

Contact-induced change? Variation in the use of the English relative clause among adolescents in London

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London: *'a point of arrival'* (Bermant, 1975)

- *A source of linguistic innovations and their dissemination*

(Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003)

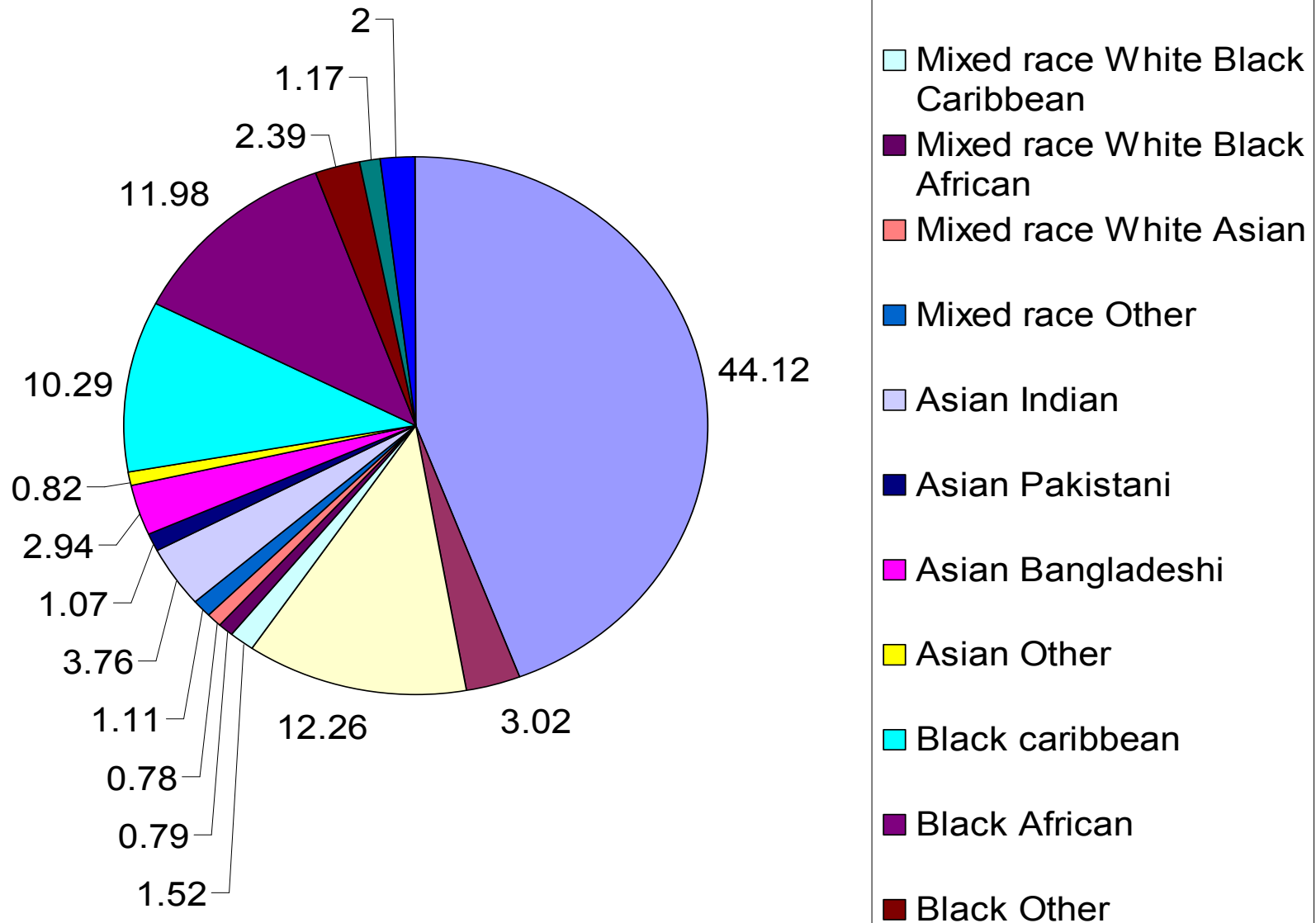
- *'the most influential source of phonological innovation in England and perhaps in the whole English-speaking world'*

(Wells 1982:301)



 City of London

Hackney Ethnic Group Percentages



Hackney: percentage of schoolchildren speaking a first language other than English

Language	%	Language	%
Turkish	10.61	Hebrew	0.75
Benuic (Yoruba, Igbo)	7.89	Hesperonesic	0.10
Sylheti	5.41	Hindi/Urdu	1.62
Akan	1.93	Italian	0.34
Albanian	0.03	Kurdish	0.10
Amharic	0.04	Panjabi	2.46
Arabic	0.97	Portuguese	0.67
Bantuic	0.30	Slavonic	0.07
Farsi	0.02	Somali	0.21
Gä	0.02	Spanish	0.59
Greek	0.33	Tamil	0.004
Gujurati	3.13	Tigrinya	0.01
Hausa	0.01	Vietnamese	1.44

(figures taken from Baker and Eversley 2000)

- Inner London:
 - multicultural population
 - large-scale in-migration and out-migration since 1950s
 - Data from 44 multi-ethnic adolescents (16-19) and 6 white Anglo older speakers (+65)

Ethnic backgrounds of participants in inner London:

- 6 White Anglo older speakers (+65 yrs old)
- 44 adolescents:

