

Studying children and adolescents in World Englishes: Rethinking paradigms and approaches

Book of abstracts

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The sociolinguistics of a class of primary school children in Yaoundé: Background, variation and change

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This paper draws the attention to an under-researched area in World Englishes, namely the study of children as pacemakers of linguistic change (Kerswill 1996; but cf. Buschfeld forthcoming for a notable exception). The current study used an apparent-time approach and structured and semi-structured data elicitation methods to observe variation on the phonetic, morphosyntactic, lexical and pragmatic levels as the sociolinguistic background of the participants. It is based on speech recordings and questionnaire data from 32 children (aged 9-11) attending an English-medium primary school in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and 10 parents.

The aim of this presentation is threefold. First, we look at the sociolinguistic make-up of the class, which shows the typical patterns of urban communities in Africa. Coming from multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic backgrounds, most children were born in the city but almost all parents have migrated from other parts of the country. Furthermore, the data show a rapid decline in the knowledge and use of the home languages among children, while all report speaking French.

The focus of our work lies on sociophonetics and the question of how children drive phonological change and give an account of initial findings in this area. To this end, we elicited different types of speech styles, focussing on typical Cameroon (Francophone) English features (e.g. Simo Bobda 1994, 2013), such as the realisation of /r/ as a uvular fricative [ʁ], e.g. in <right>: [ʁaɪ] and features /t/-affrication (cf. Buizza 2011; Brato 2015), i.e. the realisation of e.g. <bit> as [bitʃ], which is heard frequently, and GOOSE-fronting (Mesthrie 2010) currently spreading in several varieties of African Englishes. We also report initial findings on the vowel system and compare our results to the proposition of Simo Bobda (2004: 893).

Finally, we report on peculiarities on the morphosyntactic (e.g. Mbangwana 2008), semantic and pragmatic levels. The paper is rounded off with a discussion on the possible linguistic consequences of our findings on the language ecology of Yaoundé and Cameroon in general.

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Exploring the 'language acquisition' experiences and linguistic status of adolescents in an environment of mixed cultural and geographical identities: comparative case studies.

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This study explores the contributing factors to language acquisition, performance, proficiency, and choice by adolescents of mixed cultural and geographical habitus, living in South Africa, a multilingual country. My research question is 'What factors contribute to adolescents' language acquisition, performance, proficiency, and choice in the context of mixed parental foreign non-cognate mother tongues in South Africa?'. My sub-question is 'To what extent do these factors influence the status of English as a mother tongue in these South African adolescents' lives?'. Embarking on a qualitative study while using both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic lenses, I undertake a comparative case study of two sets of siblings, adolescents where one set can be considered bilingual and the other multilingual, and whose parents moved to South Africa as expatriates about two decades ago. The parents, hailing from Mauritius and Turkey as well as South Africa and Turkey are respectively multilingual and bilingual, with non-cognate mother tongues. All the adolescents were born and brought up in South Africa which enjoys 11 official languages, among which is English (De Klerk, 1996). If Kachru

(1985) had to reassess his 'inner circle' paradigm, he would need to consider including South Africa in it. The aim of this research is three-fold as it purports to, firstly, assessing the influence of the linguistic experiences of these adolescents on their current English as a home language/first language status (Trimbur, 2009). One of these adolescents moved to the US for high school purposes a year ago, and the American variety of English is influencing him linguistically. Secondly, the data collected for this research have revealed a number of sociolinguistic phenomena, namely code-mixing and code-switching, as well as, linguistic variation that occur among the various languages of these adolescents, for various reasons. Moreover, peer influence and social environment have surfaced as key factors influencing linguistic features such as language choice, vocabulary, and accent. Thirdly, the study draws on eclectic theories of language acquisition such as Lenneberg's Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)(1967) and Vygotsky's (1978) social Interactionist theory to assess the experiences of language acquisition of the various languages of the respondents at various ages. The acquisition and status of English as a home language or mother tongue of the adolescent respondents is one of the key points of focus since all languages including English were acquired by each respondent at different stages at pre-puberty. The research is deductive as it raises questions on whether or not, and to what extent social and environmental factors have an influence on the language performance and choice/s of these adolescents. Through a documentation of their stories, and in light of psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and language acquisition theories, a clear picture of the linguistic trajectory and status of each of these adolescents as individual and as family entities becomes evident. Their experiences are unique and each has developed independently of one another. The research methodology involves qualitative instruments such as interviews with each adolescent to record his or her experience. Through semi-structured interviews data were collected and analysed to deduce the linguistic tendencies which this research is initially set to unfold. The combined theoretical framework stated above has revealed to be ideal for this research. This study is specifically on South African born adolescents with expatriate parents from the combination of countries mentioned earlier, which makes the study unique and fills in a gap left in the literature on English language in the context of World Englishes in South Africa.

