

**Trudgill, Peter, 2004. *New-dialect formation. The inevitability of colonial Englishes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Pp xx+180. ISBN 0 7486 1876 7 (hardback). € 45.00.**

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*New-dialect formation*, a book written by one of the leading experts in English dialectology, is welcome as it turns to the Southern Hemisphere (varieties of) English (HSE) from a historical and comparative angle. SHE include NZE, AusE, South African English, Falkland English and Tristan de Cunha (in the South Atlantic). These Englishes are related in terms of social and demographic history and have in common a range of ling-uistic features that suggest a family relationship of a sort. They all have, for instance, a closed phonetic quality of the short vowels in words like *hid, hed, hut* and *hot*, shift the diphthongs in words like *light, loud*, etc. They also have in common numerous (often non-standard) grammatical features such as double negation or the deletion of /h/ in *house*, etc. Trudgill's *New-dialect formation* looks centrally at New Zealand English (NZE), but includes Australian English (AusE), which makes it relevant for Australianists. It also turns to similar developments in former French or Spanish colonies for comparative purposes to enhance its empirical foundation.

The book with its seven chapters, a list of references, an index and a number of maps is based on a range of data. It is most genuine in relation to NZE as Trudgill's function as participant advisor in a project on the history of NZE has permitted him access to a collection of radio interviews made by the NZ Broadcasting Commission in the 1940s with New Zealanders born between 1850 and 1889. These speakers must count as first generation New Zealanders (pp x-xi). His data on AusE and South African English are more derivative, while his empirical research on Falkland English has yielded genuine data. He suggests a theory in Chapter 1 but wants to 'let the data speak for themselves'. Logically, he leaves a peripheral role, at best, for social history and demography.

Chapter 1 is entitled "Colonial dialects as mixed dialects" and outlines the theory which is refined in Chapter 7. The crucial word is (various degrees of) mixing – with indigenous and (other) migrant languages and between (British) English dialects. Complementary to mixing are linguistic changes that had been taking place independently in each of the early colonies or, alternatively, in BrE from which the dialects were cut off. The theory based on these (six) explanatory factors is called *deterministic* and assumes that "given sufficient linguistic information about the dialects which contribute to a mixture, and given sufficient demographic information about the proportions of speakers of the different dialects, it is possible, within certain limitations, to make predictions about what the outcome of the mixture will be" (p 26).

He adds that similarities between the widely separated Southern Hemisphere Englishes can be explained by the "mixtures of similar dialects in similar proportions at similar times" (p 26). He limits this determinism to a set of varieties that emerged in a "tabula rasa situation" where there were no native speakers of English prior to British colonization that would have had an impact on the colonial varieties to develop. That situation, he believes, prevailed in the areas studied. It all depends, of course, on what how he measures 'similar' – and I will come to that in the critical part of the review. A third aspect of this theory is that he assigns a formative role to children (p 27) who are not "driven by social factors such as prestige or identity" (p 28). The type of accommodation they practice is more like a "biologically given drive", an "automatic consequence of interaction" (p 28) – not a semi-conscious strategy.

Chapter 2 looks at the changes that had been taking place independently in either the post-formative period of colonial languages and in BrE dialects. They must be separated out as they have no part in mixing. (In Chapter 6 he turns to the concept of drift to explain parallel developments in widely separated, non-interacting varieties.) Such independent development are, for instance, the use of glottal stops for /t/ in, e.g. *bitter*, the use of (low) /a/ in words like *cat* in BrE or, in NZE, the centering of /i/ in *fish*. This theme lends itself to a debate about whether colonial varieties have been innovative rather than conservative (showing the well-known 'colonial lag'). He argues, rightly, that the close vowel quality in HSEs is a conservative feature though its accentuation, as in NZE, is an innovation – BrE dialects and the prestige accent Received Pronunciation (RP) have lowered them. What he fails to add is that there was apparently a fair degree of variation in BrE dialects during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Leitner 2004a) so that there was innovation at either end. The long vowels diphthongs in words like *lead*, *day*, *die* and *mouse* are often taken to reflect a Cockney influence on NZE and AusE – *die* and *day* can be misunderstood. While he finds such 'shifted' realizations in the ONZE speakers (in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), his discussion of BrE RP and BrE dialects really amounts to saying that there was hardly any evidence for the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Leitner (2004a) argued for that reason that shifted vowels had been imported to Australia in a second wave of migration – while Trudgill's data on NZE might suggest the inheritance and strengthening of a weak tendency. His discussion of *h*-dropping in words like *house* is patently faulty when he says that AusE does not have that feature (Leitner 2004b).

