punto di riferimento molto generale. In altre parole, per esempio, nel Regno Unito, le diverse varietà d'inglese sono distribuite tra regioni, contee, città e ambienti culturali, di conseguenza, utilizzare i luoghi come un generico sistema di riferimento può sicuramente aiutare a capire da dove una data varietà ha origine.

Per quanto riguarda il ruolo della lingua nel campo dell'identità, i dati mostrano che il 74,7% dei partecipanti al questionario parla Scouse, ma l'80,3% si descrive Scouser, e solo il 32,6% ha dichiarato che parlare Scouse è molto importante all'interno del processo di creazione dell'identità di uno Scouser. Ne deriva che, nonostante la lingua possa avere

un ruolo all'interno del processo di auto-identificazione, non pare fondamentale. Di fatto, il 70,2% dei partecipanti ha risposto che ciò che li fa sentire Scouser sono i valori di generosità e solidarietà; di conseguenza, si potrebbe dire che i valori interiori sembrano dominare quando si tratta di contribuire allo sviluppo dell'identità individuale. Ciò sembra essere confermato dall'analisi tematica affrontata nella seconda parte del terzo capitolo: sotto il tema generale "identità", sono stati indentificati altri quattro sotto-temi, quali comunità, qualità e valori, humor e fierezza. Questo concetto secondo il quale i principi interni contribuiscono in maniera rilevante allo sviluppo del modo di essere di qualcuno spiegherebbe perché il 74,7% dei partecipanti parla Scouse, ma l'80,3% si descrive Scouser. L'identità sembra fondata su valori condivisi e, di conseguenza, sembra che ci si possa sentire Scouser, o qualsiasi altro tipo di identificativo, anche se non si parla Scouse, o qualsiasi altra lingua/varietà di lingua, a patto che si conoscano e si pratichino i principi di una data comunità.

Riguardo al rapporto tra lingua e status sociale, la prima parte del terzo capitolo ha dimostrato che nei contesti formali c'è una tendenza per tutti i gruppi sociali a modificare il proprio modo di esprimersi conformandolo alla Received Pronuniciation (Belchem, 2006: 32); la seconda parte del capitolo ha tentato di capire il perché. L'analisi tematica ha fornito due possibili risposte: la prima sostiene che, essendo l'inglese di Liverpool particolarmente difficile da comprendere per coloro che non lo parlano, i parlanti della varietà in oggetto tentano di renderla più semplice modificandone la fonologia; la seconda ipotesi è basata sul fatto che i parlanti di questa varietà sembrano essere consapevoli che il modo in cui parlano potrebbe influire negativamente sulla loro posizione sociale, visto e considerato che lo Scouse è spesso associato a spiacevoli stereotipi sugli Scouser. Quest'ultimo concetto non fa sentire i parlanti dell'inglese di Liverpool a proprio agio quando devono interagire con qualcuno che non è di Liverpool. A questo punto, si è cercato di capire sulle basi di cosa siano fondati questi ingloriosi stereotipi; a questo proposito, l'analisi tematica ha individuato un'associazione ricorrente tra questi preconcetti e il ruolo dei media. Sembra infatti che quest'ultimi continuino ad utilizzare l'immagine di quella che era la città Liverpool negli anni '60, quando cadde in una grave crisi finanziaria e divenne associata ai fenomeni di disoccupazione, povertà e criminalità (Juskan, 2015: 1): una vetrina di tutto quello che non aveva funzionato nelle maggiori

città britanniche (Belchem, 2006: 54). Di conseguenza, alcuni dei partecipanti al questionario hanno sostenuto di cambiare il loro accento in modo da suonare più inglesi possibile per non rischiare di venire compromessi. Ne deriva che questo fenomeno mediatico ha sicuramente delle ripercussioni a livello sociale, anche se è il 2017, Liverpool è la sede di tre diverse università e nel 2008 è stata nominata capitale europea della cultura.

Al temine di questa tesi, i dati ottenuti sembrano dimostrare che il rapporto sociolinguistico tra linguaggio e territorio non è diretto e solido come sembra, che la lingua dà forma all'identità individuale, ma i valori interiori sembrano essere più rilevanti, e che le lingue sono classificate a livello sociale sulle basi della copertura mediatica, che altera le reazioni a una data lingua e fa sì che i parlanti modifichino il loro modo di esprimersi. Tuttavia, sebbene sembri che le domande di ricerca siano state parzialmente risposte, alcune problematiche restano aperte a indagini future. Per esempio, i dati sembrano dimostrare che, per quel che riguarda l'identità, il 63,5% dei partecipanti al questionario si è riferito al territorio indicandolo come uno dei fattori che contribuisce al loro processo di creazione dell'identità, contro il 32,6% che ha dichiarato che la lingua è un fattore molto importante. Sembrerebbe dunque che il legame tra identità e territorio fosse più importante di quello tra lingua e territorio; tuttavia, se l'identità passa attraverso la lingua, e la lingua è connessa al territorio, non è semplice stabilire l'importanza di quest'ultimo, visti i dati discordanti.