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Transfer in the English Writing of St. Lucian Students: An Analysis of the Verb Phrase

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Most territories in the English-official Caribbean have just one official language while the general population uses unofficial, non-standard dialects of English and Creole languages as a

medium of communication (Craig 65). Much research has been undertaken exploring the impact of these Creole languages on the written production of English (Adk et al 2004; Carrington 1969; James 1997; Isaac 1986; Winch and Gingell 1994; Winer 1984). In St. Lucia, an English-official island-nation with a widely-spoken unofficial French Lexicon Creole (Kwéyòl), there are challenges with academic performance in English at all educational levels, particularly at the Common Entrance Examinations. Common Entrance is a standardized examination taken by St. Lucian primary school students at Grade 6 where in 2017, for example, the national average in English Composition was 16.14/30. Some scholars have argued that the transference of Kwéyòl structures accounts for this trend, while other scholars contend that the challenges with writing are not attributable to Kwéyòl at all but other causal factors evident in learners of English all over the world. Isaac (1986) concluded that 'there was a gap in linguistic ability and comprehension' and 'faulty expression from incorrect structures and dialect interference' (63-64) while Winch and Gingell (1994) stated that 'there appears to be no strong relationship between impression marking and the quantity of errors arising from possible creole interference' (177). No recent work has been undertaken that supports or refutes these two divergent conclusions and no work has been done (to the best of my knowledge) with a corpus of Common Entrance scripts.

This paper (part of a larger study that employs a learner corpus of Common Entrance composition scripts) explores transfer in the verb phrase of the writing of students from two primary schools. Guided by Jarvis and Pavlenko's 'Unified Framework' for studying L1 influence, the paper explores the four types of evidence proposed as substantiating the presence or absence of transfer: intra-group homogeneity (within-group similarities), inter-group heterogeneity (between group differences), cross-linguistic performance congruity (between-language similarities) and intralingual contrasts (within language differences) (Osborne 340). This paper demonstrates that there is strong evidence of transfer in the VPs of students and emphasizes the need for more corpus-based studies as tools for understanding the linguistic landscape and for developing pedagogical strategies that are better suited to the St. Lucian linguistic context.

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Tracking American influence on Trinidadian English: An apparent-time analysis of (spectral) variation and change in the NURSE vowel of adolescent and adult speakers

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Influence from American English (AmE) has frequently been found to affect the development of postcolonial Englishes (Awonusi 1994; Goncalves et al. 2018). However, it has rarely been investigated whether AmE influence manifests homogeneously within these speech communities. Adolescents form a group of speakers that is possibly more susceptible to American influences than adults, given that they are (1) known to adopt new forms (Kerswill 1996:198; Eckert 1997:52; Tagliamonte 2016) and (2) possibly more exposed to AmE due to higher usage of digital media (Lenhart et al. 2010).

This study compares AmE influences in the speech of adolescent and adult speakers of Trinidadian English (TrinE) and investigates whether adolescents may be leading AmE-influenced variation and change. In Trinidad, anecdotal (Youssef & James 2004:513) and language attitudinal findings (Meer et al. 2019) indicate AmE influence in terms of adolescents' norm orientation, and corpus evidence shows an association of young age and an AmE-led global linguistic pattern (Deuber et al. 2020). However, potential AmE influences on adolescent speech have not yet been systematically examined. Preliminary findings suggest that the rhotacization of NURSE ([ə:]→[ə̃]) may be linked with AmE influence (Ferreira & Drayton 2017:10). NURSE-rhotacization is associated with the speech of teenage girls attending prestige schools but said to have spread to young female middle-class speakers more generally (Ferreira & Drayton 2017:10-11). The current study investigates the following hypotheses:

- H1** Adolescents produce more rhotacized NURSE vowels than adult speakers.
- H2** Female speakers show more rhotacized NURSE vowel productions than male speakers.
- H3** Girls attending prestige schools produce rhotacized NURSE most frequently.