Chapters 3 to 5 develop and apply the theory of linguistic determinism (from Chapter 1) to SHEs. There are three stages of new-dialect formation, i.e. rudimentary levelling and interdialect formation (Chapter 3), variability and apparent leveling (Chapter 4) and, finally, determinism or the survival of majority forms (Chapter 5). At stage I (which may include the long boat journey to the colonies) rudimentary levelling eliminates extreme and minority local dialect features such as the replacement of /v/ in *village* by the sound [w] (used in *wild*). They would not spread and, as a result, speakers with such features would accommodate to the speech of the majority. There are other effects that I will pass over. But the outcome of stage I is still a wide array of variation in the speech of individuals and in inter-group communication. Importantly though, this "supermarket" scenario (cf. p 108) is

somewhat reduced and new, uncommon combinations of features are found (which include, e.g. features of ScotE and south-east of England). Prominent in this area of over-variation are vowels. This 'apparent levelling' process, he says, is carried forward by (the) children (of the first generation migrants) and affects features that are not supported by a sufficient quantity of speakers. The third stage leads to a "final, stable, relatively uniform outcome of the new-dialect formation process" (p 113) and is largely the result of the children of the second generation. In terms of time, this means that around 1890 NZE had acquired a reasonably stable and distinct shape. In terms of features, it is the majority variants that have survived.

His reliance on majority status is exemplified with a range of features in NZE: the elimination of *h*-deletion, the non-merger of /w/ and /wh/ that distinguished *wich* and *which* in traditional BrE dialects, IrE and ScotE, the retention of a front quality of /a/ in *start* and the uniform use of a schwa in weak, non-accented syllables such as in *rabbit*, which would have /ɪ/ in BrE. Equally, short front vowels retained a close quality, the diphthongs in words like *face*, *night* were shifted, etc. Without going further into his evidence, he argues that the outcome – which reflects, one should add, a new system, not a chance assembly of features – is arrived at in a probabilistic manner, based on demographic patterns.

Given that the similarities between the SHEs cannot be explained by determinism alone, Chapter 6 argues for the notion of 'drift' or, in other words, the inheritance of underlying tendencies that show up, later and independently, in varieties that cannot be assumed to have had any kind of direct contact. Thus, the vowel in *hut*, which is a back vowel in BrE RP is fronted to reach a low front position in NZE, AusE, SthAFE, etc.

Chapter 7 refines the theory of Chapter 1 in light of a number of competing assumptions and input from creolistics. It rejects specifically any suggestion that social factors like prestige, stigma or a drive for identity play a role at all. Children are, he says, not subject to such notions – one wonders as a parent! He also says that "[I]s is chastening for linguists, moreover, to see that systematicity seems to have played a very small role here" (p 159) and that the children acquired features on a feature-by-feature basis. Yet, the outcome is, as I just said, a new system so that he ought to, at least, accept a teleological principle in addition to a demographic choice situation.

*New-dialect formation* comes from a leading expert in English dialectology and must count as a significant contribution to the field of 'colonial' dialects. But there is room for criticism – on top of the few remarks already made. A good deal of what he says applies to AusE, of course, and it is from that angle that I will make some comments.

To begin with a seemingly minor error, on p 23 Trudgill refers to Mitchell's allegedly claiming that AusE had assumed a recognizable shape by 1861, which he uses in support of his own conjecture of 1855. However, Mitchell was saying there that the broad accent of AusE had emerged around 1840 and the distinction between the broad and the general accent was noticeable by 1861 (or somewhat later). That makes a crucial difference since AusE precedes any of the other HSEs by decades and was

recognizable at the time NZ was beginning to be settled! That casts some doubt on his premise that SHEes arose at a similar periods of time, with similar admixtures from BrE dialects and in similar proportions (pp 23ff). A number of consequences flow from that correction. The first is that he cannot reject a formative role of AusE on NZE as lightly as he does. Secondly, he tends to look at the 19<sup>th</sup> century as if it was an immutable unite and only rarely refers to changes in BrE during that century (Görlach 1999; Leitner 2004a). A case where he does that is when he says that diphthong shift was a feature of that was spread out from London by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. MacMahon (1998), incidentally, says that it was noticed only towards the 1880s. What is clear is that diphthong shift could not be a feature of AusE in 1840 and that, as I argued in Leitner (2004a), it must have been imported later, in a second wave of migration. The possibility of influences of later migrants on the texture of colonial Englishes is not taken into account by Trudgill. His view of the rise of HSEes is that they developed on the basis of a first initial wave of immigration, was carried forward by a first generation of children and focused into a distinct variety by the second generation of children. Complete isolationism is the hallmark of his theory. And that is not only credible as such; it runs into problems with the data and contradicts a theory that assumes mixing to be the prominent characteristic. One might add that Trudgill ignores the fact that the Industrial Revolution made many of the later settlers in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere to leave their rural villages and to migrate into the cities nearby or far away in search of work in Great Britain prior to emigration (Jupp 1998). Tens of thousands of Irish people migrated to Britain. Görlach (1999) argues convincingly that these migrations shifted the dialect boundaries and levelled some of the traditional dialect features and most must have become acquainted with the features of far-away dialects.

More peripherally, the list of references contains numerous titles not used in the book, the maps on pp xiv to xvii may be typical of many linguistic studies but do not contain sufficient information on, e.g., national boundaries, well-known cities or regions, etc., and are as a result simply incomprehensible to the non-initiated or the professional geographer. Even worse are the 13 dialect maps in the body of the book. The county map of the "United Kingdom" is really about England and does not have information on the period of its validity; counties have often changed their boundaries. He might well have used the *dtv Atlas. Englische Sprache*, edited by Wolfgang and Karin Viereck and Heinrich Ramisch (2002).

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