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# Linking [fɪ] and the variation between linking /r/ and glottal onsets in South African English

Martina Häcker

Both linking [fɪ] and the variation between linking [ɹ] and glottal stop are not known in any other variety of English apart from South African English. This paper investigates the possible origins of these features. It argues that they go back to Cockney features that were transferred to South Africa and modified under the influence of Afrikaans.

I am indebted to Roger Lass for the description of the features of South African English, whose origins will be investigated in this paper. The first one is called “linking [h]” and described as follows:

What I will call “linking [h]” is typical of the English of many Afrikaans first-language speakers (and a good number of coordinate bilinguals as well); it occurs in both educated and uneducated speakers, even in some who show no trace of an Afrikaans accent. Linking [h] is mainly restricted to word-internal hiatus before the strong syllable of a following foot; it is typically a breathy (“murmured”) [fɪ]<sup>1</sup> (the norm for Afrikaans /h/, and that of many mother-tongue SAE varieties). Some common examples:

cre[h]ate, re[h]action, li[h]aison, co[h]operate,  
pro[h]active, pre[h]empt, bi[h]ology, pi[h]ano

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<sup>1</sup> Ladefoged (2000: 124) describes this sound as follows: “Murmured sounds occur in English in the pronunciation of /h/ in between vowels as in ‘ahead, behind’. In most speakers of English I have been able to observe, the /h/ in these words is made with the vocal folds slightly apart along their entire length, but still continuing to vibrate as if they were waving in the breeze. The term *voiced h* is sometimes used for this sound, but it is somewhat confusing as there is certainly no voicing in the usual sense. The term *murmured h* is preferable. The symbol for this sound is [fɪ].”

It also occurs (rarely) in non-hiatus positions, where the preceding weak syllable ends with a nasal, e. g. *inn[h]ate*. (Lass 1996: 138)

The second feature Lass describes is a stress-conditioned variation between linking /r/ and glottal onset in sequences of word-final <r> and word-initial vowel. He illustrates this type of variation with different stress patterns in the phrase *mother is here*:

- (a) [mäðər ɪz hɪə] “mother is here”
- (b) [mäðə ʔɪz hɪə] “mother is here” (Lass 1996: 133)

According to Lass, linking [h] is typically not found across word boundaries in South African English. Word initial vowels are predominantly preceded by a glottal stop. Lass relates this to glottal onsets in Afrikaans. He quotes De Villiers (46), who states that

words usually (“gewoohlik”) begin “met die glottale explosief” [with the glottal plosive; MH], and he gives as an example [ɔf ʔə ʔaner] *of ’n ander* “or another” (where ’n is unstressed). He also notes that [ʔ] “staan ook tussen vokale in direkte opvolging . . . tensy daar ander oorgansklanke is (i.e. occurs between vowels in hiatus unless there is another ‘transition’ sound).” The example he gives is *chaos*, transcribed [xɑ:ʔos]. (Lass 1996: 138).<sup>2</sup>

From this Lass (1996: 139) concludes that the murmured [ɦ] is a “lenited [ʔ]”, and he claims that “it is everywhere a real (underlying) segment rather than a default realisation of a floating C-position.” The phoneme /ʔ/ has, according to Lass, three allophones, [ʔ] and [ɦ], and [Ø], while the phoneme /h/ has two realisations [ɦ] and [Ø], the two zero allophones being distinguished by intonational contours, a rise in the case of the allophone of [ʔ] and a fall-rise in the case of the allophone of /h/. According to Lass, in the example *mother is here* the word *is* would begin with /ʔ/, but the realisation of the phoneme would depend on sentence stress, with a realisation as [Ø] in the version with unstressed *is* (*mother is here*) and as [ʔ] in the version with stressed *is* (*mother ’is here*). The allophone [ɦ] occurs according to Lass in word-internal hiatus in words like *cre[ɦ]ate*, *re[ɦ]action*, *li[ɦ]aison*, *co[ɦ]operate*,

<sup>2</sup> Donaldson (1993: 19) transcribes the word *chaos* without glottal stop [xɑ:os], and Lass (1996: 138, footnote 9) states that the realisation with glottal stop was disputed by some native speakers of Afrikaans. He insists, however, that “there is no doubt about internal [ʔ] however at prefix-root boundaries, since there are phonetic minimal pairs that depend on it *veras* [fərʔás] ‘burnt up (to ashes)’ vs. *verras* [fərás] ‘surprised’.”