The hypotheses are investigated using word list and reading passage data from 100 speakers: 35 secondary school teachers and 65 students. Automated acoustic analyses are performed using TRINI-FAVE (Meer & Matute Flores 2018; Meer 2020; Meer et al. 2021). NURSE-rhotacization is investigated with a focus on two parameters: (1) F3 and (2) the degree of integration of F2 and F3. Additionally, the rhotacization of NURSE was analyzed auditorily. The analysis relies on mixed-effects models supplemented with conditional inference trees.

The results show that:

H1 cannot be confirmed. Despite NURSE-rhotacization being more frequent in younger than older speakers, it is not most common in adolescents; AGE is not significant and there is no consistent evidence for ongoing change (Fig. 1).

H2 has to be rejected: the effect of GENDER is not significant and there are hardly any differences in the production of NURSE across genders.

H3 has to be extended to all speakers associated with prestige schools since PRESTIGE SCHOOL is the only significant factor predicting rhotacization/F3 lowering. Independent of age and gender, these speakers have much higher rhotacization rates (c. 15.5%) than speakers affiliated with other schools (c. 0%).

The fact that the rhotacization of NURSE was found to have diffused to other speakers shows how adolescents may act (or have acted) as boosters of AmE influence on TrinE. On a more general level, the findings highlight the importance of studying adolescents in understanding norm developmental processes in postcolonial Englishes.

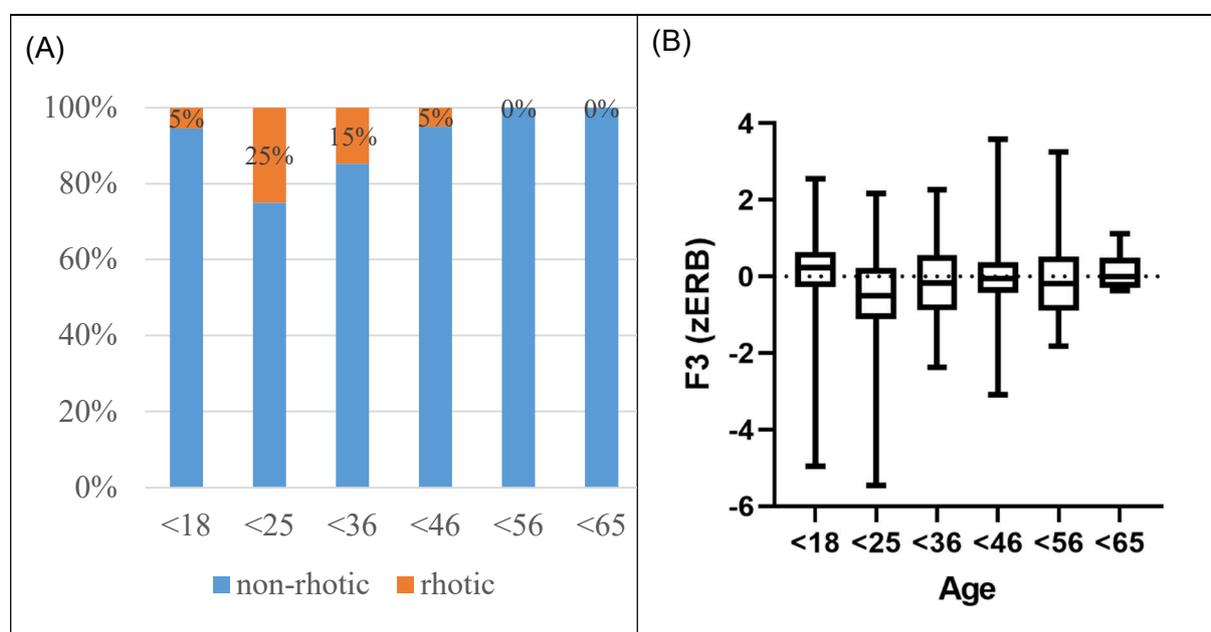


Fig. 1. Rhoticization of NURSE in apparent time. Panel A shows the relative proportion of rhotacized tokens (in %). Panel B shows the degree of F3 lowering (i.e. an acoustic feature associated with rhotacization). Formant values are psychoacoustically transformed to ERB and z-normalized.