White Anglos

Black Afro-Caribbean

Black African

Mixed race; White British/Black Afro-Caribbean; White British/Indian; Moroccan/Egyptian

Bangladeshi

Moroccan

Columbian

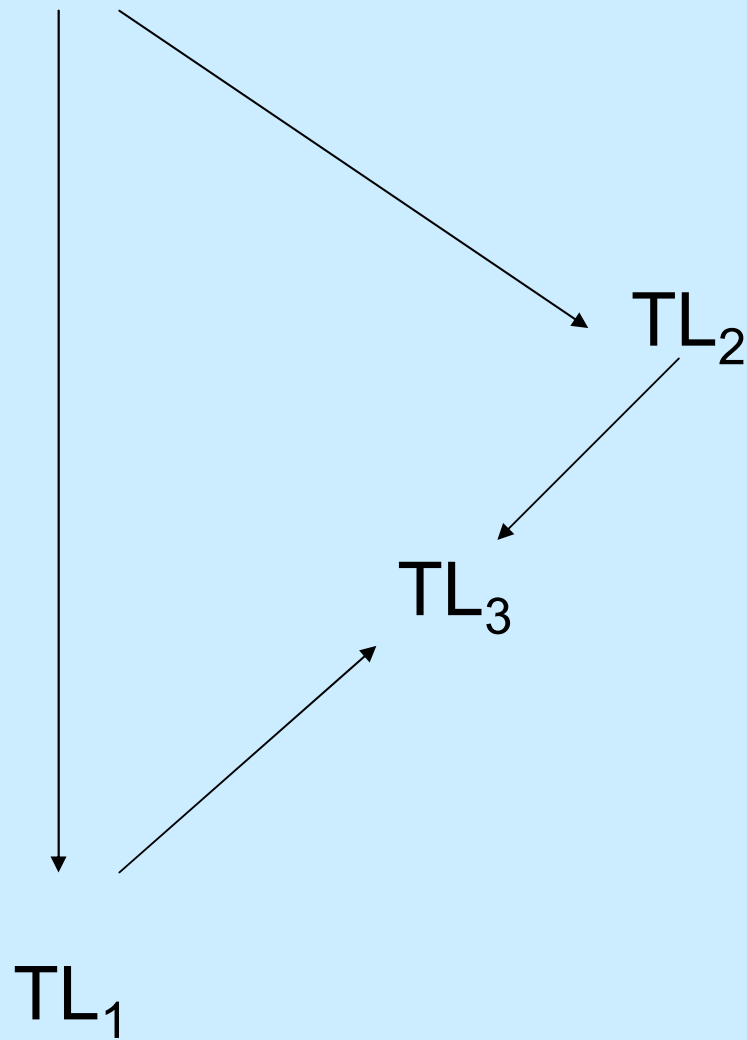
Portuguese

Chinese

- Many are bilingual / bi-dialectal

Native language

Learner errors



adapted from Thomason 2001

Evidence of contact-induced innovations?

- Phonological innovations (Torgersen *et al.* 2007)

Vowel changes:

- Fronting of GOOSE
- Fronting and monophthongisation of PRICE
- Monophthongisation of GOAT
- Monophthongisation of FACE

Consonant changes:

- Loss of H-dropping
- DH stopping

- Morphosyntactic innovations

Past BE (Cheshire and Fox 2006):

- *was/wasn't* levelling among Afro-Caribbeans
- reduction of non-standard past BE among Bangladeshi speakers

Quotatives (Cheshire and Fox 2007):

- Emergence of new quotative *This is + subject* particularly among speakers with dense multi-ethnic friendship networks

English relative markers:

- *that/∅* strategies since Old English

1) *I used to move with a lot of people **that sold drugs***

2) *I didn't like the person **I was with***

- *which/whom/whose* introduced in early ME

3) *the new underfelt **which I'm gonna have***

4) *the girl **whom you described as intelligent****

5) *the boy **whose arm is broken****

- *who* last *WH* form introduced early 15th century

6) *I'm the only one **who's gone to college***

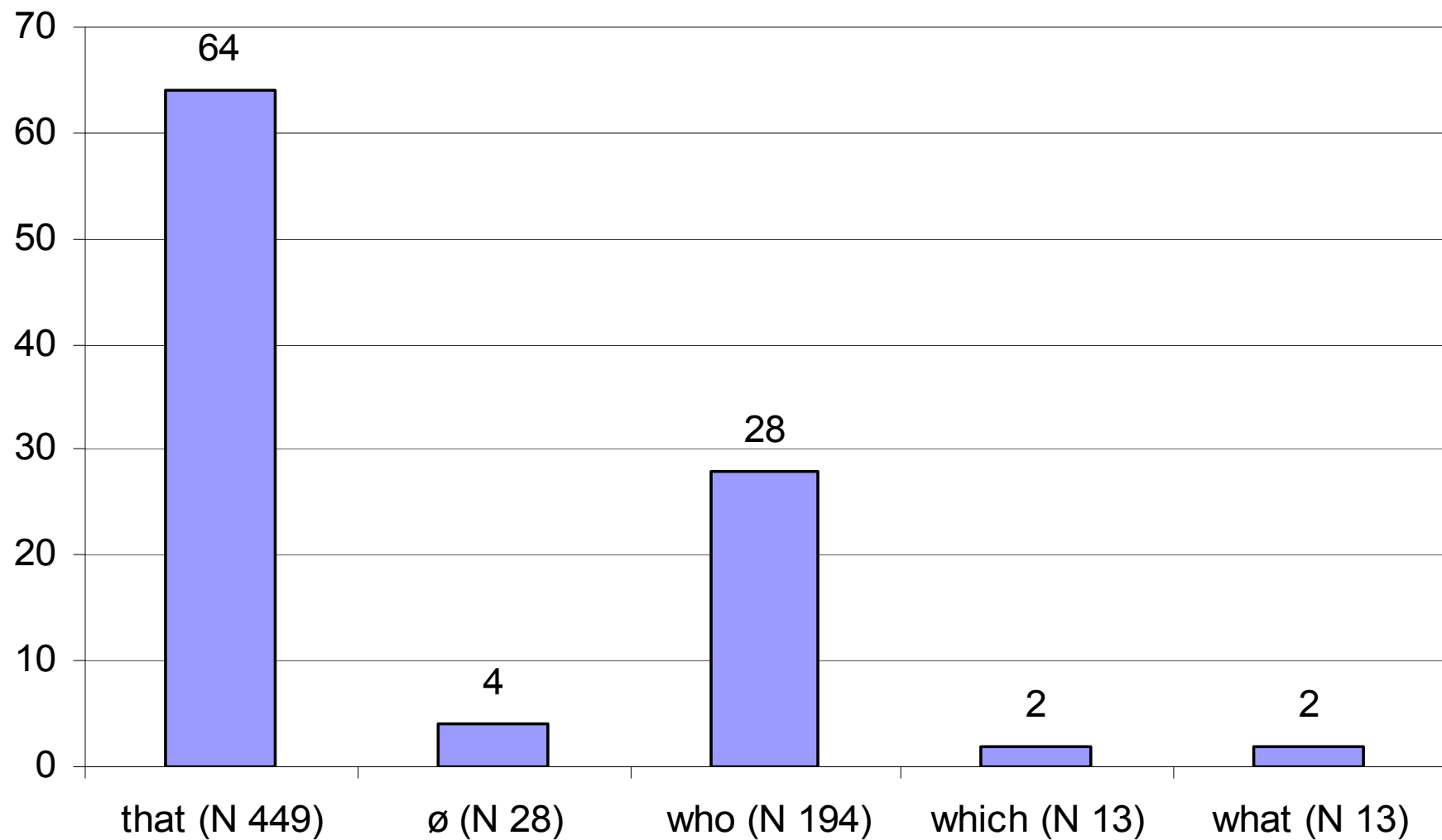
- *at, as* (northern dialects) and *what* (southern dialects)

7) *that's just as far as them trees **what I noticed***

Factors constraining the distribution of relative markers within the relative marker paradigm:

- Grammatical function of the antecedent head
- Animacy of the antecedent head
- Definiteness of the antecedent head
- Sentence structure
 - Existentials
 - Cleft sentences
 - Possessives with *have/got*
- Length and complexity of relative clause
- Education of speaker
- Age
- Gender

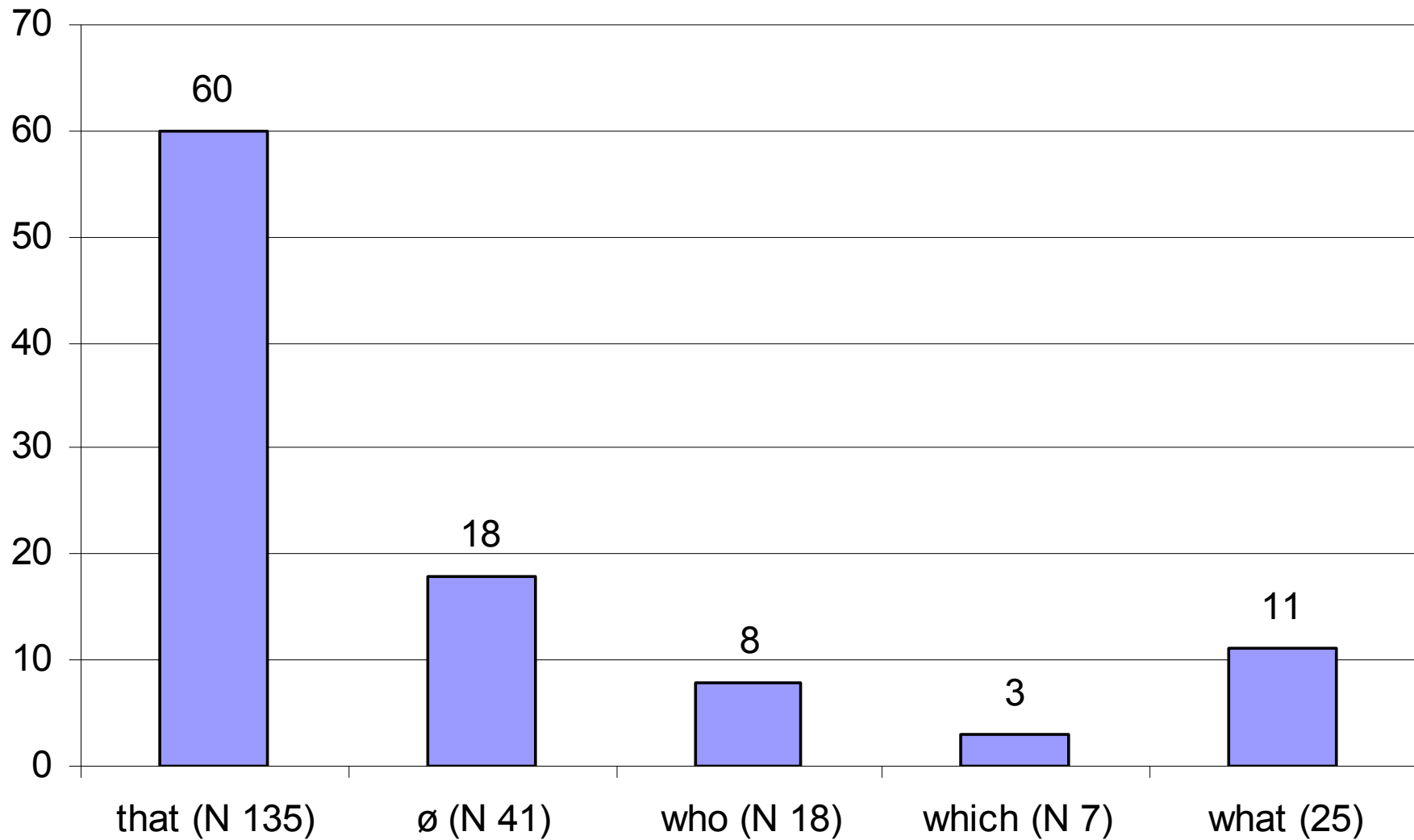
Distribution of relative markers in SUBJECT function in Inner London



