The Sociolinguistics of New Dialect Formation

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What is this talk about?

The topic of this talk is the formation of new dialects of English overseas, with specific reference to English in North America, given the theme of our conference. For that reason my data with be taken largely from English in the United States and Canada but there will also be references to new varieties of English elsewhere where this is relevant to the discussion.

The time frame is broadly that of the colonial period, c. 1600-1900, so about three centuries.
Early White Settlement of America
The Sociolinguistics of New Dialect Formation
Central American Spanish speakers

American slaves from the Caribbean (initially)

British Loyalists

Massachusetts

19c movement westwards

Movement into Inland North

Jamestown, Virginia (1607)

Cumberland Gap

Pacific rim immigrants

Massachusetts Bay Colony

1607

19c movement westwards

Inland North

Cumberland Gap

1607

American slaves

British Loyalists

Massachusetts Bay Colony
The American South with the highest concentration of traditional rural African American speakers
The coming of the Europeans
The coming of the Europeans

The European history of North America begins with the discovery of Central America by Christopher Columbus in 1492 when he landed on the Bahamas. Various parts of the coast of North America were discovered at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Between 1584 and 1586 Sir Walter Raleigh began his attempts to colonise North Carolina (then part of ‘Virginia’ named after Queen Elizabeth I), including the first unsuccessful settlement on Roanoke Island. British colonisation continued in the following years with the firm establishment of British rule at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Jamestown, Virginia 1607; Plymouth, New England, 1620; The Massachusetts Bay Colony (at the site of later Boston), 1630). Some other European countries were also directly involved in the conquest of America: the French in Canada but also the Dutch in New York (the city, founded in 1625, was called New Amsterdam until 1664).
The eighteenth century

The eighteenth century saw the emigration of approximately a quarter of a million Ulster Scots from the north of Ireland to the colonies. These often settled in frontier regions, such as western Pennsylvania and further south in the inland mountainous regions of the colonies, founding varieties later recognisable as Appalachian English.
The eighteenth century

In 1776 the Thirteen Colonies declared independence in a military struggle against England. British rule ended after a disorganised and uncoordinated campaign against the rebellious Americans in 1777 which led to the Treaty of Paris (1783) conceding American sovereignty over the entire territory from the Great Lakes in the north down to Florida in the south. After independence the United States consolidated territories inland from the Atlantic coast and in 1803 purchased over 2m sq km in central North America from the French, the so-called Louisiana Purchase.
Later waves of immigrants in the nineteenth century
Ellis Island
Gateway to a Dream
Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

Emma Lazarus (1849-1887)
HELP WANTED
NO IRISH NEED APPLY

BORN FIGHTING
HOW THE SCOTS-IRISH SHAPED AMERICA
JAMES WEBB
### Main Sources of European Immigration to the United States, 1841–1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1841–1850</th>
<th>1851–1860</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>5,074</td>
<td>4,738</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>3,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>77,262</td>
<td>76,358</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>434,626</td>
<td>951,667</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Great Britain</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>32,092</td>
<td>247,125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>3,712</td>
<td>38,331</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>229,979</td>
<td>132,199</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>780,719</td>
<td>914,119</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8,251</td>
<td>10,789</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>13,903</td>
<td>20,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>4,644</td>
<td>25,011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Composition of Immigration, 1840–1860

Joe Salmons and his colleagues have shown that monolingual German settlements survived in Wisconsin well into the 20th century. Only the uneducated Yankees spoke English and the Germans only had to deal with them when they occasionally went to another town on business. The expectation that non-English speaking immigrants should learn English was not conveyed systemically by the authorities until the end of the 19th century at the earliest.
Dialect Regions of the United States
White settlement of the Inland North. According to William Labov the building of the Erie Canal in the early 19th century led to the opening up of this region to European settlers.
The Northern Cities Shift is the major change in the vowel system of supraregional English in the Inland North.

The Northern Cities Shift

[ɪ] kit  ≡
[ɛ] dress ⇒

stuck [ʌ] ⇒ [ɔ]

↓

[eə]

stalk [ɔ] ↓

stack [æ]  [a] ≡ stock [ɑ]
John Cabot, the first European to (re-)discover Newfoundland in 1497

Newfoundland claim for the British by Sir Humphrey Gilbert in 1585
Newfoundland, not part of the Canadian Federation until 1949, experienced seasonal migration from Britain and Ireland for fishing on the Grand Banks in the 18th and early 19th centuries.
European inroads into Canada

18th century division into Upper Canada (English speaking) and Lower Canada (largely French-speaking)

Railroad expansion in the 19th century
New Dialect Formation
What is New Dialect Formation?