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Caught Between Languages and Cultures: Exploring Linguistic and Cultural Identity among Maldivian Adolescents

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Power struggles between the local and the global culture of the modern world affect individuals' self-perceptions and identities (Bourdieu 1992; Norton 1997). Although a great deal of research within the social sciences in general and applied linguistics in particular has explored the concept of identity, relatively few studies have focused on language learners' identities in formal education settings located in non-European contexts within the Expanding Circle. Even fewer studies have focused on the issue of ethnolinguistic identity in adolescents. The transitional period of adolescence is when self-categorisation and identity development are at their peak (McCarty et al. 2009). Given the connectedness of today's globalised world, the period of adolescence is a time when young people are easily exposed to and influenced by global trends and practices.

This proposed chapter will draw on research conducted in the Maldives to show the struggles for identity faced by Maldivian adolescents. The Maldives was once a monolingual nation with its own unique language. As a result of the British colonialism, the English language has achieved an indelible role in the educational system in particular and the society in general (Mohamed, 2019). This has caused the English language to be an important aspect of the identity construction of Maldivians.

The study to be reported here will illustrate how young people in the Maldives consider the English language to be a passport to progress, and look to the English of Inner Circle countries as the ideal to be attained. With over 1500 participants, the study utilised several methods of data collection including a survey, narrative writing tasks and interviews. Findings show that these young people have strong views regarding the hierarchies of languages and language varieties. Their language use also indicates that their preference for English overshadows their use of the local language in many domains. The findings also suggest that while students valued their own culture, they appeared to have more understanding of Western cultures, with a strong desire to be closely connected with the English-speaking world. There is a clear sense of the use of English as an identity maker that earns them social status and prestige while at the same time “othering” (Said, 1995) those who do not fit into their self-determined labels of English speakers. The study has implications for the need for the adoption of educational policies that promote and respect additive language learning approaches that would help students to appreciate their own linguistic and cultural heritage, as well as those of others, to encourage the development of a more inclusive ethnolinguistic identity.

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Children and Attitudinal Change in St. Kitts

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Within the field of perceptual research in the Caribbean, a focus on the education sector is regularly present. However, these studies mostly pay attention to the language attitudes of teachers (Winford 1976; Mühleisen 2001; Deuber 2009) or students attending tertiary or secondary education (e.g. Deuber 2013; Meer et al. 2019). The focus on younger students, on the other hand, as well as the relationship between the teachers' attitudes and these younger students' attitudes is mostly lacking. Nevertheless, special attention should be paid to children, as it is at the young age of eleven to twelve years that speakers "realize that there is a correlation between language variation and societal prestige" (De Vogelaer and Toye 2017: 117). A focus on children, alongside the research on adults, thus potentially allows us insights into the development of language perceptions and attitudinal change over time. In addition, up to the present, research has mostly focused on bigger locations of the Caribbean, as for example Trinidad, Jamaica or the Bahamas. Thus, more research into smaller locations is needed, too.

One such smaller location is St. Kitts which belongs to the English-speaking islands of the Eastern Caribbean and consists of a multilingual community with Kittitian English and Kittitian Creole spoken within the society. While tendencies towards an endonormatively oriented standard language development can be seen in certain language domains of bigger communities of the English-speaking Caribbean, such as Jamaica or Trinidad (cf. e.g. Westphal 2017), the exonormative orientation is still more pronounced in St. Kitts itself, which underlines its special status within the area and makes it an interesting locale for perceptual research.

Drawing from data collected in St. Kitts in 2018 and 2019 in the form perceptual experiments with students (11-13 years old) and metalinguistic interviews with teachers, as well as the analysis of local curricula, this paper looks at younger informants' language perceptions of several local and non-local varieties of English and how these perceptions are potentially connected to the local education system. Based on these data, this paper suggests that children's perceptions are still influenced towards exonormatively oriented standards in formal contexts, away from locally spoken varieties. However, based on the perceptual experiments a change towards more positive attitudes towards local Caribbean varieties seems to be slowly taking place, in line with the supposed re-evaluation of non-local and possible local standards (Hackert 2016) already present in other locations.