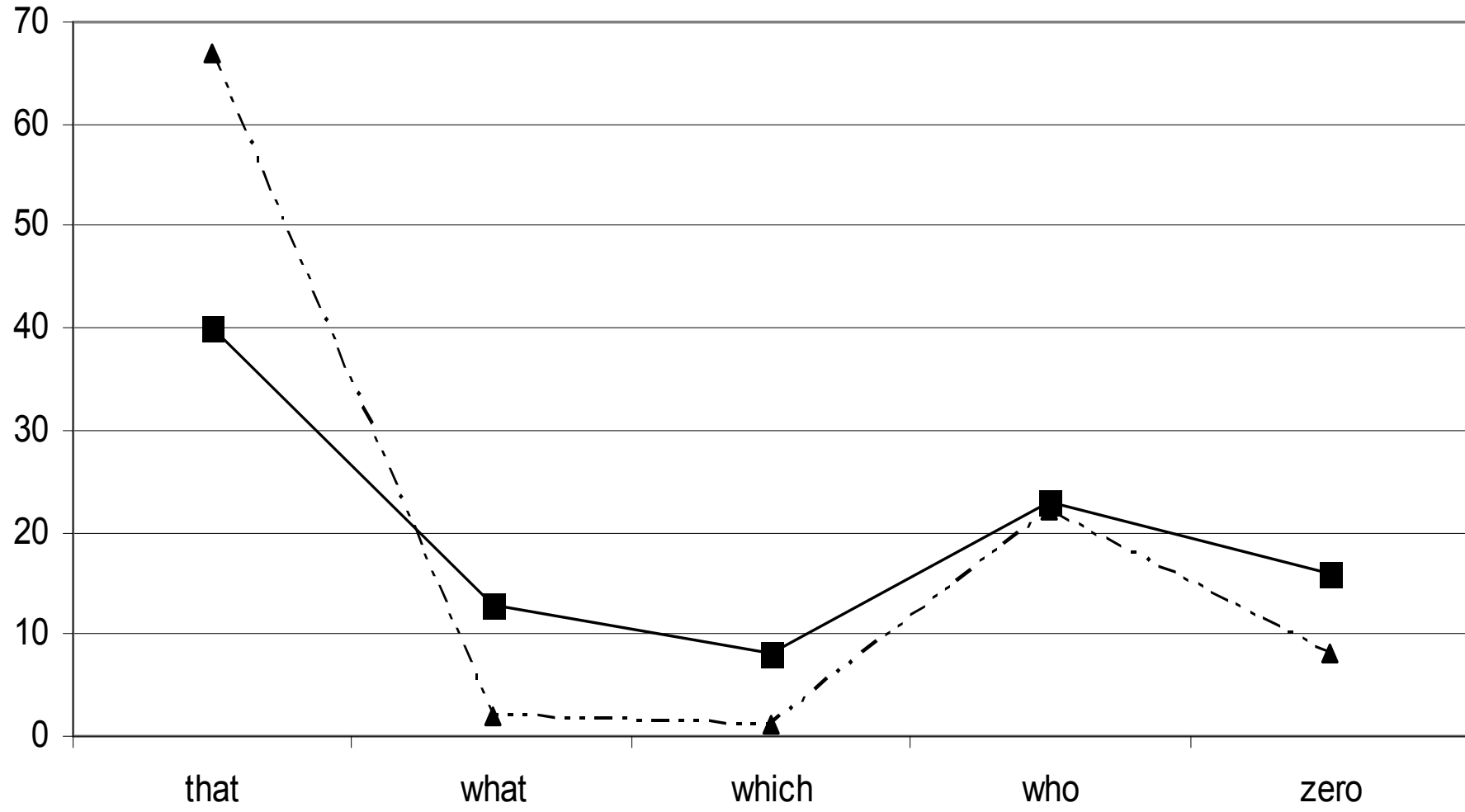
Distribution of relative markers in SUBJECT FUNCTION by human property of antecedent

	Humans		Lexical item 'People'		Things		Total <i>N</i>
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	
Inner London							
<i>that</i>	59	251	70	102	79	95	448
<i>what</i>	-	2	-	-	9	11	13
<i>which</i>	-	2	1	1	8	10	13
<i>who</i>	36	154	26	38	1	1	193
<i>zero</i>	5	20	3	4	3	4	28
Total <i>N</i>		429		145		121	695

Distribution of relative markers in OBJECT function in Inner London



Distribution of relative markers in Inner London by age



—■— Older Speakers (+65+) - -▲- - Younger Speakers (16-19)

Why *that* ?