*pro[fɪ]active, pre[fɪ]empt, bi[fɪ]ology, pi[fɪ]ano.*<sup>3</sup> Lass does not tell us anything about the distributions of the two allophones [fɪ] and [Ø] of the phoneme /h/, but it seems likely that they are likewise stress-conditioned with [Ø] in unstressed positions and [fɪ] in stressed positions. A zero realisation ([Ø]) of /h/ in unstressed grammatical words is a feature of both standard English and standard Dutch, as well as of Afrikaans.

Both features, linking [fɪ] and the systematic stress-conditioned variation between linking /r/ and glottal onset, appear not to be a feature of any other variety of English than African English (cf. Lass and Wright 1985: 213). This raises the question whether these features originate from substrate languages or were either a feature of the variety of English exported to South Africa or constitute an independent development of South African English. According to Lass (1996: 140), the realisation of /h/ as [fɪ] is a sociolinguistic phenomenon. He states that "The lower down the social scale of SAE speakers one goes (or the more Afrikaans-influenced the speech), the more typical it is for /h/ to be mainly or exclusively breathy [fɪ]." This might suggest that Afrikaans influence is responsible for linking [fɪ]. The Afrikaans realisation of /h/ is indeed [fɪ]. It is described by Donaldson (1993: 14) as follows:

The consonant h [fɪ]

Examples *bael* [fai:l] "hill", *bond* [fɔnt] "dog", *hy* [fɛi] "he".

Afrikaans is unusual among European languages [sic] in having a glottal murmured (also called voiced) *h*, but when the previous syllable ends in a consonant, it is common for a liaison between it and the word or syllable beginning with *h* to be applied, resulting in the dropping of *h* altogether; this occurs both within and between words, e.g. *verlatenheid* [fərlatənɛit] "desolation", *Waar werk hy?* [var werkɛi] "Where does he work?", *moet gedoen het* [mut xe'dunət] "must have done".

Words beginning with *h* followed by *e*, *ee* or *eu* are very commonly pronounced [jɛ], [jɛə] and [jœ] respectively in natural speech, e.g. *help* [jelp] "to help", *hele* [jɛəle] "whole", *Heunis* [jœnəs] (a surname).

The evidence for linking [fɪ] in descriptions of Afrikaans is, however, very limited. Neither Donaldson nor Raidt mention a word-internal [fɪ] to fill a hiatus. De Villiers is the only linguist who mentions it. He gives a detailed description of four word-internal hiatus fillers, the distribution of which seems to be to a large extent phonetically conditioned: (i)

<sup>3</sup> I have taken the liberty of changing the symbol to [fɪ] in Lass's set of words containing linking [h], as he describes the realisation as [fɪ].



[ʔ] is inserted after the [ə] of the prefixes *ge-* and *be-*, which means that [ʔ] is typically restricted to morpheme-initial position, (ii) [j] occurs after [i], (iii) [ɦ] before [ə], and (iv) [w] after [u], [y], [œu] and [eu] (De Villiers, 138-139).<sup>4</sup> According to De Villiers, some speakers also use [ɦ] or [ʔ] in contexts in which [j] and [w] are more typical. The examples he gives for this variation show that [ɦ] and [ʔ] in the speech of these speakers are not restricted to cases in which the second vowel is stressed.

Both De Villiers's description of hiatus fillers and the absence of such a description in the work of others such as Donaldson (1993), Raidt (1983) and Ponelis (1993) suggest that linking [ɦ] in Afrikaans is a transitional glide that does not function as a phoneme. The typical phonetic context for [ɦ] as a hiatus filler in Afrikaans was rare before the nineteenth century. In native Dutch words that are potential candidates for [ɦ]-insertion in Afrikaans, the hiatus is the result of consonant elision. According to Donaldson (1993: 14) and Raidt (1983: 83-84), intervocalic [x] is frequently elided in Afrikaans if the preceding vowel is long or a diphthong, but they do not mention that [ɦ] or [ʔ] stop is inserted to avoid a sequence of vowels. Ponelis (1993: 158) attests a weakening of [x] to [h] in only two cases, [bröhi] *brûe* 'bridges' < *brugge* (*brug* 'bridge'); [vīhi] *wie* 'wedges' (*wig* 'wedges'), while in all other cases the consonant is completely vocalised. According to Ponelis, the process of [x]-lenition was rare in Afrikaans before the nineteenth century, all of which suggests that [ɦ] in this function is a relatively recent phenomenon in Afrikaans. There is likewise no evidence for [ɦ] as a hiatus filler in Dutch dialects, while word-initial [h]-addition is attested in certain southern Dutch dialects, in particular those of the provinces of Antwerpen and Limburg (Blancquaert 1969: 96). The majority of the Dutch settlers were, however, from Holland rather than the southern provinces (Raidt 1983: 17). Moreover, six of the eight words listed by Lass as examples for linking [ɦ] have a preceding *i*-sound, which is the typical context for linking [j] in Afrikaans, while after a nasal, the second but less frequent context for [h]-insertion in South African English according to Lass (see his example *inn[h]ate*), in Afrikaans /h/ is frequently elided, which further weakens the case for linking [ɦ] as Afrikaans substrate.

