

“The thing about [hɪŋ]: Production, perception and qualitative data from (th):[h] in Edinburgh speech”

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Sound files: <https://soundcloud.com/s1217013/sets/perceptionquestionnaire>

Abstract

This study reports on [h] realisations and perceptions of (th) in female speakers from traditionally ‘working class’ areas of Edinburgh. It adds to the large amount of variationist work on TH-fronting ((th):[f]) in Scotland, where the [h] variant has received less attention. I analysed differences in my 6 participants grouped in **Communities of Practice**, as well as at the level of the **individual**. My participants produced and gave grammaticality judgements on (th):[h] in sociolinguistic interview settings. I found a large amount of variation in both of these groupings of participants, as well as within differences in self-identification. **Scots** speakers both produced, and were able to recognise (th):[h] in previously-attested settings.

Background: Previous accounts of (th):[h]

Descriptive: Early accounts of English in Scotland ignore the [h] variant, citing that “Scottish dialect [forms] should be avoided” (Grant, 1913:40). Non-linguistic accounts give examples of *‘hink* in popular usage (Mackie, 1978), and that Edinburgh speakers are beginning to make “cavalier treatment of *th*...like their Clydeside opposites”.

Descriptive: Linguists in the late 20th Century noticed that [h] appears in words containing **thing** and **think** (Aitken, 1982/1984; Wells, 1984; Chirrey, 1999), and that these forms are “widespread in Central Scotland” (Macafee, 1983). (th):[h] is often referred to as a “**traditional**” or “**localised**” variant.

Quantitative: Work in Fife (Clark & Trousdale, 2009) and Glasgow (Stuart-Smith and Timmins, 2006, Stuart-Smith et al., 2007, Lawson, 2014) showed that [h] was the most common variant in **thing** and **think** amongst their ‘working class’ participants and this remained stable **diachronically**. There may also be effects of **frequency**, as forms of ‘thing’ and ‘think’ are consistently the most frequently occurring (th) words in corpora.

Linguistic: Because this alternation is lexically-**restricted** and diachronically stable, theories incorporating lenition or frequency-led change do not give a full insight into their motivation.

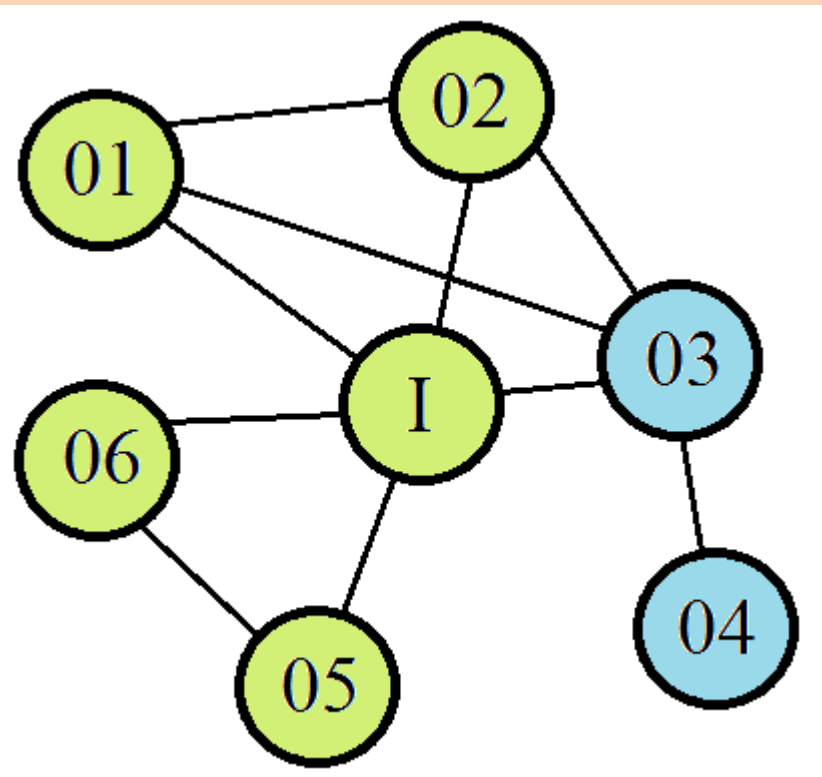
Ethnographic: Lawson (2014) reports that [h]-usage is more nuanced, and used to identify aspects of **group membership**. The ‘Neds’ Community of Practice, who index ‘roughness’ and ‘anti-establishment’ produce [h] categorically (100%) in ‘thing’ and ‘think’ forms.

