

Speak out loud and proud if you have a Norfolk accent

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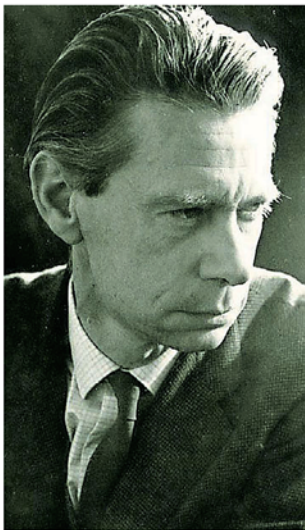
Some while ago I wrote about how, 60 years ago, my father felt he had to modify his Norfolk accent to avoid being discriminated against in his working life.

He was manager of the publishing department at Jarrolds for very many years, here in the city, but the problem wasn't there; it was out in the wider world of East Anglian and British business generally.

My column was republished in the EDP24 online edition, and a number of people posted interesting and sympathetic comments. One lady wrote that she was deeply saddened when she heard about how others are judged by their accents: "We should be applauding their rich variety, not condemning or making judgements." Of course I agree.

She then reported that someone she knew had said that they would remove their children from a particular local school in our area if the children started speaking with a regional accent.

"As a person born and bred in Norfolk",



she continued, "I find this kind of ignorance deeply offensive."

So do I. It was ignorant. And it was offensive.

It was ignorant because everybody in the world grows up with a regional accent of some kind. This is because young chil-

■ Left, Peter Trudgill's father John modified his Norfolk accent for the sake of his career.

Picture: SUBMITTED

dren quite naturally learn to speak like the people around them.

It is part of our heritage as primates that we are social animals.

Humans are genetically programmed to engage in "behavioural coordination" with the other human beings we associate with.

We talk like the others talk. That's how we learn our language in the first place; and the particular form of the language we learn will almost always be the dialect and accent of those around us.

If children speak like the rest of the pupils they go to school with, that's a good sign. It's normal. When young children don't speak like everybody else at their school, it indicates that something's wrong – that somehow they don't belong, and aren't properly integrated into the community they should be part of.

And the comment was offensive because the person whose remarks were reported was objecting specifically to OUR local accent.

If you live in Norfolk and are pleased about that, then you should expect your children to sound like they grew up in Norfolk, and be pleased about that too!

If you want them to grow up sounding like they come from London, you should move to London.

Please.