Un'altra problematica aperta al dibattito riguarda il legame tra lingua e status sociale. Come già menzionato, i parlanti dell'inglese di Liverpool alterano il loro modo di esprimersi per due principali ragioni: la prima è basata sul fatto che la varietà d'inglese presa in considerazione sembra difficile da capire per coloro che non la parlano, la seconda riguarda il ruolo dei media. Sebbene sia vero che l'inglese di Liverpool è linguisticamente particolare e quindi complicato da comprendere, non è semplice tracciare una linea per separare le volte in cui qualcuno altera il proprio modo di parlare per ragioni comunicative da quelle in cui lo fa per non rilevare troppo della sua identità. Prendendo in considerazione il fatto che la lingua cambia a seconda del contesto, il fatto che qualcuno alteri il proprio modo di esprimersi potrebbe non rappresentare un

problema; tuttavia, al contrario, potrebbe esserlo se questo cambiamento venisse effettuato con l'intenzione di nascondere una parte della propria identità perché spesso associata a pregiudizi e stereotipi umilianti. Alla luce di ciò, potrebbe essere interessante tentare di capire quante volte questo cambiamento è dovuto a ragioni di comunicazione e quante per ragioni sociali.

Infine, alla fine di questa tesi, non è ancora chiaro se lo Scouse debba essere considerato un accento o un/a dialetto/varietà dell'inglese; alcuni sostengono che visto le poche caratteristiche grammaticali e i pochi termini propri di Liverpool, sia da considerarsi solo come una variante dello Standard English (Knowels, 1973: 48). D'altro canto, non è chiaro quanti termini o caratteristiche grammaticali siano necessari perché una "variante" venga considerata un dialetto o, per estensione, una lingua. Inoltre, non è nemmeno chiaro su quali basi tale decisione debba andar presa (Crowley, 2012: 91). I dati hanno dimostrato che la maggioranza di coloro che parlano l'inglese di Liverpool (il 52,8%) sostiene sia solo un accento. Tuttavia, il quotidiano Liverpool Echo (Belger, 2017b) ha annunciato che Tony Crowley, dopo aver raccolto più di 2000 parole locali per oltre tre decadi, ha pubblicato "The Liverpool English Dictionary" a settembre 2017. Sembrerebbe dunque che l'inglese di Liverpool avesse un dizionario tutto suo, può continuare ad essere considerato solo un accento? Vale inoltre la pena ricordare che durante la fase di pilotaggio del questionario, uno dei parlanti della varietà in oggetto ha espresso il suo dubbio nel leggere la collocazione "parlare Scouse", sottolineando che questa costruzione porterebbe ad intendere lo Scouse come una lingua diversa dall'inglese, cosa che secondo loro non era. Tuttavia, l'altro nativo coinvolto nel pilotaggio del questionario non ha sentito l'esigenza di esprimere nulla di simile, indice che probabilmente lo status dello Scouse non è ben definito e invita a future ricerche.

Ciò che emerge dall'analisi presentata in questa tesi di laurea è la difficoltà di tracciare bordi linguistici precisi, in quanto, a prescindere dalla dimensione delle unità prese in considerazione, qualsiasi spazio geografico includerà sempre alcuni individui che non appartengono alla comunità linguistica prevalente (Stilz, 2015: 180). La ragione di questo potrebbe essere l'impossibilità di confinare i parlati, o in generale gli individui, sotto specifiche etichette o identità linguistiche che portano a supposizioni sul piano sociale.

Quest'ultime sembrano avere delle implicazioni all'interno della società visto e considerato che non sembra si riferiscano solo alla lingua, ma bensì ai parlanti, i quali non si sentono a loro agio con il loro modo di esprimersi. A quanto pare, i giudizi sulla lingua diventano ben presto giudizi sui parlanti tramite un processo che vede una data lingua collegarsi a certi stereotipi. Di conseguenza, se nella sociolinguistica i luoghi possono essere considerati solo come dei sistemi di riferimento molto generali, allo stesso modo, l'identità linguistica dovrebbe essere considerata solo come una parte di quello che è il vasto concetto dell'identità individuale e collettiva. In questo modo, nella mia modesta opinione, ridimensionando l'importanza dell'identità linguistica, gli stereotipi ad essa connessi verrebbero a loro volta ridimensionati in modo tale da ridurre gli effetti che essi hanno all'interno della società e i parlanti non dovrebbero modificare il loro modo di esprimersi o, per estensione, di essere.