A historical process whereby a new focussed variety arises from a series of dialect inputs, e.g. in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century. The analysis of this process has been primarily associated with the work of the British sociolinguist Peter Trudgill (Trudgill 2004, 2008) who has postulated the following stages:

1. rudimentary levelling
2a. extreme variability
2b. further levelling
3. focussing

Thus new dialect formation has as its beginning a mixture of dialects and as its endpoint a single new dialect.
New Dialect Formation: The Big Question

How did the focussed dialect at the end of New Dialect Formation come to have precisely those features which it shows.

So linguists have looked at the variability and levelling to see what forces were operative which led to later focussing.
Assumptions about New Dialect Formation (Trudgill)

Sociolinguistic factors play no role in NDF.

Identity formation is not a factor in NDF.

The status of immigrants is not deemed relevant. Note that in the case of New Zealand the English generally emigrated as families, the Irish and Scots came as individuals.

Local concentrations are ignored, e.g. the Scots in Otago and Southland, Irish in Westland, Nelson, Hawke’s Bay and Auckland.

The urban / rural divide is not regarded as important in the initial stage of New Dialect Formation.

The fact that countries like New Zealand were English colonies and that the English settlers thus belonged to the group which controlled the colonies is not thought to be an issue to consider.
Assumptions about New Dialect Formation (Trudgill)

The survival of input features in the later focussed variety depends on their quantitative representation across the groups which formed the initial settlers, e.g. English, Scottish and Irish in the first generation of English-speaking settlers in New Zealand. This stance is called ‘deterministic’.

Here is an example of the reasoning provided by Trudgill (2004):

“The Irish, Scottish, Northumbrian, (partial) West Country, and East Anglian /h/-pronouncing variants were in the majority in the mixture and have won out in modern New Zealand English. The immigration figures cited above confirm this thesis. Even if all the immigrants from Wales and England combined were /h/-droppers, they constituted only 50% of the arrivals and were matched numerically by arrivals from Scotland and Ireland, areas where /h/-dropping was and is still unknown.”
Assumptions about New Dialect Formation (Trudgill)

On occasion linguistic markedness is appealed to in order to explain the survival of minority variants such as schwa in the TRUSTED lexical set, i.e. [trvstqd] and not [trvstid].
Literature on New Dialect Formation


New Dialect Formation in different scenarios
Scenarios where the New Dialect Formation model is not applicable
New Dialect Formation: Critical voices
Critical assessments of Trudgill’s views on New Dialect Formation have been presented, see the discussions in *Language and Society* (2008, Vol. 37.2, pp. 241-280)
New Dialect Formation: Alternative models
The Dynamic Model

Schneider’s Dynamic Model

A model devised by the Austrian-German linguist Edgar W. Schneider to account for the development of English in former colonies of Britain. It stresses the manner in which overseas varieties of English have evolved in specific ecologies and strives to account for the manner in which certain features have emerged. The model stresses the essential interaction of social identities and linguistic forms, the nature of which accounts in large measure for the profiles of post-colonial Englishes. Contact occupies a central position in Schneider’s model, both between dialects present among settlers as well as between English speakers and those of indigenous languages at various colonial locations. Contact-induced change produced differing results depending on the social and demographic conditions under which it took place, i.e. on the local ecology, and on its linguistic triggers, e.g. via code-switching, code-alternation, bilingualism or non-prescriptive adult language acquisition.
Schneider’s Dynamic Model

Schneider identifies a sequence of five stages for the development of post-colonial Englishes:

Phase 1: **foundation** – dialect mixture and koineisation (for locations with multiple dialect inputs);

Phase 2: **exonormative stabilization** – a ‘British-plus’ identity for the English-speaking residents when the colony is established and has secured its position vis à vis the colonial home country, mostly England (though this was the United States in the case of The Philippines);

Phase 3: **nativization** involving the emergence of local patterns, often associated with political independence or the striving for this;
Schneider’s Dynamic Model

Phase 4: **endonormative stabilization**, e.g. ‘national self-confidence’ and codification, usually soon after independence and

Phrase 5: **differentiation** – the birth of new dialects, internal developments now linked to internal socioethnic distribution processes.

