

English in England and Wales: Multiple ideologies¹

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We begin with a brief summary of some historical factors influencing the standardising of English, then go on to discuss the diversity of Englishes in England and Wales² in descriptive, attitudinal and ideological terms. In doing this, we consider social change and globalisation, and the ways in which these are impacting on language ideologies as English is increasingly used in new social spaces.

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

British English has been the object of repeated and committed standardising initiatives over many centuries, and in that sense it might be described as the most thoroughly standardised of all linguistic varieties. A written standard for British English is firmly in place, at least in traditional domains and genres such as published novels and ‘serious’ newspapers. But spoken English in Britain retains very considerable diversity, and linguists continue to debate which linguistic features should and should not be considered ‘standard’, and indeed whether a spoken standard exists (see, for example, chapters in Bex and Watts 1999).

The term ‘Standard English’ first came to be used in the 19th century, according to Leith and Graddol (2007: 110), when ‘linguistic correctness’ in written and spoken English was seen as a mark of education. Compulsory state education, introduced in the 1870s, aimed to instruct in ‘Standard English’, and discourage ‘local dialects’. Even so, processes of both standardisation (i.e. through formal intervention) and focusing (i.e. norms emerging from close daily interaction, educational systems, powerful models of usage, and senses of group identity – see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985) had long been present in English, certainly from Caxton’s introduction of printing in the 1470s.

Caxton’s selection of the East Midland dialect (incorporating Oxford, Cambridge and London) was a significant step in the standardising of English. It meant other dialects tended not to be printed, and so this usage took on the position of a national norm. Since printing allowed a great number of people throughout England to read the same text, and more so when newspapers were introduced in the 18th century, norms were also being consolidated at the level of daily interaction. This focusing also contributed to imaginings of a ‘national’ community (Leith and Graddol 2007: 106) – even though the status of England as a singular nation is sometimes questioned and Britain has always been a multi-national polity. Leith and Graddol also refer to the importance of the Renaissance view that language should be shaped for a ‘national’ purpose, and of the Reformation and spread of Protestantism. Henry VIII’s declaring himself head of the English church in 1534, and the conflict of that historical period, doubtless also led to more linguistic focusing stemming from the sense of an external threat and an identity-promoting national cause. For the Puritans coming to prominence in the English Civil War (1642–1651), putting English before Latin meant a view of English as a national language ‘uniting *all* English people in the eyes of God’ (Leith and Graddol 1996: 153).

¹ We are very grateful to Janus Mortensen for his contributions.

² We limit ourselves to England and Wales in this chapter, since we have most familiarity with these parts of Britain. We expect, though, that many of the themes we address in relation to the English language in England and Wales will be also relevant to Scotland (but see Johnston 2007; Macafee 1997).

Later, 18th century writers such as Swift sought to shore up English against change and variation to shield it from charges of ‘barbarism’, in part through the construction of dictionaries and grammars, with Swift writing that he wanted to bring English ‘to a certain standard’ (Crowley 1989: 93). Nevalainen (2003), moreover, points to a subsequent progressive hardening of attitudes to violations of linguistic purity. While 18th century attitudes to such violations were ‘simply disapproving’, or pointed to ‘some more or less elusive qualities of decorum’, in the 19th century they were more closely aligned with the absence of ‘moral and religious rectitude’ (:144).

Historically, there have been centrifugal as well as centripetal forces at work however. The Puritans’ interest in promoting English as a national language in the 17th century was certainly compatible with an interest in regional dialects, and they would themselves have spoken them. Leith and Graddol (1996: 153) refer to Puritan John Ray’s collection of dialect words in 1674, for instance. This was very much a feature of the route to ‘uniting *all* people in the eyes of God’ (*ibid.*). They also point to the growing literature in dialects from the 1840s, the printing of literature by local publishers in northern England, often authored by self-educated factory workers, and, by the 1850s, local newspapers in northern industrial cities. Much of this literature shows strong opposition towards the south-east of England (Leith and Graddol 2007: 111). Deumert and Vandenbussche (2003) make a distinction between ‘standard languages’ and ‘language standards’, the latter being ‘focused’ varieties which lack the overt codification of standard languages, tend to be linguistically more variable, but constitute collective norms towards which people can orient in their own usage (:456). Pointing to research by Schiffman on cinema, radio and television productions, they note that language standards seem more strongly situated in popular culture (:459).