<sup>4</sup> This distribution shows considerable similarity to the Malay system of hiatus fillers (cf. Onn 1980: 48-52) and may well have been influenced by Malay, which was used as a lingua franca by sailors in Dutch East Asia and also in the Cape.

The case for African substrate is equally problematic. The main indigenous language spoken in the Eastern Cape is Xhosa (Smit 1996: 54). According to De Klerk (1997: 111), Xhosa has a five-vowel system, and both vowel reduction and diphthongisation are absent from its vowel system. When native speakers of Xhosa speak English, they therefore tend to insert [j] and [w] to separate the vowels of English diphthongs. De Klerk (1997: 111) gives the examples of /ju:zuwal/ (*usual*), /i:mpesijens/ (*impatience*), heard /hijad/ (*heard*), which means that Xhosa speakers, just like those who have Afrikaans as their mother tongue, would insert [j] rather than [h] in six out of the eight words of Lass's set.

If substrate influence is unlikely, we are left with the following options: either the origins of linking [h] lie in the dominant variety spoken by the early settlers, or linking [h] is a South African innovation. The former of these options will be considered first. The British occupied the Cape in 1795, but lost it again to the Dutch in 1803, who retained control of it until 1806, when it returned to British control. It remained British until South Africa became independent. According to Branford (1994: 433), the white English speaking population was almost doubled in 1820 and then amounted to about 10,000 (compared to c. 35,000 Dutch). The settlers of 1820 originated from the following areas: "1,900 from London and its environs, over 450 from Ireland and over 300 from Lancashire and Yorkshire (. . .). In the period 1819-20, about 300 came from Scotland" (Branford 1994: 436). The linguistic dominance of the settlers originating from "London and its environs" can also be seen in features of South African English such as the raising of front vowels, which can be traced back to nineteenth-century southern English (Lass 1990: 255-261). It is not surprising that the dominant variety spoken by the early English settlers was that of "London and its environs," as the settlers from that area by far outnumbered those from other areas.

Today lower class London English is a highly stigmatised variety, which has as one of its dominant features [h]-dropping. But the language which the settlers brought to South Africa was, of course, that of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Was [h]-dropping already a feature of London English in those days, or did Londoners insert [h] as a hiatus filler? Walker's (1791) *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* reveals that word-internal [h]-insertion before a stressed syllable cannot have been a frequent phenomenon. Of the eight words listed by Lass, five are not contained in Walker's dictionary (*liason*, *proactive*, *preempt* and *biology*), although *preemption* is listed with the very specific meaning "the

right of purchasing before another.” In other verbs in which we have a word-internal hiatus today such as *associate* and *irradiate*, the <i> was according to Sheridan (1781: 70) realised as a consonant [i. e. [j], MH], as he states with respect to *associate*, *irradiate*, *collegiate*, and *calumniate* and other verbs ending in *-iate* that they “are not pronounced as four syllables, according to the French mode.” Walker’s statement (32) that the sequence <ia> “in the terminations *ian*, *ial*, *iard*, and *iate*, forms but one syllable” confirms that <i> was realised as [j] in words such as *associate*. Walker’s criticism of pronunciations such *jometry* for *geometry* (16) and *dimond* for *diamond* (32) points to a tendency to monophthongise diphthongs in words of foreign origin. Incidentally, the present-day English pronunciation of *creature* with two syllables rather than three as in French shows that monophthongs which replaced former diphthongs were in many cases retained in the standard language.

Reflections of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century dialectal pronunciation are hard to find, as most people had either enough education to use standard spellings, or they could not write at all. There are, however, rare cases of people applying for poor relief whose letters suggest that the spelling is a close reflection of local pronunciation, whether it was written by the applicant him- or herself or an intermediary. A transcription of such a letter was kindly made available to me by Tony Fairman.<sup>5</sup> It dates from 1814 and was written in Essex, which has a long history of <h>-insertions and where <h>-insertions show similar patterns to those attested in London. According to Fairman, “this letter was written by or for Sarah White, who was at the time living in the county of Essex, to her husband’s home parish, the Cathedral parish in Canterbury.” The line breaks and capitalisations of the letter are those of the original; the gloss is Fairman’s, while the highlighting of <h>-insertions is mine. For convenience’s sake I have used interlinear glosses. Fairman’s transcription of the letter reads as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> MS Canterbury, Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U3/100/13/4/3.