- **Simplification**
 - **Loss of inflectional morphology (loss of *whose*, *whom*)**
 - **Loss of dialect form (regionally and socially marked *what*)**
 - **Loss of variation between *that* and zero form in object position**
- ***who* semantically easy to maintain**

Multifunctionality of *that* (Cheshire, 1995)

- Intensifier *he was **that** ill*
- Discourse marker *she likes pasta and **that***
- Demonstrative ***get that** one, not this one*
- Relative marker *the woman **that** saw Mary*
- Complementiser *she believes **that** there is life after death; I said **that** she should go;*
- Sentence anaphor
A: I've only got one granny and I don't like her
B: **that's** probably because she lives with you

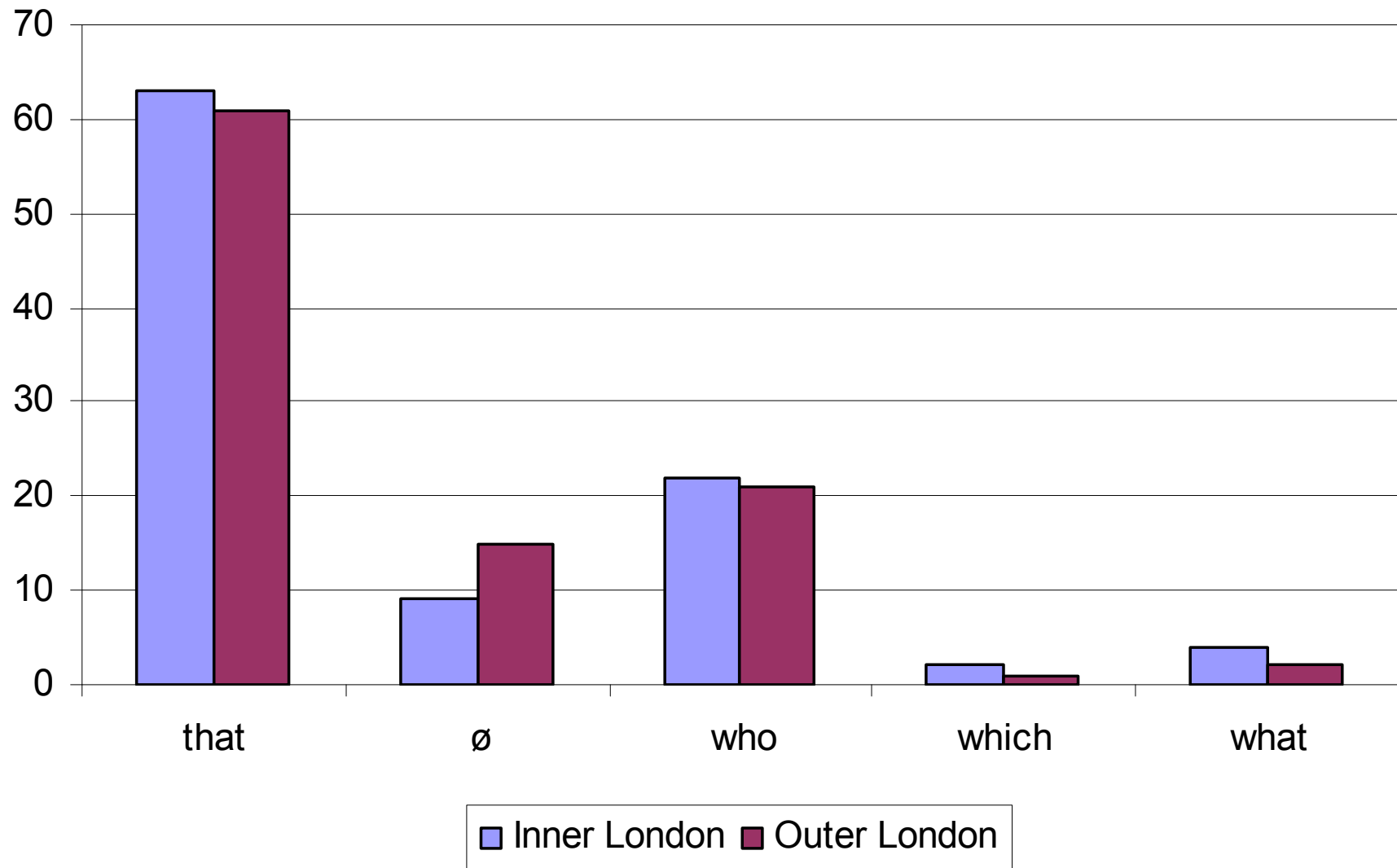
BUT.....

