

# Diachronic Change in New Englishes: Prospects and Challenges

Full-day workshop at ISLE 4 in Poznań, Poland, 18-21 September 2016

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## Outline

The last two decades have seen a dramatic upsurge in corpus-based research on New Englishes, largely thanks to the International Corpus of English project (ICE, Greenbaum 1991). The two primary aims of this research program were, arguably, to (1) uncover patterns of unity and diversity among these varieties, i.e. how they differ from each other, and (2) explain differences between varieties by identifying continuities with and departures from the structure of their ancestor varieties (usually British English), frequently referring to influence from first languages (L1 influence) and general language learning mechanisms (e.g. Sharma 2005).

However, when trying to explain differences between varieties, researchers often (necessarily) had to rely on drastic generalisations; Notable among these is that present-day varieties are compared to uncover historical developments. For example, the historical input to contemporary Indian English was not contemporary British English, as tacitly assumed by Fuchs (2012) and much other research, but 18<sup>th</sup> century (standard and non-standard) British English. Such generalisations were necessary because empirical evidence on postcolonial varieties in general, and esp. so-called Outer Circle varieties of English (Kachru 1985), was largely lacking.

With diverse innovative sources of evidence now emerging, we are increasingly in a position to question the assumptions that earlier research had to make, and to refine our understanding of the pathways of linguistic continuity and change that have shaped present-day postcolonial varieties of English. One source of evidence comes from extensions of the Brown and ICE families of corpora to earlier time-points in the development of postcolonial varieties of English, such as Singapore, Hong Kong (Biewer et al. 2014), Philippine (Borlongan 2015, Collins et al. 2014,b) and Ghanaian English (Brato 2014, 2015) as well as work by Rossouw and van Rooy (2012) on South African English (see also the contributions in Collins 2015). Another source of evidence comes from applications of the apparent-time method to present-day corpus data, permitting researchers to take a glimpse at ongoing language change (Fuchs and Gut 2015, Hansen 2015). While most of these approaches are still relatively shallow in their time depth, they are already opening up exciting new perspectives on diachronic change in postcolonial varieties of English.

## Call for papers

This workshop aims to bring together researchers working in this area. Contributions are welcome on all aspects of diachronic variation and change in one more varieties of New Englishes. We particularly encourage contributions that

- Attempt to disentangle the complex relationship between influence from the substrate/L1, the heterogeneous superstrate (consisting of standard and non-standard varieties), and general language learning mechanisms in the historical development of New Englishes
- Test developmental models of postcolonial varieties of English (e.g. Schneider 2007, Trudgill 2004)

- Test the assumptions of such models, such as the founder effect, i.e. the assumed disproportionate influence of the earliest sizeable speaker communities

Papers in the workshop will be allotted 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion, in keeping with the format of the conference. Please submit your abstract through the EasyChair system on the conference website (<http://wa.amu.edu.pl/isle4/>). The deadline for submissions is 15 March 2016. Notification of acceptance of papers is 25 April 2016.

After successful completion of the workshop, we are planning to publish selected papers in an edited volume or journal special issue.

## References

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