to  
the Oversear  
of the Great  
Churuch  
Cantabary

(...) in Deed Gentelman and if thare his no Work  
 (...) *indeed gentleman and if there is no work*  
 I Ralley must Cum back a Gain for in Deed  
*I really must come back again for indeed*  
 Gentelman I due not no Wen I Shall See my  
*gentleman I do not know when I shall see my*  
 Husbon for he his Stasyaned on the Cost  
*husband for he is stationed on the coast*  
 of a Markeary Dear Gentelman I hope you  
*of America dear Gentleman I hope you*  
 Will a [Lowe] me a trifel and, a trifel to Cloeth  
*will allowe me a trifel and a trifle to clothe*  
 the Chi[ldern] or Elceth I must be a Blight  
*the children or else I must be obliged*  
 to a Plie to [t]he Gentelman Ware I ham Wish  
*to apply to the gentlemen where I am which*  
 I Shall be Very sory to Due ( . . )  
*I shall be very sorry to do ( . . )*

What is striking about this letter is that, in contrast to present-day Cockney, the letter writer does not omit <h>, but inserts <h> three times, which suggests that [h]-insertion occurred in the writer's speech but [h]-dropping did not. Two of the <h>-insertions occur intervocalically at word boundaries, while the third occurs after <r>. A possible interpretation would be that the word *there* is pronounced without [ɹ] despite the <r> in the spelling.<sup>6</sup> In this case all <h>-insertions might reflect intervocalic [h]-insertion in speech. Alternatively, the spelling *his* for *is* may have been generalised on the basis of the realisation of the frequent collocations *he is* and *she is*, with intervocalic [h]-insertion. Hypercorrection in the sense of an incorrect <h>-addition due to the fear of incorrectly omitting an <h> is not supported by the general spelling of the letter, which has no instance of an <h>-omission.

As documents such as Sarah White's letter are rare, our primary sources for eighteenth and nineteenth-century English are comments on

<sup>6</sup> The spelling of *Canterbury* (*Cantabary*) suggests that /ɹ/ was variable in the writer's speech.

language by orthoepists and dialect representations in literature. Orthoepist comments on [h]-insertion are rare. It is neither mentioned by Walker (1791) nor by Sheridan (1762), both of whom mention <h>-omission. It was, however, noticed by their Scottish contemporary Sylvester Douglas (128), who states in 1779 that

in the speech of some individuals in England there is this most capricious defect, that in words where others pronounce the *h*, at the beginning, they do not; and where others suppress it, or where it is not written, they pronounce it. (128)

His examples of [h]-insertion are [h]-ful pronunciations of the words *heir* and *air*. He does not mention word-internal [h]-insertion nor does he tell us in which part of England he observed [h]-insertion.

Literary evidence suggests that the <h>-insertion noted by Douglas was a feature of London English. The use of representations of dialect in literary works as evidence for pronunciation habits is controversial among linguists. One may rightly argue that fictitious Cockney letters or dialogues are not a direct reflection of local speech, but the respective author's representation of it. Moreover, dialect is frequently used for comic effect, which means that local accents are exaggerated and some spellings are mere eye dialect. Nevertheless, there is normally a grain of truth in literary representations of accents, even if they are caricatures. It seems therefore worthwhile to compare the representation of Cockney letter writing and speech in literary works with the evidence for <h>-insertion provided by Sarah White's letter.

The first instance of a Cockney character inserting <h>, but also <wh>, is the fictitious letter writer Jonathan Wild in *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, a novel by Fielding (published in 1743, quoted from Matthews 1938: 26). Here *adorable* is spelt *adwhorable* and *attracting* is spelled *bateracting*. In neither case does the preceding word end with a vowel. In Smollett's novel *Life and adventures of Roderick Random* (published in 1748; quoted from Matthews 1938: 27) it is the fictitious letter-writer Clarinda, whose letters are presented as having <h>-insertions. Here <h>-insertions are more frequent. They are found in the phrases *animable hopjack* (*amiable object*), *the heys* (*the eyes*), *his harrows* (*his arrows*) and *loaksheek harm's* (*lovesick arms*). In only one of these phrases is the <h>-insertion in intervocalic position.

In Smollett's *The adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (published in 1751) the fictitious character Deborah Hornbeck's letter has two word-initial in-



stances of <h>-insertion, both of which occur between vowels, *very hole* (*very old*) and *the heaving* (*the evening*), as well as three word-medial <h>-insertion in the words *invalids*, *d'Augustin* and *cafe*, spelled *anvilheads*, *Dog-houseten*, and *calfhay*. The <h>-lessness in the French loanwords *hospital* and *humble* correspond to standard eighteenth-century pronunciations (cf. Walker 46).