Outer London:

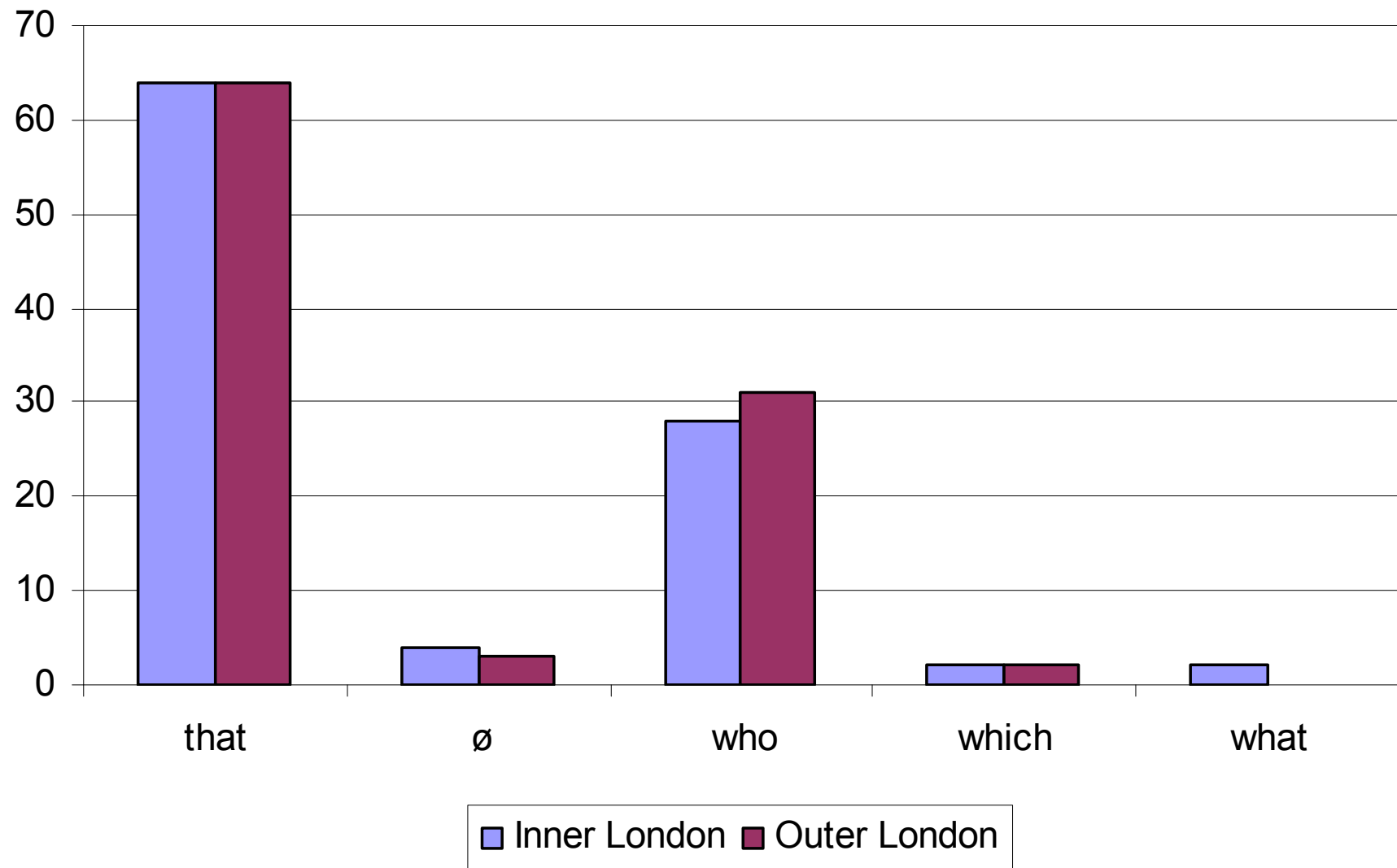
- predominantly white Anglo and monolingual population
- large-scale in-migration from inner London since the 1950s
- Data from 34 adolescents (16-19) and 6 older speakers (+65)
- 880 tokens



