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***Convergence-to-Substratum***

In the contact linguistics literature, much work on substrate influence is focused on grammatical features which can be traced to the linguistic substratum. This analytical slant is understandable, and important for our understanding of contact-driven grammatical change. There is another angle from which to approach substrate influence, which I call convergence-to-substratum. This is the situation when a grammatical feature from the lexifier language converges, in usage if not also in function, with an equivalent feature identifiable in the linguistic substratum. This type of substrate influence has not figured prominently in contact linguistics literature until recently, for the simple reason that convergence is not categorical but incremental. To reveal the extent of convergence, we need sufficiently large computer corpora.

In this talk, I discuss three cases of convergence-to-substratum, drawing data from Singapore English. These are: the deontic and epistemic uses of *must*, the temporal interpretation of *forward*, and negative raising. Although as morphosyntactic features they are very different, the three features exhibit the same type of subtle influence from Chinese, the main local language in the contact ecology of Singapore English.