Both Fielding and Smollett present their Cockney writers as trying to write elevated language, using vocabulary they are hardly familiar with and generally misspell. The gross exaggeration makes it difficult to judge the actual Cockney pronunciations the caricatures are based on. I would, however, argue that <h>-insertion as a feature of a caricature of Cockneys can only be recognised and appreciated by an author's audience if it is a feature of contemporary Cockney speech. It is unlikely that <h>-insertion for comic effect would have occurred to eighteenth-century authors if it had not existed in contemporary speech.

The literary presentation of Cockney speech rather than Cockney letter writing begins with Maria Edgeworth. One of the characters in her play *Love and Law* (published in 1817; quoted from Matthews 1938: 41) is the London servant Miss Bloomsbury. The following extract is from this character's speech:

"Then, ma'am, I declare now, I've been forced to stuff my *bears* with cotton wool ever sence I comed to Ireland. But this here Honor M'Bride has a mighty pretty vice, if you dont take exceptions to a little nationality; nor is she not so smoke-dried: she's really a nice, tidy-looking like girl considering. I've taken tea with the family often, and they live quite snug for *Hirish*. I'll assure you, ma'am quite bettermost people for Hibernians, as you always said, ma'am."

Edgeworth's play is written approximately at the same time as Sarah White's letter and represents the English of London at the time the largest group of settlers, those of 1820, left for South Africa. This passage has a more authentic ring to it than Fielding's and Smollett's Cockney letters. It contains two <h>-insertions, one at a word boundary between vowels and the other one after a word-final <r> and a word-initial vowel. Postvocalic /r/ was frequently dropped in London at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Walker (1968: 50) states with respect to /r/: "But if this letter is too forcibly pronounced in Ireland, it is often too feebly sounded in England, and particularly in London, where it is sometimes entirely sunk." It seems therefore possible that

Edgeworth intended both <h>-insertions to represent an intervocalic [h]-insertion. This would suggest that Cockneys may have used linking [f] rather than linking [ɹ] in the phrase *for Hirish*.

Pierce Egan, a Londoner himself, presents Cockney speech in his *Real Life in London*, which was published in monthly parts, the first part appearing in November 1821. There are no <h>-insertions in the extract of Cockney speech quoted in Matthews, but there is context dependent <h>-dropping which occurs in the auxiliary *have* before a past participle and in lexicalised collocations such as *this 'ere* and *that 'ere*, while in other contexts the word *here* has no <h>-omission:

It was lucky for her it did not hit her, for if it had, I'll be d-d if ever *she'd a cried* Buy my live flounders any more [ . . ]

Bob. Now, landlord, arter *that 'ere* drap of max, suppose we haves a drain o' heavy wet, just by way of cooling our chaffers – mine's as dry as a chip – and, I say, do you hear, let's have a two-penny burster (loaf), half a quartern o' bees wax, a ha'porth o' ingens, and a dollop o' salt along vith it, vill you?

Mace. Bellay! a burster and bees wax – ingens and salt *here*. . . . Now then, *here* you are, Muster Grimuzzle. [ . . ]

Bob. [ . . ] My tanners are like young colts; I'm obliged to hunt 'em into a corner, afore I can get hold on 'em – there! hand us over three browns out o' *that'ere* tizzy, and tip us the heavy. (quoted from Matthews 1938: 47-48)

In Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (first published in 1844) the speech of Mrs. Gamp contains an instance of intervocalic <h>-insertion, but the predominant phonological feature characterising her as a Cockney is the exchange of <v> and <w>:

"Ah dear!" moaned Mrs Gamp, sinking into the shaving chair, "that there blessed Bull, Mr Sweedlepipe, has done his wery best to conker me. Of all the trying inwalieges in this walley of shadder, that one beats 'em black and blue." [ . . ] "Sech is life. Vich likeways is the *bend* of all things!" (quoted from Wells 1982: 333)

Only twelve years later we find the stereotypical <h>-insertion and <h>-omission that is also typical of Shaw's representation of Cockney characters in a fictitious Cockney letter in *Punch*. The following lines (quoted from Matthews 1938: 58) illustrate the change:



Well, fryda *borgust* twenty nine it was theer *hopenin* day  
 And if the *Hentry* into mosko were whats kawled a grand sooksay:  
 But ho! to tel you *arf* of wot I *eard* & thort & sor  
 Wood take me *arf* a wollum, wich *peraps* mite be a bor: etc.