Research Questions

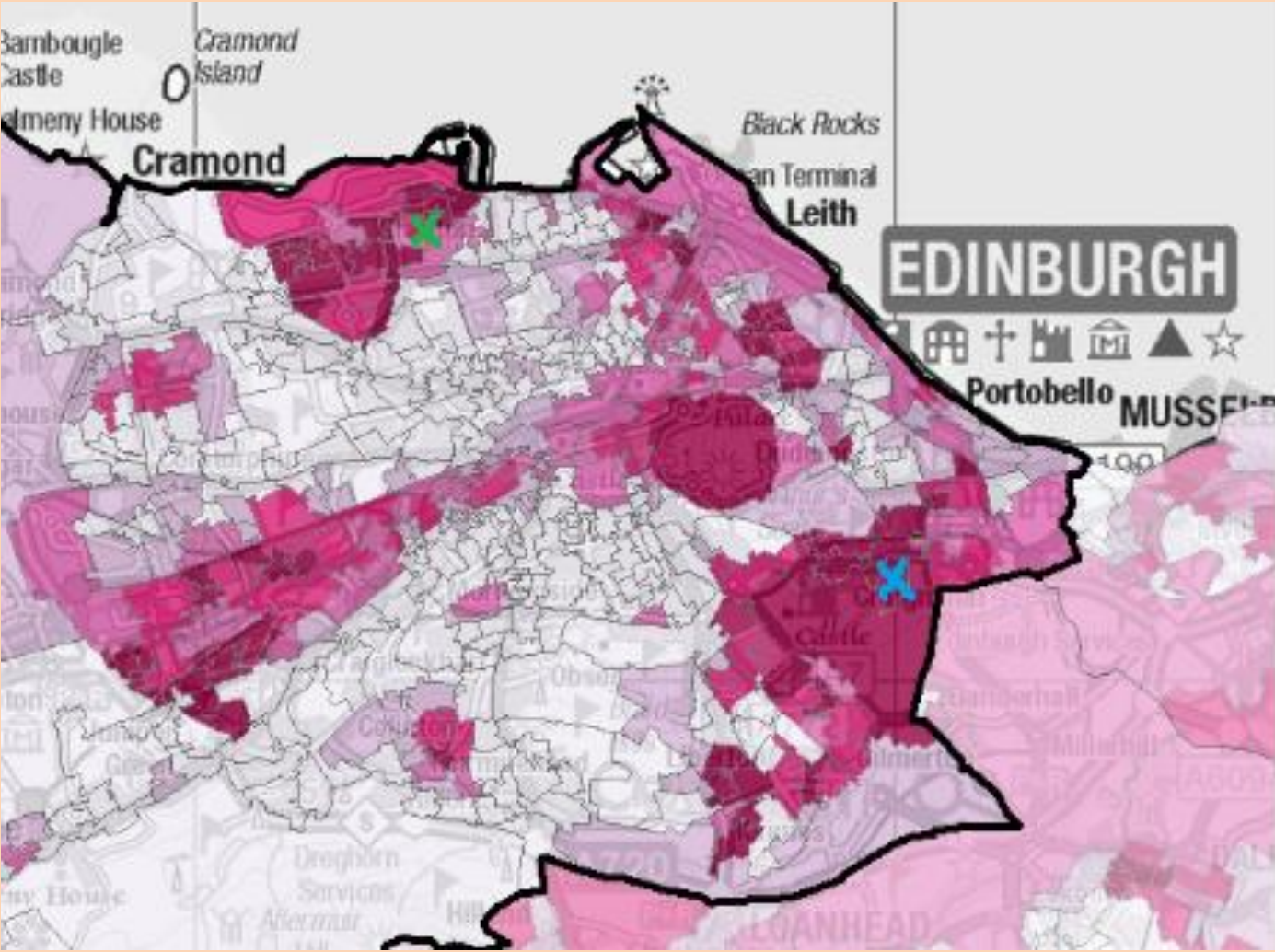
- 1) What is the patterning of (th):[h] in Edinburgh speech?
- 2) How do Edinburgh natives perceive (th):[h]?

Participants

Six female speakers in self-selected **pairs**, all aged 20 or 21. The two Communities of Practice were from the University (city centre) and College (eastern edge of the city).



Green = University CoFP
Blue = College CoFP



Materials

Attestation	Position		
	Initial	Medial	Final
Attested	1a	2a	N/A
Unattested	1b	2b	3

The word patterns used in my analyses

- Interview in three sections:
- Reading List
 - Free conversation on topics related to Edinburgh/Scotland
 - Grammaticality judgement questionnaire based on recorded sentences



12) “Is there **anything** ready?” / 13) “Is there any **thin** red ribbon?”

