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978-0-521-83140-6 - Postcolonial English: Varieties Around the World

Edgar W. Schneider

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## Postcolonial English

The global spread of English has resulted in the emergence of a diverse range of postcolonial varieties around the world. *Postcolonial English* provides a clear and original account of the evolution of these varieties, exploring the historical, social, and ecological factors that have shaped all levels of their structure. It argues that while these Englishes have developed new and unique properties which differ greatly from one location to another, their spread and diversification can in fact be explained by a single underlying process, which builds upon the constant relationships and communication needs of the colonizers, the colonized, and other parties. Outlining the stages and characteristics of this process, it applies them in detail to English in sixteen different countries across all continents as well as, in a separate chapter, to a history of American English. Of key interest to sociolinguists, dialectologists, historical linguists, and syntacticians alike, this book provides a fascinating new picture of the growth and evolution of English around the globe.

EDGAR W. SCHNEIDER is Professor and Chair of English Linguistics in the Department of English and American Studies, University of Regensburg. His most recent books include *Degrees of Restructuring in Creole Languages* (2000), and *A Handbook of Varieties of English* (2004).

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# Postcolonial English

*Varieties around the world*

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Edgar W. Schneider

*University of Regensburg*



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## Series editor's foreword

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The series *Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* was set up to publish outstanding monographs on language contact, especially by authors who approach their specific subject matter from a diachronic or developmental perspective. Our goal is to integrate the ever-growing scholarship on language diversification (including the development of creoles, pidgins, and indigenized varieties of colonial European languages), bilingual language development, code-switching, and language endangerment. We hope to provide a select forum to scholars who contribute insightfully to understanding language evolution from an interdisciplinary perspective. We favor approaches that highlight the role of ecology and draw inspiration both from the authors' own fields of specialization and from related research areas in linguistics or other disciplines. Eclecticism is one of our mottoes, as we endeavor to comprehend the complexity of evolutionary processes associated with contact.

We are very proud to add to our list Edgar W. Schneider's *Postcolonial English: varieties around the world*. This is, to my knowledge, the most comprehensive uniformitarian account of how English has spread around the world and diversified into a multitude of varieties (including creoles) thanks both to England's important participation in the European colonization of the world since the seventeenth century and to the American and British leadership role in the recent wave of economic globalization. If the spread of English has before been compared to that of Latin, Schneider has easily produced the only book that makes this comparison obvious. He also highlights the ways in which its prevalence over numerous indigenous and other European vernaculars in former settlement colonies, as well as over alternative lingua francas in the rest of the world, has been only a pyrrhic victory. Having been appropriated by new speakers in diverse contact ecologies, English has been adapted to different communicative practices and indigenized to express local and novel cultures. Schneider proposes a Dynamic Model which articulates various ecological factors bearing on the same general language-restructuring equation in order to account for the setting-specific ways in which English has evolved.

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This new approach also makes obvious who have been the actual agents of the spread of English, not always the former colonists and colonizers from the United Kingdom, or Americans and Australians since the independence of former exploitation colonies, but often the local intellectual elite and political leaders. Paying attention to the actual ethnographic functions of English in various places, Schneider also makes it obvious why the spread of this language as a vernacular in former settlement colonies, as an official language in former exploitation colonies, but only as an international lingua franca in the rest of the world has not been a uniform threat to the vitality of indigenous languages around the world. *Postcolonial English* thus provides useful information to rethink the recent common characterization of English as the agent of globalization and the “killer language” *par excellence*, while indirectly also raising an issue out of the use of a by-now established discourse of language competition that is too lopsidedly based on tropes of power, prestige, violence, and war.

This is a brilliant application of the ecological approach to language evolution, highlighting a host of factors that account for the speciation of English into a host of novel varieties. The distinction between the “settler,” “adstrate,” and the “indigenous strands” in the ways that English has been transmitted from one generation to another in (former) settlement and exploitation colonies goes a long way to account for the extent to which particular postcolonial Englishes have been influenced by adstrate and substrate influence. He provides an alternative way to speak about the significance of founder effects and the ongoing competition between, on the one hand, target structures and, on the other, adstrate and substrate alternatives in language evolution, identifying the particular cultural domains where adstrate and substrate contributions (especially lexical) are not only favored but also almost unavoidable. Schneider takes us a long way toward understanding the correlation not only between language spread and colonization (including the population genetics sense of “relocation to a new place,” also identified as *colony*), but also between, on the one hand, language evolution and, on the other, language imposition or willful appropriation, patterns of interaction, nature of the target variety, means of appropriation, communicative function, and power and identity, all as ecological factors. Specialists and non-specialists alike will find this book informative and thought-provoking, as it questions the traditional view that has misguidedly made the emergence of especially creoles and indigenized Englishes somewhat exceptional.