The fictitious writer of this letter omits and inserts initial <h> with the result that we have something like an inverse spelling. What looks at first sight like random <h>-insertions and <h>-omissions is, however, not as unsystematic as it seems. In the extract <h>-omissions follow the high vowels [i] and [u], whereas the inserted aitches occur between schwa and half open or open vowels, the positions in which in other varieties of English intrusive [ɹ] is found. The phrase *theer hopenin day* suggests, like the phrase *for Hirish* in Miss Bloomsbury's speech, that Cockneys may have used a linking [h] rather than a linking /r/ before stressed words beginning with a vowel.

The existence of <h>-insertion in Cockney suggested by literary representations is supported by the earliest transcripts of recorded speech. These recordings were made by Sivertsen and date from the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties. The speakers were born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and Sivertsen's transcripts show that [h]-dropping is widespread among them. In one of the recordings, however, one of the oldest speakers, who was born in the eighteen seventies, uses intervocalic [h]-insertion in *their arm*, which is realised as [ðeə hɑ'm] (Sivertsen 249). Additional instances of [h]-insertion are listed by Sivertsen (141-142) in her section on /h/, where she lists the following phrases:<sup>7</sup>

no I [h] ain't  
 in 'her (h)ouse  
 'time to get '[h]up  
 'te '[h]aitch (the letter sequence)  
 (h)e(r) '[h]errands  
 fo(r) 'he(r) '[h]anyway  
 I'll [h]en(d) that story

<sup>7</sup> I have replaced Sivertsen's phonemic transcription system by an orthographic one using parenthesis for letters which are mute in the speaker's realisation and [h] to indicate [h]-insertion, as in Sivertsen's phonemic transcription /h/ is also used to indicate vowel length, which would be confusing in the context of the present paper.

All of these [h]-insertions definitely occur intervocalically at word boundaries, with the exception of *time to get up* and *I'll end that story*. In these two cases Sivertsen's phonemic transcription does not tell us how the /t/ in *get up* and the /l/ in *I'll* is realised; the latter may however be vocalised, in which case here, too, we may have a case of intervocalic [h]-insertion. As in the literary examples from Edgeworth and Punch, in Sivertsen's examples [h]-insertion seems to be preferred to a linking [ɹ]. The first example illustrates the importance of stress in the distribution of [h]: while [h] is retained in the stressed possessive pronoun, it is omitted in favour of a linking [ɹ] in the unstressed lexical word *house*. The variation between linking [ɹ] and linking [h] had disappeared by 1972, when Leith recorded his Cockney speakers.

This means that while there is evidence for intervocalic [h]-insertion at word boundaries in the speech of Cockneys born in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as well as in nineteenth-century literary sources and a documentary source from Essex, there is no evidence suggesting word-internal [h]-insertion in either nineteenth- or twentieth century London English.<sup>8</sup>

The second phenomenon described by Lass, the variation between linking /r/ and glottal stop in sequences of word-final <r> and word-initial vowel cannot be explained as a substrate feature. With respect to /r/ in Xhosa De Klerk states that "a generally trilled /r/ sound is used instead of a liquid" (1997: 111). "Generally" suggests that there is no positional restriction in Xhosa. In Afrikaans /r/ is not positionally restricted either (Donaldson 1993: 15; Raidt 1983: 103). In his description of South African English /r/ Lanham (1978: 155) explicitly points out post-vocalic /r/ as Afrikaans influence:

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<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the spelling in several documents from the Old English period to the sixteenth century suggests that word-internal intervocalic [h]-insertion did exist in earlier times in English. Charles Jones (1989: 270) states with respect to <h>-ful progressive forms such as *behyng* in Henry Machyn's diary that "these items show a syllable interface between verb 'stem' and suffix which is characterized by the contiguity of two syllable peaks; the syllable to the left of the suffix being coda empty, the suffix itself having no initiating consonantal element.[ . . . ] the segment [h] is possibly best interpreted as a devocalised version of any segment with which it is contiguous and could therefore be seen [ . . . ] as the relatively less vocalic 'filling out' element for both syllables." Such a devocalised version could be [ɦ] and [h] but also [j]. For Old English intervocalic <h>-insertions, see Scragg (1970). The function of <h>-insertion in medieval and Early Modern English texts is discussed in Häcker (2004).

*Post-vocalic r*

Two types of “r-dialect” influence of Afrikaans are noted:

- (i) Resonant r or weak fricative occurs post-vocalically where Afrikaans articulates r, mainly in strongly stressed syllables (examples: “partner, cards”).
- (ii) As a junctural-intonational feature, word-final r is articulated as a resonant giving an auditory impression (to the English ear) of “linking r” except that: (i) it is followed by pause, or (ii) it can be followed by a consonant. (Example: “I came for . . . those in the window”). Distribution is unknown, but it is heard even in Cons SAE.