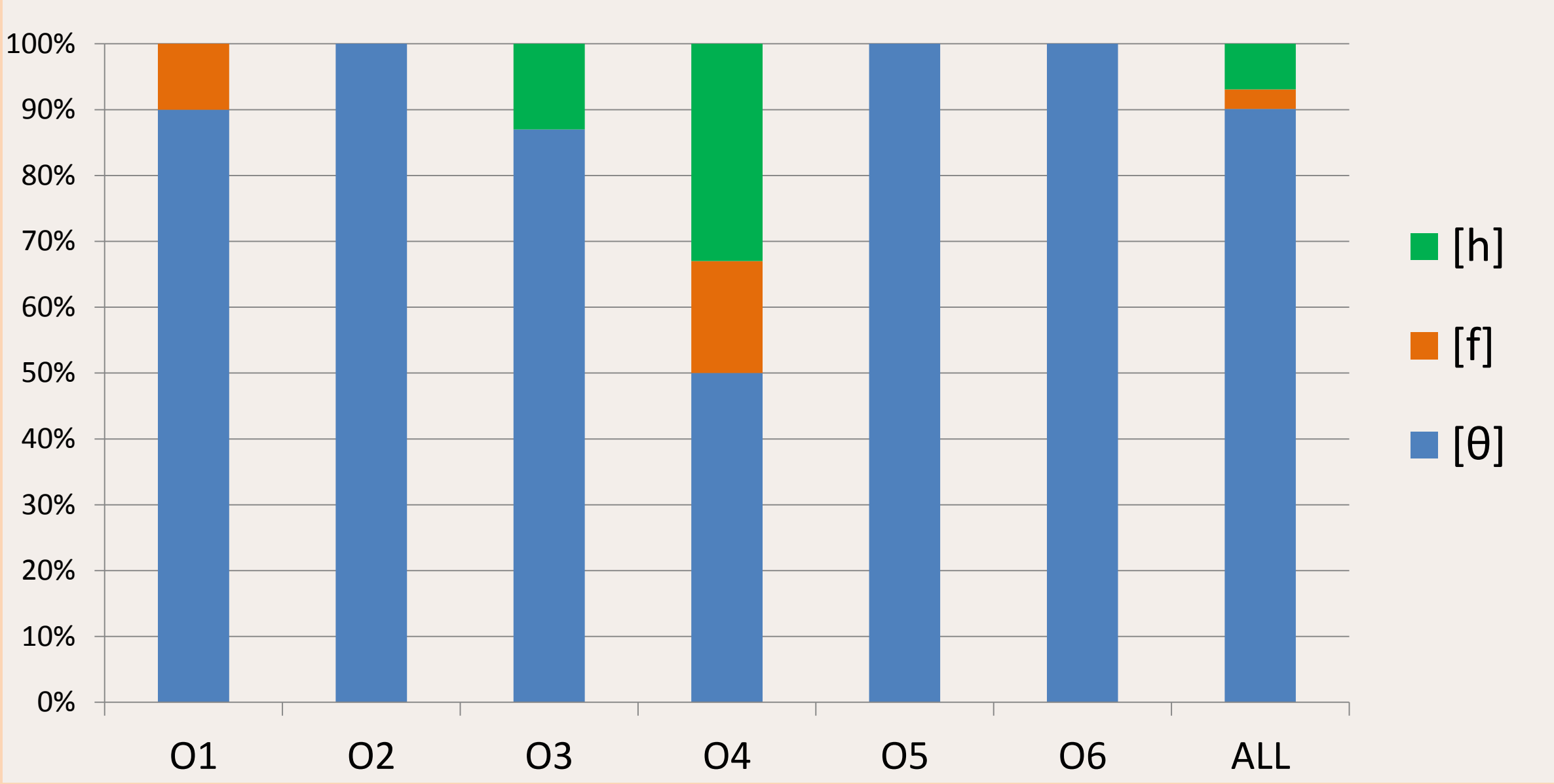
Circle 1, 2, or 3 according to your opinion of the sentence’s production.

- 1= **anything**, with this pronunciation, is normal for me.
2= I am familiar with **anything** being pronounced like this, but I wouldn’t do it very often.
3= I would never pronounce **anything** like this.