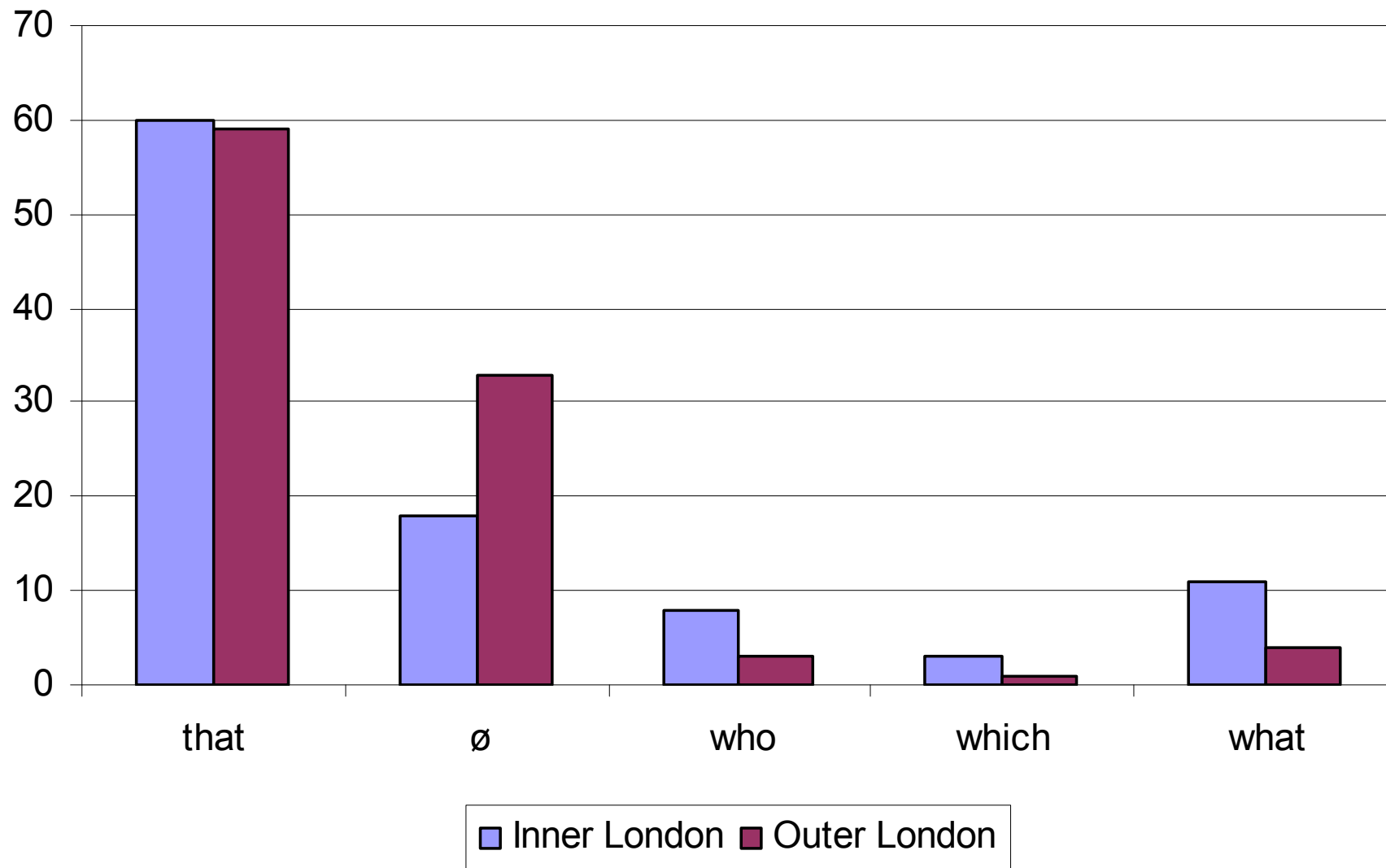
Distribution of relative markers in Inner and Outer London



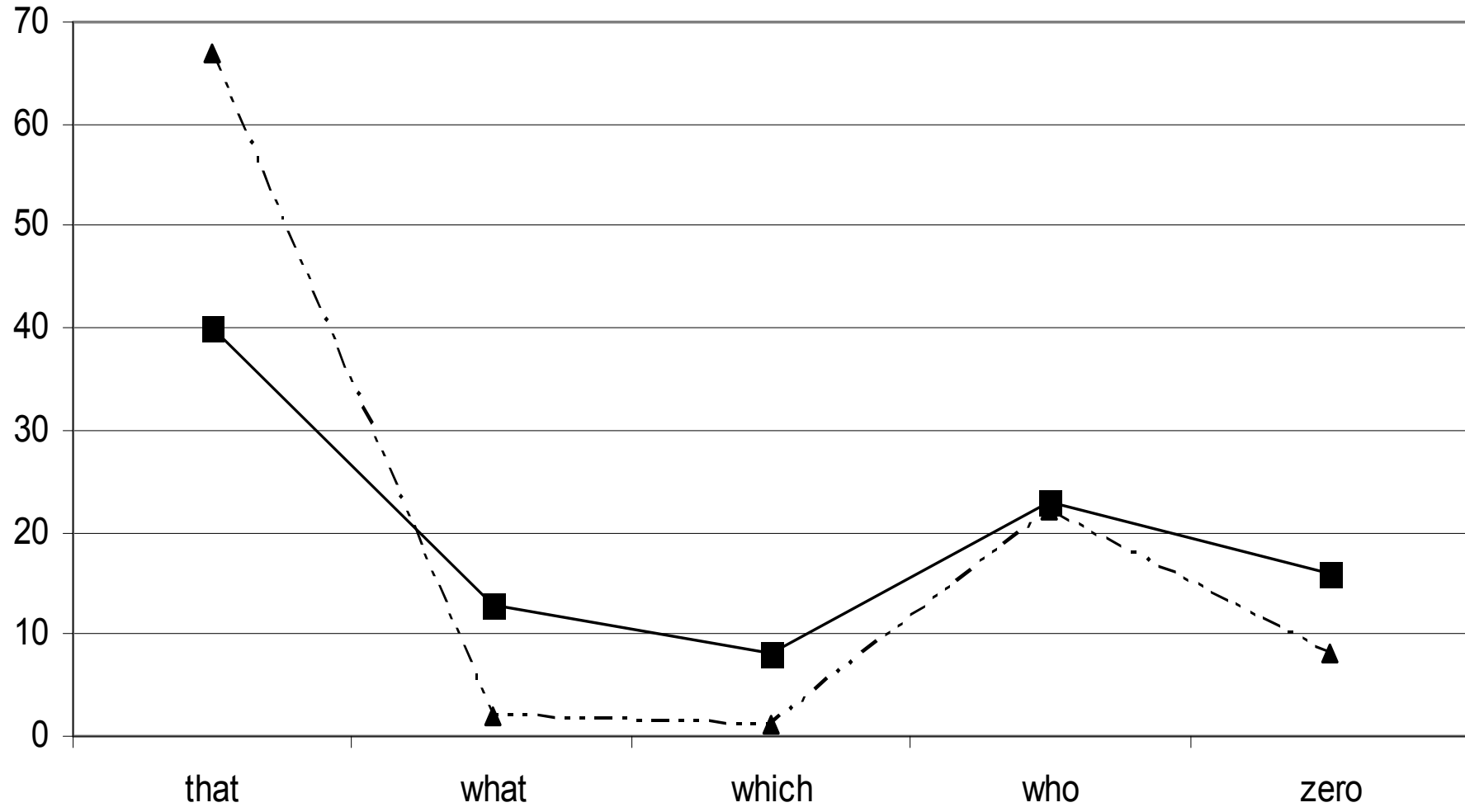
Distribution of relative markers in SUBJECT function in Inner and Outer London