Building on Milroy and Milroy’s (1991) claim that spoken language can never be fully standardised, we take the view that standardisation is a process of ideological struggle, which makes us sceptical of reifying and essentialising concepts such as ‘standard English’. Whether scare-quoted or not, standard English is best seen as an ideological ascription (Coupland 2002, 2009) rather than as a bounded variety. This is partly because of inconsistencies in how the term ‘standard’ is intended and interpreted, partly because many aspects of linguistic communication are not standardisable, and partly because pressures on what might be judged to be ‘good spoken usage’ come from different normative centres and impact on different domains or genres.

DIALECT DISTRIBUTIONS

Around the end of the 19th century, some dialectologists saw traditional dialects fading, with more developed communications and more widespread education, although they did not necessarily presume their disappearance or that new varieties would not emerge (e.g. Skeat 1962 [1912]). Moving to the main period of focus of this chapter – i.e. the 1960s onwards, as the period generally associated with late-modernity – we see a parallel (and consensual) view that dialect diversity in Britain is diminishing (see below). Nevertheless, many varieties (which are, once again, idealised groupings more than neatly bounded varieties) are able to index locality and social status very powerfully, particularly at the level of phonology.

In England, there continues to be a relatively robust pattern separating ‘northern’ from ‘southern’ varieties (Foulkes and Docherty 2007), principally indexed by vocalic alternations in the STRUT and BATH lexical sets (meaning that words like *strut*, *but* and *up* generally have [ʊ] in the north but [ʌ] in the south, and that words like *bath*, *photograph* generally have a short vowel in the north and a long vowel in the south). The southern patterns are taken to form part of Received Pronunciation (RP) – held to be the idealised middle class pronunciation norm for England. The major northern conurbations are distinguished, at least for ver-

naacular speakers, through pronunciation patterns, meaning that each of Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Manchester, Leeds and other cities has a distinctive vernacular speech-style. These vernaculars are socially enregistered to different extents (Agha 2007), for example in that ‘Scouse’ and ‘Geordie’ are socially entrenched popular nicknames for the socially familiar Liverpool and Newcastle speech and (stereotyped) cultural types. ‘Brummie’ similarly refers to Birmingham in the English Midlands, and Midlands speech, while again regionally distinctive, patterns more with the northern than with the southern idealised category.

In southern England ‘Cockney’ refers to the vernacular variety and cultural type traditionally associated with London, the capital city, although current studies show that the social meaning of ‘Cockney’ can be far more particular than this (Rampton 2006) and does not even represent the contemporary mainstream speech-style of the inner city, which is subject to significant multi-ethnic influences (Cheshire *et al.* 2011). A large area in the south-west of England (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Gloucester, Bristol, Hereford, Wiltshire) is still characterised by rhotic speech, again subject to familiar constraints of social class and social context. East Anglia is the location of another distinctive English variety currently undergoing change under specific influences from London speech and so-called ‘Estuary English’ (Britain 2005; Kerswill 2007: 49–51).

English is the majority language of Wales; only one person in five is reported in census data to speak Welsh (see Robert, this volume). As in England, vernacular varieties of spoken English in Wales index region and have more specific social indexicalities too. Our own research identified at least five accent-zones in Wales that are identifiable and socially meaningful to non-linguists: Cardiff and the south-east conurbations, Valleys, the (rural) south-west, north Wales and south Pembrokeshire (see Garrett *et al.*, 2003). Outside of the south-east there tends to be a less clear pattern of sociolinguistic stratification in Wales (as in Scotland), meaning that middle-class speakers tend *not* to speak RP. This reflects the fact that Welsh-accented English speech in Wales indexes national identity and, for many, the display of a degree of national pride (we give more details below), rather than lower social class.

Structured variation in pronunciation styles across England and Wales fall within the remit of ‘standard English’ disputes because (as we see below) they are subject to social evaluation in a host of dimensions which include judgements of adequacy and properness. Trudgill (1999), on the other hand, takes the view that standard English ‘is not an accent’; it is a social dialect, used by only 12–15% of the population, that can be spoken through a range of accents and contains stylistic/ formality-linked variation within it. Summarising this general position and following Trudgill, Kerswill (2007: 43) points to four particular grammatical features (among others) that can be considered ‘idiosyncracies’ of standard English, from which vernacular spoken usage often deviates (and may then be considered ‘non-standard’, even though ‘less idiosyncratic’). These are (i) not distinguishing between auxiliary and main verb forms of ‘do’ (leading to vernacular *I done it*); (ii) avoiding double-negation (*I don’t want none*); (iii) irregular reflexives, not based on possessive pronouns (*hissself*); (iv) distinguishing between preterite and past participles of many verbs (*I seen her, I done it*). Social judgements of ‘dialects’, however, are unlikely to follow linguists’ distinctions between accent and dialect.