Lanham’s description clearly shows that Afrikaans influence on South African English would promote postvocalic /r/ irrespective of the quality of the following segment, which is incompatible with the variation between /r/ and glottal stop noted by Lass in *my mother is*.

According to Lass, the systematic variation between linking [ɹ] and word-initial glottal stop, is not described for any variety of present-day English. It does, however, resemble the variation between inserted [h] and linking [ɹ] in Sivertsen’s transcripts. A shift of stress in Sivertsen’s (141) example *her errands* would render the following pair:

- (a) (h)e(r) ‘[h]errands
- (b) ‘her errands

The [h]-insertion in Sivertsen’s example (a) appears in exactly the same position as the glottal stop in South African English in Lass’s example, repeated here for convenience’s sake:

- (a) [ˈmæðər ɪz hɪə] “mother is here”
- (b) [ˈmæðe ʔɪz hɪə] “mother is here” (Lass 1996: 133, examples (2)a and (2)b.)

Just like the glottal stop in Lass’s example, [h] occurs where in the standard a linking [ɹ] is common. All instances of [h]-insertion in Sivertsen’s examples are restricted to stressed syllables, which is exactly the condition for the occurrence of the glottal stop noted by Lass in South African English: “Linking /r/ occurs (not exclusively but mainly) if the ‘vowel-initial’ word following does not bear phrase or sentence accent. Or conversely, linking does not occur if the following form bears accent; and if it does, it begins with [ʔ].”

If the two similar variation patterns are related, a glottal stop must have replaced a former [h]. As the pattern with [h] is attested in Cockney long after the major English settlements were established in South

Africa, this development is most likely to have happened in South African English. This raises the question of when the change has happened and whether it was caused through language contact. An article by the Rev. J.P. Legg, whom we may safely assume to be a speaker of RP,<sup>9</sup> suggests that the use of [h] in South African English differed considerably from Cockney at the end of the nineteenth century. In this article, which appeared in the *Cape Illustrated Magazine* of 1890-91 (Görlach 1997: 271-274), Legg states:

The first thing that strikes an Englishman's ear is perhaps the utter disuse of the letter "H" among the educated English-speaking portion of the Dutch. On the other hand you seldom hear the Cockney abuse of the same letter.

It is a social axiom in England that the dropping of the "H" is a sign at least of the want of good breeding; but in the Cape it would be a very fallacious mode of judging, either of a man's breeding or his education.

Professors may be heard lecturing before the élite [sic] of the surrounding country who are unfamiliar with the English aspirate! (272)

Several aspects of Legg's comments are of interest to the present discussion: (i) [h]-dropping was widespread in South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, (ii) it was not restricted to the lower classes and it was not stigmatised, (iii) it was associated by Legg with Afrikaans native speakers; and (iv) it was different from the contemporary [h]-variation in Cockney. Legg uses the term "disuse" for the variation common in South African English, while he uses "abuse" for that common in Cockney.<sup>10</sup> This would suggest that Cockney had [h] where it did not belong, i.e. [h]-insertion, while Dutch speakers of English at the Cape dropped their aitches, but did not insert [h]. How do Legg's observations compare to later descriptions of South African English? According to Branford (485-486), aitch-dropping was noted in South African English by Hopwood in 1928 and related to aitch-dropping in British English dialects of "the Midlands and the South," whereas he describes [h] as both a feature of South African English and Afrikaans English. Lanham (99), writing fifty years later than Hopwood, states

<sup>9</sup> For the type of English promoted by Anglican public schools in South Africa, see Lanham 1978: 143-144. "Public school" is used in the same sense as in Britain, meaning a fee-paying private school.

<sup>10</sup> The term "abuse" does not exclude [h]-omission, but it cannot refer to [h]-omission without [h]-insertion, as this is what Legg describes with the term "disuse."

with respect to the allophones of /h/ that, in contrast to RP, in South African English “there is virtually no glottal friction in allophones in word-initial position which are pure voiceless vocoids,” but does not mention aitch-dropping. According to Branford (486) aitch-dropping is rare, “even in broader SAEP [South African English pronunciation]” but “in certain contexts [h] is manifested in its voiced form [ɦ], giving the auditory impression of a ‘dropped aitch,’ as in the proper name Gledhill as ‘Gledill’.”

These descriptions suggest (i) that the boundary between murmured [ɦ] and aitch-dropping may at least partly be one of perception and (ii) that in the course of the twentieth century aitch-dropping as well the use of [ɦ] as a realisation of /h/ has decreased in South African English.