Further issues considered in Schneider’s model include the distinction of settler and indigenous strands in the early stages of new varieties, the impact of accommodation and the importance of identity formation.
New Dialect Formation and the Dynamic Model

Both Trudgill’s New Dialect Formation and Schneider’s Dynamic Model are \textbf{unidirectional, linear models} which describe a progression of stages from the beginning of a variety to a later time, usually close to the present. While Trudgill’s model is deterministic, Schneider’s model is sensitive to social conditions and emphasises the switch from exonormative to endonormative models in the development of varieties.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
Stage 0 & \hdots & Stage \( n \)
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
Supraregionalisation

Supraregionalisation

A historical process whereby features characteristic of vernaculars are replaced by more mainstream forms in the speech of non-vernacular speakers. The historical trigger for supraregionalisation may have been the formation of an educated middle class with an attendant stigmatisation of vernaculars seen as characteristic of the uneducated. The new forms introduced by supraregionalisation frequently derive from an extranational norm, e.g. the use of /i:/ for Middle English /e:/ and /e:/ in the late modern period in Irish English, leading to words like *meat* now being pronounced [miːt], as in southern English English.
Supraregionalisation

The supraregionalisation model describes a process which can occur at any time in the history of a variety as long as the external, socially motivated triggers for it apply. The following factors are essential to this process.

- Rise of a middle class
- Spread of literacy
- Prescriptivism
Noah Webster (1758 – 1843)
Where can one hear supraregional varieties?

Typically in the media – radio or television – where strongly local accents are taboo but where speakers may have a regionally identifiable accent.
Where can one hear supraregional varieties?

In schools, colleges, universities ....
Where can one hear supraregional varieties?

In official language usage
In the public use of language
Varieties and vertical social structure
Vertically stratified varieties among pidgins and creoles

In these forms of English it is accepted by the scholarly community that there is a continuum from the most vernacular variety – the basilect – to the least vernacular one – the acrolect.

Such vertical scales are found, for instance, in the anglophone locations of the Caribbean.
Guyana
Vertical scale of variation in pidgins and creoles

Acrolect

Mesolectal varieties

Basilect
Data from Guyanese creole

I gave him  (Acrolect: English morphological marking)
a geev im
a giv im
a giv ii
a did give ii  (Mesolect: optional tense marking with aux *did*)
a di giv ii
mi di gi ii
mi bin gi ii
mi bin gii am
mi gii am  (Basilect: deletion of tense marker *bin*)
Can the pidgins and creole scenario be applied to other varieties of English?
Standard variety (acrolect)

Vernacular variety (basilect)
Standard variety

Supraregional varieties

Vernacular variety
Standard British English
Not (i), (ii) or (iii)

Supraregional Irish English
(i)  *She’s after spilling the milk.* (= She has just spilt the milk)
(ii) *He has the boat painted.* (= He has finished the set task of painting the boat)

Vernacular Irish English
(iii) *They do be out drinking at the weekend.* (= They are continually out drinking at the weekend)
Supraregionalisation and stigma

Vernacular features which do not make it into a supraregional variety become salient and stigmatised.

Stigma is based on (i) an awareness of vernacular features through a clear association with certain social groups and (ii) the avoidance of these features by supraregional speakers (except in deliberate instances of style-shifting downwards for a vernacular effect).
Language change in varieties of English worldwide
Language change in varieties of English worldwide is one of two basic types:

1) **Change by internal development**, frequently this change was present embryonically in the initial input, e.g. short front vowel raising in Southern Hemisphere Englishes

2) **Change by external adoption**: features are adopted from mainstream varieties of English by later generations, often long after the initial input. This adoption is motivated by sociolinguistic factors (examples in following slides)
The STRUT vowel in Britain

/\ = split of FOOT-STRUT lexical sets; /u/ = absence of this split.

Note: the label ‘FOOT-STRUT merger’ is historically inaccurate as the south of England introduced the innovation by lowering the STRUT vowel. In this respect the North of England retains the original distribution. Scotland later adopted the /\ in the STRUT lexical set.
The STRUT vowel in Ireland

General Irish English has /v/.

Dublin English vernacular has /u/, i.e. no FOOT-STRUT split (it is the only variety outside the North of England without this split).