ATTITUDES

Language attitudes studies reflect some of the above diversity, but there is nevertheless a dearth of large-scale studies of attitudes to speech varieties in Britain. Giles (1970) stands out as a study of regional and foreign accented Englishes, but respondents were schoolchildren from Bristol and neighbouring Cardiff. A more recent web-based study, part of the BBC’s *Voices* initiative in 2004 (Coupland and Bishop 2007), drew its data from a broader demography and included more (34) varieties – <http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/>. A significant finding of the *Voices* study is that the prestige position of standard British English – taken to refer to RP

– remains largely unchanged from Giles' (1970) findings, and both studies found a considerable gap between the prestige level attributed to standard compared to most other varieties, and that it is also afforded high social attractiveness.

Other *Voices* findings are also of interest here. Firstly, younger and older respondents differed in attitudes. The younger were less positive towards (what was labelled) Standard English, affording it less prestige, and they saw Afro-Caribbean, Belfast and Glasgow English as more attractive than older respondents did. So there are at least suggestions of ideological shift over time. Secondly, respondents of all ages judged 'an accent identical to your own', along with Southern Irish English, Scottish English and Edinburgh English higher in social attractiveness than an elite variety labelled 'Queen's English', also perhaps indicating an ideological shift in favour of regional varieties. Thirdly, there were regional differences. For example, respondents in Wales awarded more prestige to Welsh English than did other groups. Fourthly, the *Voices* study assessed respondents' attitudes towards linguistic diversity, and found that those who said they were well-disposed to diversity gave higher prestige and social attractiveness ratings to accents. The method used in the *Voices* study (with varieties presented as labels rather than audio-recordings) meant it could not capture how language attitudes might operate in different ways across different contexts. This lack of contextualisation means that the findings are likely to reflect more the broad language ideological structures that constitute a backdrop to accent encounters in Britain today (Coupland and Bishop 2007). We return to this below.

Language attitudes research in Wales has been more extensive, employing more diverse methods across all of Wales. In our own work (see Garrett *et al.* 2003), we found teachers (also given variety labels) giving RP an evaluative profile of high prestige but low in everything else that we measured (e.g. dynamism, pleasantness). The English associated with south-west Wales was also seen as high in status (though less than RP) but high too on all other variables, including Welshness. The result is interpretable as a somewhat grudging acknowledgement of RP's social position, but with support for a more 'indigenous' variety as a Welsh 'regional standard' (Edwards and Jacobsen 1987). Our data from teenage school students (this time using audio-recordings of speakers of the varieties) also portrayed RP as the 'voice of success', but 'not our voice', as if demonstrating knowledge of but not endorsement or approval of its societal status. Such studies show that it is possible to elicit responses that show awareness of RP and Standard English as the most prestigious variety, but not without significant qualifications, suggesting that more studies are needed, and that we should not assume language ideological homogeneity across British society

DIALECT LEVELLING, (DE)STANDARDISATION AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Descriptive studies point to selective processes of what we might call de-vernacularisation through levelling (e.g. when Geordie youngsters seem to 'prefer' an attenuated regional voice – see Watt 2002) and diffusion (e.g. specific London features spreading to other vernaculars – see Stuart-Smith, this volume). Such processes are not clearly either 'standardisation' or 'de-standardisation'. As we suggested earlier, 'standard' and 'vernacular' are not coherent descriptive labels, but ideological ascriptions. For example, we cannot be sure whether people adopting diffused forms are motivated by any sense of 'gaining a local vernacular' or of 'losing a pre-existing vernacular'. The ideological loadings of levelling and diffusion often remain unclear.