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

All (th) words in bold and italic were recorded with a [h]-realisation

Findings - Production



Findings – Perception and qualitative findings

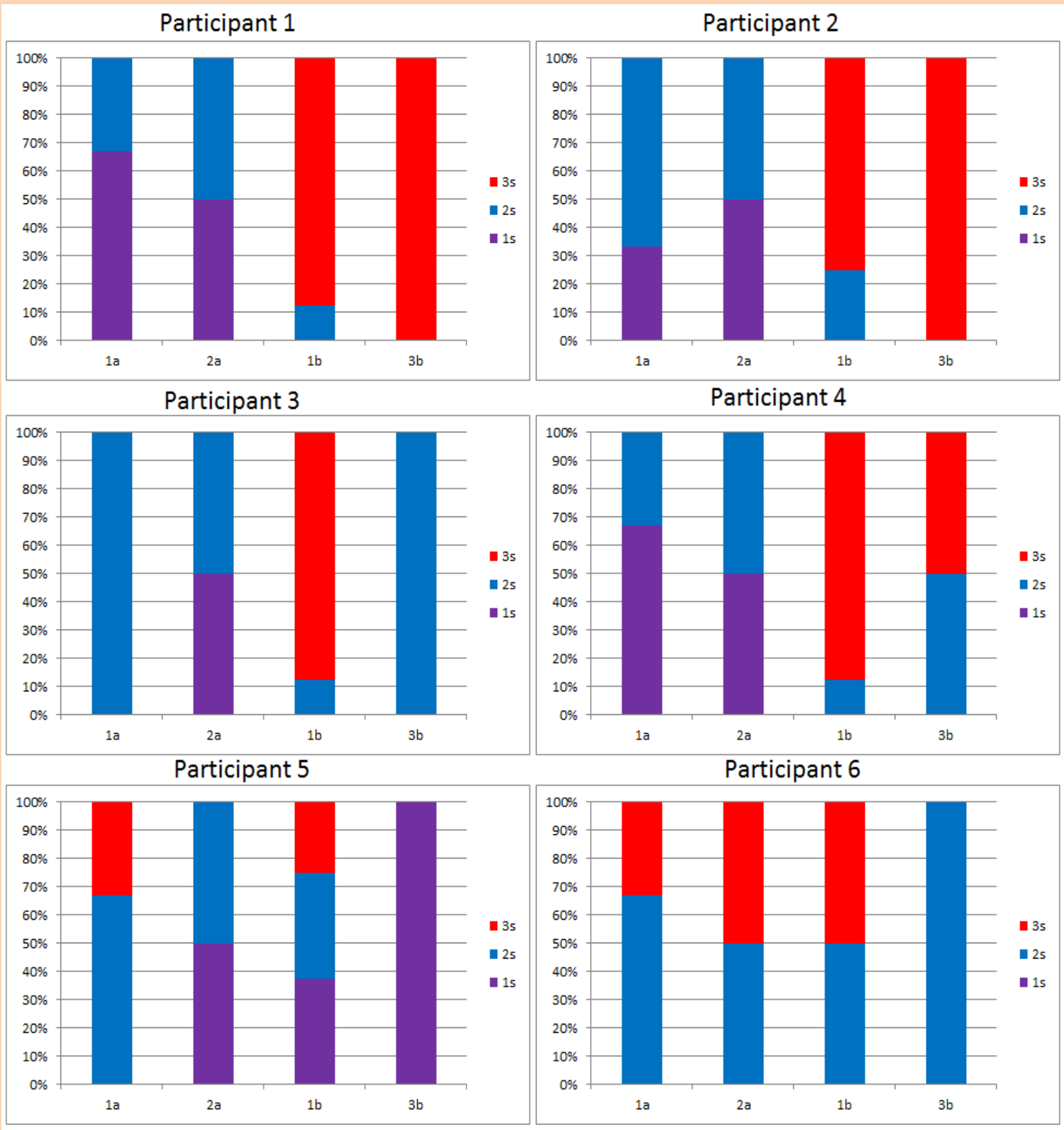


Table 15 – χ^2			
Participant	p value (N=15)	CoFP	Scots speaker?
01	0.001	University	Yes
02	0.003	University	Yes
03	0.01	College	Yes
04	0.003	College	Yes
05	1	University	No
06	1	University	No

03: “I grew up in quite a poverty-ridden area”

06: [Edinburgh speech is] kinda posh Scottish or rougher English

04: We both stay in the east, but our accents are completely different

Discussion

(th):[h] production was restricted to the most **frequent** ‘thing’ and ‘think’ forms, and in my study to the College **Community of Practice**. I suggest this indexes a **locally-situated** identity (c.f. Stuart-Smith et al., 2007), where (th):[h] may index ideas of **anti-establishment**. Moreover, only **Scots speakers** could accurately identify (th):[h] in its attested environments. Further research could implement Watson and Clark’s attitudinal rating system for the perception of multiple variants that index Scottish identity like /r/ pharyngealisation and /l/ vocalisation.



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