Distribution of relative markers in OBJECT function in Inner and Outer London

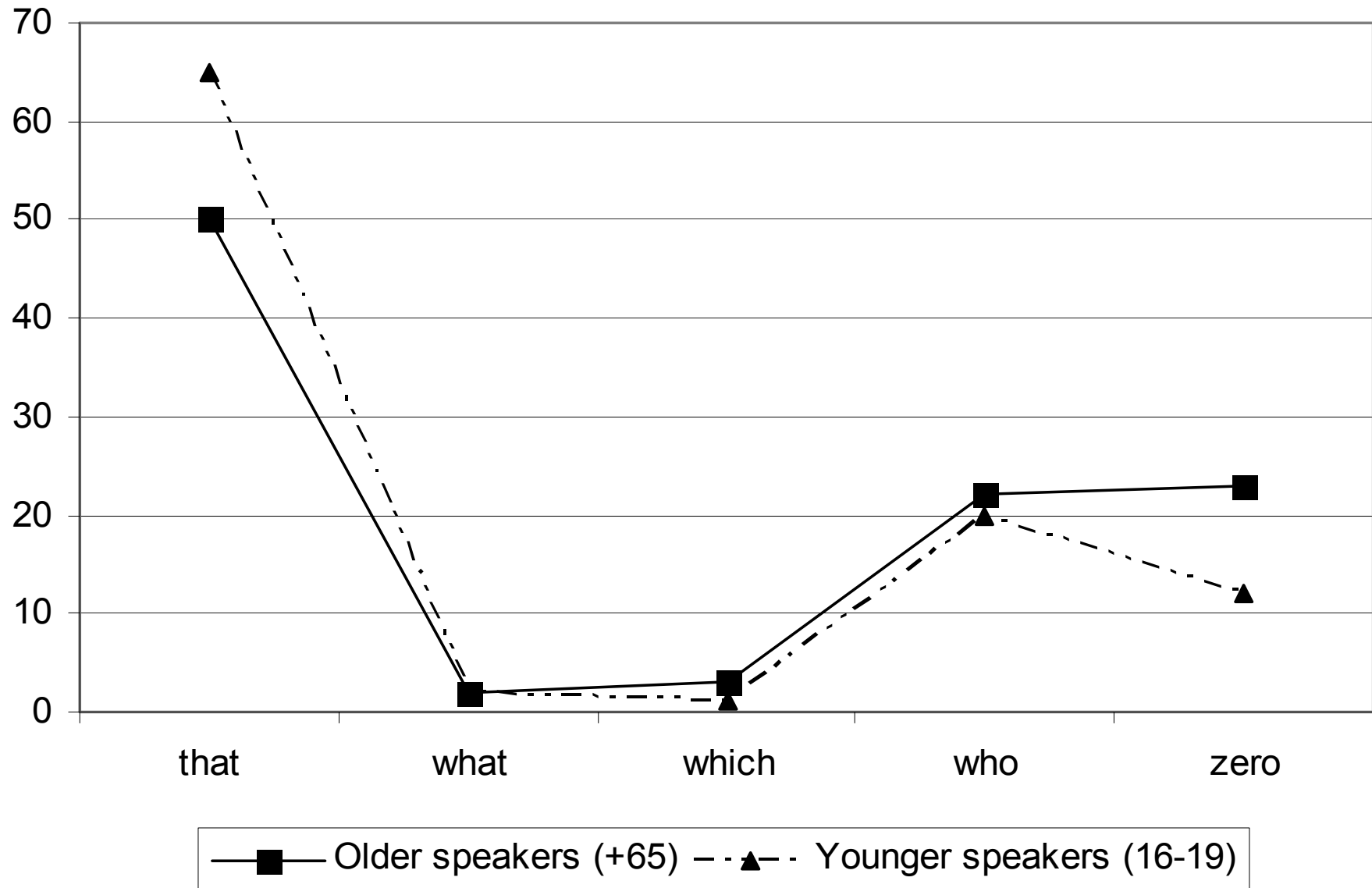


Distribution of relative markers in Inner London by age



—■— Older Speakers (+65+) - -▲- - Younger Speakers (16-19)

Distribution of relative markers in Outer London by age



- Contact-Induced change?

Yes, probably.....

- Internally-motivated change?

Yes, probably.....

- Something else?

Yes, probably.....

- A combination of all three?

Yes, probably.....

Our thanks to.....

Eivind Torgersen for extracting tokens;

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Linguistic Innovators: the English of adolescents in London

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www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/linguistics/innovators/index.htm

(website maintained by E.Torgersen)

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