In standard English, a murmured [ɦ] is attested as a possible realisation of intervocalic /h/ in words such as *behind* by Cruttenden/Gimson (1994: 174), and as a frequent realisation by Ladefoged (2001: 124; footnote 1). The different descriptions in terms of frequency, “a few speakers” (Cruttenden/Gimson) and “most speakers I have observed” (Ladefoged) suggest that this realisation is more frequent in American English than in British English. Sweet (1907: 56) describes [ɦ] as the norm for English in medial intervocalic position in 1907, while Daniel Jones states in 1950 that [ɦ] is “often heard in English as a variant of *h* between voiced sounds, i.e. in such words as [ˈbɔɪɦud] (boyhood), [ədˈɦiə] (adhere), [ɪnˈɦabit] (inhabit), [ˈmoulɦɪl] (mole-hill). In some types of English, and notably with many South African speakers, the ordinary *h* of RP is not used at all, but voiced *h* replaces it in all positions [square brackets replace Jones’ use of bold type for the sake of clarity, MH].” The difference between these descriptions suggests that the use of [ɦ] as a phonetically conditioned allophone of /h/ was firmly established in nineteenth-century English but has decreased in British English with respect to both its frequency and to the contexts in which it is used except for South African English where it is firmly established as the normal realisation for /h/. Jones’s description of this sound is based on speech perception: “It is as if one pronounced a vowel using a stronger current of air than is necessary for a vowel, the superfluous air causing a simultaneous frictional sound in and around the glottis” (113). This description resembles that of Cooper, who states in his description of standard southern English in 1687 that “H [...] hath no particular formation, neither does it make any sound of it self, but a bare aspiration



[. . .]" (quoted from Mugglestone, 112).<sup>11</sup> This would suggest that the standard realisation of /h/ may have been similar to the South African one in late Early Modern English and that southern English may have been the source of the South African English realisation of /h/ as [fɪ] and possibly also of the Afrikaans realisation of /h/ as [fɪ], whose origin is obscure.

The replacement of [h] by [ʔ] in the onset of vowel-initial words is probably a contact phenomenon. Present-day Cockney has, of course, glottal onsets, but in Cockney they are the result of a spread of the glottal stop which started as a replacement of plosives and only at a much later stage spread to vowel onsets, whereas lower class South African English has glottal onsets of vowels but no glottal stop replacement of plosives. Glottal onsets of vowels in Afrikaans are attested in 1928 by Hopwood and are likely to have been a feature transferred from seventeenth-century northern Dutch, which has up to this day, just as its (northern) German neighbour, glottal onsets of vowels (Blancquaert, 57). The context-dependent variation between glottal stop and [fɪ] or [j] in the speech of (northern) German immigrants, who had *harten Einsatz* [glottal onset] prevocally at the beginning of words and at morpheme boundaries in words such as *beobachten*, but had [fɪ] morpheme-internally in words such as *sehen*, may have reinforced the variation between word-internal [fɪ]-insertion and word-initial [ʔ] in South African English.<sup>12</sup>

To sum up, the origin of (word-internal) South African linking [fɪ] cannot be related directly to either African or Afrikaans substrate nor to nineteenth-century southern British English. Unless further evidence emerges that suggests otherwise, it seems most likely that the phenomenon developed in South Africa. The stress-conditioned variation between linking /r/ and initial glottal stop in sequences of words ending in <r> and words beginning with a vowel, however, shows a strong resemblance to the Cockney variation between linking /r/ and an intrusive linking /h/, which is attested in the middle of the twentieth century

<sup>11</sup> Cooper, a native of Hertfordshire, describes his own native variety according to the following statement which appears in the preface of his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae*: "ducatus fui meridiana regione, qua partem vitæ occupatæ plurimam, primis annis, Scholæ præfui grammaticæ, ubi etiam purissima & emendata loquendi consuetudo norma est" (quoted from 309).

<sup>12</sup> "German immigration picked up during the eighteenth century, and from the 1750s, the Germans outnumbered the Dutch immigrants by far. [. . .] Until 1789, approximately 15,000 German immigrants arrived at the Cape" (Ponelis 1993: 18-19).

in the speech of speakers who were born in the eighteen seventies. Spellings in literary and non-literary documents with prevocalic <h>-insertion after words ending in <r> suggest that this type of variation may go as far back as the early nineteenth century in London and its surroundings. The change from [h] or [ɦ] to [ʔ] is probably a contact phenomenon, as Afrikaans as well as its most influential ancestor, northern Dutch, had glottal onsets of vowels. It seems possible, if not likely, that South African linking [ɦ] may eventually be replaced by a glottal stop, as not only in RP have words such as *cooperate* realisations with intervocalic glottal stop (Cruttenden/Gimson 1994: 155), but also in Afrikaans are the linking consonants [j, w, ɦ] giving way to glottal stops with some speakers.



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