More importantly, we feel the need to identify *different* ideologies that have perhaps been confused under the rubrics of both 'standard English' and 'standard language ideology' (SLI). So, for example, SLI is not only a matter of 'intolerance of optional variability in language' (Milroy and Milroy 1991: 26); it is intolerance of some sorts of usage, in specific contexts, on specific grounds; and it validates other sorts of usage, in specific contexts, also on specific

grounds. Milroy and Milroy (1999) appear to us, in our own extrapolation, to be modelling SLI as being:

- conservative, reactionary, anti-progressive
- elite, based on class-linked privilege
- purist, seeking to cleanse or supplant ‘sloppy’ or ‘loose’ usage
- myopic about its class basis
- naïve in interpreting ‘bad’ usage as low competence, awareness and education

This is a very specific (and very punitive) ideological cluster. We can call it *Establishment SLI*, the top-down ideology of standard language located in ‘the British Establishment’ of the early and mid 20th century (see Coupland 2009).

For some segments of the British population and under some conditions of inquiry, Establishment SLI remains mainly intact and fairly solid. The results of the *Voices* study certainly appear to reflect the functioning of Establishment SLI at a general level. Hierarchical patterns of social evaluation of regional varieties are easy to detect, presumably by triggering conservative ideological discourses about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (prestige) and ‘nice’ and ‘ugly’ (social attractiveness) ways of speaking. So, in this ideological frame, there is strong stigma still attaching to particular urban vernaculars in England (and to some extent to Cardiff speech too). We would expect this pattern of judgement to be linked to class paradigms, where values such as ‘common’ (in its pejorative sense), ‘unsophisticated’, ‘uncultured’, etc. are ascribed to some urban vernaculars. In this ideological mind-set, people can find considerable positivity (prestige and attractiveness, at least) in varieties labelled ‘Standard English’, as we saw above.

However, there is some evidence, and plenty of anecdotal support, for the view that Establishment SLI is being:

- (a) eroded by fundamental social changes affecting social class and regionalisation in Britain, and quite generally by social changes associated with globalisation
- (b) undermined and rendered less credible in some of its traditional institutional enclaves
- (c) actively opposed by quite different language-ideological formations working through particular genres and social situations, particularly those linked to popular culture and mass media
- (d) relativised by the emergence of new footings for personal self-presentation and spoken performance, and new ways of contextualising voice in many salient contexts.

As a result, we might expect that *new* SLIs are emerging, for example where ‘standard’ ceases to entail ‘correct and cultured usage’ or ‘maintaining standards’ (the imperative articulated by Lord Reith in the early life of the BBC – see Mugglestone 1995) and comes to entail ‘ordinary acceptable usage’ (as in the phrase ‘standard practice’), or ‘usage agreed as fit for purpose in this particular discursive niche’. We might call these *Positively Normative Language Ideologies* (PNLIs), and see them more in terms of ‘recommendations’ than ‘hegemonic rules’, and as more locally applicable, and so perhaps as closer ideologically to Deumert and Vandebossche’s (2003) ‘language standards’ than ‘standard languages’.

THE OPENING UP OF NATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Another important part of social change in Britain is the increasing permeability of national territories, and large-scale mobility. This mobility is not only of people physically travelling (Kerswill 2007), but also of images and information, communicative formats and genres (most obviously of film, television and print media), values and ideologies. Our view is that

social change is a far swifter and less predictable dimension of what we should call ‘sociolinguistic change’ than language change itself. Linguistic varieties may be *relatively* unchanging over time-spans of a few decades, while social and ideological change can be dramatic within those same time-frames.

The effects of such permeability on standard language ideology have to be considered. The socio-political landscape of the early 21st century looks quite different from the one that fostered the strong European SLIs in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the case of English and Britain, the full picture is hardly captured if we only consider the processes of (de)standardisation within the British borders. Establishment SLI has impacted over a much larger geographical area, and the varieties endorsed by SLI are similarly not confined to Britain (see next paragraph). Permeable boundaries mean stronger incursions by exo-normative language varieties and values, some originating in other Englishes. This development interacts with a complex sociolinguistic politics of race within Britain – Afro-Caribbean influenced varieties having a cachet of ‘cool’ for some, but Asian-influenced varieties of English still being stigmatised in different ways. We need to understand more about how exo-normative language styles and their associated older and newer language ideologies (especially related to ethnicity) interface with endo-normative patterns (related to class).