SALIKOKO S. MUFWENE, *University of Chicago*

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## Preface and acknowledgments

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The evolution of Postcolonial Englishes is a most fascinating subject. Having worked on English-language dialectology, sociolinguistics, creolistics, and historical linguistics before, I was fully attracted to this field when I took over the editorship of the journal *English World-Wide* and the book series *Varieties of English Around the World* in 1997. The role as an editor is demanding and time-consuming, but it is also a privilege in many ways. It not only forces me to keep up to date with current discussions and writings in the field but it also brings me in touch with colleagues all around the globe, with young scholars with fresh ideas, and with new concepts, perspectives, and data. Luckily, it also provides excellent excuses to travel to all kinds of places, to present my own research and to get first-hand exposure to different language ecologies. So, what I have ended up with is a bird's-eye view of this exciting process of the globalization and, at the same time, local diffusion of English in all of its forms and functions.

It was this perspective that suggested to me that there are more similarities between individual processes of the emergence of indigenized Englishes in various localities than has hitherto been recognized. From there, it is only a short step to the uniformitarian hypothesis that has informed the present book, the claim that there is a single, coherent process which underlies the evolution of Postcolonial Englishes. The thesis was presented for the first time about five years ago in Sydney, and since then it has met with a lot of interest and supportive response. The present book builds upon ideas and facts published in my article "The dynamics of New Englishes: from identity construction to dialect birth," in *Language* 79 (2003): 233–81, but it goes substantially beyond what was discussed there. It presents a wide range of new data and case studies, and a version of the core thesis which has been developed further, modified, and expanded in a few aspects, and spelt out in greater detail.

Over the years I have benefited immensely from contacts and conversations with many friends and colleagues who have shared their views and, in some cases, their more intense familiarity with specific countries and situations with me. This book would not be conceivable without them,

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and I want to say a big thank you to all of them. At the same time, of course, they are not at all responsible for any errors or weaknesses in this text: while I have profited enormously from advice, sometimes I am stubborn and have resisted it. So for all errors and shortcomings I am solely responsible.

In the genesis of this book Salikoko Mufwene, the Series Editor, has been most influential and helpful. From the beginning, he has been the most astute and supportive editor one could hope for. He has read the entire manuscript extremely carefully and has suggested numerous improvements. I have also enjoyed the continuous support and interest of Andrew Winnard and Helen Barton at Cambridge University Press. I am most grateful to them.

Raj Mesthrie, Dani Schreier, and Udo Hebel also read select chapters and gave me valuable comments. Many others have influenced my thinking through their discussions with me and their reactions to other writings of mine on global Englishes, including earlier stages of the present work: Laurie Bauer, Maria Lourdes S. Bautista, Kingsley Bolton, Jack Chambers, Chng Huang Hoon, Peter Collins, Saran Kaur Gill, Manfred Görlach, Anthea Fraser Gupta, Braj and Yamuna Kachru, Thiru Kandiah, Joybrato Mukherjee, Peter Mühlhäusler, Aloysius Ngefac, Pam Peters, Jeff Siegel, Jan Tent, Peter Trudgill, and many more. Many friends in American sociolinguistics, most notably Guy Bailey, Ron Butters, Bill Kretzschmar, Michael Montgomery, and Walt Wolfram, have been very important for me and have influenced me more than they may have realized. I am grateful to all of them and look forward to further exchanges!

Portions of the ideas and the material discussed in this book have been presented at several conferences and universities: the Australian Style Council in Sydney in April 2001; the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in Bangi in December 2003; the “Methods in Dialectology” conference in Moncton, New Brunswick, in August 2005; the “Studies in the History of the English Language” conference in Flagstaff, Arizona, in September/October 2005; the University of Stockholm, Sweden, in October 2005; and the “International Conference on Language, Literature and Education in Multicultural Societies” in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in May 2006. I thank the audiences for their interest and their valuable feedback. Thanks are also due to Nobuyuki Honna and ALC Press for permission to use parts of an article published in *Asian Englishes* 2003 in section 5.5.6, and to Brian Joseph and the Linguistic Society of America for permission to reproduce select parts of the 2003 *Language* article quoted above.

What remains to be acknowledged is the foundation, the network of human relations without which I couldn’t thrive and enjoy life and write a

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book. My team in Regensburg, including students, assistants, and colleagues, are a part of this. My friends, in Burgweinting and elsewhere, give me the down-to-earth human touches that make me feel comfortable and that I need as grounding in real life. And my family – well, they know they are my sunshine anyhow. Their smiles with which they tolerate my occasional absence or absent-mindedness are just wonderful to see. So I dedicate this book to Jutta, who has always stood by my side in so many ways without giving up her own path, and to Berit and Miriam, who are flying high but continue to have roots with us.

# Abbreviations

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AAVE	African-American Vernacular English
ADS	Adstrate speech community
ANZAC	Australia and New Zealand Army Corps
“BSAE”	Black South African English
CCR	consonant cluster reduction
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICE	International Corpus of English
IDG	Indigenous speech community
L1	first language
NCS	Northern Cities Shift
p.c.	personal communication
PCEs	Postcolonial Englishes
RP	Received Pronunciation (standard British pronunciation)
SAfE	South African English
SGEM	Speak Good English Movement (Singapore)
STL	Settlers speech community