Like the rest of Ireland Belfast English adopted /v/ but then expanded it to encompass instances like pull, would, could with /v/. 
A linguistic question

Change by external adoption is essentially different from incremental Neogrammarmarian change (which is internally motivated). But how does it take place? There are two options:

1) By **lexical diffusion**, beginning with some common words and gradually spreading throughout the entire vocabulary.

2) As a **lexically abrupt** change: all words with old feature X have this replaced by new feature Y.

I personally feel that (2) is the more likely but only in situ investigations of supraregionalisation could help to decide the matter.
What happened in America?
The first settlers in the Boston area came in the 1620s so they would not have had a FOOT-STRUT split as this, according to authorities like E. J. Dobson (Early Modern English Pronunciation, 2 vols, 1968 [1957]), only arose in the mid 17th century in the south of England.

This means that at some later point English speakers in America adopted the /v/ in STRUT.

But who adopted this, when and for what reason?
Who are the agents in supraregionalisation?

1) Children (first language learners)

2) Adults (users of their native language)

Ad 1) Children are very sensitive to language use and sense what forms are up and coming and what are conservative and receding. In the later generations of settlers in America the realisation must have been prominent that /u/ in words like *but*, *cut*, *done* was not mainstream and not ‘cool’. The children of these later generations then abandoned /u/ for /v/, keeping it only in lexicalised instances like *pull*, *bull*, *push*, *bush*, *would*, *could*, etc.
This type of change by adopting an external feature applied in many cases. The following are former sound features of early 17th century American English which where lost through feature adoption and not internal change.

1) Short vowel in the BATH lexical set

2) Mid front vowel in the MEAT lexical set

3) Low front vowel in the FACE lexical set

4) Non-retracted low vowel after /w/ in the SWAN lexical set, i.e. [swan] rather than [sw>n]
The dynamics of supraregional varieties
Supraregional varieties are not static and can react to triggering events such as the following type of major social upheaval:

1) Sudden increase in prosperity (Dublin 1990s)

2) Reorientation after major war (post WWII in Britain and America)
What audio recordings from the early 20th century tell us about accents of English

Post-WWII adoption of retroflex non-prevocalic [5] into supraregional American English

\[\text{car} \quad [\text{ka:}(r)] \quad [\text{ka:5}]\]
\[\text{card} \quad [\text{ka:}(r)d] \quad \Rightarrow \quad [\text{ka:5}]\]

The non-rhotic pronunciation of New England, as seen, for instance, in the Boston Brahmin accent (John F. Kennedy had such an accent) was gradually abandoned by supraregional speakers and accents of the Inland North experienced an increase in prestige and popularity.
Movement of the TRAP vowel in England up to WWII

CATCH-raising: *catch* [ketʃ̩], *back* [bek], *cap* [kep]
Post-WWII movement of the TRAP vowel in England

TRAP-lowering: trap [trap], back [bak], cap [kap]
Supraregional varieties and the identity question
The New Dialect Formation model by Trudgill explicitly denies that identity formation is a factor in the development of varieties. Schneider’s Dynamic Model, on the other hand, puts identity formation centre-stage. This is also true of the supraregionalisation model.

But if supraregionalisation consists of removing vernacular features then what remains?

The answer is a selection of non-stigmatised, but non-standard features (compared to an exonormative variety, frequently standard British English).
A good example of this is the phenomenon of Canadian Raising where the vowel in the PRICE lexical set has a raised onset, i.e. [prvis] (before voiceless obstruents), whereas that of in the PRIZE lexical set does not show this raising, i.e. one has [praiz] (before voiced obstruents).

Note that in the various inputs to early Canadian English (West Country English, Southern Irish English, Scots and Ulster Scots) the precise distribution of PRICE and PRIZE which one has today was not present, though part of it was (often for the /ai/ diphthong but not for the /au/ diphthong in LOUT and LOUD).
Conclusion

The development of overseas varieties of English during the colonial period (1600-1900) has been described using various models, each highlighting different sets of factors.

Trudgill’s deterministic model raised our awareness of variability and levelling but at the expense of ignoring social and identity factors.
Schneider’s model sought to redress this imbalance and put social factors centre stage and helped us better understand the linear development of overseas English and the switch from exonormative to endonormative varieties.

The supraregionlisation model focuses our attention on intermediate varieties on a vertical social scale and highlights the essential distinction between internally motivated change and change by the adoption of external features.
Thankyou for your attention.

Any questions?

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