MULTIPLE SLIS

English as a world language certainly functions as a conduit for influences into Britain from the USA, but also elsewhere. Globalisation – mobility and the increasing global reach of mass media (see chapters in Coupland 2010) – has exposed Britain to alternative SLIs of English. This supranational sociolinguistic context militates against the view of SLI in Britain being a top-down intolerance of variation in (class-related and presumably therefore indigenous) English. How do these different ‘standard Englishes’ stand up to each other, ideologically and evaluatively?

Attitudinal studies of world Englishes in the 1970s and 1980s suggested that, despite Britain’s diminishing role in the world over many decades, RP was still attributed considerable prestige in the USA, Australia and NZ, for example, compared to their own Englishes. In 2001, Bayard *et al.* reported findings from their quantitative data from Australia, New Zealand and the USA indicating that this comparative international position of RP might be on the wane. Subsequent open-ended data in Garrett *et al.* (2005), however, still suggested a picture of high international prestige for RP amongst respondents from the same three countries. Such differences in findings may of course arise from some methodological approaches more readily tapping into ongoing attitudinal change, and others into ideologised values (see the discussion in Garrett *et al.* 2005 and in Coupland and Bishop 2007). Significantly here, though, the 2005 data painted a qualitatively differentiating view of these Englishes. British English, for example, was associated with authenticity (e.g. tradition and heritage) more than the Australian, New Zealand and US Englishes were.

What sorts of SLIs do these international views project in terms of Milroy and Milroy’s SLI characteristics outlined above? The 2005 respondents awarded less prestige and social attractiveness at that time to US English, yet it is hard to assume that this evaluative profile can be taken as meaning that US English was not acknowledged at some level as a significant standard language by the respondents. British English was viewed as more conservative, linked to elites, pure, original etc (more in line with the SLI characteristics sketched above), and US English as freer, faster, more associated with the media, etc. Conceivably, then, here are two different global standards (cf. Kristiansen’s 2001 findings for distinct Danish standard varieties for schools and media). So, for the English language at the international level, there appears to be ideological diversity across specific SLI formations. Most conspicuously, foreign learners of English have a pool of standard Englishes to choose from, with different ideo-

logical loadings (see e.g. Garrett 2009). Such images are undoubtedly reflected back at the English speakers of these respective countries, perhaps also shared by them. How do traditional uniformity-stressing views of SLI accommodate such multiplicity?

NEW CULTURAL CENTRES AND MODES FOR THE ‘STANDARDISING’ OF VERNACULARS

There are already several hints in sociolinguistic research that new social spaces are emerging in which specific vernaculars can be performed and be highly valued (in popular culture generally, including many TV formats). If we are to access these changes, the social contextualisation that has been missing in a great deal of attitudinal/ideological research (as mentioned earlier in relation to the *Voices* study) becomes much more important. While such contextualisation will allow fewer generalisations about the inherent values and indexicalities of varieties, we will learn more about how they are locally positioned in relation to specific uses, functions and formats. We might expect to see cases where old taxonomies associating (high) linguistic standardness with (high) prestige break down, for example if vernacular and ‘non-standard’ voice is portrayed accompanying prestigious and affluent people and demeanours, or if historically stigmatised social identities are inverted and attract respect in their new domains. Under these circumstances, the concepts of ‘standard’ and ‘non-standard’ become even less reliable as a simple conceptual pair.

Disputes about media voices in Britain for many decades foregrounded ‘a complaint tradition’, where, in line with establishment SLI, TV viewers, for example, might write letters to newspapers complaining that a newsreader had ‘mis-pronounced a place-name’ or ‘had an unintelligible accent’. Some of this tradition persists. But it is clearly being offset by a tidal wave of non-RP-speaking TV and radio presenters and personalities filling out an ever-greater proportion of multi-channel digital media space. There are channels (e.g. Radio 1, the youth-inclined ‘national’ BBC popular music channel) and genres/formats (stand-up comedy, satirical quizzes) where the prospect of employing RP-speaking presenters would be laughable, other than in ‘voicing’, self-parodic roles. The outcomes of ideological contests around standard English in British media will in large measure depend on whether ‘public language’ comes to be defined in relation to demotic, socially commodifying, stylising, entertainment-focussed broadcasting, as opposed to the ‘serious’ and paternalistic formats that The British establishment formerly revered. A research focus on popular culture formats, allowing us to access how viewing populations engage with such shows and debate and evaluate language-ideological issues relevant to them, will be an important way forward in the further exploration of what has been and is happening with SLIs, and PNLIs, in English in England and Wales.

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