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Investigating child language acquisition from a joint perspective: a comparison of traditional and new L1 speakers and child learners of English

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Studies of the acquisition of English by young children that are informed by corpus linguistics and World Englishes research are rare. The present paper is among the first to address this research gap by inquiring into the following question: How is the acquisitional outcome and the route taken by new native speakers of English emerging in the former colonies of the British empire (e.g. Singapore and other Asian and African contexts) different from that of traditional native speakers of British or American English and, in turn, different from bi-/multilingual children acquiring English as their first or second language in migrant contexts? We compare the acquisition of three morphosyntactic features, viz. the definite and indefinite articles *a* and *the*, past tense marking, and the realization of subject pronouns. Omissions of these three features have been reported to be characteristic of early child language on the one hand (see e.g. Brown 1973), but also features of new varieties of L1 English such as Singapore English (e.g. Buschfeld 2020) as well as learner features (Lardiere 2004, Salaberry & Shirai 2002, Namtapi & Pongpaioj 2016). The data come from children between the ages of 2 and 12 acquiring English in different cultural and sociolinguistic contexts, viz. in Singapore, England, and North America, and monolingually and in combination with one or even further other languages. The Singapore data come from 30 children (aged 2;5 to 12;1) from a corpus of spoken L1 child English in Singapore (CHEsS; Buschfeld 2020), all of which are bi-/multilingual with either Mandarin Chinese or one of the Indian languages spoken in Singapore as their other language(s). The reference data contain on the one hand the CHILDES database (MacWhinney 2000) with over a million words by American and British children aged 2 to 9 years. On the other hand, we use a corpus of children from England containing 14 monolingual children aged 2;1 to 10;0 and seven bi- or multilingual children aged 2;3 to 10;9 (Buschfeld 2020). We use a semi-automatic method to extract the characteristics under investigation, involving POS tagging and chunking by Treetagger (Schmid 1994) to detect zero-determiners,

syntactic parsing (Schneider 2008) for zero-subjects, and AntConc (Anthony 2019) for regular expressions and manual sifting. We present percentages of the non-standard variants when compared to the standard variants in the envelope of variation of each variable.

Results suggest that important differences exist. Whereas the three features under investigation are all characteristics of early child language, they decrease in frequency and ultimately vanish in the monolingual native speakers from England, and, at least mostly in the bi-/multilingual children growing up in the UK or US. The L2 learners of English realize parts of them as instances of cross-linguistic influence from their L1s, whereas the Singaporean children retain these features beyond the initial phases of language acquisition as part of their final state linguistic repertoires. In the Singapore context, these cannot be interpreted as performance errors or instances of incomplete acquisition due to the specific sociolinguistic development in post-independence Singapore.

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Parental language ideologies and children's language use – raising speakers of 'Standard' English?

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Current linguistics research has shown a shift away from the traditional focus on standard varieties of languages towards successful communication and speaker equality. Nonetheless, within society, represented e.g. through policymakers, teachers, and parents concerned with the practical or theoretical implementations of (first or second) language acquisition, the ideology of the standard varieties' hegemony has often been maintained. Since language ideologies can function as mediators between language and social constructions, they reflect a conscious or subconscious hierarchization and positioning of speakers within a social group (c.f. Piller 2015; Woolard 1998; Wortham 2001). In this talk, I use Singapore as a case in point to show how language ideologies and their societal repercussions are politically implemented and, subsequently, represented in home language use and attitudes. Furthermore, I show to what extent these parental language ideologies and preferences converge or diverge from their children's use of English.

Singapore is a multilingual and multi-ethnic country. However, English, brought to Singapore during its time as a British colony, holds a unique position within the country's linguistic landscape; it is considered to be ethnically neutral while representing the prestige and recognition associated with the language of globalization and power (c.f. Blommaert 2001; Leimgruber 2013; Wee 2004). Based on 37 parental questionnaires, collected by Buschfeld in 2014, I analyze the participants' language attitudes and ideologies. I show how and why they are rooted in Singapore's social fabric and language policies, which are clearly biased towards the desirability of Standard Singapore English. Furthermore, I correlate the participants' statements on their families' language use and attitudes and compare it to Buschfeld's (2020) findings on children's use of English in Singapore.

My findings show that (1) parents prefer Standard Singapore English over Singlish, which is the colloquial variety of Singapore English, and (2) that the parents' assessment of their children's language use does not correspond with its reality as observed by Buschfeld. The results of the study reveal that parents in Singapore aim for their children to acquire Standard Singapore English, while their children produce more structures associated to Singlish than their parents assume or hope for. The parents' preference of Standard Singapore English, therefore, might not be self-motivated but appears to reflect societal conventions and subconscious social positioning.

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